

CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA
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"God's Work, Our Hands"

Non-profit
 Organization
 US Postage

Calvary's PROCLAMATION

February 2009

Create in me a
 **clean heart,**
O God;
and renew a
right spirit
within
me.



Psalm 51:10


Ash
Wednesday
February 25

DIRECTORY

Church Staff

Dr. Michael F. Riley..... Pastor
 Becky Stevens.....Organist/Music Director
 Valerie Graybill.....Chancel Choir Director
 Amy Alexander.....Hand Bell Director
 Shirley Hise.....Parish Secretary

Council Officers

Mike Imboden.....President
 Emmet Brittain..... Vice-President
 Dot Williams.....Secretary
 Judie Huffman.....Financial Secretary
 Garry Harding.....Treasurer

Congregation Council

Term expiring 2009

Teresa Gamewell
 Jerry Stevens
 Angela Williams
 Scott Wilson

Terms expiring 2010

Mike Imboden
 Seth Hunt
 Phillip Rector
 Steve Wilson

Term expiring 2011

Emmett Brittain
 Jeff Farrar
 Debbie Little
 Dot Williams

MISSION STATEMENT

Embraced in God's love through Jesus Christ, Calvary Lutheran Church is called
 To proclaim the Good News of God's saving grace,
 To nurture spiritual growth, and
 Care for all God's creation.



Dear Friends in Christ,
 In a new year, in a new day,
 in a new moment, in any
 given time, there is God.
 As we were meeting last
 weekend during the council

retreat, we had opportunity to think about life in the church and the beginnings that are offered to us by a God who loves to think in terms of the new, the creative, and the fresh.

“I am about to do a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”
 (Isaiah 43:19)

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.”
 (Lamentations 3:22-23)

“So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old is passed away; see, everything has become new!”
 (2Corinthians 5:17)

“See, I am making all things new...write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”
 (Revelation 21:5)

“Create in me a clean heart, O God. Put within me a new and right spirit.”
 (Psalm 51:10)

There are many places where our scriptures speak of new beginnings, new life, and a fresh start. Each week as we stand before the cross of Christ, and remember our baptism into the One who brings new life, we ask God to turn us from the old and give us a clean start again. By God’s grace and God’s love for making things new, God sets us upright again... and again...and again. For this we give thanks and worship the Lord.

During the retreat, council members constructed an image of our congregation out of craft materials, working together to build a representation

of who we are at Calvary. Aside from working well as a group and demonstrating impressive artistry in the project, council members identified gathering around Christ in word and sacrament to be at the heart of our church, and moving out (with Christ) from there into our mission and ministries to which we have been called. Much discussion took place about our joys, hopes and struggles as we try to faithfully work and serve together in the Church, the body of Christ. There are positive thoughts and prayers among your leaders that this new year will bring the building up and renewal of spirit among all members of our congregation, so that our life together will faithfully reflect the presence and blessings of our faithful and loving God.

At the end of one of our Bible Study times, we used the words of the following hymn as our prayer. I commend the words to you for reflection and prayer as we enter another new day as children of God in Christ Jesus at Calvary.

Build us up, Lord, build us up. Set in us a strong foundation. Lead us to do your holy will; form and shape your new creation.

Build us up, Lord, build us up; as we guide and teach each other, help us to share your love with the world, every sister, every brother.

Build us up, Lord, build us up. Let our lives reflect your glory. Cast away all our doubts and fears; help us tell the world your story.

Build us up, Lord, build us up. Help us to bear good fruit for you. Lord, give us vision and keep us sure, grant us faith that’s steadfast and true.

Growing in Christ, we plant seeds for the kingdom, we follow in faith what’s begun! Lord, set our hearts in the power of your word to spread the news of your Son.

