

Are You Ready?—Rev. Dr. Lee F. Shafer, Rector

Dear Friends,

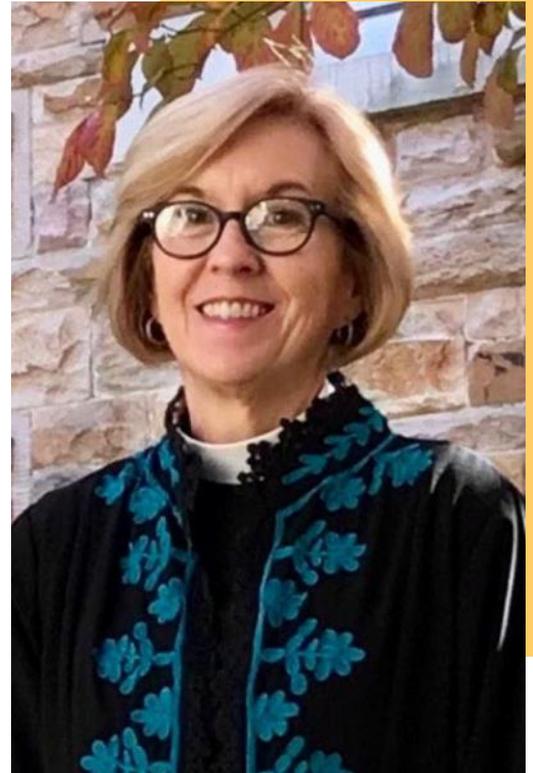
One of the most often asked questions this time of year is ‘Are you ready?’ My hunch is that in most cases the one posing the question has no theological framework in mind for the query. The frame of reference for this question, it seems, is a readiness that has to do with having gifts purchased, wrapped, and perhaps shipped, or meals planned or even outfits chosen for celebratory gatherings. This is the requisite readiness of the world at this time of year. And yet ‘Are you ready?’ is actually a really good question to ask ourselves as we grow closer and closer to Christmas, to the Incarnation of God in human form.

Few people think themselves more ready than women in the 40th week of their first pregnancy. Once small and agile bodies are now unwieldy and painful. Nights that were once passed without thought are now spent tossing and turning, searching for fleeting moments of comfort. The desire to hold the unborn child that jabs an elbow into your ribs or a toe into your bladder is championed by a naïve desire to be free. Free a mother will never be, nor a father for that matter. All adjust to the new life, but none can claim with certainty (at least if honest) that they were ready for what that new life would look like.

The question for us Christians as we approach Christmas is the very same: ‘Are you ready?’ And the answer is probably the same as that of those approaching the birth of their own child, “absolutely/ and not at

all.” For us Christians, Christmas is much more than tree trimming, present wrapping, meals and celebrations (or it certainly should be). For us Christmas is about God’s deific self choosing to enter into our experience in the world fully as a totally dependent infant to reveal for us what love really looks like. God’s example for us and in the life of Jesus is in every way contrary to the way of the world. The message that comes to us on Christmas is a message of love that is beyond compare; love that is vulnerable and dependent on us to carry it to the world. Are you ready?

God’s peace,
Lee+





Calvary Connection

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols—*Shawn Dawson* Sunday, December 22

On Sunday, December 22, Calvary will continue its wonderful tradition of Lessons and Carols. It is a service that tells the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus through nine short Bible readings from Genesis, the prophetic books, and the Gospels, interspersed with carols and hymns sung by the choir and congregation.

The service, made famous by King's College, Cambridge, is now in its 101st year at King's and celebrated by churches all around the world. At Calvary the carols sung by the Calvary Choir will feature composers both English and American, many of whom are still living. Among them are John Rutter, Bob Chilcott, and David Willcocks. The service begins at 4:00 p.m. with the organ prelude at 3:45 p.m. Nursery care is provided, and a reception follows the service.

Come celebrate Christmas at Calvary with A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols!





