

December 2024

Mount Calvary Lutheran Church & Preschool

2055 S. Franklin St. Rd
Decatur, IL 62521

217-428-0641

Pastor Brett Hinrichs
pastor@mtcalvarydecatur.org



Office Hours

Monday – Thursday
8am – 12noon

Office Closed:

December 24th – 26th

December 31st – 1st

Modified hours 12/27/24-1/2/25

Call before coming to church

Regular hours resume Monday, January 6th

Join Us Sundays

Worship Service
at 9am

Christian Ed. Hour
at 10:30am

Wednesdays in

Advent 6:30 PM

(Full Schedule on pg. 3)

A Message from Pastor Hinrichs

“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...”

-John 1:9-12

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

The other evening when I began writing this letter, I found myself staring out my office window, temporarily mesmerized by the cars driving by and the streaks of light that would occasionally cut through the darkness outside. Although it was only 5:30 in the evening, I couldn't believe how deep the night seemed. In these dreary winter months, darkness is everywhere. For many of us, we wake up in the dark, go to work in the dark, and then come home in the dark. There is no escaping the darkness.

The same is true of darkness in the Bible; it is one of those Biblical themes that comes up again and again in Scripture. From the darkness that was over the surface of the deep before God created the universe to the darkness of sin and distress described in Isaiah 9, these powerful pictures depict what life is like apart from the gracious and powerful love of God. As we read these passages, we too know what it is to live in darkness. We speak of the darkness of death. We talk about the gloom of despair and depression. Even those feelings of isolation, we compare to being surrounded in shadowy darkness.

Even as all of these things ran through my head, as my eyes turned back from the window, my eyes caught a glimpse of the small Christmas Tree that sat on my desk (Yes, I gave in this year and started decorating before Christmas). As I look at those lights and the beautiful Christian symbols that covered it, somehow the darkness didn't seem as heavy. The simple presence of the light drove back the darkness.

This imagery is what John is capturing for us when he speaks of Jesus, saying, “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.” In Jesus, we have light and life. For wherever Jesus is, the darkness of sin and death give way. Even the darkness that fell on the whole land, as Jesus suffered and died of the Cross, would not remain. On Easter morning, He would rise again in victorious light.

And so this Advent, as we speak of the a bright star that broke the darkness over Bethlehem, as we consider the glory of the Lord that shone around the shepherds, and even as we sing in worship of the Word that is a lamp to our feet and light to our paths, may the brightness of Christ, shine upon you and drive away the darkness in your life.

In Jesus,

Pastor Brett Hinrichs



Grow Together

Worship Life at Mt. Calvary Sunday Opportunities

Worship Service at 9:00_{AM}

— A “relaxed” traditional service with hymns and standard orders of worship —

Christian Education Hour at 10:30_{AM}

— Adult Bible Study, Confirmation Class, Additional Classes —

Midweek Opportunities (SEASONAL)

Wednesday Advent Worship at 6:30_{PM}

— A brief quiet, contemplative service with hymns and standard orders of worship —

(SEE NEXT PAGE FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS THEMES & SCHEDULES)

Connect at Home

Facebook Live Worship: Sunday at 9:00_{AM}

Radio Worship: Sunday at 9:00_{AM} on 100.9FM WZUS

Weekday Bible Studies

Men’s Bible Study: Monday Evenings 6:30_{PM}

Location: Conference Room at Mt. Calvary (across from office)

The first Monday of each month join the men at Primrose Living Center.

Women’s Bible Study: Tuesday Mornings at 9:00_{AM}

Location: Conference Room at Mt. Calvary (across from office)

The 3rd Tuesday of each month join the ladies at Mt. Zion Rehab Center or Primrose Living Center. See the Calendar for details.

Thursday Bible Study: 1st & 3rd Thursday evenings at 6:00_{PM}

Location: Conference Room at Mt. Calvary (across from office)

All Bible Studies have call-in options. Please contact the group leader for more info





RED LETTER—ADVENT EDITION

25 DAYS OF UNBOXING HOPE, PEACE, JOY AND LOVE

Due to the HUGE popularization of Advent calendars, most people are familiar with the word Advent. But if our knowledge is limited to chocolate countdown calendars, we are missing the greater purpose. This December we will be unboxing the biblical gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love as we follow along on a daily devotional journey, counting down to Christmas!

