



book of faith

Open Scripture. Join the Conversation.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the Christmas season will be almost over and we will be moving into the New Year.

We thank Karen Hasskamp for helping Calvary decide how we would respond to the church-wide initiative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church called the "Bible-Book of Faith Initiative."

In response to the request of many synods of the ELCA, we are determined to increase our fluency in the first language of faith, Holy Scriptures. Our church council has voted unanimously to support this initiative and we have some plans as to how to do that.

That's a challenge. The Bible is not always easy to understand and sometimes feels more distant and foreign than friendly and relevant. However, so much is at stake. If we lost our ability to use this first language of faith, it would be like traveling in Mexico without knowing Spanish. You can travel there but you miss so much of the color and beauty of the place. You can't hear the stories that are told there that give life to the people.

We can't grow into a solid and strong relationship with God without this familiarity with God's word, the Bible.

We have several plans to assist you in becoming more fluent in the Bible's language of faith.

We invite you to make a new year's resolution to read the Bible more. We will offer several concrete plans for you, including reading the Bible cover to cover (three chapters a day), or in more selected passages. We will have pledge cards in the bulletin for the next couple of weeks and invite you to think about this as a valuable goal for the coming year.

Visit the Bible display. We have a number of Bibles available for sale at cost in the Fellowship Hall. They reflect a variety of needs and help us understand the Bible better.

Take the three-session course. Karen Hasskamp will offer a three-session course, either between services on Sunday or on Monday evening at 7 PM, on January 11 (12), 18 (19) and 25 (26).

Visit the Blog. We have a blog that Rob McNair will host that you can access from our web site.

This year in Confirmation, we are concentrating on the Biblical stories, seeking to bring our young people into a life-giving relationship with God's stories.

Worship oriented around our relationship to God through Scripture. In January, I am spending three Sundays, January 11, 18 and 25 orienting our worship around our relationship to God through the Scriptures. January 11 will focus on the Old Testament, January 18 with the New Testament and January 25 with our Lutheran and Reformation relationship with the Bible.

We will have a question box available and I will spend just a few minutes on each of those three Sundays responding to them during the Adult Forum.

We will have a number of Bible study opportunities available, including continuing our Monday noon Bible study resuming on January 12.

I invite you, and better yet, God invites you to draw closer to God as you open God's book.

Pastor Phil Holtan



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Life Events

Archer Lee Davis was baptized Tuesday, December 23 at Calvary. His sponsors are *Randi Dallas, Courtney Davis* and *Evan Putnam*. Parents are *Cameron Davis* and *Jamie Dallas*. Grandparents are *Tim & Paula Sucher*.

Jayden Lee Schrupp was baptized on Christmas Day at Calvary. His sponsors are *Douglas & Jenny Van Meter*. Parents are *Jason & Jordan (Zellmann) Schrupp*. Grandparents are *Bill & Cindy Zellmann*.

Condolences to the family and friends of *Lorraine Saarinen* who passed away Wednesday, December 12. Her funeral was Tuesday, December 16 at Calvary.

Condolences to the family and friends of *Loree Reck*, who passed away Sunday, November 23. Loree is the wife of *Pastor William Reck*, who served Calvary 1977-1987. Greetings may be sent to Pastor Reck at 412 Sheridan Street, Crookston, MN 56716-1233.



Transfer

Kent & Danell Slevin, Dylan, Logan and Hannah to St. Paul's Lutheran of Perham.



New Members

On January 25, 2009, we will receive New Members to Calvary. We will have two sessions of preparation on Wednesday nights, January 14 and 21, from 7 to 8:30 PM in the Matthias Room. If you are interested in becoming a member of Calvary, please contact Pastor Phil immediately and we will match you with sponsors and begin this process. We are delighted with the response already and you will find a wonderful "class" of new members with whom to begin your Calvary Journey.

Feed My Starving Children

In today's economy, hunger is a growing presence for many people, particularly for its most vulnerable--the children. As most of you know, the Perham Ministerium (with help from local congregations, schools, service clubs, businesses and individuals) is bringing a mobile food site to Perham to package meals for Feed My Starving Children. This will happen March 13-15.

Karlie Miller, the reigning Miss Perham and a Calvary member, is leading the project, making this the focus of her year. Several other young people from our congregation have, like Karlie, spent time packaging food at the Feed My Starving Children site in the Twin Cities and have come away committed to this effort.

