

THE BRAND NEW THING



CQ

CALVARY QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

FALL 2020 | SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER

distance learning
coronavirus
technology
retirement
parenting
fad diet
facemask
politicians
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FROM PASTOR HANS

Hi everybody!

Here's what I know: **We both love and hate the brand new thing.**

We are enamored with the brand new iPhone.

We've just got to have the new F150.

We clammer to the new fashion trend, fad diet or home decor trend.

...and yet the brand new thing causes us tension, doesn't it?

New things force us to do something we don't like to do: change—change our patterns and habits, even our perspectives or opinions. That's the push and pull of the brand new thing. That's why thrift stores are a cluttered mess of the latest greatest thing we just had to have yesterday.

And, hear me: This isn't just about the products that line the shelves of stores. This happens in our lives too. When something new strikes our work lives, marriages, relationships and finances we feel that tension, don't we?

We are about to start a brand new school year and the way we are doing school is brand new. At Calvary, over the past months, we've learned a brand new way of being church online. We also have a brand new building, Calvary, that will feel different once we get back to meeting in person. Friends, since Covid, we've had to learn a brand new way of life!?!#

How do we navigate all that is brand new and have the clarity to know what's lasting and what's just a fad? What gives us life and what keeps us from really living?

Inside the pages of this issue of the Calvary Quarterly you will hear the stories of Calvary friends who experienced "The Brand New Thing"—whatever that was in their lives—and where they saw God at work. I'm so thankful for their stories.

Grateful for you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hans', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hans

THE BRAND NEW TIME FOR CHANGE.

On June 11, more than 300 people gathered safely and peacefully to hear a diverse group of community members speak to the importance of creating a culture of racial equity in Alexandria. Speakers included Calvary member Jay Sieling and Pastor Hans, as well as Mattie Bogart, Niki Botzet, Pastor Kevin Taylor, Josette Ciceron, and Police Chief Scott Kent. The June event was organized to inspire people into positive action following the death of George Floyd, but the organizers knew it couldn't stop there. In August, they launched *Time For Change: Conversations that Matter*, a community group that facilitates conversations focused on racial equity. Their vision is "to have a community in which all people feel cared for, included, respected and supported."

Conversations around racial inequities are hardly brand new. As Time for Change vision team member Tom Jacobson notes, "Despite any progress we *think* we've made, there's a lot of work that needs to be done in addressing racism in our world. It's too easy for people in a town like Alexandria to say 'Why are we even talking about race?' or 'Racism just doesn't happen here.'" Local business leader, Tom Wacholz, who helped with the June event said, "There is a huge risk in *not* talking about race. Shame on me for being oblivious—now is the time to talk about it. We have to get comfortable with what can be uncomfortable. When someone makes a racist comment, I need to stand up and say something." As Jacobson continued, "I don't necessarily have the tools to talk about racism, but that can't be the excuse. It's time to find the tools, have the hard conversations, and find and follow a better path to racial equity."


TIME FOR CHANGE
creating a community of equality

Conversations that Matter was created to help give people the tools they need. In early August, Calvary's staff and church council participated in the pilot 90-minute training event led by Joani Nielson, a member of the vision team. In the training, which is now available for local businesses and organizations, local Black leaders told stories

about the racism they've experienced and expressed tangible, anti-racism steps we can all take. Calvary signed the organization's pledge, committing to continued work in education, consciousness, conversations, and actions toward racial equity in Alexandria.

THE BRAND NEW WAY TO WORSHIP.



My family moved to Alexandria when I was 2 years old, and for as long as I can remember, we have been members of Calvary. From Sunday School and VBS, summers at Luther Crest and Friday morning choir, to my mom co-leading my middle school confirmation group, there are really wonderful memories. In high school, many weekends were spent on a volleyball court in Minneapolis. That schedule challenged our regular routine of Sunday morning in-person worship, but what always stayed constant was grace around the family dinner table and prayers together before bed. During college, if we were home for a weekend, it was Saturday night service and then dinner out as a family. Life after college brought me to Minneapolis for a job opportunity, but even then, Calvary at the Lake would bring me home for summer weekends.

