



NOV
2023

CALVARY STORIES

STORIES OF GOD'S PRESENCE
AND HIS FAITHFULNESS IN THE
CALVARY COMMUNITY.

**We exist
to reflect
the love
of Jesus
in the
world.**

We are a community gathered by God,
transformed by the Holy Spirit, and sent
to reflect the love of Jesus in the world.

A WELCOME FROM DUSTIN DETERS

Dear Calvary family,

As a dad, some of my favorite moments in the week are when my boys ask me to tell them a story. Usually these stories begin with something like, “There were two boys who...” I assign the character’s a silly name that sounds awfully close to each of their names (Dolton & Dacetead of Colton & Jace) and begin down the journey of retelling a story of a past experience they’ve had. The boys quickly catch on and smile as they put themselves into the story and recount the details. These story times also lead to lots of “Dad, remember when...” moments. These memories they hold on to and the stories that surround them shape who they are as individuals.

In the last few years since becoming a member of Calvary, many of these stories for my boys include our church family. I hear stories about Cadets, Sunday School, the church campout, our small group, prayer room experiences, Wednesday night dinners, Sunday worship and the list goes on. God has used so many of you as integral characters in those stories, and my wife and I are so grateful for the lasting impact these memories have as we seek to guide them to be young men who desire a relationship with Christ.

In the pages that follow, there are many stories retelling experiences that Calvary members have had. As you read through them, I hope you can also find yourself in these stories, as though the names are just changed. I hope they trigger, “Remember when...” moments for you to recount similar experiences and/or moments of God’s faithfulness

and the Holy Spirit's work in your own life. As you remember and find your place in these stories, share those with your family and friends so you can recount the stories God is telling through you!

"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.
Psalm 27:13"

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dustin".

Dustin Deters
Governing Elder Team Member

THERE'S NO "JUNIOR HOLY SPIRIT"

Pastor Alex Arthurs

During this interim period in Student Ministries, Pastor Matthew and I have been in charge of tag-teaming Middle School and High School Sunday School. Honestly, at first, I saw this added responsibility as just that—one more obligation on an already full pastoral plate. But I'm overjoyed to tell you that this "added responsibility" has genuinely become the highlight of my week.

Each week as I run from the Worship Center to the Lodge, and walk past the kindergarten through 5th grade Sunday School classrooms and hear the teachers and students talking and praying, and as I smell the fresh waffles in the Lodge, and hear the blue plastic nine-square ball being swatted around, I find myself

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overwhelmed with excitement and expectancy. I'm excited and expectant to bear witness to how the Holy Spirit is moving in the hearts and lives of our middle schoolers and high schoolers.

People of Calvary, God is moving in and through our Youth. The Spirit is stirring up a holy hunger to hear and respond in obedience to God's voice. God is not only calling, shaping and forming the adults of Calvary to be a House of Prayer, God wants all of Calvary to be a House of Prayer and God desires that the people of Calvary be a Household or a Family of Prayer—from the oldest to the youngest, including our teens and pre-teens.

The Sunday School time has been sacred and rich. Here's a small sampling of some of the comments, questions and insights shared by our youth:

"I'm allowed to be angry with God. I can honestly tell God how I'm feeling because God cares more about me being in relationship with Him than He cares about me having neat and tidy emotions."

"God doesn't want us to feel guilty. God wants us to come to Him."

"Prayer really just seems like an ongoing discussion with God. We're allowed to bring everything to Him."

"I understood the second and third point of your sermon. But the first point made absolutely no sense to me. Do you think we could talk about it?"

"Putting on Jesus (in spiritual warfare) reminds me of the story of Saul and David. David tried to put on Saul's armor, but it didn't fit him. False identities are like Saul's armor for David. They don't fit us. Only Jesus fits us. He's our true identity."

That's just the tip of the iceberg. Do you see the stirring? Our Youth have a growing appetite to know Jesus in prayer, to be known by Jesus in prayer, and to make Jesus known through their lives.

But we haven't just *talked about prayer*, we've *prayed together*. Usually, it's like pulling teeth to get anyone under the age of 18 to pray out loud (...it's not much easier to get people over the age of 18 to pray out loud!), but a handful of times our Youth have asked if we could pray...out loud... together! Just two weeks ago, a classmate to many of our students and her family was in a devastating car accident. So, we spent the last 10 minutes of Sunday School praying that God would provide healing and peace for the family. The coolest part? I didn't say a word. The whole time was completely led, from closing to opening, by our students.