Our congregation has made a wonderful start in making this happen. Our Thanksgiving offering - dedicated to the project - totaled more than \$7,000. Donations from the community are past the \$16,000 mark. The cost for each 100,000 meals is \$17,000. The Ministerium hopes to package 300,000 to 400,000 meals that weekend.

Packaging the food on Friday, March 13, will be the all-school day, where every child will have a chance to package food for an hour or two - a great learning experience! Saturday's packaging experience belongs to the community. We need teams of 15 people to organize and work a two hour shift. We hope that churches, businesses, service clubs, families and friends will join us that day. One-half of Calvary's financial contribution will be used to support the school effort on Friday. The other half will pay up to \$350 of the \$700 that each Calvary team contributes to package food on Saturday.

Each package of food contains six meals for a starving child. The cost amounts to 17 cents a meal - a dollar covers six nourishing meals. Each life-saving dollar we contribute goes a long way. 95 cents of each dollar goes directly to food and transportation costs.

Save the date! On Sunday afternoon at 3 p.m., January 25, there will be a community songfest at Calvary. Each congregation will supply a musical group to perform. The offering will go to fund Feed My Starving Children in Perham.

This is a huge community service project. The organizers estimate that we will need between 2,500 and 3,000 people to get this done. It will take commitment from our community, but the rewards are great. Perham will be recognized for the generous people that we are, a community that works together for the world's starving children. Join us!

Christmas Cards for the Jubilee

As a part of our Jubilee Year, we are planning to create some special Calvary Christmas cards, to make available for our church family members to buy and send next Christmas. The cards would feature photos of Christmas at Calvary, taken this Christmas.

We invite anyone who would have a very unique and meaningful photo of Calvary at Christmas time (property and/or people) to submit your photos to the church office, for consideration for our cards. (Submit any time in January, following the Christmas season.)

Questions? Contact Lisa Peterson or Pastor Phil.

In Case Of Inclement Weather



In case of inclement weather that makes travel dangerous, please listen to the radio and television stations listed at the right for up to date worship information.

If the weather conditions are serious there may be only one worship service at 10:45 a.m. and if conditions are extremely dangerous, worship will be canceled.

On weekdays, if Perham Schools are closed or classes dismissed early due to weather, all confirmation, choirs and meetings are canceled as well.

Stay tuned to these local stations for the latest church related information:

KPRW FM 99.5 Radio Perham 218-346-4800
KWAD AM 920 Radio Wadena 218-631-1803
WDAY AM 970-WDAY TV 6 Fargo 701-237-5346
KCCO TV Channel 7 Alexandria..... 320-763-5166

Men's Ministry News

The Fishermen are a group of Calvary committed to growing the church through ministry to and through men with a variety of social events, educational opportunities and service projects. For more information about Men's Ministry at Calvary, please call Craig Swanson at 347-7926 or call Rand Stolee at 346-3440.

Men's Breakfast. The 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at 7AM Men's Breakfast meets for great food and a study of the upcoming Sunday's Scripture lessons. Please join us!

Islam Study. Men have been requesting a comparative religions course. Pastor obliged with a special fellowship hour program and a series of classes, well attended (overflowing at times).

Common Hope. Pastor visited one of the children that we sponsor with our Men's Breakfast money. He was impressed with the work of Common Hope and their facilities in Guatemala.

Bugs & Ticks Family Service Project

The blankets that were made last January have all been distributed. We will meet to make more blankets Sunday, January 18 following the 2nd service.

Pheasant Hunt. Dan Miller hosted a pheasant hunt in October. There was good attendance by the men and the hens but roosters were less interested. Still, a good time was had by all.

Habitat House. The local Habitat House was dedicated in November. Calvary men had an excellent representation in the construction. A new house has started in Wadena. It is not clear whether or not there will be a Perham house again this spring.

Christmas Activities. Ron Anderson led the men in setting up the Nativity on December 13. Also planned was the lighting of luminaries on Christmas Eve at 4:00 (before the second of three Christmas Eve services).

Upcoming Program Ideas. We floated some ideas for winter activities including snowmobiling, ice fishing, and cards. Rand will host a Super Bowl party if the Vikings are in. Planning for the canoe trip will begin in January or early February; contact Dave Knudsen if you want input.

