



Calvin Presbyterian Church  
Lovingly nurturing every journey with Christ in prayer, praise, and action

# CALVIN NOTES AND NEWS



December  
2020

Friends,

Occasionally God inspires us to write and preach messages that hit the mark to the point that pretty much everything else becomes nonsense. The first Sunday of Advent's *"Why Waiting"* was for me, one of those messages.

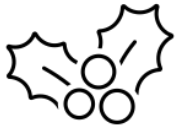
This Calvin Notes was supposed to encourage you and yours to: dig deeper by getting involved in small groups and or Advent devotions with your family; dig deeper by pledging to our stewardship campaign; dig deeper by connecting during this time of disconnection.... Tell me if you don't agree that if we reach out and accept what's right in front of our noses, all of these and all of the other things in life work out?

We pray that with God's help you and yours have the merriest Christmas that will transform future holidays for generations!

Godspeed!

  
(noun) /vī-'ta-lə-tē/  
essentials of abundant life

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## Why Waiting?

Mark 13:24-37

Sunday, November 29, 2020



Little Benjamin sat down to write a letter to God asking for a little baby sister. He started the letter out: Dear God, I've been a very good boy.... He stopped, thinking, *"No, God won't believe that."* He wadded up the paper, threw it away, and started again: Dear God, most of the time I've been a good boy...He stopped in the middle of the line, again thinking, *"God won't be moved by this,"* so into the trash can went the wad of paper. Benjamin went into the bathroom, grabbed a big terrycloth towel off the bar, brought it into the living room and laid it on the couch. Then he went to the fireplace mantle, reached up and brought down a statue of the Madonna, the mother of Jesus, that he had eyed many times. Benjamin placed the statue in the middle of the towel, gently folded over the edges, and placed a rubber band around the whole thing. He brought it to the table, took another piece of paper, and began writing his third letter to God: Dear God, if you ever want to see your mother again....

Benjamin's tale hits home on many levels. **1)** We all, like Benjamin want God to act. We want God to act NOW, more than ever, to end this Pandemic because we've had ZERO breaks. **2)** We all, like Benjamin are willing to make deals, concessions, sacrifices to get what we want. **3)** Knowing this, God calls us to develop passionate perseverance. These three things, I believe, are as imperative to us here in these days and in this age as it has ever been. We scream desperately for God to act when our children are in terrible situations or accidents, when our spouses suffer illness and disease, when the world's enormous problems like out-of-control viruses plague us. We're knocked to our knees and we all ask, *"Why doesn't God just come down and straighten the whole mess out? Then there would be no more starvation or war or oppression or sickness and death. Why don't you come down?"*

There is a play written in 1945 by a German pastor named Guenter Rutenborn set at a time when Germany was still reeling from the tragic impact of World War II. Many people in Germany were agonizing with the question of who was responsible for the horrific agony that the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War had brought upon the world. Characters in the play voiced the opinions of those who were looking for answers. Was Hitler alone responsible? How about the munitions manufacturers who financed him? Did an apathetic German population share the blame? But then a man comes up out of the crowd and says, *"Do you want to know who is really to blame for all the suffering we've been through? I'll tell you. God is to blame. He is the one that created this world. He is the one who has let it be what it is."* Soon everyone on stage is echoing the same indictment: *"God is to blame. God is to blame."*

And so, God is put on trial for the crime of creating the world . . . and is found guilty. The judge sentences God to what he considers to be the worst of all sentences. He sentences God to live on this earth as a human being. Three archangels are given the task of carrying out the sentence. The first archangel walks to the end of the stage and says, *"I'm going to see to it when God serves His sentence that He knows what it's like to be obscure and to be poor. He will be borne on the backside of nowhere with a peasant girl for His mother. There will be a suspicion of shame about his birth, and He will have to live as a Jew in a Jew-hating world."* The second archangel adds to that harsh penalty: *"I'm going to see to it when God serves his sentence that He knows what it's like to fail and to suffer disappointment. No one will ever understand what He is trying to do."* The third archangel said, *"I'm going to see to it when God serves His sentence that He knows what it's like to suffer. I'm going to see to it that He has all kinds of physical pain. At the*

Continued on page 3...

