

(Not So) Silent Night



CQ

CALVARY QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

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Merry Christmas!

When we imagine the first Christmas night, we always imagine it to have been a peaceful and quiet night, don't we? We sing "Silent night, holy night. All is calm, all is bright." We picture the star shining over Bethlehem. The stable with fresh hay. Mary and Joseph, cool, calm and collected, as if everything was in its place. Everything as it should be. Everything just "so."

The truth is: Our imaginations have gotten the best of us. That first Christmas was anything but peaceful and silent. Think about it: Mary was young, unwed and pregnant. Joseph wasn't the father and contemplated walking away from Mary. They traveled 80 miles on foot to Bethlehem and when they arrived, Mary's water broke and there wasn't a single hotel room available. She gave birth in a maintenance shed behind a motel. Folks, this story was anything but peaceful, calm. or silent!

Have you ever wondered why God chose to enter the world in such a messy, chaotic, "not so silent" way?

Here's what I think: God knows our real lives. Not the ones we portray on Facebook or Instagram. God knows our real lives, and if we are honest, they are far from silent. The unexpected always seems to happen. Parenting gets the best of us. Health concerns drag us down. Our past has a hold on us. Relationships blow up. The news and politics raise our blood pressure. Fear creeps in. Let's be honest: Our lives are anything but silent.

Friends, the truth of that first Christmas is that God wanted to send a clear message: **God came into this world so that people like you and me—whose lives are filled with the unexpected—would hear the words of the angels: Do not be afraid!**

On the following pages, you will hear the "not so silent" stories of people who call Calvary their church home. I'm so grateful for their willingness to share. I hope in their stories you would hear *your* story. And, as we prepare for Christmas, you would know that the story of Christmas is all about a God who came into this world for people like you and me—people whose lives feel chaotic, nutty and are filled with fear and uncertainty. People whose lives often feel "not so" silent.

I can't wait to celebrate Christmas with you!



Pastor Hans

P.S. Who in your life needs to hear this message? Make plans now to invite them to Christmas at Calvary!

Celebrate The Season with Calvary!

WINTER 2019

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CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERIES

November 30-December 25

Most of us imagine the first Christmas night to be an idyllic "silent night." But, the truth is, it was nothing of the sort! Mary was young and scared. She and Joseph traveled 80 miles on foot to Bethlehem only to give birth in a barn. And the first to hear of the birth were crusty, old shepherds who were terrified! God wanted to make it clear that God came into this world for people like you and me who's lives are also "not so silent!"

GIVING TREE: Beginning November 30

Help give local families in need some extra cheer this Christmas, by purchasing gifts listed on the giving tree ornaments.

KIDS AND CAROLS: December 1, 2:00pm-4:00pm, at Gathered Oaks

Families, join us for an afternoon of Christmas activities, crafts, games, carols and an impromptu Christmas pageant. All are welcome! Invite a friend.

CAROLS AND COCKTAILS: December 6, 7:00pm-9:00pm, at Gathered Oaks

Is there any better way to get into the Christmas spirit than singing your favorite Christmas carols? Join us for a "Carols & Cocktails" at Gathered Oaks. Open to the public so bring friends and family! Cash/Card bar will be hosted by Gathered Oaks with music provided by the Calvary Worship Band!

WOMEN'S ADVENT BRUNCH: December 6, 9:30am

Celebrate the season with the women of Calvary's annual brunch and program.

LESSONS AND CAROLS: December 15, 8:30am

Join in a traditional telling of the Christmas story through readings and music led by Calvary's traditional service musicians.

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP "UNPLUGGED": Sunday, December 22 at 9:00am

The weekend prior to Christmas, you are invited to worship from home. Yes, you read that correctly. Join us for a special service in the comfort of your home via Facebook or www.calvaryalex.org. Sit back, relax, and enjoy Calvary Unplugged. *No regularly scheduled worship this weekend.*

CELEBRATE
CHRISTMAS
AT CALVARY

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 18: 6:15pm Christmas Preview Worship
MONDAY, DEC. 23: 4pm, 6pm Christmas Eve (Eve) Worship
TUESDAY, DEC. 24: 11am Traditional Christmas Worship
1pm, 3pm, 5pm Christmas Eve Worship

* candlelight & communion at all services

* Kids JAM programming at 11am, 3pm & 5pm on December 24 for 2-5 year olds, so you can enjoy your service while they enjoy theirs!