Build us up, Lord, build us up. (ELW 670)

Your partner in Christ,

Pastor Mike



FAMILY

Barbara Bergstrom
 Bob Berryhill
 Steve Bethke (Navy)
 Roy & Azile Bogle
 Donnie Bogle
 Darius & Sue Bollinger
 Ray Bost
 Katherine Briggs
 J.C. Burnette
 Steven Byers & family
 Edith Cobb
 Lori DiMedio
 Alta Grauer
 Cathy Edwards
 Andy Foss

MEMBERS:

Charlie Edwards
 Jim Fisher
 Betty Glasbrook
 John Hale
 Bruce Keever
 Rachel Keisler
 Sandy Koerner
 Joan Mease
 Betty Riley
 Patrick Stokes
 Ernie Wallat

OTHERS:

All military service men & women
 All who work for peace & justice
 Domestic & global missionaries

FAMILY, continued

Elizabeth Gray
 Mary Haller
 Gregg Harding
 Julia Hartzog
 Robert Horne
 Hans & Betty Lund
 Avery Lutz
 Noel Martin
 Melissa Moore & Family
 Curt Nutbrown
 Sarah & Mitch Pons
 Denise Robinson
 Constance St. Armand
 Michael Stokes
 Jim Taylor
 Evan Thomason
 Rebecca Weiner
 Fred Whalen
 Vernon & Laura Whisnant
 Donald & Hazel Whitley
 Tasha Williamson
 Everette Zettle

AT HOME:

Jan English
 J. C. Gantt
 Ruth Hahn
 Maggie Lou Roberson
 Billie Rose Robertson
 Doris Sink
 Jackie Wiseman

U.S. MILITARY:

Henry Lange (Navy-Iraq)
 Justin Williams (Marines)

NURSING HOME:

Marie Page (Autumn Care)
 Wilma Whisnant (Grace Ridge)
 Mary Voltmer (Grace Heights)

SEMINARIAN:

Joanna Novak
 Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia)

SISTER PARISH:

Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church Brisas del Valle, El Salvador

FRIENDS:

Brett Anderson
 Bryson family
 Louise Carrell
 Louise Doyle
 Gene Dube
 Jewell Gist
 Veronica Grossi
 Gloria Hayes
 Susan Nyman
 Lucille Robinson
 Kyle Rusnak
 Vonda Stroupe
 Irma Stefula
 Vicki Wilson

Thanks to everyone for donations of clothing, food, diapers, and prayers for us and Ryan Victoria. We are very thankful for all of you. Please continue to keep us in your prayers. Seth and Andrea Hunt

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

3	Wayne Williams	18	Tina Padgett
5	Jack Huss		Joanne Stokes
8	Sandy Nutbrown	20	Ernie Wallat
11	Crystal Anthony	21	Donna Kanupp
12	Jake Duncan	22	Cynthia Lange
14	Evelyn Keever	23	Larry Elliott
15	Nathan Graybill	24	Addison Poteat
16	Elizabeth Garrison	25	Carol Clark
	Elaine Yount	27	Carol Somers
17	Howy Copenhaver	28	Charles Harding
	Seth Poteat	29	Steve Yount

WE PRAY MONTHLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION IN LOVE AND COMMUNION WITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

David & Sharon Shirlen
 Steve & Donna Short
 Juanita Sigmon
 Doris Sink
 Paul & Carol Somers
 Janice & Granville Sorrells

Calvary Proclamation is published monthly by Calvary Lutheran Church, N. King Street, Morganton, North Carolina 28655. Phone 828-437-0780 Fax 828-437-1276 Email calvarylutheran@compascable.net Web page www.clcmorganton.org Deadline for submitted materials to regular publications is the third Monday of each month. Circulation for the Proclamation each month: Larry & Lois Berryhill, Ruth Peterson, Lee Dehnert, Louise Whitener, Robert Rumpel.

KEEP US POSTED VIA E-MAIL: If you have added internet services, changed internet carriers or adjusted your e-mail address, notify Seth Hunt (sthunt@burke.k12.nc.us). By doing that we will be able to keep the “Prayer Chain” up to date and can be a communication link between you and the church.

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

8:30
Ushers Julie Copenhaver
 Howy Copenhaver

11:00
 Wil Johnson
 Gary Lail
 Jerry Stevens
 Scott Wilson

February 1
Assisting Minister Dawn McDonald
Acolyte Gavin McDonald
Crucifer Dawn McDonald
Lector Fred Miller
Greeter Arlene Robinson
Nursery

Treesie Cape
 Holly Goodson
 Crystal Anthony
 Elaine Yount
 Jan & Joanna Dokter
 Scott & Jennifer Wilson

 Pastor Mike
 Tonya Cozort

Children's Message
Children's Church

February 8
Assisting Minister Nina Harding
Acolyte Tina Padgett
Crucifer Nina Harding
Lector Betty Riley
Greeter Don & Rita Blanton
Nursery
Children's Message
Children's Church

