

*Faithful members of Calvary Church,
Servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints who are in Cincinnati:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,*

I thank God every time I think of you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among us will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

Paul greeted members of the church in this way in his letter to the Philippians community. His letter to the church, not too unlike a Rector's annual address to the congregation, was meant to rejoice in, encourage, and strengthen the work of ministry.

The book of Philippians shows how living as a Christian means seeing your own story as a living expression of Jesus' story.

After serving you as rector for the past year and a half this I am confident: we are living expressions of Jesus' story as members of Calvary Church. And the one who began a good work among us will bring it to completion.

What good work is going on among us?

Worship and Community

We promise as Christian people in our baptism *to continue in teaching, fellowship, and breaking of the bread*. In 2019, worship attendance increased by 10%. Over the past year, we baptized seven children, celebrated the blessing of three marriages, celebrated the confirmation of an adult and a teen, and had only two funerals.

We continue drawing people into our community through three unique Sunday worship service experiences. From a quiet 8:00 Holy Communion to the raucous and highly-participatory 9:30 Family Service to the 10:30 Choral Eucharist— there is something for everyone. In the coming year, I plan to introduce ways that our three unique communities can spend more time on Sundays getting to know one another.

Our Kitchen Crewe, led by Susan Skidmore, continues to inject joy into our shared community. There is a wonderful energy around our ministry of hospitality and fellowship in this place.

Music

We are blessed to have Howard Helvey as our choirmaster and organist. I am especially grateful for the faithful volunteer members of the choir, along with our Choral and organ scholars from CCM and the greater community. Howard's composed works and skilled liturgical planning help to bring our worship to life.

Over the past months, we have also been preparing to celebrate Howard's singular talent as a composer and conductor at Carnegie Hall. In March, Howard will conduct eight of his composed works along with a chorus of 150, including 20 singers from the Calvary community and nearly 50 varsity ensemble choir members from Winton Woods High School.

Howard also led a lesson on the meaning and power of music in worship with our children in August. That day, we celebrated our Skinner pipe organ. In Family Worship, about 20 young members of Calvary got an up-close look at the instrument— from the console with its keys, stops, and pedals to the chamber where a majority of the pipes reside. In 10:30 worship that same day, we invited all members of the church to take a look inside the organ chamber at the pipes.

Sally Engelbert gives children an introduction to the love of music in the Family Worship Service. We have been intentional about introducing both traditional hymns and music from around the world to children in that worship service, and are preparing to bring on a dedicated Family Service Musician in the coming weeks. My hope is that as our children continue to grow older with each passing year (*moment!*) that the songs we sing as a community become touchstones for their faith for the rest of their life.

Children & Families

Along with a celebration of music at Calvary, we celebrate the liveliness of the presence of children in our church.

Nearly a quarter of our active membership at Calvary is under the age of 18. The majority of those members attend both Sunday School and the 9:30 worship service.

Sally Engelbert is now in her third year of faithfully cultivating both a strong Sunday school program and shepherding a vibrant family ministry program. Families are able to raise their children in the Christian life and faith with integrity at Calvary.

The average Sunday attendance at the 9:30 service has increased significantly. On Christmas Eve, many of you witnessed the wonder of Christ's birth as presented by nearly 30 children and teenagers at the first Christmas pageant at Calvary in decades.

Youth

As our children grow, so does our youth program. Miriam McKenney is very intentional about building a bridge from the Godly Play curriculum of the children's Sunday school program to the formation of teenagers in Youth Group. Our Youth have explored the Letter to the Romans, the prophet Isaiah, and Presiding Bishop Curry's Way of Love (practices for a Jesus-centered life) in the past year.

Eight of the youth joined Miriam and me for multiple Saturday nights for dinner and studying the Episcopal life and faith. Yes, you heard that right, eight teenagers spent several Saturday nights at church sitting around and exploring their Christian faith.

Our youth care about the needs of the world and of their city. They raised over \$1000 for Heifer International this year, bringing their cumulative total throughout the years to over \$20,000. Every fifth Sunday, the youth feed the residents of Tender Mercies as part of their dedicated outreach.

Outreach

Calvary remains strongly dedicated to the work of outreach, inclusion, charity, and justice. Just take a look at the list of ways we reach out to serve our greater community and world in the annual report.

This is just a short list of some of the ways we made a difference in 2019: We educated a child in Central America. We financially and physically supported the rehabilitation of a Habitat for Humanity Home in Lower Price Hill. We funded the purchase of a new industrial refrigerator for St. Andrew's Food Pantry. We prepared and fed meals to hundreds of hungry people and volunteers throughout our city through IHN, Tender Mercies, and Habitat for Humanity.

We don't just hand out help — we work the ground with fellow members of our community to support both immediate aid and assistance to those in need and to work toward a healthier and more sustainable Cincinnati and world.

Adult Formation and Spirituality

It is through learning together that we are equipped to go into the world. Over the past year, we explored Episcopal Traditions and Beliefs in our Lenten Series.

The Rector's Book Club is a new addition that has brought in 8-20 members each month, exploring Presiding Bishop Curry's Way of Love.

Calvary named and claimed our commitment to radical welcome with our Statement of Inclusion, released in Lent. The statement hangs at the entry to the church as a reminder.