CAN'T BE
IN CHURCH?

WATCH WORSHIP LIVE ON OUR FACEBOOK FEED!



/calvarylutheranchurchalex

Council Update

Wow! What an incredible Fall we've had, Calvary!

- Because of your generosity, the "Now is the Time" appeal raised almost \$4 million!
- With an overwhelming majority, our church family voted to move forward with a \$6 million expansion and renovation project!
- Construction has begun!



With all the excitement, one thought has occurred to me: During construction, I think we all need to be reminded that **our building is simply a tool to live out our mission: which is to lead all people to a lifelong faith in Jesus Christ.** A nice building is not the "goal." We exist to lead people to faith in Christ. As Angie Larson pointed out in a recent message, the largest church in Alexandria isn't any church in Alexandria. It's the "unchurched." It's our friends and family and neighbors who don't attend church and haven't experienced a church where they hear a message of God's unconditional love for them.

So, amid this exciting building project, how do we all continue to live out our mission? Here are some thoughts:

- 1. Invite someone to church.** Christmas is a great time to do this because, whether you are a church goer or not, you celebrate Christmas. Invite someone to celebrate with us at Calvary. They will appreciate the invitation. Statistics show that 82% of people would come to church if a trusted friend invited them. Yet in a typical year, only 2% of Christians invite a friend to church. Be bold, invite someone! We have postcards and online tools to help you with this.
- 2. Start a Connect Group.** We all have people in our lives who need a group of loving, caring people who are willing to get real about faith and life. We all need this. Start a connect group and invite those friends and neighbors who are not connected to a church or are marginally connected. Give them an experience of faith and community that's authentic. Show them that faith is so much more than Sunday mornings. Call the church office and the staff will give you all the tools you need.
- 3. Sign up to serve as a worship greeter.** This may sound silly, but you may not know that every week in worship we have dozens of visitors who walk through our doors. People who have never attended Calvary before. People who are new to the community or new to faith. One easy way to extend a hand of hospitality is to serve as a greeter on Sunday mornings. Help us welcome someone new as you were once welcomed into the church. Call the church office to sign up.

I'm so grateful for our church family and the mission we share. I can tell we've been living out our mission because year-to-date our weekly attendance is up by 50+ people per week. Can you believe that? It is such a privilege to serve as our church's president.

Christmas peace and joy!

Deb Dittberner, Council President



Building Renovation and Expansion Update

Calvary said a resounding “Yes, now is the time!” in October to start the renovation and expansion of our building. This project is a response to God’s call to create more space and the right kind of space so that all might know a lifelong faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot wait to see all that comes in the coming months as we continue living out the vision God has given our church—to worship, connect, and serve all with the love of Christ!

You’ve probably noticed some changes outside to our south lawn. Excavation continues to prepare the ground for the new worship/multi-purpose space and connecting hub for fellowship, as well as additional parking lots. This winter will bring renovations inside to the second floor as we transform small classrooms into larger multi-purpose rooms and staff offices. In the spring the Svea Lounge will be turned into the new Calvary Preschool wing, and the summer will be spent renovating the remainder of the main level and connecting to the expansion. Construction will be completed by late fall of 2020.

The Construction Team has been formed with a main purpose of communicating to the congregation about the project. You can expect that to get the latest updates from the team in a variety of channels. We’ll share important changes to be aware of, along with exciting updates on progress. We can guarantee that the next year will bring some dirt and dust, and some parts of the church will be closed periodically for renovation. However, we can also guarantee that the end product will be worth the inconveniences as it will allow us to live out our mission to lead more people to a lifelong faith in Jesus Christ. All of this is possible due to your generosity to the project. Thank you for making your gifts to the project anytime through the offering plate or online at www.calvaryalex.org/giving.

Calvary’s Construction Team

Wade Cole (ORB Management), Cory Hodgson, Elaine Larson, Bruce Luehmann, Katie Rentschler, Rich Rentz, and Jay Sieling





Jonas & Rachel, with kids Leo, Gus, Calvin, Winnie and Huck

Parenthood: *Far From Silent*

"Just find your other shoe and get in the van SO WE CAN GO WORSHIP THE LORD!" I growled as I checked the clock for the millionth time, anticipating yet another late entrance to DIG. I looked at my expression in the rearview mirror, which closely resembled Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*. The irony of being crotchety about getting to church in time to participate in the sharing of God's peace is not lost on me. Yet, most Sundays, our arrival at church is akin to us awkwardly skidding across the finish line, only to trip on our own untied shoelaces during our victory lap.