While you can join on any level you wish, to get the most from this Advent journey we recommend:

- Picking up a discounted copy of the Red Letter Advent Book in the church entry or you can order a copy online here [full price online]
- Start reading the daily readings/challenges on December 1st
- Participate in the worship services (Sundays & Wednesdays) where we will explore each gift (Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love) in depth!
- Invite a friend or family member to join in this Christmas Countdown challenge with you! This is probably one of the best parts because gifts, especially God's gifts, are best when they are shared with others!

—Advent & Christmas Schedule—

Sunday, December 1th at 9:00_{AM} — Unboxing Hope

Wednesday, December 4th at 6:30_{PM} — Hope: Handle with Care

Sunday, December 8th at 9:00_{AM} — Unboxing Peace

Wednesday, December 11th at 6:30_{PM} — Peace: Handle with Care

Sunday, December 15th at 9:00_{AM} — Unboxing Joy
(Children's Led Worship & Program)

Wednesday, December 18th at 6:30_{PM} — Joy: Handle with Care

Sunday, December 22nd at 9:00_{AM} — Unboxing Love

Tuesday, December 24th (CHRISTMAS EVE)

7:00_{PM} Christmas Eve Candlelight & Carols Service

Sunday, December 29th at 9:00_{AM} — Sharing the Gift





Serve Together

Stitches of Love

We will be delivering these items very soon to our community. We have been blessed with not only our own members making these handcrafted items, but also friends of our congregation and ladies from the local correctional center.

Hats: 886

Dish Cloths: 71

Scarves: 64

Baby Hats: 38

Small Blankets: 28

Shawl: 1



Our students are so excited for Christmas! Their Halloween costumes were hardly put away before their attention was turned to Christmas, and so our Bible stories all this month will be the Christmas Story!

Units of Study this month will be everything Christmas! Devotions will focus on the Christmas Story.

We will learn that Jesus is the true meaning of why we celebrate Christmas. We hope to have an Elf from New Life Pregnancy Center visit our classroom to pick up our baby gift donations. We will make an Advent Chain to countdown to Christmas Day. We will make an angel and talk about what an angel is. We will even eat Reindeer Sandwiches!

There will be a Preschool fundraiser as part of the Cookies and Cocoa with Santa. Come and get pictures with Santa!

Our Christmas Program will be Tuesday, December 16th at 11:30 AM. We would love for members of the congregation to attend to support our students and welcome their parents!

Heavenly Holidays Bazaar

7am-2pm Saturday, December 7

Mount Calvary Lutheran

2055 S. Franklin Street Rd.

Prepare now for the holidays by marking your calendars for our holiday bazaar. Homemade treats and cookies sold by the pound! Handcrafted items, for Christmas and everyday!

Our Ladies Guild has been busy planning to provide you:

☆ Cookie Walk ☆ Bake Sale ☆ Christmas Room ☆ Cookbooks ☆ Crafters ☆

Sponsored by Mt. Calvary Lutheran Ladies Guild



Venezuelan News -Volume 3-12

Sonia has had her operation. And it has gone very well. I know many of you have been praying about that. And there was no cancer. She's had some pain but it's much better now.

I had hoped to be sending a package down to VE before Christmas. It's not going to happen this year. I will try to get that in the first couple of months of 2025. I have some reconditioned computers and a phone to send down. Plus, we'll have all the other things we collect. I'm not asking for anything right now. I'll let you know when I'm closer to being ready.

We have a couple of regular givers but there is still more that we need. I want to get their medicines every month and help the children with school. And I'm sure we'll be adding more to feed and supply water to. It has been very hard because of the hurricane tragedies and I think there has been a general uncertainty prior to our national elections. But the need is still there. One fallout over the VE elections is growing inflation. Mama's and Yili's medicines have gone up by \$10 in one month. There seems to be less variety in the food available as well. It looks like they are headed for hyperinflation again (inflation >1000%).