Lunch will be provided so please bring the entire family and help us tie up some warmth for those in need this winter. Bugs & Ticks is Calvary's K-6 youth group. Questions? Call Liz at 347-7926.

Women's Ministry Happenings

Thanks to everyone who helped make the Christmas Tea & Bake Sale a success!

Altar Guild. Are you willing to assist with communion setup and cleanup? Call Sally Awes at 346-7911.

Java Jams Bible Study
Mondays at 8:30AM
Mary Room

Charity Circle
Wednesday, January 7 at 9:30AM
At Ruth Miller's home

Faith Circle
Wednesday, January 7 at 1:30PM
Matthias Room

Peace Circle
Wednesday, January 14 at 9:30AM
Matthias Room

Cranberry & Cashew Meatballs
Daria Anderson

2 lb ground beef
3 eggs
½ oz. pkg. onion soup mix
1 c. bread crumbs
1 t. salt
2 clove garlic, pressed
½ c. chopped cashews
1-1/2 c. chili sauce
1-1/2 c. water
1-1/2 c. sauerkraut, drained
2 c. cranberry sauce, homemade is best
1 c. brown sugar, packed

Mix together the ground beef, eggs, onion soup mix, bread crumbs, salt, garlic and cashews. Form into 1 inch balls. Bake on a baking sheet for 20-30 minutes at 350 degrees. Combine the chili sauce, water, sauerkraut, cranberry sauce and brown sugar. Pour over meatballs. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour.



Youth & Family

Salvation Army Project January 3

Saturday, January 3 is another great service project opportunity. We leave Calvary at 9 a.m. for Fargo where we feed the hungry at the Salvation Army. Interested? Contact Rob.

Youth Worship Helpers January 4

Thanks to our youth for being worship helpers the first Sunday of each month beginning January 4. Questions? Please contact Rob.

Confirmation Resumes January 7

The Wednesday night Confirmation schedule will resume January 7:

5:30-6:00pm Teen Meal
6:00-7:15pm Confirmation
7:15-8:15pm WNA* Grade 7-9
8:15-9:15pm WNA* Grade 10-12

**Wednesday Night Alive in The Loft*

Acolyte Training January 11

Sunday, January 11 between services there will be Acolyte Training for grades 5-9 in the Sanctuary.

Marriage Encounter

Say "I Love You" with a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend. You'll spend two nights in a comfortable hotel and enjoy five delicious meals from Friday at 7pm to Sunday at 5pm. Four presenting couples, including a Lutheran clergy couple, give a series of presentations followed by questions the couples discuss in the privacy of their hotel room. There is no counseling and no group sharing. No one tries to change who you are. It's great for couples who already have a good marriage and want to enrich their relationship, but it also does wonders for those marriages that may have lost their luster through years of child rearing and work obligations.

The next Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekends are February 13-15 and April 24-26 in Brooklyn Center or March 27-29 in Duluth. Please register a month in advance.

For more information, contact Dick & Judy Dehnel at 952-432-3105, Pete & Phyllis McMahon at 763-651-1575 or visit www.godlovesmarriage.org.

ADULT FAITH ENRICHMENT

I am very excited about the "Book of Faith" initiative, and welcome any questions you may have regarding it. Many thanks to Karen Haaskamp for getting this off the ground. I would also very much like to hear from people who are interested in leading a study; if so please feel free to email me at tracybieger@calvaryperham.com.

We are planning to do "The Lutheran Course," which focuses on the fundamentals of Lutheranism in just seven sessions. This will be a great study to follow "Rediscovering the Book of Faith."



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Wow, it's 2009!! It's been almost five months for me in my new position, and I want to thank everyone for being patient! The Sunday School program is blessed with great teachers again this year. Sunday School will resume January 11, and we will continue with the Faithweaver curriculum through the end of this year, but may try something designed more for pre-teens with the 5th and 6th grade. We will also be gearing up for 2009 VBS!