The Apostle Paul writes in the book of Ephesians, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4-6). ONE body. ONE hope. ONE Lord. ONE faith. ONE baptism. ONE Spirit. There's no "Junior Holy Spirit"; the same God alive and active in our adults is alive and active in our Youth.



There's no "Junior Holy Spirit";
The same God
alive and active in our adults,
is alive and active in our youth.

MY TIME IN HONDURAS

Pastor Matthew Hochhalter

Mission is in Calvary's DNA. Since her birth as a worshipping community, Calvary has had a propensity for actively participating in God's mission to redeem and restore. One chapter of our church-story that is regularly retold is The Year of Jubilee—a counter cultural ministry initiative and season that would impact all of the chapters afterward. It was this Jubilee initiative that was a major factor in my own discernment to join the Calvary staff in 2017. Soon afterwards, I got to experience it myself by traveling to Haiti twice in my first three years at Calvary.

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Of course, due to societal unrest in Haiti resulting in unsafe traveling realities, we have not been able to return to Haiti in a number of years. While our love for our Haitian brothers and sisters is unwavering, true ministry partnerships have been unattainable.

I was eager to travel to Honduras in October, because I wanted to catch a vision of what true ministry partnership could look like with organizations—such as ASJ—in Honduras. Beyond the personal desire, I wanted to begin discerning how Calvary as a whole might move into prayerful, financial, & mutually beneficial partnerships with people that we'd come to know, intercede with, care for, and grow in faith, hope, and love together. I went asking, “God, is Honduras our next ‘Haiti’”? Is this a place to which we'd send teams and trips to

discover the expansive Kingdom of Christ that is coming in Holland & Honduras as it is in heaven? A place to participate in the great commission to “go...to the ends of the earth”? A place that might become an outpost of missional justice and a beacon of gospel hope?

While this discernment is ongoing, it was clear that God had already begun knitting relationships together between Calvary and the people in Honduras. The first meeting that we had was an informal one with one of the Co-Directors of ASJ—and I quickly learned that we share an affinity for tacos, lots and lots of tacos. Not a bad start.

All joking aside, one big takeaway was learning about the work of macro development. In the past, I categorized justice work into two categories: aid (ie, assisting in a humanitarian crisis) and development (ie, establishing schools, hospitals, micro-loan programs, etc.) or what I'd later realize is micro development. To use a somewhat common analogy, if you give a hungry person a fish, you feed them for a meal (aid). If you teach them how to fish, you feed their family (micro development). If you work on making the fishing industry more safe, equitable, and sustainable, you feed a village for generations to come (macro development). Macro development seeks to bring change to social systems and political structures that stunt the growth or paralyze the sustainability of any/all micro development initiatives. Paired together (micro+macro), and the flourishing of whole people groups & nations comes to be realized.

It's a task of supernatural proportions, but we serve a God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine (Eph. 3). My hope for future partnership is that we'd be able to come alongside like-minded organizations to

bulwark their efforts in prayer, seeking to break spiritual strongholds of oppression and injustice. That we'd be able to grow in relationships that help us see the expansiveness of God's Kingdom, and to participate in its goodness. That we'd be able to invest kingdom resources through partnerships that express and actualize the good news of the Gospel. And that we'd grow in faith—taking our learning and experiences in Honduras, back to Holland and West Michigan—to actively participate in the Kingdom's coming on earth as it is in heaven. To God be the glory!



WHO IS GOD CALLING YOU TO BLESS?

Missions Director, Jason Pierce

I received an email a while back from someone I have known for years but hadn't spoken with in months. She told me her 20 year-old grandson was going through some things and could use some guidance. My first thought was, "I'm no counselor" followed up with, "I have my own struggles, who am I to guide this stranger" but I prayed about it and felt convicted to meet her grandson.

I sent this young man a text introducing myself and followed it up with, "we eat 27 meals a week, how about we eat one of those together?"

We found a date and time that worked for us both and when the day came, I went through the awkward waiting for the other person to show up and feared asking strangers, "hey, are you (I'll call him) Ted?" (Fortunately the first person I asked was Ted.)