The Vestry Voice—*Donna Duvall, 2019 Vestry Secretary*

The Vestry met on November 26, 2019. There were the following items of note:

- December 3 was the Rector’s first anniversary with Calvary.
- In October, Calvary served the largest number of clients so far at Calvary’s Well.
- Calvary post cards highlighting events and services during Advent, with the message “Historic and at Work in the World” have been mailed to over 2,000 homes in the 40203 postal area. There will also be a radio advertisement for the Lessons and Carols and Christmas Eve services.
- Two brochures, one with general information, updating with our new Rector, and the other providing a historic tour of the church, have been ordered and will be available for Advent visitors, as well as CEEP.
- Work on the church property continues. The basement has been cleaned up and organized. In the North Tower, plastering is being done and that will be followed by repairs to the stairway.
- A lift on the stairs from the Nave has been chosen. It will be placed on the pulpit side, below the pipes, will be approximately \$25,000 in cost, and should be completed before the CEEP conference in February.
- Judy Wilson now has sixteen new violin students at Calvary, in the program funded by donations.
- For the month of October revenues were \$45,939.86 (\$28,000 being investment income). Expenses were \$57,733.21. Net Operating revenue/expense was (\$11,793.35). The year-to-date actual revenues were \$479,778.53. YTD actual expenses were \$460,897.41. YTD net operating revenue/expense was 18,881.12.



Upcoming Schedules

Sunday Forum

Sundays, 10:00-10:45

Bible Study also meets at the same time, led by Joseph Reece.

Jan. 5—Joyce Barnett—“The Different Faces of Homelessness”

Calvary Coffee Hour Hosts

Sun., Dec. 22—Penny & Charlotte Brisson

Sun., Dec. 29—Calvary Care Pizza Party

Sun., Jan. 5 —NEED VOLUNTEERS

Sun., Jan. 12—Meg Scharre

Sun., Jan. 19—Patti Davidson and Elizabeth Lenkoff

Homemade Soup with Crackers

Sun., Jan. 26—NEED VOLUNTEERS





Not Your Average Santa Claus—Linda French, Senior Warden **The True Story of St. Nicholas**

St. Nicholas is my patron saint, and I feel that I need to defend him from the “Santa Claus” image imposed upon him by a commercial world. This man was a devoted follower of the teachings of Christ. He took an oath of poverty and used his inheritance to help the needy. Due to his dedication to the poor, there are St. Nicholas churches in 37 countries around the world including 25 here in the U.S. And he never once ignored starving children while giving a roomful of toys to children who already had a roomful of toys.

So let’s look at St. Nicholas of Myra—the man, the myth, and the legend. And also, did he or did he not attend the First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.? There are interesting stories surrounding this question.



First, yes, it is factual that he did exist. He was born in the year 270 A.D. in Patara, which was part of the Roman Empire, and died on Dec. 6, 343 A.D. in Myra, which was in what is now Turkey, and was part of the Byzantine Empire.

He was the only child of a wealthy couple who died of a plague when Nicholas was only sixteen. His parents were strong believers and followers of Christ and held in respect in the area. His mother wrote of Nicholas’ following Jesus from a very early age. She tells that, even as a toddler, he refused to eat on Wednesdays and Fridays—the two holy days of fasting and religious study at the time. Now, I’m a mother and I know we tend to exaggerate about our children, but I think it is safe to say he was an exceptionally thoughtful and spiritual young man and his parents were quite pleased with him.

At their deaths, he began his “secret” giving to others. Let’s look at just one of the stories. You may have heard only the Disney squeaky-clean version of the event which was, in fact, quite appalling: three young ladies couldn’t get married (Horrors!) if they didn’t have a dowry. So Nicholas crept to their house and dropped three bags of gold through the window. The bags landed in their shoes
(Continued on page 5)



Calvary Connection

(Continued from page 4)

(probably drying by the fire) and the tradition began of leaving coins in shoes on December 6.