Since Covid hit, I've realized that church has never been so close. I was hooked the first time I got a Facebook notification that Calvary was "Live"! I feel more connected to the church and God than I ever have before. One of my favorite times to worship online with Calvary now is on a walk. There's something about fresh air, birds, sunshine, and movement that makes me feel so close to God. It's a similar feeling I get when I go for a run and experience church on the trails. Anywhere I go, I know worship with Calvary is right at my fingertips.

Covid has shown me that church is anywhere we want it to be. It's given me the opportunity to sing God's praise, spread the good word, and meet the Lord in places beyond the sanctuary and church pews. Our God is always right here and always good. As I reflect on my journey with Calvary, I can thank my parents for paving the path they did. Because today, when I get to choose the path I want to follow, I know so confidently it's a life with Calvary.

Natalie Watkins



WATCH WORSHIP LIVE ON OUR FACEBOOK FEED!

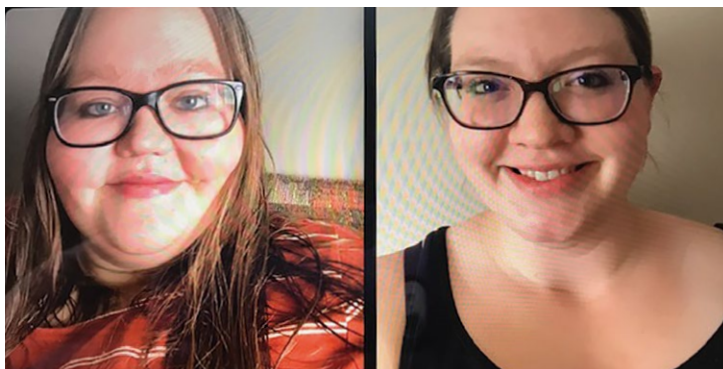


/calvarylutheranchurchalex

THE BRAND NEW WAY TO CONNECT.

Pandemic... Stay at home... Live alone... Not working due to increased risks... How do I manage without being completely isolated from the world? When this began, I was determined to not feel isolated from the world, which in many ways was what I was trying to do. I guess I wanted to be separated, not isolated. I had heard stories of people going days without talking to anyone. I'm an introvert, but I'm not a hermit. This would never do. That wasn't going to happen to me.

I believe God gave me a plan. If I could line up someone to talk to me every night of the week I could look forward to some socialization every day. It worked! My sister agreed to be my Monday person, a friend I would meet on Tuesdays once a month became my Tuesday person. Wednesday was taken by a long time friend and my maid of honor. We Facetime every week. Thursday was taken by the friend I walked with on Thursdays, and Friday, a friend I would meet on Fridays for supper. It all seemed to fall into place. The weekends were filled up by my girls. Perfect!! Someone to talk to every day. This has been an incredible blessing. I used to talk to my sister once a month or so, now it's weekly. Communication with my long time friend had been sporadic, usually by email, now it's talking to her weekly. My relationships with these five people have greatly improved and everyone has been more than happy to help me with my weekly communication.



Relationships can be consistent, the way we proceed with those relationships changes. Letters, email, texts, Facetime, phone calls—these things change over time. Relationships also change. They grow deeper or they fade away, it's up to us. God cares for us and provides for those needs. I look forward to the day when distance isn't the norm. Until then, I know the relationships I have been given are helping me get through this difficult time.

Gwen Peck

THE BRAND NEW WAY TO SERVE.

Having moved from Herman, MN to Alex about 6 years ago, one of our first priorities was to find a new church home. We came from a small congregation where everybody knew everybody, so our goal was to find a friendly church where we could fit in and feel involved. After visiting several other churches, we attended Calvary one Sunday. We noted several former residents of the Herman area that day, among whom were Marvin and Darlene Larson. Marvin was my confirmation pastor way back in 1964. Seeing all these familiar faces and the overall friendliness of everyone that day seemed like a sign from above. We had truly found our Brand New Church home!

Our continued regular attendance led us to participate in a Backpack Attack bag filling process downstairs one Sunday. We enjoyed meeting people in the “controlled chaos” of the event. Fast forward to the summer of 2020, when changes resulting from the pandemic required the Backpack Attack leaders to establish a central backpack attack “filling station” at Lincoln School. After signing up for a 2 hour shift, we arrived at the appointed time to fill bags. During that shift working with the same people, you get to know each other’s names, where they live, what time they attend worship, etc. As we continued filling bags and bringing them up to be boxed, we conversed, told jokes and all the while filling and feeding our need for friendship, human interaction, and acceptance. How ironic that we come together in a brand new environment to help feed others while being fed ourselves! And God smiles.