It's so hard to believe that a country that was so well off has fallen so far. The people cry out for change and there is no answer. There are so few jobs and the ones that are available are menial and pay only a few dollars a month. I ask you to continue to pray for our friends. If you like to put names in your prayers here you go: mama, Yinette, Luis, Yili, Santi, Miranda, Sonia, Camellia and mama's three friends Nancy, Mirian & Ninfa. Mama's three friends have almost nothing to support themselves with. One of the women has had a lot of problems with her grown son - to the point of abuse (he was jailed for a while). Yinette feels if they have something to eat these women should as well. Pray for them.

Just a reminder, if you are an online church giver, you can now designate funds to be given to The Least of These and the church treasurer and financial secretary will make sure your donations get there. You can also give at church, just designate that it is for The Least of These. But please, always put Mt. Calvary first.

Pray for our friends in Venezuela. If you are interested in this mission or want to help you can talk to me anytime. You can email me personally.

Contact Info:

If you are interested in this mission or want to help, you reach out to me, Dan Reynolds, at any time via email at on30ng@gmail.com AND/OR join our Facebook Group, "The Least of These" (to join, contact me or my daughter Katie Gambrill on Facebook so we can add you to the group)

Support Info:

Our PayPal address is: theleastofthese3@yahoo.com
Our Venmo is: Kaitlyn-Gambrill

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, not anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39





COUNCIL

CORNER

Save The Date: December Voters Meeting

Please mark your calendars and make plans now to attend for our December Voters Meeting on Sunday, December 8th after worship!

In addition to hearing the semi-annual reports from your council members, we will be having important discussions about our church finances, our 2025 budget, and discussing some ministry priorities for 2025. Since we are all part of the Body of Christ, we want to hear your voice as we pray and plan for this next year of ministry. If you have questions or comments in advance of the meeting, we encourage you to talk to Tom Little (President) or Alan Little (Treasurer).

Long-Term Planning Team

In November, our Long-Term planning team had its first meeting and has begun to explore various opportunities for strengthening our congregation and its ministry going into the future. While this team will take a break in December, we will be excited to share some updates in the coming year.

2024 Budget Update (January 1—November 24)

<i>Budgeted General Funds</i>	<i>Received YTD</i>	<i>Projected End of Year</i>
Weekly Offerings	238,970.86	260,000.00
Pre-School Tuition	24,673.59	30,000.00
Thrivent Funds	1,977.00	1,450.00
Special Services Offerings	3,027.00	6000.00
Other Offerings	900.00	500.00
Building Fund Offerings	28,801.40	43,000.00
Mortgage Interest Refund	3,976.61	5,000.00
Other Income	5,665.65	2,700.00
	307,992.11	348,650.00

<i>Designated General Funds</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Gift-In-Kind	-0-
Memorial	6,064.00
MRO	141,873.35
Sunday School	775.55
Venezuela	3,240.00
Pre-School Scholarship	1,110.00
<i>Separate Account</i>	
Elders' Fund	2,682.00

Surplus or (Deficit)
(-40,657.89)



Share Together

Advent Rite of Remembrance

The season of Advent is a unique and special time in the life of the Church. We look backwards in order to rejoice in Christ's birth (First Advent), but we also look forward to find strength and courage as we wait for Christ's Return (Second Advent). This "backward-forward" dynamic speaks to another reality we experience at this time of year as well: the reality of grief. We feel the weight of the empty place at the table. We miss the sound of their voice in the midst of the laughter. And yet while we look back on those things, we look forward to that blessed reunion that still lies ahead in Christ.

This year as part of our worship service on Sunday, December 1st, we'll have a brief "Rite of Remembrance" to "look back" and acknowledge the loved ones who are already with Christ, even as we "look forward" to seeing them again at Jesus' Return. As part of that celebration, we invite you to bring an ornament (with your name attached) to place on a special Christmas tree we will have set up for this remembrance. The tree will remain decorated throughout the Advent season, to help us remember that Christ is holding these loved ones even as He is holding us. At the end of the season, we invite you to take the ornament back home until next year.

From the wood of the manger to the tree of Calvary, Christ holds all together in His death and resurrection. In this, we look backward and forward, knowing there is hope even in our grief.

