

ADVENT

GOD WITH US

GIVING TREE



**GOD**  
*With*  
**US**



**CQ**

**CALVARY QUARTERLY MAGAZINE**  
WINTER 2018 | DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY

# FROM PASTOR HANS

As we approach Christmas, I want you to remember: **God is with you.**

God is with you amid the chaos of Black Friday. God is with you as you put up the Christmas lights and realize some don't work and others won't stop blinking! God is with you when you max out that credit card to buy Christmas gifts with money you don't have. God is with you when you try to orchestrate the perfect Christmas dinner. God is with you when that uncle brings up politics at the Christmas dinner table and you have had enough family time!? Friends, God is with you. Now, maybe more than any other time of the year, we need reminders of this, because this time of the year can be disorienting.

At Christmas, we remember that God broke into our world in that Bethlehem stable some 2,000 years ago. I imagine that story was just as disorienting. Into a world ruled by the heavy hand of Rome, Jesus came as the King of Kings—yet he had no army, no political power, no sword. To a world in love with power, he told stories of how “the last will be first and the first will be last.” He told stories in which outsider Samaritans, poor widows, scruffy shepherds and foreign wise men were the heroes of the stories. Jesus broke rules and social standards. I imagine, for those first followers, this was more than disorienting.

Here's what I know: At one time or another, you have experienced some sort of disorientation in your life. We all have. A job didn't pan out. A marriage crumbled. Your health took a turn. There was some unexpected experience that sent you spinning.

Even churches experience this. There was a day when churches could open their doors and people would flock. I grew up in that world. People went to church because their family had always been Lutheran, or “that's just what you do.” Today, this just isn't the case. There's are no social pressures to attend church. And so, as a church we adapt. We add services on Wednesdays to meet the needs of families. We cling to our traditional worship style, but also offer a modern style of worship. We utilize technology. We worship at the lake. We go out of our way to provide hospitality and welcome first-time worshippers. And, all of this leads to new people attending, to a need for more space, and to a reality that we no longer know everyone. Just like the story of Christmas, this can be disorienting.

But here's what we do know: **God is with us.** With us in the valleys. With us in the wilderness. With us in the storms. This is the one thing that we know for certain will never, ever change. Friends, as we march toward Christmas, remember: **God is with you.**

Christmas peace & joy!



Pastor Hans

GOD is with US

## WINTER 2018

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605 Douglas Street  
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Speaker: Ryan Leak

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**CAN'T BE  
IN CHURCH?**



# Celebrate THE SEASON with Calvary!



## "GOD WITH US" WORSHIP SERIES

November 25-December 16

What better time to hear that God is with us in every moment than amid the heightened anxiety and chaos of the Christmas season? God is with us through the pain. God comforts us in the waiting. God gives us courage when we feel anxious.

## KIDS AND CAROLS

December 9, 2:00-3:30pm | Gathered Oaks

You are invited to an afternoon of Christmas activities, crafts, games, carols and an impromptu Christmas pageant. All are welcome! Join us at the Gathered Oaks Events Center for a time of Christmas fun for the entire family!

## CAROLS AND COCKTAILS

December 14, 7:00-9:00pm | Gathered Oaks

Is there any better way to get in the Christmas spirit than singing our favorite Christmas songs? Join us for our first Calvary "Carols & Cocktails" at Gathered Oaks Events Center. This event is open to the public so bring friends and family! Cash/Card Full Bar will be hosted by the Gathered Oaks Events Center with music provided by members and friends of the Calvary Band!

## Christmas Worship

Amid all the holiday cheer, if you are human, you have asked at one time or another: Where are you, God? Don't you see what's happening in my life? The wise men, the shepherds—even Jesus' family—were everyday people with the same questions, just like you. Invite your family, a friend or neighbor to Christmas Eve Worship, so they can hear the story of a God who does and always will see you!



**Wednesday, December 19**

6:15pm Christmas Preview Worship

**Sunday, December 23**

6:00pm Christmas Eve (Eve) Worship

**Monday, December 24, Christmas Eve**

11:00am Christmas Family Worship

1pm, 3pm, 5pm Christmas Worship

7pm Christmas Traditional Worship

*\* communion will be served at all services*

WATCH WORSHIP LIVE ON OUR FACEBOOK FEED!



/calvarylutheranchurchalex



# GOD *is with* US

## WHEN WE CONNECT

Recently joining a group focusing on important marriage and parenting topics, has been a really good thing for us. We try to meet weekly which is often hard with a variety of schedules, and though our family is often tired and tricky to pull together we all find it very rewarding in the end. We are able to have honest conversations with other adults that are dealing with a lot of the same stresses, insecurities and difficulties we are.