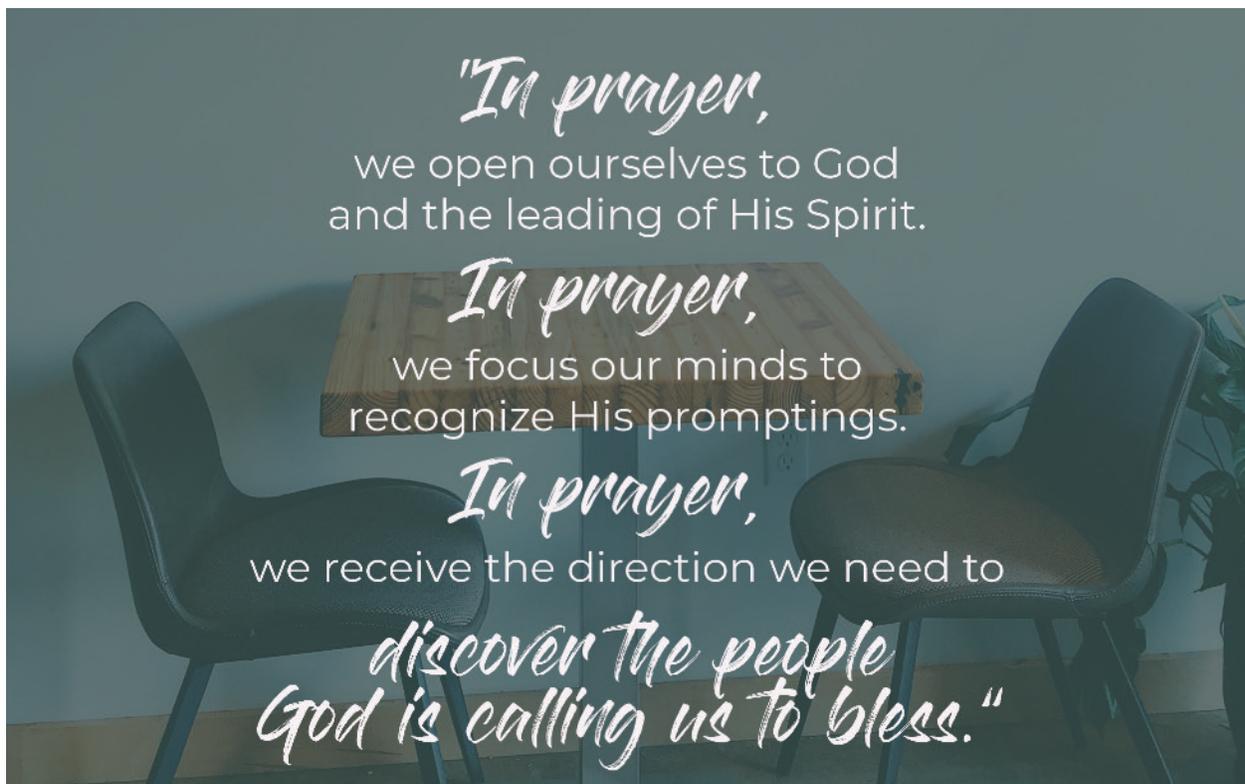
It was like pulling teeth getting the conversation started. Seriously, it took at least a half hour of me asking questions before he finally started to give more than one or two word answers. Eventually, the walls came down and Ted opened up. I never told him what he should do. I never gave my opinions on his theology or what the next right steps for him should be. *I asked questions and listened.* In the B.L.E.S.S. Book there is an equation that says listening + being known = loved.

When Ted and I finished up lunch he said, "This is not how I expected this to go." My logical response, "how did you expect this to go?" His expected response, "I thought you were going

to tell me I needed to get back in school and get back to church." I then responded, "I'll tell you those things if you want to hear those things, but I came here to get to know you. Thank you for allowing me into your world. If you ever want to talk more, give me a shout." *To be continued.*

It doesn't always work like this. Sometimes we pray and pray for someone and nothing happens or nothing changes and it feels hopeless. It's not. Keep praying. The Creator of the universe hears our prayers.

Maybe it will take years before you connect with your neighbor or your coworker or whoever it is you are praying for. It's possible the door into their life never opens, but praying for them isn't nothing. *Praying for them is loving them.* Who is it you are praying for?



Brothers, Dave and Jon Ferguson - B.L.E.S.S. Book

A WEEKEND WITH GERALD GRIFFIN

Director of Prayer and Spiritual Life, Kelli TenHaken

On October 15, Calvary had the privilege of hosting Gerald Griffin, who is the Pastor of Prayer at Bridgetown Church in Portland, OR. Some leaders at Calvary have been drawn to what God is doing at Bridgetown, especially because of their connection with the 24-7 Prayer organization. The lead pastor at Bridgetown, Tyler Staton, is the national director of 24-7 Prayer. He is the author of “Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools” that many of you have read. Last spring, Pastor Matthew and Pastor Alex traveled to a pastor’s conference that was hosted by Bridgetown Church. At this conference, they were moved by how God is moving through prayer and through the leaders of Bridgetown.