*end of His life, He's going to be absolutely executed in as painful a way as possible."* And suddenly the three archangels disappear, and the houselights go down.

I invite you to close your eyes for a few moments just as the audience was left for a few moments in darkness as the reality dawns upon each of them that God has already served God's sentence. God knew what it's like to be obscure and to be poor. God knew what it's like to fail and to suffer disappointment. God knew what it's like to suffer an excruciating death. God experienced it all in the life and death of Jesus Christ (you may now open your eyes).



That, of course, is what Advent is all about. From beyond time and space, down past the galaxies and all the heavenly firmament, in an event that surpasses our grandest attempt to get our little brains around it, God has come down. In a little obscure town outside of Jerusalem, in a lowly stable, God came as a tiny babe born to a humble couple from a backward village called Nazareth. God has come down. That which we pray for, has happened. And that innocent babe wrapped in swaddling clothes provides the answer to all of our and the world's suffering and pain.

Friends, *Why Waiting?* Because like Benjamin, we're still bartering with God, instead of reaching out and accepting the answer to our and the world's suffering and pain that has been right in front of our noses this whole time. To have: passionate perseverance in our unconditional love for our neighbors, passionate perseverance in our nonjudgmental love for each other, and passionate perseverance in our self-sacrificing love for God.

Amen?!

<sup>1</sup> King Duncan, Illustrations for Mark 13. Collected Sermons.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Dr. John Claypool, *"God Became What We Are,"* 30 Good Minutes, Chicago Sunday Evening Club, 1994, [http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/claypool\\_3812.htm](http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/claypool_3812.htm). (Adapted).



# News You Can Use

## Online Coffee Hour

Join us Sundays after worship at 10:30 a.m. for a virtual coffee hour where we will connect with one another and have a worship talkback with the staff.

Join Coffee Hour

Meeting ID: 896 5039 8384

Password: 056457

## Calvin Chapel Canceled

Due to the continuing rise in COVID-19 cases in the county, Calvin's Coronavirus Task Force, with the approval of Session, has recommended the cancelation of Calvin Chapel services. Our prayer is that we can mitigate post-Thanksgiving spread so when we reassess in mid-December we will be able to have Calvin Chapel Christmas Eve services.

## Third Thursday Prayer Vigil

Due to the increase in COVID cases in Butler County Prayer Vigil is returning to online format December 3rd from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

You can access the prayer vigil by going to our website at [calvinchurchzelie.org](http://calvinchurchzelie.org). If you have a request, please send it to [calvinprayerrequest@gmail.com](mailto:calvinprayerrequest@gmail.com).



## Church Custodian Wanted

Calvin Church is seeking a custodian to provide general maintenance on the church once a week. If you are interested, or know anyone else that may be interested, please contact David at 724-452-7560 or [adavidpaul@zoominternet.net](mailto:adavidpaul@zoominternet.net).

## Study Groups

The **Tuesday Morning Devotional Group** meetings from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. They will continue their discussion of the *St. Francis Prayer* by reading and discussing one short chapter a week. Some people are involved in other small groups so they have found that the short chapters are a way of not being overloaded with reading. If you are interested in joining in on the discussion please contact Marie Campbell at [Marie.I.Campbell@icloud.com](mailto:Marie.I.Campbell@icloud.com) and she will send you the Zoom invite number. In December, the group will discuss one chapter each week (Chapters 4-8) as a way of staying connected during this COVID time.

The **Centering Prayer Group** meets at 10:45 on Tuesday mornings after Devotional Group. People who are interested in gathering via Zoom and having an intentional time of Centering Prayer can contact Marie and she will send you the Zoom invitation.