The adult version of this same story is that the father had lost all his wealth that year and was called upon to pay his taxes to the government. Unable to do so, he was preparing to sell the girls into prostitution. This was, unfortunately, a common practice of the time, but Nicholas could not permit it. Two nights in a row, it is said that he anonymously dropped the bags of gold through the window. On the third night, the father was waiting for him and Nicholas was revealed as the one who had also been leaving food at the doors of the poor. He was outed! No more secret gift-giving allowed!

After Nicholas had become a priest and studied with the Desert Fathers in Egypt, he was very quickly chosen as Bishop of Myra. As a highly respected Bishop of the area, we can be sure that Nicholas would have participated in the important First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. So why is his name omitted from the list? Some vowed that they knew he had been there, but his name is missing. Did he forget to RSVP? Did he disregard the sign-in sheet? Don't you just love a mystery?

One explanation may be only a legend, but it is written that Nicholas was temporarily defrocked for actually slapping the heretic Arius following a long, heated debate about the Holy Trinity at the Council. (The Arian heresy was that Christ was merely a human son of God, not part of a divine trinity.) Because I've read much that describes Nicholas as serious-minded, sober, and strongly outspoken, I think this story might actually explain why his name was removed from the list of those in attendance.

Those who have protested that the man never existed at all need to update their thinking. His bones ultimately came to rest in Bari, Italy, and in 2014, scientists convened to determine the age of the bones and to construct a likeness of Nicholas' head. They determined that he was approximately 5 feet 6 inches tall. Coming from an area which is modern-day Turkey, he, of course, had olive skin and almond-shaped eyes. Interestingly, he had a long, shaggy gray beard.

Some 200 years after his death, Bishop Nicholas became Saint Nicholas of Myra. There are many unsubstantiated miracles attributed to him. Maybe he resurrected three little boys from the butcher's brine. Maybe his spirit really did soar above all ships and bring sailors safely to port. We don't know, but I'm satisfied that Nicholas is the Saint who teaches the following of Jesus' commands to be generous and to give to the needy, and that's enough for me!

Now that you know St. Nicholas was not jolly, was not fat, and had nothing to do with toys, I wish you a very Merry Christmas as we celebrate the birth of Jesus—who brings us love and hope for the future.



Ministry of the Month — The Calvary Vestry

Each Episcopal congregation has a Vestry and Calvary is no different. The Vestry is an elected group, similar to an executive board for many other organizations, and has three primary responsibilities: watch over parish finances (including stewardship, spending, planned giving, and fundraising); look after the parish building and grounds (including infrastructure updates and maintenance); and choosing those who will fulfill positions of leadership and representation such as the rector, wardens, convention delegates, and others. The Vestry also acts as an advisory council to the Rector of Calvary.

The members of the Vestry are lay congregants of the church, elected at the annual parish meeting for a three-year term. By the rules of the Diocese of Kentucky, to be elected to a vestry, one must be a communicant in good standing, age sixteen or older; must have received holy communion at least three times during the preceding year; must be faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented; must be faithful in working, praying and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God (i.e.: committee membership, pledge fulfillment in previous year and pledge card submitted for current year); and must be confirmed or received by the Bishop. Since five Vestry members are elected each year, continuity is maintained by having each fifteen-member Vestry consist of three “classes” of five: those in their first year, second year, and last year, respectively. All are expected to attend monthly meetings, as well as participating in various committee responsibilities.

At the first Vestry meeting after the annual Parish meeting, the membership elects Senior and Junior Wardens. Wardens are the chief stewards and servants of the congregation who must serve as examples of faithful parish members and do their best to donate their time, talent, and treasure. The Wardens fulfill a variety of responsibilities in support of the Rector and oversight of congregational interests. As part of the Vestry Executive Committee, a Secretary and Treasurer are also elected.

Anyone interested in serving on the Vestry (or nominating someone else to serve) may contact the Rector, one of the Wardens, or a member of the Vestry Nominating Committee, which is comprised of the “graduating class” of the current Vestry. Nominees may also come from the floor of the Annual Meeting, but these are at risk of being subsequently disqualified if their standing is not verified.

If you wish to volunteer yourself, or nominate someone else, the chair of this year’s Nominating Committee is Jamie Hendon, JHendon@rwbaird.com.