*"Do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.
For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that
God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him."*

Cookies and Cocoa with Santa!

Sunday, December 1st 2-4pm

We will have Santa here to kick-off the Christmas cheer!

Every child will have the opportunity to get their photo with Santa for free.

Enjoy cookies, cocoa and The Polar Express while you wait your turn.

All are welcome to come for the fun—and treats too!

If you would like to donate cookies, cocoa mix or just toward the event it would be appreciated. See Heather Boleyn for any questions: 217-561-3084



Ladies Christmas Tea



ALL Mt. Calvary Ladies are invited to join our Christmas Tea on Tuesday, December 10 at 1:00pm. A \$10 offering is suggested to help cover the lunch that will be provided. Please sign up to attend on the bulletin board.

Bring a \$5 gift for our gift exchange.

If you have any questions, reach out to Beth Little at 217-855-2802 or bethelittle2333@gmail.com

From the Ladies Guild:

Plan to attend the Yearly Ladies Guild Planning Meeting on January 18th at 8:30 AM.

We will focus on planning events for 2025.

LWML Mite Sundays are always the FIRST Sunday of each month! Please remember to turn in your mites.

YOUR MITES DO COUNT!



MTC KIDS CORNER

Events and Activities

- **Youth-Led Worship Service**
 - ◇ Kids of all ages will plan and lead our Sunday worship on December 15th. A rehearsal for the service will be held on Dec. 14th from 10am-12pm.

Children's Church

- **Youth-Led Service: Songs & Skit**
 - ◇ Our kids are learning songs for the youth led service during children's church. Please help your kids practice at home!

General Reminders

- **At Home Advent Devotional Kits**

Knowing that parents are the #1 spiritual influencers in a child's life, we encourage you to consider adopting a new habit this Christmas season: Advent family devotions. If this is something you have not done before, we encourage you to pick up the Red Letter Advent Family Additions—it is photocopied on the table. These are shortened, age appropriate devotions with a question and discussion that is meant for your family to engage in around the dinner table. These are free for you.

Confirmation Connections

- **Youth-Led Worship Planning**
 - ◇ Parents, please make sure your kids are at confirmation class this month so they can help plan our youth-led service.
- **Sermon Reports**
 - ◇ December is a great time to work on sermon reports since there isn't new class material.
- **Church Service Requirements**
 - ◇ Don't forget to start earning Church service hours! There are lots of places to serve in our congregational worship life (A/V techs, greeters, readers, ushers, etc.).

SERVING IN GOD'S HOUSE IN DECEMBER

ELDERS

12/1	John Graff
12/4	Russ Jozwiak
12/8	Merle Collingwood
12/11	Dan Reynolds
12/15	Sherman Kramer
12/18	John Graff
12/22	Russ Jozwiak
12/24	Merle Collingwood
12/29	Dan Reynolds

READERS

12/1	Youth Reader
12/8	Tom Little
12/15	Russ Jozwiak
12/22	Frank Dunmire
12/29	Marsha Warnick

A/V TECHNICIANS

12/1	Jim Stevens/Joel Fletcher
12/4	Jim Stevens/Joel Fletcher
12/8	Jim Stevens/Joel Fletcher
12/11	Jim Stevens/Joel Fletcher
12/15	Jim Stevens/Joel Fletcher
12/18	Jim Stevens/Joel Fletcher
12/22	Jim Stevens/Joel Fletcher
12/24	Jim Stevens/Joel Fletcher
12/29	Jim Stevens/Joel Fletcher

OTHER SERVANTS

ALTAR FLOWERS	Sandy Haseley & Marsha Warnick
BANNERS	Sharon & Rod Butler
BUILDING & GROUNDS	Roger Harting
CHANCEL CANDLES	Dale & Barb Jones Debbie Koester
COFFEE/TEA	?
NURSERY	Sharon Goers
PLANTS	Debbie Goveia
RECYCLING	Lyn Stevens
SOUND & VIDEO	Jim & Lyn Stevens Joel & Stacey Fletcher
SUNDAY SCHOOL	Gale Krueger Dan Reynolds
TABULATOR(S)	Marsha Warnick & Janice Weathers
HEAD USHER	Andrew Napier