Parenthood has shown me that the image I have in my head of how an event will play out is most certainly not reality. And I'm learning and relearning that this—right here in my chaotic living room—is where God is. I see it during our family time when we share our daily highs and lows. I feel it when our kids remind us to say grace before dinner. I hear it when my oldest son asks if we can pray together for God's help in a sticky situation. I sense it in my bones when my superhero-loving six-year-old refers to Jesus as "The one and only legendary God." And it rings true when my toddler sings the final stanza "thank you God!" to a Bible song my mama sang to me when I was young. It is truly in these moments where the magic lies. It's the beauty in the chaos. And Jesus is right there.

Though an entirely silent night seems like a distant galaxy from where I am, I find comfort in knowing that's not really the goal. The beautiful scenario that set the stage for the entire Christian faith is not a quiet evening where every person was in her assigned place. Mary and Joseph were most certainly not clothed in their Sunday best. I might even dare to guess Mary and Joseph weren't feeling particularly lovey-dovey toward one another as they ventured to Bethlehem. Yet, God chose this setting for the birth of Jesus. Wow.

This Christmas season is a brand new opportunity to find that God is right here with us. We can't always eliminate the discord in our lives. All is not always calm. But what we can do is acknowledge that God is present through it all. God takes us in our noisy, not-so-silent state and makes something special. All we need to do is make room for it. And try to get to church on time (someday).

Rachel Capistrant

Strength In Healing

I was brought up in a strong Christian family. We attended church, Sunday School, and Luther League. God was the center of our family, and I always felt that my faith was strong. When I became an adult, I had some “shaky ground” experiences, of course. But when my daughter, Carrie, was killed in a car accident my life came crumbling down on me. She was only 30—so much life to live. I found myself asking, *Why, God, why? Where were you?*

But as angry as I was, I realize now that God knows how I feel. He gave his only son to die for us. I felt God’s arms around me giving me strength for my children and grandchildren who in turn gave me strength. Over time, God has brought me peace knowing Carrie is happy in heaven with our Lord and Savior.

God continues to give me strength in time of turmoil—during those “not so silent” times of life. Without God, I would have struggled to find the strength and patience to be not only Grandma, but a substitute mother for two of my grandsons in Alexandria. Their dad, having full custody, needed me to live with the boys every two weeks when his job took him out of state. I am so glad I was given the chance to be a part of their lives in this way. We found Calvary, and I could bring them to church and school activities.

The Lord has blessed me with my grandchildren—even though I miss Carrie every day. God gave me a reason to live! And I know God is always with me.

Carol Hildebrandt





We Are Never Alone

Cast all your anxiety on him because He cares for you. - 1 Peter 5:7

Both Bill and I have been blessed with good health, which is such a gift, until several years ago when Bill started having health issues. It was easy to worry about what was wrong and about what the future would be like for us. Fear and concern could take over. Sometimes it still creeps in, but we know fear is a liar. Our faith has given us the peace to be assured that we can handle whatever the future holds. We are never alone. We have a God who is with us every step of the way. We have felt God's presence every day as we have faced the ups and downs. We can turn to Him and cast our anxiety on Him. We are so thankful for His love for us.

Silent Night, Holy Night, All is Calm, All is Bright!!

Dear Heavenly Father

Thank you for all of the blessings you have given us. Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus. Thank you for loving us and for walking every step of the way with us on this journey called life. It gives us a peace each day that passes all understanding. Each day we can wake up and say "This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it." Amen

Bill and Janet Bolm

Impossible Blessing

How could I be pregnant? Impossible. I was told that with my tubes tied there was less than a 1% chance of me having another baby. But God had a different plan for our family. I was not ready to trust that path. While I cried and asked questions, my husband's response to the news was "we got this." But did we? My last C-section had complications. I was scared that something could go wrong. Could my body carry this baby? What if something happened to the baby? Our two kids were under four years old, how could we divide and conquer with another one? How could we afford another baby? I had so many worries.