The Calvary Vestry, 2019



Calvary Connection

Collecting Christmas Crèches— Carolyn Snow

We have fallen into collecting Nativity sets through our travels but our first one had no particular artistic or geographical significance—and somehow over the years poor Joseph was lost. We added some French hens and sheep from Scotland and a baby elephant found under our Holly tree when trimming it for an Advent event but Joseph has not turned up.

Originally when we traveled we bought Christmas ornaments for remembrance and then began to add small crèches. Included in my favorites are one from Santa Fe and also a beautiful one from Amalfi, Italy modeled from clay. In the Vatican City we found one in a small shop just outside St. Peter's. It is Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus carved out of one piece of wood.



Santa Fe



Amalfi



Vatican City



Ireland

We concentrate on smaller ones that can be hand carried on the plane, and once in Paris I almost missed my flight while a security agent was admiring a crèche ornament bought in Prague. While in Ireland we got a Waterford crystal set with the Holy Family and in Australia one locally made of corn husks which coincidentally also seems to be missing Joseph.



Australia



Strasbourg

Nativity sets were easily found in some countries, like Portugal, where they were everywhere, and also in Germany and France. In Strasbourg, a city known for swans, many of the sets featured a crèche as swan wings.

In Germany we found several small ones including one from Passau (not pictured) where we heard an organ concert. Talking with Margaret Dickinson later, we were pretty sure that it was the same cathedral where Melvin had performed once.

(Continued on page 8)



Calvary Connection

(Continued from page 7)

We have two that we value that are not connected to any trip. One was bought at Just Creations, made in Colombia from corn husks. Just Creations only sells fair trade products where the artists receive a living wage; this is also the only set we have where Baby Jesus is smiling. We also ordered one set from a catalogue, and it was hand-carved from olive wood in the Holy Land.



Colombia



Holy Land

A few years ago the church had a display of crèches owned by Calvary members. Wilma Wilson has a big set in which she hand-painted each piece and Judy Wilson has a beautiful set that belonged to Richard's family. Others of interest was Larry and Anne Marie's from Peru and Susan Baker's, which includes a pizza seller from Italy. I am sure there are many others, and perhaps one day we will organize another display.





Calvary Connection

Awaiting the Divine in Ancient Religions—Dean French

The Near East has given the world three great monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But what preceded those religions?

Architectural structures and images have been significant elements of worship since the dawn of history. In them, the sacred and human realms are closely intertwined. Devotional objects and structures created in the service of faith have left a cultural legacy from Egypt and Mesopotamia to India and China. These creations are invested with an extraordinary degree of power, influence, and authority. They are believed to have the potential to affect the world around them. For Hindus and Buddhists, the image itself is god rather than simply a representation of the divine. The meaning of a sacred object is shaped by the context in which it is viewed and the personal attitudes the viewer brings to it.

The layout of Sumerian cities reflected the central role of the gods in daily life. The main temple to each state's chief god formed the city's monumental nucleus. In fact, the temple complex was kind of a city-within-a-city, where a staff of priests and scribes carried out official, administrative, and commercial business, as well as oversaw all religious functions. The outstanding preserved example of early Sumerian temple architecture is the 5,000 year old White Temple at Uruk, a city that, in the late fourth millennium BCE, had a population of about 40,000.

Usually only the foundations of early Mesopotamian temples can be recognized. The White Temple is a rare exception. Sumerian builders did not have access to stone quarries and instead formed mud bricks for the superstructures of their temples and other buildings. As a result, all these structures eroded over the course of time. The fragile nature of the building material did not, however, prevent the Sumerians from erecting towering works, such as the Uruk temple, constructed several centuries before the Egyptians built their famous stone pyramids.

In Mesopotamia, using only mud bricks, the Sumerians erected temple platforms called ziggurats. The most famous ziggurat was the Tower of Babel. At The White Temple and ziggurat at Uruk (modern Warka, Iraq), built ca. 3,200-3,000 BCE, as well as all temples of the area, only priests and leading community members had access to enter. Even the approach to these temples was restricted.