I would like to thank all who helped with the Christmas program: Megan and Jill Shipman and Russ Bunker, for doing such a great job with music. Sue Delaney, Larry Hunt, Deanna Kovash, Liz Swanson, Kim Jensen, Lynn Lueders, Linda Barvels, Mitch Groethe, the Sunday School teachers, and of course, all the wonderful kids for their beautiful singing of "gifts" to our Lord! Thanks to Chandler Rach for filling our urgent need for a "Joseph!" Thanks to Samantha Greene, Maggie Rennie, and Tristan Groff for coming in to practice, since we had a "snow day" and to the Carol and Youth Choirs for helping fill treat bags.

Tracy Bieger

Together Winning In God's Service



TWIGS would like to *thank you* for your extremely generous donations to the program this past year.

Since beginning in March 2008, the program has grown and served a wide variety of needs in our community. Through your *generosity* TWIGS has been able to:

- Pay for one-night hotel stay for homeless people passing through on two occasions
- Provide money for prescription medications, \$210.32 used in November alone
- Provide the down payment for an extended family to purchase a trailer. *Monthly installments have been paid back regularly*
- Prevent two families from being evicted
- Provide piano lessons for a young girl
- Provide dance lessons for 2 young girls
- Sponsor several children for summer recreation activities
- Pay the tuition for 2 children to attend preschool
- Give Ghost Runner taxi gift certificates
- Pay for swimming lessons
- Provide a PACC punch card for a single Mom and daughter
- Send a mother of an autistic child to parent training
- Purchase a double stroller
- Send a student to a Christian sports camp
- Pay for track clothes for a high school student
- Pay lunch money for a first grade student

Thanks for the Clothing Drive

Thanks for the children's clothing, boots, mittens, bedding, quilts and afghans provided for Richville Methodist Church's Clothing Drive. Thanks to Joyce, Pat and Lorna for hauling and helping unpack bags given by Calvary.

The newly remodeled basement looks great.



The clothing room is open Tuesday afternoons from 1-4 and Wednesday evenings and items are free. Please pass the word if someone has additional items to donate or know of people in need that would like to shop.

Trash & Treasure Sale for Missions



And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

These are a way for us to love and serve our neighbor as Jesus taught us through his love and service to others. Through a variety of yearly trips, we combine a service project with time for reflection and spiritual growth and rest.

On Saturday, January 24 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., the Justice Journeys Team will sponsor a Trash and Treasure Sale in the Calvary Fellowship Hall.

So . . . now would be an excellent time to start cleaning out those closets! We are looking for donations of **good**, used items, **but please no clothing, shoes, electronics or appliances**. Donations may be brought to Calvary and placed in the end of the Fellowship Hall between January 10-21.

Then, doors will open at 9 a.m. on January 24 and you will find treasures galore! And remembering that one man's trash is another's treasure-and the fact that you will now have room in those closets (emptied by the "trash" you brought in earlier!), we invite you to shop 'til you drop.

All \$\$'s raised will go to missions.

Thanks so much for your continued support!

Stephen Ministry at Calvary

The regular monthly meeting of Stephen Ministers will be on Monday January 12, 2009 at 6:30 PM in the Mathias Room. Barb Christie will provide the devotional.

Sheila Jacobson of Schoeneberger Funeral Home will make a presentation about pre-funeral planning.

After refreshments and a break, small group supervision will occur where Stephen Ministers help each focus on the relationship they have with their care receivers.

Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota

Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota expresses the love of Christ for all people through service that inspires hope, changes lives, and builds community.

LSS Services include:

- Adoption
- Disaster Relief
- Financial Counseling
- Guardianship Services
- Housing
- Mental Health Counseling
- Older Adult Services
- Refugee Services
- Youth Services
- Services for People with Developmental Disabilities

Thirteen-year-old Patty walked into LSS offices asking for a safe place to go. Her home was not that place. LSS counselors went with her to get her clothes and took her to her aunt's home. When she was 17, they helped her find an apartment and educated her in independent living. With grit and perseverance she finished high school a semester early so that she could work more hours to support herself. Now she is married and loves her job in child care at St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth.

Her husband Jeff's story is also one of a life changed by the support of LSS. A high school drop out with drug and alcohol problems, he found transitional housing at LSS where he got needed support to get sober, and his life started moving in a positive direction. Today he is a health claims analyst for United Healthcare.

Stephen Minister Commissioning at St. Paul's Lutheran in Perham. Saturday, January 3 at the 5 PM service and January 4 at the 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM services, five new Stephen Ministers will be commissioned.

