



Mount Calvary Lutheran Church & School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

www.mtcalvary-mke.org

June 2014

Beloved in the Lord,

It was a year ago, right at this time, that I drove from Florida to Milwaukee and began serving at Mount Calvary. It seemed to me to be a good time to reflect on what God has been doing and where I sense that He is taking us.

The word that best sums up how I feel about the last year is **grateful**. I am thankful to God for this opportunity and the joy in ministry that I have here. I am also grateful to you for the warm welcome and kind encouragement that you have provided. I came to Mount Calvary with a great deal of excitement and optimism. I am even more optimistic today – there has been no “buyer’s remorse” on my part. For that I am deeply grateful.

What I know about Mount Calvary that I believed a year ago is that you deeply love your Church. You are equally committed to being a positive influence in this community with the Gospel. For decades Mount Calvary has been that positive influence and Sherman Park is a better place to live today because Mount Calvary is in it.

The challenge of positively influencing our community is that it is a moving target. Our community is constantly changing (all communities constantly change because they are living things). Our total reliance on God’s grace, our commitment to living as His agents of mercy in the world, and our work for justice don’t change, but how they connect to our community is always changing.

God has been at work at Mount Calvary in the last year. Here is just a sampling of how:

- † Three young people were instructed and received their First Communion (Baryah, Chloe, and Christina)
- † Two young people were confirmed. (Chloe and Luke)
- † One child was baptized. (Deacon)
- † One family joined Mount Calvary by transfer. (The Garner Family)
- † We began regular publication of the *Mount Calvary Messenger* and launched a revamped web site.
- † We have been a part of the Milwaukee Police Department-District 7 faith-based initiative.
- † We had a fantastic Community BBQ in August (it’s not too early to volunteer for this year’s BBQ).
- † *Mount Calvary Cares* assisted in the restoration of the SOS Center on North Avenue (which is once again open).

I am excited about what God is going to do in the next year. I have complete confidence that God will be at work in and through Mount Calvary in the next 12 months. I also know that we have to work together to continue to connect with our community, to show tangible

mercy to those in need, and to work for just systems for the disenfranchised. Based on what I've learned in the last year and continue to learn, the key to how we move forward together is to see our community (Sherman Park, in particular) as a God-given opportunity and not a threat to us as a congregation.

I have also become aware of how challenging ministry in our urban context can be. In the past year a sister congregation just a few miles from us, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, closed their doors. Last Sunday, *The Journal-Sentinel* reported that another sister congregation, Emmaus Lutheran Church, filed for bankruptcy. We grieve with our brothers and sisters in Christ over the loss they feel over these events. I know very little about how these events unfolded, but they are a sobering challenge for me to not become complacent.

Despite the challenges, I remain optimistic. I believe Mount Calvary's best days are in front of us and not behind us. I find great joy in knowing every day that I am serving in the best place God has for me to serve.

Finally, I would like to publicly thank Joy Elowsky for her part in this ministry. Joy has been a joy to work with and I am blessed to have known her. Dr. Joel Elowsky has also blessed this congregation by his willing and quiet service wherever needed. I wish the Elowsky family God's richest blessings in their move to St. Louis and the new endeavors to which they have been called.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan Czaplewski