Dany and Sue Pederson



Backpack Attack is sponsored by United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties to help students struggling from hunger throughout the school year. Through generous support from many of you, we raised \$20,000 to fund this program throughout the summer months. Dany and Sue, along with 20 other Calvary volunteers, deliver weekly bags of Backpack Attack food to 180 homes around the Alexandria area.



THE BRAND NEW

WAY TO ENGAGE KIDS IN MINISTRY.

Over the past 6 months, I think all of us have had to learn a new thing or two. Some of us have had to learn how to do things virtually, learn how to be around our family 24/7, learn how to cope with this crazy virus, learn how to not be “in control” of our everyday lives, the list can go on. For our family, this was not the first time that we have had to learn a new thing in a big way & let go of control and trust God more than we ever had. Our son Kyler, who is 8, has a congenital heart defect. He has had 3 open heart surgeries and many other medical things under his belt. When this crazy virus hit, it meant our whole family, home, locked up, for 10 weeks. Groceries were delivered, work was done from home, school was done from home & daycare was done from home all at the same time.

After the initial shock like everyone else, we decided we needed to get back to some sort of “routine” at home. One of the things I’m most thankful for is the “normalcy” that Calvary has provided for our Sunday routine. We still get up, make our breakfast, get ready & all sit down and watch church. This was our “outing” for the week each week. One of our summer highlights has become VBS since we have attended Calvary. I’m thankful for this “new way” of VBS as my son would not have been able to participate had it been an in-person event. It made him feel like he could still partake and have a little normalcy in life for the week. Seeing the smiles it brings to their faces as they sing & dance along with Calvary music is a day brightener. I hope everyone has a takeaway from this time in our lives. Ours has definitely been to slow down, remember what is important in this life, let go of control and trust.

Heather Ahrens

THE BRAND NEW WAY OF EDUCATING.

Since 2017, I have served as the Technology Integration Specialist for Alexandria Public Schools. I was hired to learn innovative educational technologies and see how they could fit into our classrooms. I teach teachers about things they can do to enhance learning and better serve our students. Ultimately, my whole job revolves around learning brand new things every day; however I don't think anyone was ready for the knuckleball of newness that came last spring when all schools moved to distance learning. Lucky for us, we work and live in an incredibly adaptive district and did some pretty cool things with Distance Learning. In fact, we are still meeting other districts around the state to tell them what we did! Although it was tough to only see our students through a computer screen, I believe there are silver linings if you look for them. From someone who teaches teachers, this was about the best professional development about educational technology I could have asked for! Every single teacher rose to the occasion and learned an enormous amount on how to use technology to reach students, even if that reach was a little farther away than expected. I think our students are learning life skills including empathy, compassion, resilience, grit, communication, collaboration, creativity, and global citizenship. They really are experiencing and learning from the world like no other generation before them.

Even though it's not what any of us wanted to do, we were able to make the best of a tough situation to deal with the brand new thing. We made the change to distance learning so quickly last spring, but it was important that we as educators pulled together in the same direction-we couldn't get stuck. Looking ahead to this year, the lens of reality for schools has some uncertainties; however, I know we'll plan, adjust, and take on whatever brand new thing comes our way to best meet the needs of our students because we genuinely care about them!

Lukas Gotto



THE BRAND NEW TRADITION.

Having brand new babies in a pandemic was different. Few to no visitors. Little help. Fear for the unknowns of the virus. Uncharted territory, even though we had both been through childbirth before. Beau Steven Gilbertson was born March 5th (to Mike and Stephanie Gilbertson). Hunter Matthew Gilbertson was born May 5th (to Matt and Kari Gilbertson). Cousins, exactly two months apart. We had to find a brand new way to do a lot of things. Not only had our families changed—the entire world changed.

When it came to wanting to have the boys baptized, that had obviously changed too. We didn't even know if we could do it. Before we even had our boys we knew we wanted to have them baptized together. With these cousins being so close in age, they will go through a lot of life together, baptism being the first. Calvary made this day so special for us and our families. It was a brand new baptism. Intimate. Just our families present. We got to make this moment theirs. We got to feel God's presence, in this place, in a brand new way. They were both sealed by the Holy Spirit, and marked with the cross of Christ forever. We were all able to pray over Hunter and Beau together. A brand new way to honor tradition, and bless these babies. It was truly a special moment.