Included in this class will be Reg Hansen, our Stephen Ministry and Caring Ministries Coordinator here at Calvary. There will be cake and coffee before the Saturday service and between services on Sunday.

The Stephen Ministry Team of St. Paul's invites Calvary members to come and show their support of Reg and his completion of 50 hours of Stephen Ministry training..

He and Patty are so grateful to LSS. They will have a special Christmas this year as they welcome a new baby. Knowing personally how very important it is to have safety and stability in your life as a child, Jeff and Patty are busy preparing to be the finest parents a child could hope for.

On the news, there appeared to be no danger, so Michele and her family went to bed. They had no idea that massive relief efforts were underway to save hundreds of people stranded in trees, in cars, or in their homes. But the next morning, with their first floor under water, they had to jump five feet from their second floor into a boat below to make it to safety.... Their house was almost a complete loss. This was in Rushford, MN, where LSS set up shop almost immediately after the flood to help the residents with paperwork, access loans, make important decisions, and coordinate volunteer teams to help families rebuild homes. They turned often to the LSS Disaster Office. After an emotional year of ups and downs, all while living in a 650' FEMA trailer, they finally see the end of a dark tunnel. Their new home should be ready by Christmas. "At times, our situation felt hopeless," Michelle said. "If it hadn't been for volunteers, phone calls made on our behalf, and lots of emotional support we received at LSS, we might still be wondering where to go from here."

With the support of ELCA congregations and individuals, during 2008 LSS completed a new building complex, **The Center For Changing Lives**, which houses all the LSS offices, provides conference spaces, and offers 48 units of affordable housing to needy families. **Save the date! March 19, 2009.** Families and services have moved in. The grand opening celebration of The Center for Changing Lives will be held on March 19 at 5:00 p.m. Everyone is invited!



Music Ministry

Cantata Rescheduled

Sunday, January 11 at 8:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m., our Senior Choir will again present Joseph Martin's Christmas cantata, *The Winter Rose*. You won't want to miss this inspiring work, celebrating our greatest gift at Christmas, our Savior, the Perfect Rose, Jesus Christ.

Community Songfest

On Sunday afternoon at 3 p.m., January 25, there will be a Community Songfest at Calvary. Each congregation will supply a musical group to perform. The free will offering will go to fund the March 2009 Feed My Starving Children project in Perham.

Wednesday Rehearsals

Carol Choir, for grades 2-5, meets from 3:30 to 4:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. *Parents, please pick up your children promptly at 4 p.m. as there is no supervision for them after Carol Choir.*

Youth Choir, for grades 6-8, meets at 4:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Senior Choir is for grade 9 through adults and meets at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Sweet Assurance, our women's ensemble, meets at 5:30 p.m. in the Choir Room.

Jonah & The Wailers, our men's ensemble, meets at 5:45 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Contemporary Praise Team, which leads music in worship, meets at 5:45 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Love to sing? Come make a joyful noise with us in any of our choirs or ensembles that interest you. Can't sing, you say? But do you play an instrument? Or would you like to learn how to help with the sound system? Or help with publicity? Then our Contemporary Praise Team needs you! Come any Wednesday and check out how you can become involved in this exciting ministry!

Library

Have you read a good book lately that you are recommending? Please share it with other Calvary readers.

The Library Committee is inviting you to write a brief review of the book so that we can include it in the green binder in the library marked, "Book Reviews". Pink book review forms are available in the library to help you write your review, but feel free to write your own review in your own style. Check out the reviews that other famous Calvary readers have written! Be sure to include your name as well as the name and author of the book you are reviewing.

We are very interested in learning what "Calvary is Reading."



Luther Crest

January 23-25 (Grade 4-6) and January 30-February 1 (Grade 7-9): Spirited! Winter Youth Retreats. Spend the weekend reconnecting with old friends from the summer and making new friends as we explore how the Holy Spirit works in our lives each day.

February 14-15: Sweetheart Ski Weekend. Saturday, December 14 enjoy dinner, skiing, devotions and a movie from 5 to 11 p.m. Saturday evening and Sunday morning there is a Bed and Breakfast option, Saturday lodging and Sunday brunch.

