



IT'S PERSONAL



CQ

CALVARY QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
SUMMER 2019 | JUNE, JULY, AUGUST

Dear friends in faith,

We all have routines. We get up. Make coffee. Brush our teeth. Make the bed. Drive to work, and at work we have still more routines. We have routines that become second nature—we could practically do them with our eyes shut. Routines.

Sometimes, faith can become routine. For many, faith can feel like you're simply going through the motions. Attending church is just checking off another Sunday and simply doing what you think you're supposed to do. And here's the deal: None of us wants a faith like that. No one. But far too often this is the version of faith so many of us settle for.

Way back when, Jesus spoke to the actual realities of peoples' lives. He wasn't abstract. He wasn't flowery. He was direct and wasn't afraid to get personal. He talked about the challenges of "loving your neighbor as yourself." Forgiveness. Fear. Cynicism. Relationships. And, more than anything else, Jesus talked about money. He got personal.

What if? What if you were to discover a faith that actually spoke to your real life? Your real joys and messy challenges? What if you were to find a faith that is more than a bunch of religious words disconnected from your life? A faith that's, well... PERSONAL?

This summer we can't wait to launch a new worship series: "IT'S PERSONAL!" We'll take this big, wild, ancient thing called faith, unpack it, and uncover how "it's personal." Because that's how it's always meant to be. This summer, we're going to take off the church masks we wear and get real with one another. The faith we all wish we had, well, IT'S PERSONAL.

Inside this issue of the CQ you will hear stories of people like you and me who have uncovered a faith that is less abstract, less about routine, less about guilt...and far more personal. I'm honored they were willing to share their "It's Personal" faith story. As you read, I'd invite you to ask yourself: What would my "It's Personal" faith story sound like?

We'll see you in church!



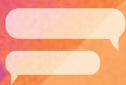
Pastor Hans

SUMMER 2019

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THIS ISSUE

From Pastor Hans
This Summer At Calvary
Council Focus
Now Is The Time
Your Identity
Infectious Love
Something Changed
A Journey Of Faith
Eat, Connect, Worship
Faith Reignited



IT'S PERSONAL

SUMMER WORSHIP SERIES

"IT'S PERSONAL" SUMMER WORSHIP SERIES

Tired of a faith that feels like you're just going through the motions? Attending church is just checking off another Sunday? Simply doing what you think you're supposed to do? What a waste! But far too often this is the version of faith many of us settle for. What if you found a faith that actually spoke to your real life? A faith that was more than a bunch of religious words and Sunday mornings? A faith that's personal. This summer, we're going to take off the masks we wear and get real with one another, because the faith we all wish we had, well—IT'S PERSONAL.

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THIS SUMMER AT CALVARY

Calvary At The Lake | Memorial Day Weekend, May 26

Join us each Sunday for lakeside worship (Memorial Day-Labor Day) on the shores of Lake Carlos at Luther Crest Bible Camp. Brunch is 9:00-10:30am, and Worship is at 10:45am. In case of inclement weather, we move into the dining hall at camp. Invite a friend, and we'll see you at the lake!

Calvary At Luther Crest Bible Camp | June-August

Bible Camp has a huge impact on a young person's faith life! So, we'll celebrate all our young people who will spend the week at Luther Crest Bible Camp. Sign up for day camp or overnight camp today.

Father's Day Weekend | June 16

Invite your father, mentor or grandfather to church with you. We'll honor all those who have been father figures in our lives.

4th Of July Weekend | July 7

You'll likely have company in town, so bring them to Calvary at the Lake! Brunch is 9:00-10:30am, Worship is at 10:45am, and after worship we will give away root beer floats in Calvary at the Lake glasses.

Calvary High School House Boat Trip | July 8-12

Current 9th-12th grade youth will spend an incredible week on Rainy Lake with old and new friends in community, worshiping, laughing, fishing, playing games, hearing messages about life and faith and having tons of fun!

Vacation Bible School | August 5-8

VBS is free! We want all young people to experience the joy and love of God. Sign up at www.calvaryalex.org/kids today!

CAN'T BE
IN CHURCH?