Then, our sweet baby boy arrived. Our prayers were answered. He was healthy, I was healthy and we were in love with him. Without our family and friends who covered us in prayers, visits and help, I'm not sure how we would have made it through those first few weeks. Looking back, God was there in the simplest moments. God was there during surgery, and when we all got to meet our little miracle for the first time. God was there giving my husband energy to care for our older kids, and when friends and family brought meals so we could enjoy time together.

It still is hard. But we have 3 healthy kids (as much as daycare allows!). We don't know what the future will hold but we can trust that we will have joy, our kids will know how much their parents love them, and they will have a bond that cannot be broken.

It was hard to trust God's plan for our family during this "not so silent" moment in our lives, but I could not imagine how life would be without our sweet baby boy. We are so very thankful that God has chosen us to be his parents and hope he realizes how truly amazing and special he is.

Nicole Momsen



Nicole & Kyle, with kids Ian, Sarah, and Leo



The Importance of Not Staying Silent

I grew up in a Christian household, where my grandpa was a Lutheran pastor. I had supportive family and friends by my side, always. I went through many hard events—the suicide of my aunt, the death of three grandparents, family and friend issues, but I never failed to have a smile on my face.

April 6, 2019 was the beginning of my not so silent night. I attempted suicide and overdosed; then I was admitted into a psychiatric hospital. I hoped this would take away all my pain but, it did the exact opposite. I hit my lowest low. I felt God had left my side. I felt alone, shameless, and not worthy enough. I was in a toxic unhealthy relationship, as my dreams were being let go of. I was fading away from my family and friends, I was missing and failing school, and I was lacking in my faith. As I sat in the hospital, with plenty of time alone with God, I knew it was time to change, and that this is not the way I wanted to live. I had changed my mindset, and I was determined. As horrible of a situation as it was, it was the biggest blessing in disguise. I learned so many lessons. I learned about myself, what I deserve, what I want, and why it's important to stay close to God.

Although I struggle to deal with my emotions more severely than most, it doesn't mean I'm a result of poor upbringing or that I lack personal strength, or character. With proper treatment, I realized my full potential, coped with the stresses of life, worked productively and meaningfully contribute to the world. I just need a little help to see this. Without mental health I cannot be fully healthy.

Now, I am continuing my education at Bethel University, surrounded by a great community where I know God is working through me. I am here to tell you to share your story no matter how deep or scary it may seem. I am here to stop the stigma of mental illness. I am here to help others who feel worthless or abandoned. I am here to tell you—YOU are worth it!

Taylor Peterson

Learning From Our Children

Coming to teach at Calvary Preschool has blessed me in ways I can't measure. From the hugs, laughter, and chaos of natural play, I'm blessed by the ways these little people shine with the light of Jesus. They show love for all things created by God, such as the tiny spiders we catch and examine at our science center. Reaching out with the caring nature of a hug when a classmate is sad. Most of all, the conversations and prayer that are had during our daily devotion time.

Recently, during one of those "not so silent" moments at preschool, I had a student who was struggling to follow the rules. I sat down with the child and we discussed how our actions have consequences. Sometimes those consequences are as simple as feeling bad or our own heart feeling sad. Through our conversation, the child teared up and lamented about his choices. I shared my experiences of when my heart is sad, I turn to God. I asked if we could pray together, to which the child was visibly not sure. When I mentioned I would do the talking if we prayed, the reply was "ok" and we folded our hands in prayer. The prayer consisted of a moment of thanks and guidance to do the right thing. After the prayer ended the child wiped the last tears, we hugged and playing commenced.

In the weeks to follow I saw this child open up and work diligently to be a good friend. I give it all to God! Allowing for that moment to happen solidified my belief that even through trials and tribulation or those "not so silent" moments the Lord carries us through. Jesus said we need to have faith like a child to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I'm the teacher, but I'm pretty sure my students are teaching me some important lessons.

Sarah Olson

Teacher, Calvary Lutheran Preschool





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CHRISTMAS

AT CALVARY

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 18: 6:15pm Christmas Preview Worship

MONDAY, DEC. 23: 4pm, 6pm Christmas Eve (Eve) Worship

TUESDAY, DEC. 24: 11am Traditional Christmas Worship
1pm, 3pm, 5pm Christmas Eve 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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