As we were discerning what our year-long focus on prayer should look like, we felt led to reach out to Pastor Gerald to see if he would come and encourage us in prayer. After praying about it, he said “this feels like a clear yes to me”. We were excited by his response and felt like God was drawing our churches together.

During his time at Calvary, Gerald taught on Sunday morning and Sunday night. He met with some of the staff, prayer team and elder team for lunch to share more of the Bridgetown story of deeper intimacy in prayer. He prayed with the prayer team before both services and met with students and the prayer team after the service to debrief how God had moved during the service. He also spent time on Saturday meeting with some of our leaders to talk in depth about how to grow a

culture of prayer and move into ministry empowered by the Holy Spirit. He was approachable and easy to have conversations with. It was a blessing to hear his journey into prayer and dependency on the Holy Spirit.

The teachings Gerald shared were meaningful. I was reminded that the gifts of the Spirit are for everyone and the Holy Spirit uses the gifts to work through people and empower them to do His work here on earth. The prayer times we had with him and two members of his prayer team were



powerful. Bold kingdom prayers were prayed for Calvary and the City of Holland. The prophetic words he shared were very encouraging. For example, before he stepped foot into Calvary's building, Gerald shared that he got an image of a river when he was praying for us as a church. He believed God was inviting all His people at Calvary to jump in the river of God's abundant life. He had no idea that we actually had artwork of a river on the back wall of our stage to symbolize this very thing! It felt like the Holy Spirit was orchestrating this relationship from the start.

But, more than any of that, what stands out to me about the weekend was that Gerald reminded us the vision is Jesus. He affirmed what God was doing at Calvary and he encouraged us to keep making room for people to have encounters with Jesus. During both worship services on Sunday, Gerald humbly prayed "Come, Holy Spirit, Come". And then he

created time and space to allow people to meet with God. And God was there! His presence was palpable and He did amazing things in people's hearts as they heard from Him.

God is the living God and He is speaking, moving and actively restoring His creation back to Him. An encounter with His manifest presence can change everything. Let's keep making space for people to hear from Jesus.



THE VISION IS JESUS

Anna and Jodi Gilmore

The last week of September, a group from Calvary made up of staff, elders, prayer team members and even 10-month-old Greyson Hochhalter, all flew to Colorado Springs, CO to attend the 24/7-USA prayer conference. The goal was to be encouraged and equipped by the leaders of the 24/7 prayer movement as we started off our focus of becoming a House of Prayer for All Nations.

When we arrived at our Airbnb, we were spoiled with spectacular views of the mountains and a beautiful house that we could all stay in together. There is something special about all being in one house. We all know each other from Calvary of course, but suddenly you know more about each other when you greet one another while waiting for coffee to brew in the kitchen at 6:00am without your hair combed and make-up on or contacts in yet. Late night conversations on the deck looking at the stars, many meals together, car rides and favorite songs being shared, and laughing and crying together at the most random things and at the goodness of God all within one conversation. Praying with and for each other and serving each other in big and small ways. What a joy to be on a journey of growing closer to God with others in our Calvary community.

“...but suddenly you know more about each other when you greet one another while waiting for coffee to brew in the kitchen at 6:00am without your hair combed and make-up on or contacts in yet.”

One of the things that was extra special for me was having my daughter Anna come along to attend the conference. As we at Calvary lean into what it means to be an “all play” kind of church and doing more than just saying that “the youth are more than the future of the church...they are the church,” it seemed like an okay idea to let her miss 3 school days to come hang out with a bunch of staff, elders and prayer team members. And it truly was a gift. At one point, Anna was struggling with some feelings of doubt. She shared it with me and I shared it with another woman with us to ask her to pray with me and Anna, and instantly we were surrounded by women praying with and for Anna. When finished, one woman said that in Africa, mother elephants form rings around young elephants to protect them from enemies who may want to hurt them. They stomp their feet, creating a cloud of dust to hide the young elephant from predators. She told Anna that she now has a circle of moms around her, protecting her from lies the enemy might try to tell her. As her mom, it was a beautiful moment to see women from Calvary surrounding my daughter and joining with me in praying with and for her. Anna now feels like she has a group of trusted women she can turn to at Calvary. What a gift!