WATCH WORSHIP LIVE ON OUR FACEBOOK FEED!



/calvarylutheranchurchalex



Summer is here and with summer comes all kinds of new life! Buds are forming on trees. Ducks are back on the lake. My husband headed out to the garden. Summer residents return. There is newness in the air. Likewise, at Calvary, the past several years have brought a “newness.” New services. New people. New newsletter. New worshipers. New focus. This newness comes from a renewed commitment to our mission at Calvary: to lead people to a lifelong faith in Jesus Christ, by worshiping, connecting and serving.

I've learned a few new things myself about what it takes to grow a healthy church (or any healthy, growing organization, actually). Here are a few thoughts that guide our council's leadership:

1. **Outwardly-focused churches reach more people.** There is a natural pull in churches and organizations to become more and more inwardly-focused over time, and when they do, they get stuck. Decline is inevitable for inwardly-focused organizations. In our council meetings, staff meetings, and worship, we want to set a tone that churches exist to reach outside our own walls. This is new for some, but this is what the church is meant to be, isn't it?
2. **To be effective in our mission means shifting from ministry programs to a simple, clear “discipleship path.”** It seems counterintuitive, but most churches that are declining have an overwhelming number of programs. Because of this, all kinds of issues emerge in those churches as a result. They tend to staff and structure their team around their programs, rather than their mission. This creates ministry silos and turf wars over communications and resources. Healthy churches shift from complexity to focus. They have a simple, clear path for people to find their place. Rather than an overwhelming menu of programs, outwardly focused churches make it easy for new followers of Jesus to take their next steps.
3. **We exist for ministry, not meetings.** Unhealthy, declining churches have lots of committee meetings, lots of boards, and lots of meetings. Leaders and members spend all their time “talking about ministry” rather than doing ministry. Engaging congregations empower the ministry staff to carry the administrative responsibility and to equip lay people to do ministry. According to Ephesians 4:12, our primary job is to equip God's people to do the work of God. The healthiest churches have one board of members that empowers a highly gifted staff team to spend their time and energy equipping lay people to do ministry.

It's a privilege to serve as our church's president as we navigate this exciting new day at Calvary!

Deb Dittberner, Council President



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Now

IS THE TIME

In May 2019, the congregation voted to support taking the next steps in the proposed building renovation and expansion project. This vote allows the next steps to be taken in further developing the architectural drawings that would be ready for construction documents, as well as beginning the fundraising appeal. The appeal will be formally presented in late summer and early fall.

The congregation will be asked to reconvene in October 2019 to learn the results of the appeal, see final design drawings, and hear about the phasing of the project should the approval take place to continue moving forward toward construction. The building and financial teams will once again conduct forums leading up to this meeting, so watch for those dates later this summer. You can learn more about the building project at www.calvaryalex.org/buildingproject, as well as leave feedback or questions there for the building and financial teams.

This proposed renovation and expansion is a response to God's call to make room for everyone so that all might know a lifelong faith in Jesus Christ. We are excited about the possibilities this project brings to allow us to continue living out the vision God has given our church—to worship, connect, and serve all with the love of Christ!

Miriam Svobodny, Alicia Bertram and the Building Planning Team



© 2018 JLG Architects



Tanya Lueth

***"I tell myself
I am strong,
worthy, beautiful,
important, and
everything that
God knows I am."***

GOD KNOWS YOUR IDENTITY

My faith a few years ago was not as strong as it is today. I went to church because I had to—not because I wanted to. When I was finally living on my own, I chose to sleep instead of choosing to go to church. I dealt with depression, which made me not care much about what life had to offer. I thought I was in a good relationship when really, it was unhealthy. I had so many days where I didn't want to be on this earth anymore.

Well, guess what? Something changed! The first change for me was finding a church I loved—Calvary. The messages and songs helped me realize I wasn't in a good spot and I needed to fix it. I started going to church because I wanted to. Second, I started to pray more. I used to pray crying to God asking him to take the hurt and pain. Now, I pray to thank him for everything he has given me. I thank him for helping me through my dark time and helping me see that I belong on this earth. Third, I started believing in myself more, just like God believes in me. I tell myself I am strong, worthy, beautiful, important, and everything that God knows I am.