Tori Whalen
 Gabrielle Peters
 Ellen Koerner
 Sarah Williams
 Ernie Wallat
 Watts Family
 Scott Wilson
 Heather Sossoman

February 15
Assisting Minister Wayne Giese
Acolyte Georgia Ballard
Crucifer Wayne Giese
Lector Larry Berryhill
Greeter Betty Williams
Nursery
Children's Message
Children's Church

Ingrid Farrar
 Will Duncan
 Jake Duncan
 Matt Robillard
 Amy Goodson
 Cozort Family
 Rich Duncan
 Jennifer Wilson

February 22
Assisting Minister Nina Harding
Acolyte Tina Padgett
Crucifer Nina Harding
Lector Mandy Greco
Greeter Judie Huffman
Nursery
Children's Message
Children's Church

Ken Whitley
 Amanda Rector
 Alex Rector
 Tammy Isaac
 Shirley Nutbrown
 St. Louis Family
 Jennifer Hunt
 Susan Rector

ALTAR GUILD: Karel Johnson, Julie Copenhaver, Judy Moll,
 Lynn Black

CARE VISITOR: Sandy Blackburn



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Souper Bowl of Caring 8:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School Choir Rehearsal 11:00 am Worship Service	2 7:30 Circle I	3 10:00 Circle II 6:30 Mutual Ministry	4 6:00 Support Board 7:00 Handbells	5 BUCM (am)	6	7
8 8:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School Confirmation Class Choir Rehearsal 11:00 am Worship Service 5:30 pm New Orleans Youth 6:30 pm CLC Youth	9	10 BUCM (pm) 11:00 Calvaliers	11 4:30 Service Board 6:00 Endowment Board 7:00 Handbells	12	13 6-9 PM Valentine's Dinner & Dance (Youth babysitting)	14
15 8:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School Choir Rehearsal 11:00 am Worship Service	16	17 BUCM (am) 6:00 Worship & Music	18 7:00 Handbells	19 BUCM (pm)	20	21 10 am-12 noon Confirmation Class
22 Transfiguration Sunday 8:30 am Worship Service 9:45 am Sunday School Choir Rehearsal 11:00 am Worship Service 5-7 pm Shrove Tuesday Event & Lenten Craft Night (Youth Fundraiser)	23	24 7:00 Council	25 Ash Wednesday 5-6:15 pm Meal in Fellowship Hall 6:30 pm Worship Service	26	27	28

ADOPT A SISTER 08-09 CLOSING DINNER
 All ladies who have been involved in the 2008-2009 Adopt a Sister Program are invited to attend our closing dinner on Tuesday, February 17th at Friday Friends (across from the Morganton Post Office.) We will meet in the private dining room beginning at 6 PM. Please bring your final gift for your sister as we reveal our sister for the past year. We will order from the menu (Dutch treat) and enjoy some fun time together. If you cannot attend, please contact Elaina Benson or Debbie Little.

ADOPT A SISTER 2009-2010 BEGINS!
 If you are interested in having an adoptive sister from our church this year and surprising her with small monthly gifts (\$5-\$7 value), you will want to sign up for this program. We will begin in March and end in February 10 with a closing dinner. Ladies of all ages are welcomed to join us! We would love to have some new ladies as well as our "seasoned" sisters who have been active before. It's a wonderful way to get to know each other better and to share some "sunshine" in our church. Please contact Debbie Little for more details and to sign up.



WELCA Purpose Statement
*As a community of women,
 Created in the image of God,
 Called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and
 Empowered by the Holy Spirit; We commit ourselves
 to GROW in faith, AFFIRM our gifts,
 SUPPORT one another in our callings
 ENGAGE in ministry and action and,
 PROMOTE healing and wholeness in the church, the
 society, and the world.*
 WELCA is
*We are all the women of Calvary, we are all ages,
 whether circle member or not, if Calvary is your
 home..... WELCA is YOU!*
Calvary Lutheran Church WELCA Officers
 President.....Betty Williams
 Vice PresidentDot Williams
 SecretaryHeather Sossoman
 Treasurer.....Connie Wilkie
 Circle I LeaderJeanette Wilson
 Circle II LeaderDot Williams

Dear CLC Ladies,
 We have a wonderful opportunity to attend a one day Lenten Retreat on February 28th. This retreat is for all women. The only requirement is a desire to join with Lutheran women in prayer, study and fellowship.
 While you are free to attend at any of the locations, Old St. Paul's in Newton is the closest. Also, we can share a ride.
 Please note that February 13 is the deadline for registration. Fill out the form and send to Marguerite Taylor.
 For information, Call Betty Williams 439-2474.