Calvin is making available **three small group studies** for the Advent season. In *"Advent Through the Eyes of Those Who Waited"* author Carol Wehrheim introduces and re-introduces readers to several biblical characters found in the readings for Advent. Discover the meaning of the season with *"O Come, O Come Emmanuel: Reflections on Four Seasonal Hymns."* Written by Mary Louise (Mel) Bringle and Beverly Howard, this four-session adult study pack takes a look at the meaning of four popular Advent and Christmas hymns. Go on a spiritual journey this Advent with this four-session study, *"Spiritual Practices for the Season: Advent"* written by Kathleen Long Bostrom. It introduces participants to several spiritual practices that can help improve their personal faith journeys. Experience how Christmas is observed in each of the four Gospels in the study *"Christmas Accounts in the Gospels"* written by Cynthia M. Campbell.

If you are not involved in a Small Group, please call the office to get engaged. These are also great to do as a family, couple, or individually. Click on the QR code to the right with your phone's camera, or [click here](#) to download the files directly from Dropbox.



## Holiday Closings

There will be no Youth Group meetings over Christmas and New Year's holiday weekends.

The office will be closed from December 24th – January 1st. Office hours will resume on Monday, January 4th.



# News You Can Use

## Bringing Hope For Christmas to Families in Need

Please bring new or gently-used children's or teens' coats for donation now through December 3rd to Roach & Ziegler Interiors, 209 S. Main St., Zelenople.

The coats will be distributed to needy children on Thursday, December 3rd at the Miracle on Main Street, 4:30 – 8:30 p.m. in the Zelenople business district.

Non-perishable food items also may be dropped off at the Miracle Tent to benefit Southwest Butler Food Pant



## Christmas Detour

Join us for a Christmas Detour on December 5th from 6:00 — 8:00 p.m. Calvin Church members decorate their cars in the parking lot and the community will drive thru and look at them.

Want to participate? Sign up [online](#).



Check out the new [special section](#) on our website for children's bulletins, sermons, and other fun stuff for the kids!

## December Bulletins



[December 6th](#)  
[December 13th](#)  
[December 20th](#)  
[December 25th](#)



[December 6th](#)  
[December 13th](#)  
[December 20th](#)  
[December 25th](#)

# News You Can Use

## Christmas Joy Offering

The Christmas Joy Offering reflects that God is with us, through the generous gifts that support church leaders among us, retired, present and future, who have pointed us to God. Even as we support our current and former church leaders through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, God is calling new leaders for our Church and world, through the ministry of Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color – offering students the means for a brighter future and enhanced opportunities to use their talents and skills to serve God, the Church and the world for years to come.



The Christmas Joy Offering is one of four annual special offerings. The church-wide Special Offerings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) play an important role in defining what it means to be a connectional church in the 21st century, bringing together the diversity of the PC (USA) to focus and take faith-based action on shared concerns. The Special Offerings offer opportunities for partnership, learning, and witness and they profoundly affect the life of the church as a collective witness to Jesus Christ's love for the whole church.

### Being Together

God saw the great needs of the world and offered a perfect gift, a gift that brought God and humanity closer together. God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ, offered the power of being with us. According to Matthew's Gospel, one of the names given to Jesus is Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."

During these past months, many of us weren't able to be together in person. But we have always been together in spirit, and in faith. God has been with us. And through our gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering, we are together with those who need our love and support. Because God is with us, we see the potential of students of color who will become our leaders and we seek to come alongside them, to encourage them, to be with them.

50% of your gifts make it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Because God is with us, we see church workers who have critical financial needs and we come alongside them, to assist them – we are with them.

50% of your gifts provide assistance for current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs.

Thank you for your gift to the Christmas Joy Offering – for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

### Please give generously

- Through your congregation on 12/13 and 12/20
- Text JOY to 56512 to learn more or donate
- [pcusa.org/christmasjoy](https://pcusa.org/christmasjoy)



Due to the pandemic we will not be able to make a decision about our Christmas Eve services until later on in the month. We will notify everyone via the announcements so stay tuned!