The temples being built on what is known as a bent-axis plan, worshippers had to maneuver stairways and entrances which incorporated two or more angular changes of direction. Temples were known as “waiting rooms.” It was there that the deity would appear to the priests.

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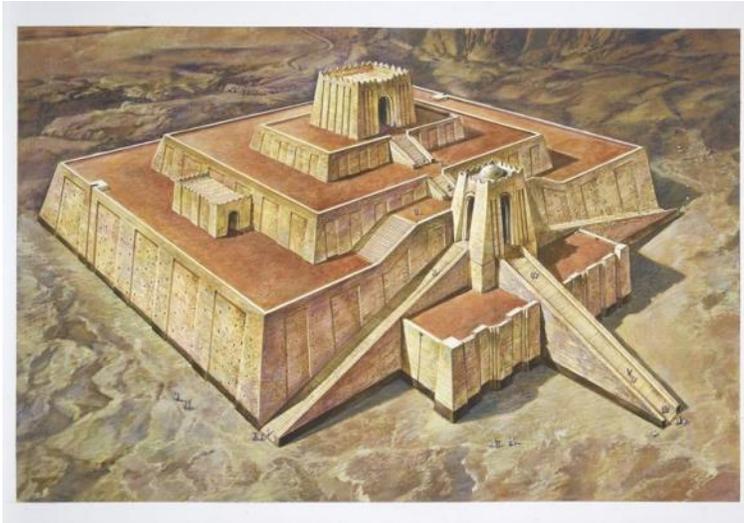


White temple and ziggurat at Uruk (modern Warka), Iraq built ca. 3200-300 BCE



Calvary Connection

(Continued from page 9)



White temple as it would have appeared originally.

Because entrance was restricted, worshippers created votive figures to represent themselves. These figures were placed before the image of the divinity to await his or her appearing. Prayers and requests were carved on the statues along with the worshipper's name. Statues embodied the essence of the worshipper so that the spirit would be present when the physical body was not.



Sumerian Votive Figures, 2700 BCE. Made of Gypsum and inlaid with black shell and limestone.

The principal purpose of the votive figure was to allow a person to be praying in spirit even when he or she could not be present. (Christians use votive candles, which serve a similar purpose.) All of the figures represent people rather than deities. Their hands are folded in front of their chests in a gesture of prayer, usually holding a small beaker which the Sumerians used in religious rites. Their eyes are wide and attentive, indicating readiness for the appearance of their god.



Advent Reflections and CEEP 2020— Cindy Curry

During this season of traditional busy-ness, the Church keeps us focused with Advent readings which remind us of the “Reason for the Season”—the Comings of our Lord, both as God Incarnate and at the “End of the Age.”

We are enjoined to WAIT and WATCH through Scriptures of prophecy and adoration, through the Advent wreath, and through reflection on the two central figures of John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary; he, the one ‘crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord’ (Isaiah 40:3) and she, the Theotokos (God-bearer) of the Magnificat (Luke 1: 43-55). By virtue of our Baptismal vows we find ourselves called to image them both in—and to—our broken world. We are empowered by Grace to prepare the way for our Lord and enabled by that same Grace to bear the Incarnate sacramentally, whether in our daily encounters, or with peanut butter sandwiches, popcorn, and Eucharist in the streets, or with quarters at Laundry Love, or with food, clothing, and violins within Calvary’s walls.



How do these Advent musings relate to CEEP 2020, which Calvary will be hosting Feb. 19-22? While its name-- Consortium of **E**ndowed **E**piscopal **P**arishes—reflects the initial focus of this nationwide endeavor to provide support and resources to parishes with endowments, it has more recently expanded into a network open to any parish interested in sharing the mission of “Strengthening Leaders for a Changing Church.” With the Annual Gathering title of “Leading Beyond the Walls,” CEEP provides opportunities for continuing the Advent themes by inspiring and enabling parishes to engage the world around them as and where it is.