ONE DAY LENTEN RETREAT
Saturday, February 28, 2009
9:30 am to 2:30 pm
Theme: Sabbath Keeping

City	Host Church	Leader
Brevard	Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd	Marguerite Taylor
Dallas	Philadelphia	Judy Schlegel
Wilmington	St. Paul	Anne Laudatti
Salisbury	Prince of Peace	Arlene Duffala
Chapel Hill	Holy Trinity	Edna Wagschal
Goldsboro	Good Shepherd	Gerda Fellke
Newton	Old St. Paul's	Karen Hunt

COST \$8.00 REGISTRATION DEADLINE FEBRUARY 13
 Send registration form below with check payable to NCSWO Women of the ELCA Attention: Marguerite Taylor, 1118 Dumbarton Road, Gastonia, NC 28054 Phone: 704-867-2653

Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ City/Zip _____
 Your Congregation & City _____
 Retreat Site Attending _____

BUCM FOOD ITEMS FOR FEBRUARY
SOUP & CRACKERS

Please place in bins located in old fellowship hall.


Donations to Southmountain Children and Family Services

Thank you to everyone who responded to the Christmas service project and donated items and/or money to the Southmountain Children and Family Services. Because of your generous donations, Calvary Lutheran Church donated nine blankets, 18 twin sheet sets, 19 pajamas for boys, 16 pajamas for girls, 40 small school backpacks, and six laundry baskets. Also, \$280.00 was donated to the organization to help provide Christmas presents to the children. Thank you again for your contributions. You are a blessing to so many!
 The Service Board

Dear Friends,
 On behalf of the children of Southmountain Children & Family Services, thank you for your generous support of our organization. Your donation \$280.00 along with the clothes baskets, sheets and blankets is greatly appreciated. All of these items will help so much when we take in new children!
 Southmountain Children & Family Services continues to provide a loving, stable environment for the children in our care thanks to your help. Community involvement plays a big role in providing the financial support we need to continue caring for these children.
 Thank you again for your support and please keep our children in your prayers.
 Sincerely,
 W. Chris Jernigan
 Executive Director
 Southmountain Children and Family Services

Come one, Come all!

It's time for our Valentine's Dinner and Dance on February 13th; 6:00 to 9 PM. Our own, Rob Harriger, will be our DJ again this year. The event will be held at the Community House. The Cost: \$10.00 per ticket. The meal will consist of:
 Almond Chicken, Roast Beef, Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Fresh Veggie Medley, Tossed Salads, Yeast Rolls, Cheesecake with cherries on top. Tea, water and coffee.



**Valentine
 Dance & Dinner**

The Youth will offer babysitting for a per child/donation toward their upcoming Youth Trip. For your convenience, these services will be held at the church while you enjoy the evening. Please feed your children supper before bringing them for childcare. A nutritious bedtime snack will be given to the children. Please see Joyce Imboden for questions on childcare. Tickets for the Valentine Dinner and Dance are available from any Parish Life member after church on Sundays! Get your tickets early...we will have a wonderful night of adult fun together whether you plan to dance, or just spend time talking with good friends. You are welcomed to invite neighbors or friends to attend as well, but everyone must get tickets before the event so the seating space and food can be planned accordingly. If you have any questions please contact Debbie Little, Teresa Gamewell, or Elaina Benson.

Our Lenten Meals begin before our Ash Wednesday Service on Feb. 25th and will be offered weekly through April 1st. Each week the meals will consist of a different soup, sandwiches, tea or lemonade and a simple dessert. The Self Serve Lenten Meal Buffet will be open for you beginning at 5:00 until 6:20 before our service at 6:30. A donation basket will be available at each meal. Each year we have enjoyed watching our attendance to the Lenten Meals grow. Also, anyone wishing to make cookies or a simple dessert or sandwiches for the meals please contact Elaina Benson.