Today my faith is strong and I am not afraid of it. I am proud of my faith and proud of the person I am today. I am happy! I walked away from an unhealthy relationship and realized I didn't deserve what I was going through. No one deserves to feel like a mistake, that they aren't good enough, or that they don't belong. Going to church has made a difference in my life and it has made me a stronger Christian with a stronger, more personal faith.

Tanya Lueth

INFECTIOUS LOVE

Having never really attended church growing up, teenage Blaine had quite an opinion about religion. My view of faith had devolved into this awful, corrupted, twisted mess of perceived exclusivity. It was made clear to me by some of my peers that I was destined for hell, regardless of how good a person I tried to be. They claimed I wouldn't go to heaven because I didn't go to church! That I didn't wear the right clothes on Sundays, that I didn't know any passages, and that I wasn't a part of their club. According to them, Jesus didn't care what was really in my heart, rather he only cared if I jumped through the proper hoops.

It wasn't until I met my wife Joanna that I began to realize the truth about faith. Joanna and her family represent everything right with the church, they live out Christ's love day-in and day-out, and this love is infectious. They accepted me for who I was, and for how I grew up. They invited me to church every chance they had, regardless of how many times I politely refused. Joanna gently persisted, and over the years I attended church more and more during college.

I slowly came to the realization that I've been given a gift. This gift didn't come wrapped neatly in a box, there was no fancy ribbon. Though, it is a wonderful gift. The gift was that I'd developed a faith in God through the community at the churches I attended. All of these church-goers were just as amazing as Joanna and her family, and they all had the same infectious love. Once it hit me that this infectious love is in fact the love of Jesus, I decided that I had found my people, my faith, and my Lord.

Blaine Green



Blaine, Joanna & Isaiah Green

***"...it hit me
that this infectious
love is in fact the
love of Jesus..."***

SOMETHING CHANGED FOR ME

Raised in a Lutheran home, our family spent a large amount of time at church. Much of our social life actually revolved around it, but we never talked about our faith outside of church. The Bible stood between two glass bookends on a shelf, and, as far as I know, was only moved for dusting. We said a memorized prayer before bed, but that was it. I certainly believed in God and loved the stories of Jesus, but to me faith meant a list of “dos and don’ts” so that one day I would make it to Heaven.

In adulthood, some things began to change. My Bible came off the shelf. I remained involved with church music and committees. There were times when my faith was strong, especially when my daughter and later my grandchildren were born and baptized. But I didn’t have a real personal relationship with God. There were times my faith wavered: during college, when a family member was injured, after my divorce. I remember years ago, when I was plagued with migraines, being told that I must not be praying right. And I had a pastor yell at me (no exaggeration) for suggesting we hold a forum inviting members of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). “Those people” were not welcome at our church. So as my faith in humanity sometimes wavered, that, at times, affected my faith in God.

Eventually I found my way to Calvary. I can’t pinpoint a day or experience when my faith became strong and personal. There were no blinding lights or deep voices rumbling like thunder. But I can say that over the past six years, something has changed for me. I love that I am welcome here, whether I’m rich or poor, gay or straight, divorced or married, educated or not. I hear sermons that I swear are written just for me. I hear music that uplifts me. In fact, I often wake at night with it still in my head. Do I still get caught up in all the busy-ness of life and forget what’s important? Of course. But now I take more time to reflect and pray. As time has passed, I have learned that life is unpredictable, but that God is always with me. The joy I feel in God has far outweighed any difficulties, and I believe the best is yet to come!

Bonnie Schnell



Bonnie and her grandchildren, Caroline and Ethan, at Calvary’s VBS.

A JOURNEY OF FAITH

Dorie (Shelstad) Matejka caught glimpses of what it meant to live a life of faith at an early age. She has vivid memories of Hannah Erickson, the woman in charge of her home church's Sunday School, bound by crutches yet full of joy as she worked with children and taught the stories of Jesus. Later in life, she distinctly remembers understanding what grace meant as one of her pastors preached passionately about it. And in 1983, she felt the power of long-standing faith as she and her siblings read a letter that her mother had written to all of them just before she died.