# Mission Matters

## Christmas Angel Tree in the time of COVID

Last year Calvin Church was able to provide 150 gifts for the children of families served by Glade Run Lutheran Services. This year, the Mission Committee is offering members three different ways of participating.

1. You can still purchase a gift and deliver it yourself to the contactless drop off location (Glade Run Santa House)
2. Or you can shop the wish list located online at Amazon, Target or Walmart and have your gift shipped to Glade Run
3. If you prefer, you can mail a gift card, monetary donation, or use their secure website to donate to the Glade Run Foundation Christmas Angel Program.

These choices are detailed on the [information flyer](#) and [brochure](#). If you choose to participate, please provide Cheryl Martin, coordinator at Glade Run, with your name, address, and Calvin Church identified with the gift. The deadline to donate is the week of December 8th–12th.



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## Food Cupboard

As Covid continues, the food cupboard is more important than ever. In November we helped more than 120 families, 40 more than a few months ago. With cases increasing daily, this number will be rising in the coming months. Donations can be sent to Zion Lutheran Church 557 Perry Highway Harmony Pa. 16037.

The distribution of Christmas wishes has been changed this year. Wishes can be requested through the South West Butler Food Cupboard Facebook page. Click on "Joy to the World" and follow the directions.








# December 2020

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

**Events are subject to change depending on state or federal mandates.**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
		6:00 p.m. Membership* 7:00 p.m. Youth Formation*	7:00 p.m. Building & Grounds*	6:00 p.m. Prayer Vigil (Online)		6:00 p.m. Christmas Detour
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		6:00 p.m. Communications* 7:00 p.m. Personnel & Finance* Beth Moore Group	6:00 p.m. Mission* 7:00 p.m. Spiritual Nurture*			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Christmas Joy Offering		7:00 p.m. Session*				
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Christmas Joy Offering		7:00 p.m. Beth Moore Group		Christmas Eve Services TBA  OFFICE CLOSED		
27	28	29	30	31		
NO CYG	OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED		

\* Meetings happening via Zoom

## Sunday

9:00 a.m. Online Worship Service  
10:30 a.m. Coffee Hour\*  
6:00 p.m. CYG3 grades 4-6  
CYG2 grades 7-8  
7:00 p.m. CYG grades 9-12

## Tuesday

9:30 a.m. Devotional Prayer Group\*  
10:45 a.m. Centering Prayer Group\*

## Thursday

7:00 a.m. Men's Room\*  
7:00 p.m. GIFT Group



# Calvin Presbyterian Church

*Lovingly nurturing every journey with Christ in prayer, praise, and action*

415 E. Grandview Ave.  
Zelienople, PA 16063  
724-452-7560

[www.calvinchurchzelie.org](http://www.calvinchurchzelie.org)

*Address Service Requested*

## Church Staff and Session Members

### Church Staff

Rev. A. David Paul  
Rev. Connie Frierson  
Bruce Smith  
Toni Schlemmer  
DeWayne Segafredo  
Dahn Kilroy  
Karen Frank  
Tom Reiber  
Scott Caputy  
Maggie Danko  
Dr. David English

*Senior Pastor*  
*Parish Associate*  
*Director of Music/Youth Director*  
*Director of Fine Arts*  
*Technical Director/Accompanist*  
*Office Administrator*  
*Treasurer*  
*Worship Visuals*  
*Worship Audio*  
*Worship Musician*  
*Music Advisor (Volunteer)*

### Session Members

Cathy Baker *Clerk of Session*  
Kevin Trobaugh *Building & Grounds Committee*  
*Communications Committee*  
Lisa Buechele *Spiritual Nurture Committee*  
Kelly Stefanacci *Membership Committee*

Eric Stoltenberg  
Steve Fowler  
Marilyn Evans  
Denee Stevenson  
Ashley Gigliotti

*Personnel & Finance Committee*  
*Worship & Arts Committee*  
*Youth Formation & Ed. Committee*  
*Mission Committee*  
*Zelienople Nursery School Committee*