Lenten Meals

Parish Life Board Announces New Board Steward

The Parish Life Board would like to welcome Elaina Benson as our new Board Steward. Elaina will be replacing Debbie Little. The Board is very excited about this and look forward to continuing exciting fellowships at Calvary under Elaina's leadership. Thank you Elaina, for stepping up to help us provide this important ministry for our church members! If any members have fellowship ideas you would like to see the Parish Life Board hold, please feel free to contact Elaina and share your ideas with her to pass on to the Board. We look forward to hearing from you.

Special Offering

Calvary's Women of the ELCA are seeking to set up a scholarship to enable a deserving student from the Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church in El Salvador to attend the Lutheran University of El Salvador (ULS). The scholarship would go to an education major. The tuition for ULS is approximately \$40 per month. While we have set no goal for the amount to be collected, it is hoped that the scholarship will be sufficient to fund an individual's tuition requirements for an education degree. We invite you to join us in this effort to provide an opportunity for an individual in Brisas del Valle to develop skills needed to give back to his or her people. If you wish to contribute to the scholarship, please make your check payable to "CLC Women of the ELCA" and mark it for "ULS Scholarship." If your offering is in cash, please place it in a plain white envelope with "CLC Women of the ELCA – ULS Scholarship" written on the outside. You may place your contribution in the offering plate on Sunday or give it to one of the following people before March 15, 2009: Leslie Kern, Margaret Miller, Connie Wilkie, Jeannette Wilson, Betty Williams, or Dot Williams.

I would like to challenge each of you to donate FOOD ITEMS to our local Burke United Christian Ministries! They are in need of assistance for those who are hungry, so ANYTHING is APPRECIATED. Please place your items in the rolling containers in the old fellowship hall.

I once saw a story about a lady who suddenly found her family in need for help with food. When asked what she would share about her visits to the food bank for her family she replied, "We have always been the family who helped others, so it was different to be the one in need. What I learned was from now on not to look into my pantry and dig out the older food we never had eaten and give that...but instead to purchase the items that children long for so that they are like "the other children" at school." Examples would be to purchase the little juice boxes and snacks for the lunches that they normally would not get. She said for herself, she appreciated it all. But she felt badly when her children wanted the items they were used to having that she was unable to purchase. Those items were rarely at the food shelters because they were the first to be selected by caring mothers.

This taught me a lot and made me have a new perspective on donations. Have you ever thought about how you and your family would feel if you were the ones in need going to collect the items from a food shelter? It makes you think, doesn't it? And it makes you thankful for what you have, and what you can give. Please remember to share generously to those in need!

Debbie Little



"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them..." (1st Cor. 12:4). The 2009 Congregation Council retreat began with prayer, a message from Pastor Mike, and Holy Communion. A group

exercise in creating a model of our congregation led into Bible study (*Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13; 1st Cor 14:12; Gal 5:22-23*) and discussion of the unity in the body of Christ.

The models, developed by council members divided into two groups, represented how each group "saw" our congregation. The models differed in the details, but each placed Christ at the center of the church and the church – Calvary Lutheran – at the center of the model. Reaching out from the church to the community and beyond were the missions of our various ministries, the Christian attributes renewed and strengthened at the altar. Coming into the church were the people with their gifts and needs. Key points of the ensuing discussion were

Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

Gifts are given for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

Gifts are given so that they may bear fruit.

In the business portion of the retreat council members reviewed the reports of the financial secretary and the treasurer and elected officers. Those officers will serve for one year and are Mike Imboden, president; Emmett Brittain, vice president, and Dot Williams, secretary. In reviewing

actions of 2008, the members talked about how we as a church could more closely reflect the model set by Christ for his disciples and apostles.

We want to do a more effective job of welcoming people to Calvary, visitors and new members and each other. We want to cultivate a warm spirit for those coming to any service or event, demonstrating the same courtesies as we would to folks invited into our homes.

We want to recognize the good things we are already doing and build on these, helping folks who have not participated so much in these actions know their contributions are wanted, their suggestions welcome.

We want to make our communications throughout the church more effective. We want to share what we are doing and listen to what others are doing and thinking.

In all our actions, we want to more effectively practice "the golden rule."