Calvary Classifieds—Help Wanted

Unless otherwise noted, contact Jeana Nelson at jeananelson@calvaryperham.com or 346-4780.

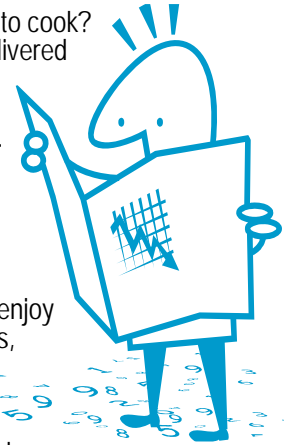
Sound Board Team Member. Run the sound board for contemporary service. No experience necessary, training available. Flexible schedule.


Drivers. Can you deliver dinner meals to people who are in need?

Nursery. Nursery volunteers to help out occasionally during 10:45a.m. worship. Contact Tracy at tracybieger@calvaryperham.com or Jeana at jeananelson@calvaryperham.com.

Meal Ministry. Love to cook? Needed: Suppers delivered to people whose lives for a short time could use some help. Contact Mary Erickson, Sally Roe, or Jeana Nelson.

Gifts & Ministries Committee. Do you enjoy reaching out to others, helping them find joy in serving? Your help is greatly needed.





Simply Giving[®] for Calvary LUTHERAN CHURCH

a simple choice, a generous response

You are invited to become part of a new program being offered to Calvary's members—a free program for simplifying and extending our regular giving.

Simply Giving[®] enables us to regularly give our church offerings using electronic funds transfer (EFT). You may already use EFT to have your mortgage, car payment or insurance premium automatically withdrawn from your checking or savings account. Now, your gifts to God can be regular and "off the top," just like these other commitments.

It's very simple. If you'd like to participate, or just want more information,
please contact Shirley at the Church Office at 346-4780 or shirleypauna@calvaryperham.com.

God's Global Barnyard

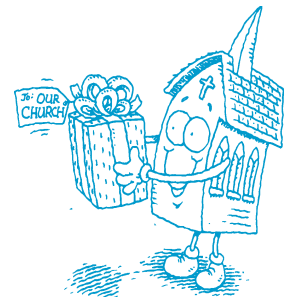
Calvary's 9th grade confirmation "chicks" bring hope to families by purchasing two batches of chicks through ELCA's God's Global Barnyard program. This gift will make a big difference in helping to alleviate economic struggles by providing stable nutrition and a sustainable income source for two families in need. Way to go 9th grade girls!

Want to know how you can help? Find more information by visiting the ELCA's Global Barnyard: <http://archive.elca.org/ScriptLib/DS/giving/pg15-17.html>

The Building Fund

The Building Fund needs help!

Wouldn't it be great as part of our 50th anniversary celebration in 2010 to burn the mortgage? We can achieve that goal with everyone's help...so please remember the Building Fund with your weekly or monthly offerings.



Jesus Wasn't Born In A Barn

By Rob McNair

By the time this article is read Christmas will be a memory, hopefully a good one! During Confirmation prior to Christmas, we viewed the last 20 minutes of the movie "The Nativity Story" which was released in 2006. There is something to be said for watching a visual reenactment of a biblical story. The acting and production make the short narratives we find in the Bible come alive. However, sometimes dramatic interpretations can deviate from the true story. After watching the movie the students were instructed to read the scripture related to the nativity from Matthew and Luke and compare what they read to what they saw. They did a pretty good job picking up on some key differences that have made their way into how we picture the birth of Jesus.

In almost every Christmas program I have ever seen, Joseph goes door to door looking for a place to stay in Bethlehem. However, this is highly unlikely and is not how scripture reads. First, the whole reason Joseph and Mary are going to Bethlehem is because that is where Joseph is from, so Joseph would have had relatives there. By staying at an inn they would have brought shame on his family and his family would have shamed themselves if they did not allow Mary and Joseph to stay with them. The cultural norms of the time would have assured this.