Our days were mostly spent in worship, prayer and being inspired, taught and encouraged by several speakers on the subject of prayer and the church. One particularly powerful message for me was a simple one. The Vision is Jesus. It's easy for me, a planner, to get caught up in details and programming, learning and teaching; the working FOR Jesus. But the reality is that an encounter with Jesus is worth much more than a great Wednesday night lesson for Women's Ministry or a brilliant 3-5 year strategic plan for growth. Prayer is simple, yet powerful. Anyone can do it. And it's all about Jesus. More than anything else, Jesus should be the focus of

our churches and our lives. Jesus is who I should long to be with more than anyone else. Jesus should be what I am most excited to share with others. Pointing people to Jesus and inviting them to join me in following Him is the most important thing I can do as an Elder at Calvary, as a mom & wife, and as a neighbor, co-worker and resident of Holland.

If you were to speak to one of those who attended, we'd all have different stories of how we encountered God while

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gathered with the larger 24/7-USA community. Our active and living God was so encouraging to us and touched and impacted us all in very real ways. What a good and faithful God we serve. He knows just what

we need to encourage us to keep seeking Him... and encourage us He did. Here are two little stories from me and Anna:

Anna: One of the afternoons, we were given time to be with God. I was listening to worship music and reading my Bible and journaling my prayers. I suddenly got a picture in my head of a woman in a wedding gown. I started thinking about getting married some day and my wedding. I realized I was now daydreaming and felt bad that I hadn't stayed focused on praying and reading the Bible to be with God. Later when we returned to the conference, the next speaker spoke about the church being the bride of Christ. I thought that it was pretty crazy that I had the image of a bride pop into my head and had let my mind wander about that for a while...and that same image was used to encourage us in our walk with God as His bride. It made me feel like God and I

were connecting that afternoon, even when I didn't think we were connecting. I felt seen and loved by God.

Jodi: During one of the sessions, one of the speakers said they felt like there might be grandparents or parents in the room who were praying fervently for children and grandchildren who were not walking with God right now. And they were weary. The speaker asked if that was true for anyone, if they would raise their hands so that those around them could pray for them. I was surprised at how many hands were in the air. I had up until that point thought it was a pretty young crowd, but in that moment, I realized how many parents of older children and grandparents were among us. And they were faithfully standing in the gap praying for their loved ones... but they were indeed weary and burdened. As the room started to buzz with the prayers for those standing close to those who had asked for prayer, the Holy Spirit manifested himself through something called travailing prayer. Travailing prayer is mournful cries or groans. It can be shocking and difficult to hear. In scripture we learn that the spirit intercedes for us with groaning. And the room began to be filled with cries of sorrow and pain, with physical tears and audible weeping. This was showing us the Father's heart for His lost children and it was powerful and disturbing all at once. You could feel the pain of these parents and grandparents for their lost loved ones. And through that you could feel and hear the pain of our Father God for His lost children. It was a powerful experience and an encounter with the living God that I won't soon forget.

“Travailing prayer is mournful cries or groans. It can be shocking and difficult to hear. In scripture we learn that the spirit intercedes for us with groaning. And the room began to be filled with cries of sorrow and pain, with physical tears and audible weeping.”

We came home from Colorado Springs having met the goals of the trip. We were encouraged and equipped. But as we are in the habit of saying around Calvary lately, God gave us more than we could ask or imagine through a time of community building with each other and with Him. There were encounters that strengthened friendships new and old and brought us deeper into our relationship with God and an increasing desire to spend time in His presence in prayer for our own lives and for the lives of others. Indeed, the vision is Jesus. As the song I learned many, many years ago in Sunday School and we sang at the conference goes, "Jesus, Jesus... Jesus in the morning, Jesus in the noontime, Jesus, Jesus... Jesus when the sun goes down."



THE PRAYER ROOM: A SACRED PLACE TO HEAR FROM GOD

Director of Prayer and Spiritual Life, Kelli TenHaken

As we discerned how to implement a focus on prayer at Calvary, we felt led to host a week of round the clock prayer at Calvary. What a better way to kick off a year long focus on prayer than to pray! As we prepared for this week, God went ahead of us. The people of Calvary showed up and the week of 24-7 prayer far exceeded my expectations. People at Calvary were eager to pray and the slots filled up quickly. Around 75 individuals signed up for a slot in the prayer room and many of them registered for multiple hours. Some of those people came with their families or with friends and small groups. I was so excited to find that most of the middle of the night slots were full.