This brief synopsis of the activities of Friday evening and Saturday morning (23 and 24 January) fails to properly convey the sharing of thoughts and exploration of ideas that filled the hours spent as a new council for new members and more experienced members alike. In God's grace our actions over the coming year will be a more telling gauge in our efforts to grow as servant leaders of Calvary Lutheran Church. We thank you for the opportunity and ask for your input and prayers as we seek to be worthy of "the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (*1st Cor. 12:7*)

- Your Congregation Council

Dear Brother and Sisters, Your responsiveness was hopeful and we cherish your partnership in this mission of practical compassion for the destitute among the Lazarus people at America's back door. If there is congregational support for a special project, such as a well for a village, our Projects Department will be ready to begin that conversation. You can also view an

inspiring DVD left with your Pastor. Also available are an ample supply of our donor brochures through your church office or display area. We look forward to a possible future engagement with you and ask your fervent prayers and generous support for this urgent mission among the most destitute of our hemisphere. God bless you all. Arnold M. Hilpert, FFP Speaker

Calvary Endowment Report

The Calvary Endowment has completed its first full year and we felt that we should report our progress to the congregation.

The Calvary Endowment was established in late 2006 to provide a vehicle for you to make donations that “keep on giving” to support Calvary Lutheran Church. This is accomplished by investing the funds with the ELCA Foundation and normally using only the interest earned, leaving the original donations intact to “keep on giving”.

The Calvary Endowment is managed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Church Council. Current Trustees are Margaret Miller (Chair), Rich Duncan, a Council representative (to be appointed for 2008), and Howy Copenhaver (Sec/Treas). Keith Black and Christine Duncan serve on the committee.

We are pleased to report that through 2007, members and others have given \$18,525 for investment in the Calvary Endowment.

Our thanks to the following members (couples, unless otherwise noted) who gave to the Calvary Endowment through the end of the year: Fred Miller in memory of Robert L. West, Wil Johnson in memory of Ester Wallat, Wil Johnson in memory of Anne & James Lorenzen and Doro-

thy & Armin Johnson, Jared Yates, the following in memory of Evelyn Copenhaver (Larry Berryhill, Keith Black, Don Blanton, Mr. Charlie Buckner, Bob Cannoles, Joe Csercevits, Jim Fisher, Wayne Giese, Sam Glasbrook, Ted Graham, Callie Gregory, Garry Harding, Wil Johnson, Gary Lail, Quez Little, Fred Miller, Ms Rama Mills, Charles Moeller, Ms. Edith Murphy, Ms. Mildred Newton, Bob Peterson, Ms. Juanita Sigmon, Mr. Ernie Wallat, Wayne Williams, Ms. Jeanette Wilson), the following in memory of Betty Miller (Wayne Giese & Howy Copenhaver), Howy Copenhaver in memory of Wayne and Evelyn Copenhaver, and Quez Little in memory of Jeanette Wilson’s mother-in-law.

There are many ways you can support the Calvary Endowment. Some contribute on a regular basis, others as a lump sum or memorial or honor. You can contribute cash, stocks, bonds or land, make the Calvary Endowment a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or in your will, or perhaps remember the Endowment in your trust. Please contact the Trustees if you have questions. Professional help through the ELCA Foundation is available. We keep the amount of your gift private and publicly acknowledge a gift only if the giver agrees, although we like to show the Church’s appreciation for all gifts.

**MISSION MUSINGS
REFLECTIONS ON VISITING OUR LUTHERAN MISSION PARTNERS IN BRISAS DEL VALLE, 2008**

My third visit to El Salvador. It’s funny, you know? I thought I would know what to expect. I thought that this trip would be old hat to me and that I would feel like the seasoned pro. And in some ways this actually was kind of true—navigating the airport was no problem, speaking a few phrases in broken Spanish came a little easier, and adjusting to the cultural differences took adjusting to the cultural differences took almost no time. The landscape seemed very familiar, almost like home, and I found that I could even remember how to navigate through some parts of San Salvador—most notably the drives from our hotel to Casa Concordia at the Bishop’s compound and to Apopa, Guazapa, and Brisas del Valle, all towns fairly close to San Salvador where we worship, serve, and have fellowship with our brothers and sisters (whose names and faces, by the way, cam readily to my mind!). There were dishes that I have craved for over a year, like the fried guisquil with cheese, and pastels, which are tiny turnovers filled with meat or vegetables. (I was amazed that I still recognized I still recognized the lady in Suchitoto frying these treats on the sidewalk in an improvised wood-fired fryer made from a 55 gallon drum)!