This day ended up being so memorable—not just because we did it together, but because this moment was just for them. We all were gathered there to bless them. Much more intimate than any other baptism. We were able to bring our families together, and celebrate during these times of uncertainty. Change is hard for everyone, and life right now is full of brand new ways to do the same thing. We are so happy our little guys have this memory for their quarantine baptism. Together, brand new, intimate, and special. Thank you Calvary, Angie and Hans!

Stephanie and Mike Gilbertson / Kari and Matt Gilbertson



THE BRAND NEW SPACES.

Your faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 119:90)

As the final portion of work is done to renovate and expand Calvary's building, we reflect on how this verse captures all that has happened and is yet to come in our building. God has certainly been faithful to the many generations who have called Calvary their church. When the founding members started the church in 1885, they built a foundation of faithfulness, a spirit of generosity, and a mission to lead people to faith in Jesus Christ. That foundation was strengthened through the years when again the members of the church invested in the building as a tool for ministry, creating spaces for us today, but ultimately people they would never know.

Today, we have added significant square footage and value to our building—our tool for ministry. The foundation laid in the new worship center will bring new people into our building years from now who will experience the joy of Calvary's worship. The Hub that ties the existing to the new part of the building will stand for generations to come as a place to connect with one another, grow in relationships, and deepen their faith.

You will see many new things as you visit the building for the first time. We've got a new entry, new bathrooms, new meeting rooms, new coffee bar, and much, much more that will be new to you. However, underneath all of that is a strong foundation that binds us together and reminds us of God's faithfulness through all the generations that came before us. And that foundation will stand for generations to come, as our building will be our tool to welcome people into a life of faith, where they too can worship, connect, and serve. Join us as we give thanks for those who went before us, and pray for those who will one day be welcomed into this life of faith.

Calvary Construction Communication Team

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

WE WILL SOON BE HOSTING TOURS OF THE BUILDING!
Watch your email or mail for more information to come.

FROM CALVARY'S PRESIDENT

The leadership of Calvary has made the important and faithful decision to keep our building closed to in-person worship and large gatherings. I want to take a minute to explain why this decision is a right decision for us at Calvary. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, two questions have guided our decisions concerning the reopening of our building:

1. CAN WE ENSURE THAT EVERYONE WHO GATHERS WILL BE SAFE, ESPECIALLY THE MOST VULNERABLE AMONG US?

The safety of all who gather for worship is our number one priority, especially the safety of those who are elderly and have pre-existing health conditions. We know that gatherings of large numbers of people in enclosed spaces where there is talking and singing create the perfect conditions for the transmission of Covid-19. Sadly, even with masking, we could not ensure your safety. A church in Lake Park, MN recently held a funeral attended by 50 people and masks were required. 30 contracted the coronavirus. 5 were so sick they were hospitalized. We do not feel we can create an environment where all would be safe.

2. CAN WE OFFER AN IN-PERSON WORSHIP EXPERIENCE THAT YOU WOULD BE EXCITED TO INVITE YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS TO?

Imagine walking into the church and needing to have your temperature taken. Then you sign a waiver and take a health screening. An usher then escorts you from the door directly to your seat in the sanctuary, which you had to reserve the week prior because guidelines limit gatherings to 50% of building occupancy. Everyone is seated 10 feet apart. There would be no singing. No gathering to chat before or after worship. No kid or student ministry. No communion. No coffee! Nobody would want to attend an experience like this, and you would never invite a friend or neighbor. This is why churches that have reopened are seeing just 10-40% of normal attendance.

With this announcement, you may be wondering: How are we doing as a church? How are we going to make it? Rest assured, your church is thriving, believe it or not. Because of your generosity, we feel more confident in our mission and ministry than ever before. General fund giving is 5% ahead of budget, while we've also reduced unnecessary expenses. The building project is on schedule and on budget, and you have already contributed nearly 40% of the dollars pledged to the project. More importantly, our online ministry is reaching people across Minnesota and throughout the country—from Colorado to Idaho, Florida to California.

God is doing great things through you, Calvary!



Deb Dittberner, Council President



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WORSHIP THIS WEEK!

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6:15PM

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