After our visits, we are often relieved and left with a feeling of calm knowing we aren't alone. The group leaves us feeling closer to one another and to Jesus too. We appreciate the connections we've made with the other families and our kids do too! The kids get a chance to play together as well and they leave with funny stories about their time together.

*Megan & Sam Steidl*



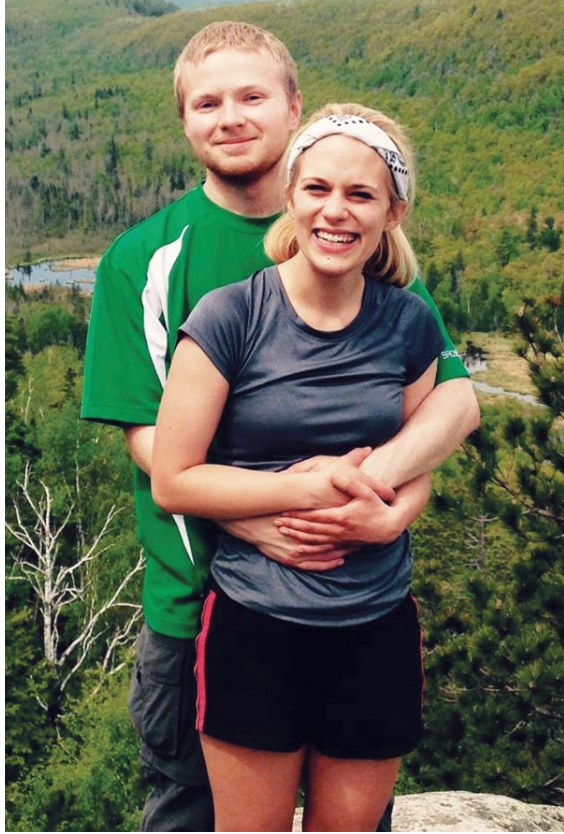
**BACK:** Marlene Thompson, Bonnie Holm, Kathy Janke, Nan Folsom, Karen Arm, Carolyn Loken, Margaret Granlund  
**FRONT:** Linda Raaum, Judy Biss, Ann Pulscher, Nancy Charles, Sandy Friend, Ethel Haider  
(Not pictured: Diane Nelson)

## WHEN WE CONNECT

Last year, we left behind many good friends and coworkers to move to Alexandria, a community we knew little about. We had spent the past couple years floating between Sunday morning services at a variety of churches, and we realized that faith for us needed to be something more.

The Connect Groups were a main factor that drew us to Calvary. Over the past year, our Connect group of four young couples has already lived through many big life changes. We might have been happy just to meet some new people our age, but we found that the group allows us to connect with others in a deeper and more meaningful way. We're excited to grow in our faith and friendship together in the coming year.

*Libby & Michael Brossart*



## WHEN WE CIRCLE UP

How do you get connected at Calvary? How do you make new friends? For some of us the answer is through a Women's Circle. Elizabeth Circle meets monthly for a snack and a study.

We share laughter and joys, we share concerns and worries, we share ideas and thoughts; and when the worst days happen to us we are able to share tears and fears. We join in prayer to ask God's blessing on all of our joys and concerns.

And then when we leave our meetings and go back into our everyday, we have people to call, to share lunch or coffee, to go places; we have friends who love each other and love the Lord. Through them we know that He is with us and that is truly a blessing.

*The Elizabeth Circle*





# GOD *is with* US

## WHEN WE CARE FOR THOSE IN NEED: GIVING TREE

The Adopt-A-Family program at United Way allows 250 families who may not otherwise have the means, to provide gifts for their children during the holidays. When families register, they give us a list of items that their child needs, as well as something special that they may want.

Imagine a child's list that consists of basic items such as socks and clothing or winter wear with only a mention of a toy. This is the situation for many registered families, and the special doll or race car is last to be mentioned. The tear of joy and genuine smile and appreciation we observe as a parent picks up their gifts touches our hearts.

We thank Calvary for their amazing partnership to share joy with families in our community during Christmas, as well as your mission to care for all of God's children throughout the year by ensuring that they have food to eat on the weekends through the Backpack Attack program. Thank you for being a blessing to those who need it most this holiday season as we celebrate all that we have been given by giving in return!