I heard stories from so many people about encounters with God during time in the prayer room. People mentioned feeling God's presence, hearing God speak words of healing and hope to their hearts, praying big kingdom prayers for Calvary, praying for the lost, seeing encouraging visions, listening to worship music, reading scripture, praying with their kids, walking through the sanctuary to pray for each row of chairs and feeling so loved and seen by God...the list of ways people experienced God during this week could go on and on. God's presence was palpable to so many as they prayed.

I was in the prayer room with my kids, when Mona, my youngest, asked me what the anointing oil was for. I explained to her why we might anoint someone with oil and then she asked me if I would use the oil on her. So, I anointed her head and hands with oil and prayed a

blessing over her. After my prayer, she opened her eyes and said, "I heard God talk to me". I said, "Wow, that's great! What did He say?" She responded with, "He said, 'Mona, I love you'". At nine years old, she felt loved and seen by God through prayer. What a special moment to have in the prayer room with her!

Here are a few more prayer room stories that people shared with me (written in their words, but shared anonymously):

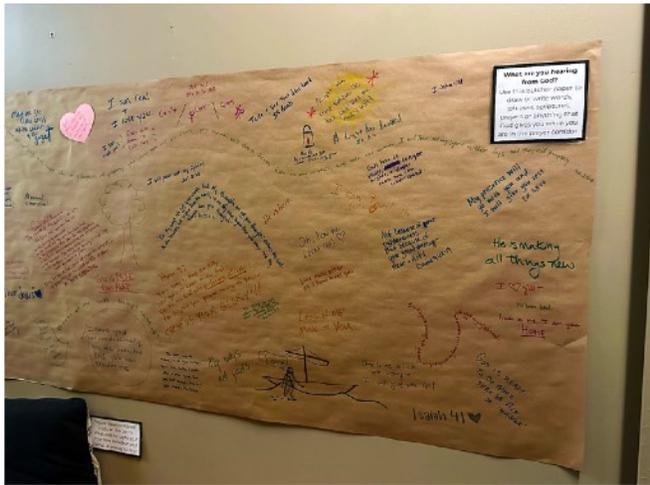
"We signed up for an hour as a family. As we drove to church our 9 yr old asked, "so we just go to church for 5 or 10 minutes, pray and come home?" It's not like this was our first conversation with him about prayer, so it caught me a bit off guard. It was a great opportunity to talk about and show him all the different ways we can pray and listen and just sit and be with God! He was excited to pray through coloring and participate in the interactive boards. We also took the time to use the anointing oil and pray over every chair in the sanctuary. What a great way to pray and move at the same time! Thank you for the opportunity to tangibly teach him how he can also participate in the life of the church and what prayer can look like! It's my hope more families would sign up and embrace what might seem like a bit of a "messy" prayer hour with the realization that God calls us to have faith like a child and he will meet you in that hour!"

"In my first experience in the prayer room, God placed 2 very special people on my heart. As I was sitting on the bench in the room, I saw the notecards on the shelves and brought 2 over to where I was sitting and praying, just in case they'd be needed. As I prayed for them, God was giving me words to write to them. I was writing so fast (and very messy) because I did not want to miss anything that He was saying. God was so present, moving my heart, my mind, and my pen. He made sure that I didn't miss anything He wanted to say."

"I overlapped with someone I've sat next to in church for years and have never had a conversation with. We had an opportunity to pray for each other and for each other's families and even open up about our insecurities about prayer. Probably the most meaningful 3am I've ever had! I can't imagine another scenario where it would've happened."

"I so appreciated all the work to prepare the prayer room and provide a wide variety of ways/opportunities to pray. The most meaningful option for me was to write a name on a paper hand of someone who doesn't know Jesus and put it on the wall. I then placed my hand on each hand there and prayed for all the names listed."