ORGANISTS

12/1	Steve Ford
12/4	Lisa Peterman
12/8	Steve Ford
12/11	Krista Hinrichs
12/15	Peter Miller
12/18	Steve Ford
12/22	Steve Ford
12/24	Steve Ford
12/29	Lisa Peterman

MEALS ON WHEELS

12/3	Sharon & Rod Butler	12/10	Lyn & Jim Stevens	12/17	Karen & Larry Lange
12/24	Barb & Roger Harting	12/31	Nancy Peck		

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

12/2	Jim Butler
12/3	Nancy Howard Megan C. Johnson Jennifer Peters
12/4	Richard Austin Karlie Rae Jeffers Vickie Mendenhall
12/7	Joy Boleyn Pastor Brett Hinrichs Tayler Howse
12/14	Kelsie Gerhardt
12/16	Lori Wallen
12/17	Alan Reynolds
12/20	Ryan Jozwiak
12/23	Hazel Howse
12/24	Bentley Harms
12/26	Cecilia Barding
12/27	Arielle Boleyn
12/30	Nicholas Atteberry Jean Wangrow

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

12/1	Alan & Allison Dull
12/3	Jim & Carol Sulwer
12/13	Scott & Paula Busboom
12/28	Dale & Barbara Jones
12/29	Steve & Sandy Haseley
12/30	Alan & Bethe Little
12/31	Jim & Beth Butler Bob & Sheila Norman

“Just a Thought”

I have a friend that is Christmas crazy. She begins on Sept 17 which is 100 days till Christmas. In terms of “get ready, set, go” she is getting ready! Last week when we had a warm spell, I got out my Christmas lights and decor’ ... I’m getting “set”. Dec. 1 is “GO time”! Advent begins and we should all GO! Consider this your warning, reminder, and encouragement to attend advent services. That is the best way to get ready for

Christmas--
beth langdon

“Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you.; he will never let the righteous fall.” Psalm 55:22

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

Partner Ministry Updates



UNITY CHRISTIAN LIONS

PREPARING LEADERS FOR LIFE

— A Ministry of the Lutheran School Association —

Christmas Concert

Unity students will present their Christmas Band and Choral Concerts on Tuesday, December 10th at 5:30pm. And 7:00pm. The Elementary kids and choir will perform at 5:30 and the Jr. High and Sr. High bands will perform at 7:00. All are welcome to come and hear how hard the kids have been working and receive some Holiday Spirit for free!

Family Christmas Celebration

Get ready for a Christmas celebration big enough for the whole family! You're invited to Jingle Jam 2024 with SPL Kids! Come join us on Sunday, December 8th at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Decatur for this free event - kicking off at 9:15 AM, you can enjoy lots of family fun - hot cocoa bar, donut decorating, inflatables, family photo opportunity, games, card making, a service project, and more. Then at 10:30 AM, you can be a part of a family-friendly Jingle Jam service in the worship center with live music, engaging Christmas message, and more. You can even bring a new winter hat and gloves to donate! We will be collecting winter hats to give to people in the community who could use one this winter. Everyone is welcome - invite your family, friends, and neighbors and come be part of the family as we celebrate what Christmas is all about.



Coming up at Camp CILCA



Events Happening at Camp CILCA in 2025:

- February 28– March 1 2025—ACT LIKE MEN Woodcutter's Retreat
- March 15, 2025—FREE Pancake Dinner
- March 28-29, 2025—Women's Retreat
- April 5, 2025—Spring Work Day
- April 25-26, 2025—Spring Women's Scrapbooking Retreat
- May 23-26, 2025—CID Campout (no hog roast)

Call 217-487-7497 for more information or email Pastor Theilen at director@cilca.org



**CENTRAL ILLINOIS
DISTRICT**

of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



What's happening at LCMS CID?

Mission Education Toolkits now available at www.cidlcms.org

- Witness HELPS are available to help sharpen skills for witnessing under their outreach webpage
- New Dollar for Missions projects—Restroom water heater for University Lutheran, Champaign
- Illinois Pro-Life March Tuesday, March 25, 2025
- National Youth Gathering—Summer 2025 in New Orleans