But remarkably, there were some parts of the trip that felt just like they did the very first time I set foot in El Salvador, if not more striking. First, the hopeless poverty. Everywhere you look, the poor make their homes and lives out of whatever they can salvage. Only a few blocks from Multiplaza, one of San Salvador’s most opulent (and most &.S.-like) mall, a village of cardboard boxes and sheet metal arises out of a dirty stream running under a bridge. On the streets, thin people in what appear to be U.S.-donated clothes wait for buses, their hollow expressions revealing what I can only imagine to be sparse lives. From what place do they come, and where do they go? I found myself amazed at the multitudes of dirty, shoeless children in the countryside. Once we arrived in Brisas del Valle, the beautiful new church of Espiritu de Gozo arose out of dirt and litter, while mud and brick houses with scrap metal roofs looked on in amazement. And the skinny dogs, skinny cows, skinny horses...amazing how the depressed economy affects every living thing in the country.

Another thing that jumped out a me. Despite my exposure to it in previous trips—the hope. I didn’t have to look far to find evidence of hope—it appears in so many places, some obvious and some surprising and obscure. In museums, the national struggle of the past are celebrated and revered, and the victories that helpe4d form what El Salvador is today held in places close to everyone’s hearts. Conversations with villagers reveal that they really do

spend time thinking about the future, not just making do with today, and that the future in their hearts is full of peace, comfort for friends and family, and happiness. Only rarely did I hear anyone mention the concept of wealth for himself, or even financial stability—hope for the future means prosperity of spirit. I even find it hopeful when I see all of the plants growing from plastic buckets, grocer sacks, and coffee cans. The nurturing of these beautiful signs of God’s artistic tendency is somehow hope to me, especially when these makeshift houseplants pop up in the country side and in the city alike. Another wonderful symbol of hope that I saw in a number of places in the countryside—small, wooden crosses “planted” in the small areas adjacent to homes. These crosses seemed to be tiny altars to me, and where better to bring your hopes and desires?

I will mention one last thing that caused this trip to be different than the others for me. This time around, we spent a little less time getting to know each other, and a little more time walking and working together. So many of the people that were familiar to me before came back into my life again—Rosa , who is a member of Espiritu de Gozo’s church council and the glue that holds together the community of Brisas del Valle; Don Armenio, the chairman emeritus of Espiritu de Gozo’s council; Olympia, grandmother of Stanley, (who was baptized during Brisas’ celebration), who bakes bread to sell in Guazapa; Dona Trinidad, who runs Casa Concordia and Casa la Esperanza, the inner city soup kitchen in San Salvador; Bishop Medardo Gomez, the leader of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church; Pastor Matias and the newly-ordained Pastora Martina—the spiritual guides and family of the communities of Brisas del Valle , Loma de Ramos, Colon, Guaycume, and Buena Vista de San Juan. The hugs and greetings of these people were more reunion than introduction, and were great starters for the work ahead. And then we all took up shovels and paint brushes, construction paper and clerical stoles, musical instruments and Bibles, and we worked side by side. At times, I even found myself thinking, “Even if I could speak Spanish fluently, I think I would be content to work together in this wonderful peace, this unified desire to extend God’s kingdom.” How exciting to pick up our tools literally and figuratively, and work collectively. For those seven days, and often in my days between visits to Central American, my world seems just a touch smaller because of this wonderful kinship, this fond attachment and clarity of mutual purpose.

So as I reflect, I guess I do so recognizing the paradox, like so many other of God’s wonderful ironies—the strangers as family, the new life that springs out of nothingness, the unfamiliar homeplace in another continent. Gracias a Dios! Thanks be to God!

Scott Wilson

Income and Expenses for the Month Ending December 2008

Current Month Income	Current Month Expenses	Year to Date Income	Year to Date Expenses	Income vs. Expenses
27,469.99	23,287.50	266,545.83	253,942.86	12,602.97

Calvary Lutheran Building Fund Summary Year Ending 2008

Beginning Balance January 2008	Paid on Principal Year to Date	Ending Balance Year to Date	Interest Paid Year to Date
428,098.04	149,422.09	278,675.95	16,918.55