*Jen Jabas  
Executive Director,  
United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties*



*Calvary's Giving Tree with 300+ ornaments is possible through the Adopt-A-Family program at our local United Way.*



*Gifts are collected at the United Way office where families pick them up.*



*Pick up an ornament on the Giving Tree at Calvary starting Saturday, November 24!*

## DURING NEW SEASONS OF LIFE

Our lifecycle is much like seasons, we must accept change. Jennings and I enjoyed many years of heading to warmer climates in our RV, but realize that season had come to an end, so we signed up for phase 2 at Grand Arbor. That summer Jennings was diagnosed with metastatic cancer. In September we moved into Grand Arbor. It was a good decision. Six months later Jennings said goodbye and I was faced with a new reality.

My faith, family and friends kept me strong. God was with me as I discovered wonderful relationships just down the hall, with my 'breakfast buddies' or with my 'pool pals' at water aerobics, a neighbor that shares her newspaper, or the opportunities I have to share food and fun without leaving the building. God is all around me here and I treasure the memories and the realization that this season can also bring joy and peace in my life.

*Margaret Torgelson*



Back: Marv Larson, Dar Larson, Dee Peterson  
Front: Margaret Granlund, Margaret Torgelson

## WHEN WE CARE FOR KIDS

My personal faith journey started just a few short years ago. I was a member at another church and had become as involved as I could, but something was still missing. After a few twists, and, unforeseen turns, my son and I ended up attending summer VBS at Calvary. After an enlightening, heart-warming week of fun and faith at VBS, Jennie and Joanna saw something in me that I had never before seen in myself. When the Preschool ministry position offer came across my computer, I was blown away. I mean, I've always loved kids, but being so new to faith myself, I felt inadequate of teaching and molding them. Lots of prayers and encouragement from dear friends went into my acceptance of the offer. Now, I'm glad to say, I get just as much, if not more, out of being able to teach and love the kiddos. Grateful is the resounding word in my mind and on my heart. I have found a home at Calvary.

*Kia Seimer, Coordinator of the Sunday morning JAM program*





## GOD *is with* US



### WHEN WE SERVE

Oftentimes the person considered the provider in a relationship receives more than the recipient. That is exactly what happens every Sunday morning when we are blessed with the opportunity to give our friend LaJune a ride from Bethel Manor to worship services at Calvary.

This dear woman has experienced innumerable hardships in her life—the death of her husband twenty two years ago,

raising six children, working caregiver and waitress jobs to support her family, and enduring the deaths of three of her children and two granddaughters. No, her life has not been easy and yet she devotedly continues to praise God in worship and truly live a "God With Us" life. Why do these bad things happen to good people? It's a question many of us ponder, especially when they happen to good people like our faithful friend. Although we do not know the answer; we do know, however, that God walks with us and that our TRUST in him encourages us to move forward. We are so blessed to be part of our caring Calvary family and part of LaJune's life characterizing love and abiding faith. *Psalm 73:23-26.*

*Ian & Eldie Shelstad*

### WHEN WE NEED STRENGTH

God was with me when Mom fell. He sent me the sign I prayed for. The same sign he gave me 25 years ago when Dad passed.

48 hours after Mom died, God was there again when a friend from the past stopped unexpectedly for coffee. It was a miracle that she is a doctor and saw the bruises. Who would think hours after his Resorters Golf match, Steve would be airlifted to Fargo with a rare blood disorder?

God was strong and present in the ICU at 3 a.m. when the doctor motioned for me to step out. His words changed everything. "I am a man of God. Your husband will survive." No diagnosis, no treatment plan. He did not know us or our faith. God was with us, He spoke through him and He was right!

*Teressa Herzog*





## IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

I have always felt a close relationship to God. I've talked to God at night since I was a little girl, not only praying for health and happiness, but thanking God often for the blessings in my life.

I felt as though God placed my husband Craig, in my life in 1996, it had to be more than just coincidence. By the time 2016 rolled around we had been blessed with four healthy beautiful children. We wanted to try for one more so our youngest would have a forever friend to grow up with.

Given my age, combined with my test results we were told if we really wanted a 5th child we may want to consider IVF (in-vitro) with a donor egg. We decided to give it one more shot. It was September 2017, while in line for communion, I prayed to God. I simply asked him—well, I probably begged—to please help me get pregnant. This overwhelming feeling came across me, one that I can't explain, but I felt with my whole soul he had just answered my prayer.



Soon after, I was talking to God on my way home from work, explaining that I felt silly for thinking he gave me a child. A shooting star came through the sky in front of me. I believe that was a sign from God that He was with me, He was listening. Approximately 4 weeks later I got a positive pregnancy test. I thanked God over and over again.