Second, archeological evidence indicates that Bethlehem was a very small village, perhaps 200 people at most, so there probably were no inns or public places to stay overnight in Bethlehem. In addition, it was not along a main thoroughfare that would have attracted visitors. Some scholars believe the word "inn" used in Luke 2:7 is a mistranslation. If we look at the Greek word used it is "kataluma." This same word is used in Luke 22:11 when Jesus instructs Peter and John to go find the place where they will share the Passover. They are told to ask the owner of the house, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" So here we can see "kataluma" is translated as "guest room." Now the Greek word "pandocheion" is used in Luke 10:34 when the Good Samaritan pays to house the injured man: "He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him." It appears this word "pandocheion" more accurately means "inn." So it seems logical that the Gospel writer would have used this word if he wanted to indicate Mary and Joseph stayed at an inn. Most likely Joseph and Mary stayed with relatives, but the guest room was taken so they stayed in the main front room. Now you may be thinking, "What about the manger?" Well, we know that it was customary for animals to be brought into this front room at night to keep them safe and also to provide warmth to the house with their body heat. This would account for the manger being present. If we look at Matthew 2:11 we find further evidence to support this interpretation: "On entering the house, they [the wise men] saw the child with Mary..."

Third, there is no mention of Joseph talking to an innkeeper or anyone else as they enter Bethlehem. In fact, Joseph doesn't have any speaking parts! The Bible doesn't record him saying one word.

Another difference is that reenactments often depict Joseph and Mary's arrival into Bethlehem as very dramatic, as in the movie "The Nativity Story" where Joseph frantically rushes from house to house desperately trying to find a place to stay as Mary is just about to give birth. However, the only glimpse we have into their entry into Bethlehem is Luke 2:6 that reads: "While they were there [Bethlehem], the time came for her to deliver her child." The truth is they could have been in Bethlehem days, weeks, or even months before Jesus was born.

The idea that Jesus was born with just Joseph and Mary present is also unlikely based not only on scripture but also cultural norms of the time. First, the idea that Joseph was even present at the birth is very unlikely as this would have made him "ritually unclean." The laws related to child birth are spelled out in Leviticus 12:1-8 and these would have been closely followed. In addition, the presence of men during labor and delivery is a relatively recent occurrence, mainly in the Western world. Secondly, female relatives of Joseph certainly would have come to help and assist with the birth. Luke 2:17-18 reads: "When they [the shepherds] saw this [Jesus lying in a manger], they made known what had been told them about this child [from the angel Gabriel]; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them." This would certainly indicate that others (Joseph's relatives) were around besides Joseph and Mary, since they already knew from Gabriel who Jesus really was.

One final misconception is that the wise men arrive on the scene the same time as the shepherds, just after Jesus is born. The truth is that the only thing we know from scripture about when they visited is from Matthew 2:1 that reads: "In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem..." In reality, the Wise Men probably came weeks or even months after Jesus was born. This view would help to make sense of why Herod sends his troops to kill infants two years old and under in Bethlehem, as Herod wasn't under the impression that Jesus was a newborn infant.

Now you may be wondering why I would spoil the Christmas story like this. My intent is not to ruin the story, but rather to illustrate that we need to read God's word for ourselves. We cannot rely on other people's interpretations. We cannot believe something just because someone told us or because someone showed us what they think. We need to read God's word firsthand as it is the only way to find out the truth and to see what exactly God has done for us. It was only about eight years ago that I took that first step and opened a Bible (with much hesitation and trepidation I might add.) Now I work in a church and am writing this article. That is an amazing transformation that never would have happened without overcoming my fears, apprehensions, and insecurities about exploring God's word. It can be an intimidating task, but one that I assure you will change your life.



book of faith

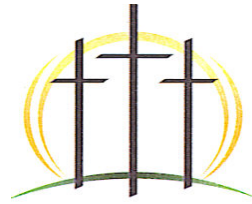
Hopefully by now you have heard about the **Book of Faith** initiative that is being promoted by the ELCA. This is a campaign and program to support people in reading the Bible and here at Calvary we are hoping to reach out and engage our church family in this endeavor. So whether you are well versed in the Bible or have never cracked the cover, I encourage you to get involved and participate. Keep an eye on our bulletins and newsletters for all the opportunities related to reading the **Book of Faith**.

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The Calvary Connection

Calvary Lutheran Church exists to be an example of Christ's love through service to all people, helping everyone to learn and experience God's love in the struggle and triumphs of daily life.

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book of faith

Open Scripture. Join the Conversation.

The Book of Faith initiative invites the whole church to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word.

Open this newsletter to find out how you can join the conversation!