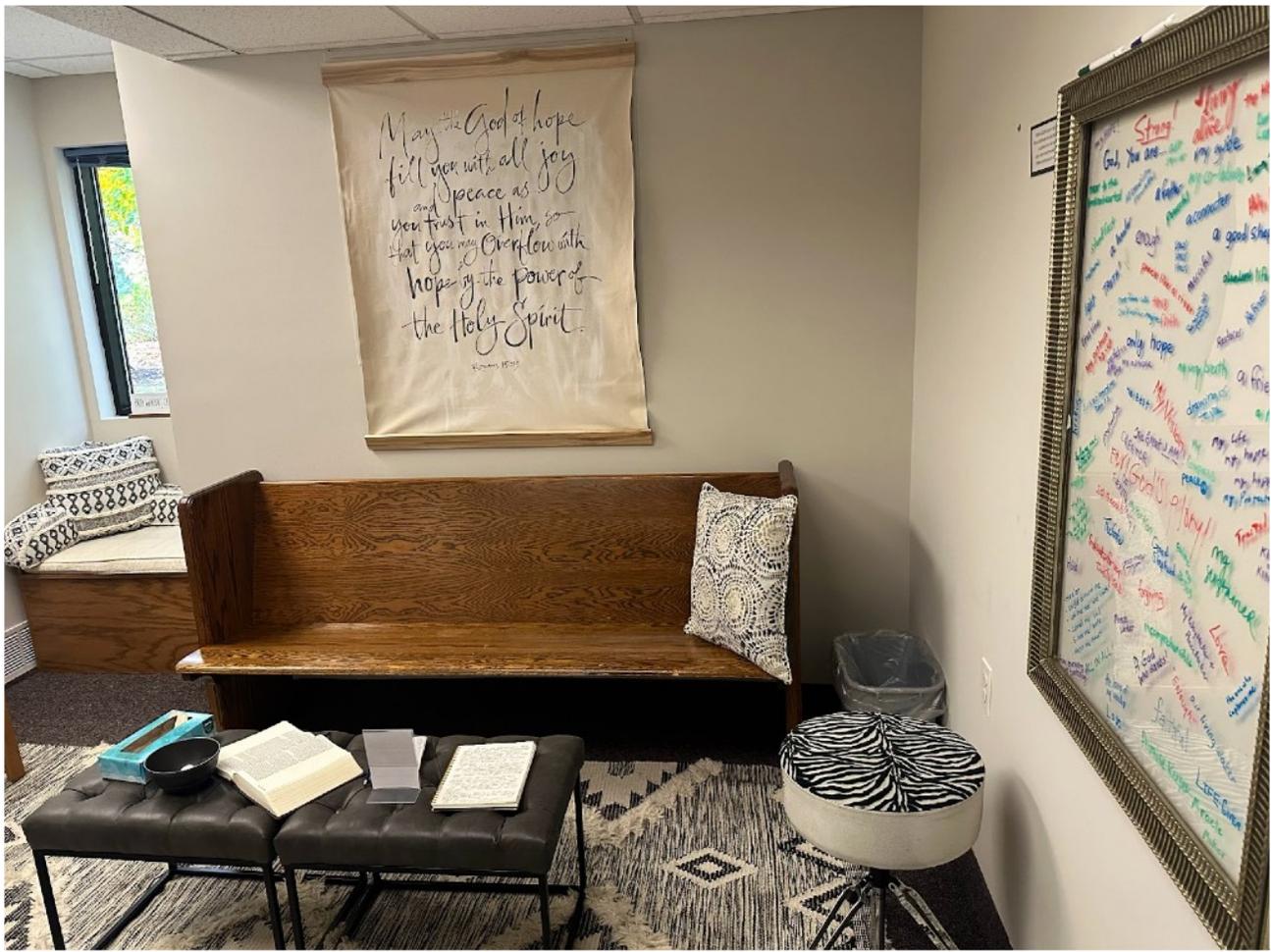
"I can say that 24/7 praying was an awesome experience. Having the sanctuary all to myself, knowingly no one else was around made me feel special. I was with God alone. I once heard that God is selfish, that he wants all my love. Well that's how I felt, I had all his attention and I didn't have to share it with anyone. It was so peaceful. I could sit back and listen."



Wall where people can write what they are hearing from God.



Wall of attributes of God that we are praising Him for.



A snapshot of just one area of the prayer space.

VULNERABILITY BRINGS HEALING

Lydia Tubbergen

This past summer my grandpa had passed away and that hit my family and I hard. My grandpa was the rock of our family. Shortly after, my mom took me along to the first Worship and Prayer night. This was my second prayer night so I understood how these things normally go but this night affected me in a different way than what I thought it would.

During the beginning we were asked to reflect on our souls and what God wanted us to hear. As I closed my eyes and started to slow down my breathing, I started to reflect over the past months. A huge wave of tears started to flow out of me, confused on why, I looked down at my grandpa's ring I wear on my necklace and I was just relieved. As we transitioned into group prayer, we took turns praying for each other and when it became my turn, everyone was coming back to grieving and that I needed to grieve and go through the emotions I was feeling. For me, that meant accepting the feelings that I was vulnerable and weak. I didn't want people to know that I was vulnerable, furthermore, I didn't want to accept that I was vulnerable. This whole time, God made sure I knew that I was hurting, and that being hurt is fine in His eyes. I don't have to be perfect or put on a face, I can find refuge in God's arms. At that moment I understood that accepting my emotions didn't make me a weak person, that being vulnerable is a time when God can protect me and heal my wounds. Allowing him to do that takes faith and trust that comes from a personal relationship. I continue to work on my relationship with Jesus and continue to heal.