Look for the culmination of the Way of Love study this winter, including the next book Radical Welcome by Stephanie Spellers. The book is a practical theological guide for congregations that want to move beyond mere inclusivity toward becoming a place where welcoming "the other" is taken seriously and engaging God's mission becomes more than just a catch-phrase. We will be challenged to put our words into action in meaningful ways.

Olivia Hamilton also led us in a new Prayer Partners ministry, where we determined that an expression of Healing Prayer ministry and a Maundy Thursday Prayer Vigil will be part of our 2020 community prayer life.

New Clergy and Staff

Calvary was able to both sustain and grow in our existing ministries in 2019. Along with that, we welcomed a ministry of the Diocese, the Episcopal Service Corps, to our campus. Throughout 2019, post-college students called the house next door, Calvary House, their home as the Brendan's Crossing Community.

Unfortunately, a member of this year's cohort left Brendan's Crossing in November, causing the program to be unsustainable for the remainder of the year. Brendan's Crossing continues to operate its recruitment activities out of Calvary House, and is bound by their lease with us until June 2020. The future of that ministry is yet to be determined.

One of the remaining members of Brendan's Crossing, Nathan Harpine, has been a fantastic addition to the Calvary staff team in the past few months. Nathan's faithful work in cultivating the Calvary Community and enhancing our Communications is a great gift. I was able to extend an offer to Nathan to continue on as our Calvary Community and Communications Intern through May 2020.

And what a great gift the Reverend Olivia Hamilton has been to Calvary. Olivia was ordained in June and joined us in August as a part-time associate. Her preaching, pastoral sensibility, and introduction of the Prayer Partner program has enhanced our life together. Olivia will be ordained in Cambridge, Massachusetts by the Bishop of Massachusetts in her sponsoring parish.

Throughout these months she has served as a transitional deacon, Olivia has offered her time to us without a stipend. In February, when Olivia is ordained to the priesthood, I am happy to welcome her to our paid staff as Calvary's Priest Associate.

How Calvary Runs

It is through the faithful service of each of you, giving your time, talent and treasure, that makes Calvary the vibrant place it is today.

The Vestry of Calvary Church has been working doing ministry as a team and in a leadership team structure. I have been intentional about using the word “team” rather than “committee” to convey groups that meet with a sense of purpose than with the purpose simply to meet. The work has been good and enlivening.

And I want to highlight our staff team over this past year: Judy Gardner, Howard Helvey, Sally Engelbert, Miriam McKenney, Nathan Harpine, and until May, Edy Dreith. This is a group of faithful people who love Jesus, are committed to building up the church, and who love to laugh.

Members, Vestry, Staff and Clergy:

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians so long ago, and writes to us:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

We are built upon the foundation of the Spirit of the Living God!

And of course, the place we worship is also built on a solid foundation, but one that needs our earthly care. From 1865 to present, Calvary Church has gathered in this monumental building. And as we know, this building requires continued maintenance and care.

I am especially grateful to John Malone and Chris Gardner, who for a few years oversaw the Building Maintenance projects at Calvary. In the late summer, both of them stepped down for differing health reasons. In the past months, the Buildings and Grounds Team of Junior Warden Tom Bible, J J Engelbert, Jim Graham, and Daren Grayton have continued working to identify priorities for continued maintenance and repair on our buildings. The team and I completed a job description to hire a part-time Facilities Manager this year. That job description was made public last week and I have received 68 resumes to date from potential candidates.

In the early summer, our 20-year-old HVAC systems gave way to their age and required replacement. And you, without a formal capital campaign, stepped up and paid for over half of the expenses to replace \$155,000 of equipment needed to keep this building running well. That is abundant generosity at work.

Over the past two years, you have increased your pledged giving at Calvary Church by 46%— from \$151,000 in pledged giving to \$222,000. Thank you for your faithfulness in offering your treasure to the work of the church. Our increases in giving have made it possible to bring on new hires like Olivia Hamilton and Nathan Harpine, as well as be good stewards of our buildings and grounds.

Currently, we are overly reliant on endowment interest income to operate our church and to cover our building maintenance needs.

As I mentioned last year, my vision as your rector is to see this parish fund our living ministries — outreach, programs, and personnel — 100% through our living dollars— the pledges we make.

Many of you give in a sacrificial way to Calvary Church— some tithing their income, some giving the maximum proportion of their income possible for their family. Some of you give to the church faithfully, but perhaps could increase your pledge to further advance our pledged giving to a more sustainable level.

I ask to you pray about your pledge, as well as consider remembering Calvary in your will if you have not already done so.

Did you know that 30 bequests have made up the capital in Calvary's endowment fund over the past 100 years? Those gifts over the years have ranged from \$500 to \$500,000 left behind in the last will and testament of faithful members of Calvary Church.

This is my vision for giving at our church:

Living dollars fund living ministries.

Interest on investments keeps our building's foundation strong.

We are seeing exciting and sustainable growth among the membership of Calvary Church. Through our prayer, worship, formation, fellowship, outreach we are actively living and sharing the Love of Jesus with a 21st century world hungry for that Good News.

Just think back on how Calvary has made a difference in your life in the past year. Look at the images that capture the energy of all we've done together in Jesus' name. I believe that God has begun a good work in us, and that more than we can ask or imagine lies ahead of us.

As the Apostle Paul prayed nearly 2000 years ago, so I pray today:

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.