Fast forward to June 14th, 2018, my induction day. Everything started well, just as it had with my other four deliveries, but this time our baby's heart rate began to drop. The induction was stopped hoping that would help his heart recover but it was only going lower. And then my health declined rapidly, they made the decision to get Dr. Saul, who was on the floor waiting to do a C-section on another patient. I prayed and cried out to God to please save my baby. My husband was left standing in the room alone. He was not allowed with me. Our baby boy was born at 12:10pm! God heard my prayers. He saved me and my baby that day.

I was later told that I had placenta abruption, and placenta accreta. I thanked God over and over again for the knowledge of the nurses to act fast, the skills of Dr. Saul during the C-section and the operating room crew that worked together as a team to save two lives. I was told that the outcome would have been much different had the operating room not already been set up for that scheduled C-section patient, and had Dr. Saul not been in the immediate area. They told me all my stars aligned that day, I told them it was divine intervention, God saved us.

Today, Keegan is a healthy, beautiful and much loved little boy. He was welcomed home by his siblings Madisen (15), Cade (13), Bricen (11) and Kyler (3).

*Jaime Berghorst*



## GOD *is with* US



### IN JOY AND SORROW

We are the blessed parents of two babies born prematurely, James Pierre (JP), born at 25 weeks and who only lived for three days, and Jacqueline James (JJ), born at 29 weeks and who spent 46 days in the NICU.

Both of these experiences were filled with their share of hope and despair, but we have been able to look back and see God's presence in every step. God was in my decision to go into the ER when something didn't feel right. God was in the nurse who brought me water and stood next to us as we took JP off life support. God stood with us through the crippling anxiety of our complicated second pregnancy, and long and uncertain NICU stay. As we navigate our life as a family, we are constantly reminding ourselves—God never promises an easy path in life, but He does promise never to leave us.

*Martha (Griffin) and Zach Mink*



### JANUARY WORSHIP SERIES: NO OUTSIDERS

Throughout the Bible there is one constant motif that runs from the very beginning to the very end: With God, there are no outsiders! In fact, the Bible was a scandalous story of how those perceived as outsiders were strategically placed in key positions that make them critical to the narrative. What if we could restore that story? This worship series will be a great time to invite a friend or family member who needs to know that with God there are no outsiders!



### FAITH FOR LIFE SPEAKER: RYAN LEAK

February 6, 6:15pm, at Calvary

Ryan is an author, filmmaker, and speaker. He's known as an ultimate risk taker from his two documentaries: *The Surprise Wedding* and *Chasing Failure*. Ryan's most recent film is called *Chasing Failure*. He travels the country and teaches people how to remove the limitations that keep them from dreaming. Ryan and his family reside in Dallas, TX and he serves on staff at Covenant Church as a part of the Teaching Team. For more information on Ryan, check out [www.ryanleak.com](http://www.ryanleak.com).



## GOD IS WITH US IN BAPTISM

I have grown up attending church services at Calvary and have participated in many activities that strengthened my faith, but I had never been officially baptized. I thought I had missed my chance since it didn't happen when I was a baby. However, when Calvary planned an adult baptism day this summer I knew this was the opportunity. When talking about it with my family, they also realized how important it was for them to reaffirm the promises of baptism for themselves. My grandma has significantly influenced my faith journey, so being able to have her, my parents, and my sister by my side meant everything to me. I know that God was with us in that moment. For me, being baptized later in life alongside my family was a great example of God's perfect timing. Baptism is an incredible gift and it is just as special when you're a college student, parent, grandparent, infant or anywhere in between.

*Heather Johnson*



On August 19th, Greg, myself, and good friend Sylvia, all participated in Calvary's Adult Baptism at Luther Crest. We are so very thankful that we were able to share this moment with Calvary's open and welcoming congregation. The Holy Spirit was truly present. In the weeks preceding, we felt the Spirit calling us to support Sylvia in her Baptism and to reaffirm our baptisms as well. We had been through a year of ups and downs, but blessings prevailed. Sylvia had been through a cancer diagnosis and recovery. We had all felt "God With Us" throughout our year. The Baptism seemed the perfect opportunity to honor Him in a way we could draw close and thank Him for His presence. Being baptized in the water of beautiful Lake Carlos is an experience we will never forget! We truly felt God's presence with all involved on that day.

*Greg & MerriLee Henderson and Sylvia Mills*



**CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP / MONDAY, DECEMBER 24**

- 11:00am** Christmas Family Worship
- 1pm, 3pm, 5pm** Christmas Worship
- 7pm** Christmas Traditional Worship

**JOIN US FOR WORSHIP**

- Saturday:** 6pm Relaxed Worship
- Sunday:** 8:30am Traditional Worship  
10:45am Modern Worship
- Wednesday:** 6:15pm Modern Worship

JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT CALVARY!



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