What does it mean for kids to reflect the love of Jesus in the world? Here are some of the responses from Calvary kids as they reflect on how to reflect His love!

Sharing your snacks and your toys with people.

Helping people... like if they trip, help them up.

What does it mean for you to reflect the love of Jesus in the world?

Include others and share.

Respect people, and talk kindly.

Be nice to people, be a good human.

Play with kids that don't have anyone to play with.

CALVARY FAMILY UPDATES

We celebrate the Profession of Faith of Nico DiLaura and Seth Cantu.

We welcome the following new members to Calvary:

Ken and Katy Arthurs

Patrick Arthurs

Jack and Sandra Dik

Sara Hill

Carolyn Lemmen

Seth and Molly Piersma

Jay and Evelyn Weber

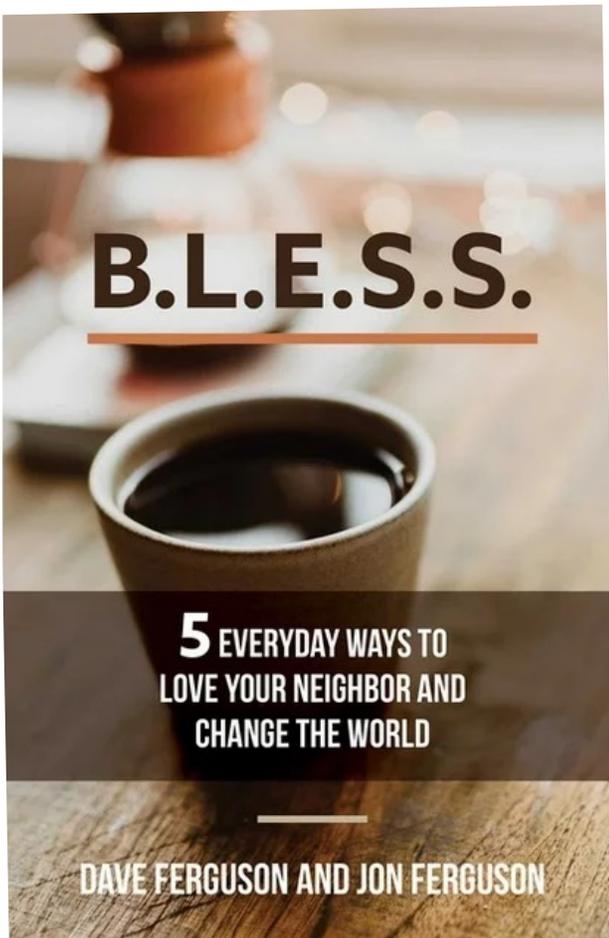
Frank and Sally Wevers

Roy Wehrmeyer

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November

local missions month



Going through the B.L.E.S.S. book this month has been a starting point for those that want to share their faith and the love and kindness of God with those around them.

To journal your time and share how God is leading you, scan the QR code to access the Calvary B.L.E.S.S. Community Journal. We hope to encourage, pray and support one another in this journey of learning to B.L.E.S.S. those with whom we live, work and play. You may share anonymously if you'd like and we can celebrate with you and pray for you in the challenging times.



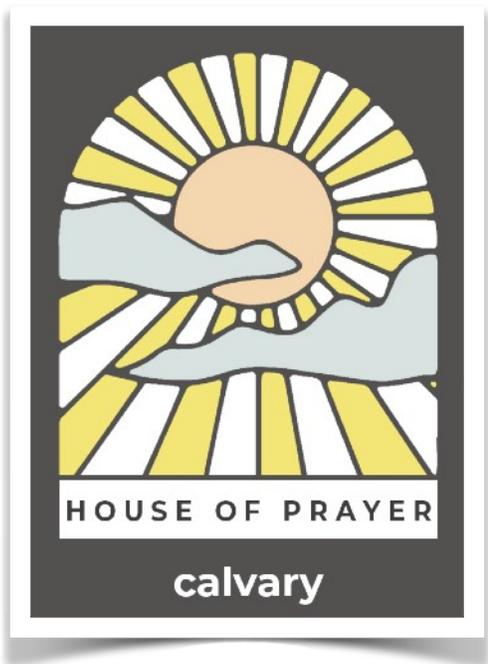
B.L.E.S.S.

Community journal





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