Although her own journey through life and faith has never been perfect, Dorie is not one to complain. In fact, she will happily recount stories of raising 3 children with Glenn, her high school sweetheart. As they moved throughout Minnesota—Dorie as a teacher, and Glenn as an administrator (named as Minnesota's first Superintendent of the Year)—they were always quick to find a church home. Whether in Moorhead, Wheaton, Hermann, Circle Pines, Hutchinson, or Alexandria, this was of utmost importance to them.

When they moved to Grand Arbor last year, Dorie and Glenn's commitment to living a life of faith did not change, but they realized that faith life might look a little different. Even though it's more difficult for the two of them to come to Calvary, Calvary can come to them! On a Sunday morning, you might find them listening to the radio broadcast or even tuning in to Facebook Live. As they look toward celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary this summer, Dorie and Glenn exemplify a faith that is both adaptable and personal.

Dorie Matejka



Siblings Arlene Knutson, Eldie Shelstad and Dorie Matejka



Dorie and Glenn Matejka

EAT, CONNECT, WORSHIP

Family Dinner started out as a way to kill some time between school and work and Calvary's Wednesday night church and confirmation. Living 30 minutes out of town made it useless to go home and return for church. For those who know me and my disdain for shopping, wandering around Target was not the answer either. Thankfully, Carie Stotesbery approached me a few years ago and asked if Hunter, Logan and I would like to meet for dinner before service with her, and her two children, Aaron and Alycia. She too lived 30 minutes out of town and the Target runs had become old.

One of the kids coined the phrase "Family Dinner" for our weekly event and it stuck. Each week we would meet at a designated restaurant and catch up on everyone's lives. Sometimes we could all make it, and sometimes school activities, events, or life would interfere, but the tradition continued. Our little group, that started out as casual acquaintances, quickly grew into something more meaningful. Family Dinner became a place for all of us to relax and talk about the ups and downs of our daily lives. By accident, we had become our own little faith group, each helping navigate and offering support when life threw curveballs.

For me, our Family Dinner became more than just a way to pass time before church. It was a way to make deeper connections with those who share similar triumphs and struggles. Next year, our Family Dinner will change some. Hunter and Alycia will be off to college and greater things, and Logan and Aaron have now been confirmed. Hopefully, the stars will align and we will get to experience more of our Family Dinners. If not, I know we've all learned through our experience, that casual connections can be more meaningful when you just take the time.

Lois Croonquist



Lois Croonquist with kids Hunter and Logan | Carie Stotesbery with kids Alycia and Aaron

FAITH REIGNITED

For a long time, my faith was just going through the motions, making sure to go to church as often as I could, being a good person, and praying when I felt the situation required. Like most people I know, my lapse in practicing my faith began in college. Moving away from home and finding a new church was something that wasn't a priority, after all I'd make it home for the big holidays! Even working as an athletic trainer at Concordia College in Moorhead, MN and St. Stephen's Episcopal School (Prep) in Bradenton, FL, I just went through the motions, even though I was literally surrounded by buildings and people rooted in strong faith.

What really has made my faith grow deeper has been my wife and children. After getting married in 2008, as a new husband, I started to explore the scripture to see how I could grow as a husband and as a man. As a father, I want to provide my family with everything possible to succeed in this life and the next. Watching my children grow in their faith, start to enjoy worship, music, and church activities makes my heart content and has also helped me to explore my own faith to help them answer some of the questions they come up with.

When we first moved to Alexandria in the summer of 2014, our journey to Calvary required three things: an ELCA-affiliated church, an active and engaging church, and a congregation that had families with kids that our family could grow in faith with, hopefully forming a lifelong bond in faith, friendship and fellowship. My faith has been reignited and grown as I have become more active at Calvary and made connections with others, both in church and in the community. Thank you and God bless!

John Flatt



John & Shan Flatt with children Hadley, Caleb and Logan



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JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

- Saturday:** 6pm Relaxed Worship
Sunday: 8:30am Traditional Worship
9:00am Brunch at the Lake
10:45am Calvary at the Lake

JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT CALVARY!



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