Indeed, Calvary is honored to host the 500-600 attendees anticipated to attend the gathering, which will be based at the Omni Hotel in downtown Louisville with Opening Eucharist to be held at Calvary the evening of February 20. **Volunteers** will be needed for a variety of functions, and a listing of specific activities and scheduling opportunities will be posted in Frazier Hall next month. Please consider joining in offering hospitality during any of the events!

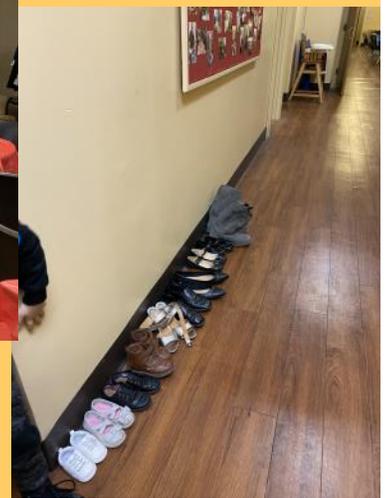
For further information, visit the CEEP website at www.ceepnetwork.org, or Calvary’s site at www.calvaryepiscopal.org, or ask a member of the Host Planning Committee — The Rev. Dr. Lee Shafer, Meg Scharre or Bart Brown (co-chairs), Jamie Hendon, or Cindy Curry.



ADVENT



December 1 at Calvary



EVENT



CHILDREN'S

—please share with the children in your life

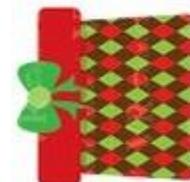
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Christmas Giving

By Iris W. Bray

Christmas is for giving
 And for showing that we care,
 For honoring the Christ Child
 With the loving gifts we share.
 The wise men gave of riches;
 The shepherds, faith and love.
 Each gift, in its own measure,
 Was smiled on from above.
 Let every gift be treasured;
 Not always size or price
 Determines the extent of love
 And willing sacrifice
 Handsome gifts with festive trim
 Bring smiles of sweet content,
 But modest gifts of humble means
 are oftimes heaven sent.
 Whether it be large or small,
 Each gift will share in part
 The message of true Christmas joy
 If given from the heart!



If you are reading the Calvary Connection online, click [this link](#) to go to Bible-related coloring and games. Enjoy!

Children's Corner is a regular feature of the Calvary Connection. Submissions and suggestions are welcome.



Office Hours and Service Times

Sundays

8:30 am Holy Eucharist - Rite I (Traditional Language)

11 am Holy Eucharist - Rite II with Choir

Thursdays

12:05 pm Holy Eucharist with Anointing

Office Hours

Monday - Thursday 9 am - 3 pm

Contact Us

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Parish Staff

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Jim Barnes, Verger, Parish Administrator

Shawn Dawson, Organist/Director of Music

Ke'Aira Wooden-Brown, Bookkeeper/Office Manager

Britt Shelton, Communications Coordinator

Jordan Williams, Children's Education Leader

Leroy Malone, Sexton

SPECIAL HOLIDAY TIMES:

Festival of Lessons and Carols: Sunday, Dec. 22, 4 PM

Christmas Eve: Tuesday, Dec. 24, 5:30 PM (Music), 6 PM Eucharist

No Sunday School Dec. 22 and 29 (Nursery still open)

Office closed Dec. 24 to Jan. 1, open Jan. 2

Food and Clothes Closet closed Dec. 24, 25, and 27, and Jan. 1; open Dec. 26, 30, and 31, and Jan. 2

Calvary's Well open Dec. 26 and Jan. 2

Lay Leadership

Linda French, Senior Warden

Stephanie Smith, Junior Warden

Sally Reisz, Treasurer

Donna Duvall, Secretary

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Would you like to get emails from Calvary? We send them out regularly to list the schedule for the week or happenings within the parish such as marriages, births and the passing of our members.

Go to www.calvaryepiscopal.org, Under About Us, select Contact Us and fill out the form to request digital communications.



Beasts of Burden

Quietly sharing
Stall and straw, visible breath
Warms word made frail flesh.

