



**Calvary by the Sea Lutheran Church**  
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November 1, 2023

Dear Calvary by the Sea Members, Friends, and Supporters,

Greetings to you in the name of the Holy Trinity, One God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer! As we approach the end of this year we should ponder just how faithful the divine has been with us. Often, before my sermons I invite us to tell someone, "You are welcomed, you are loved, you are safe, and God is well pleased with you!" This is a biblical promise that affirms God's faithfulness with us!

In 2023, our congregation continued to advance and expand, cultivating new relationships and thriving in service and ministry to our community. I mentioned last year around this time just how defining 2023 would be for our spiritual family and such a statement cannot be more true. For example, our church participated at the state capitol in early February supporting the Leading with Love rally, boldly speaking for inclusion of our queer community. In April our church provided a free community event that reached more than 500 people through our Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt. We participated in unity with our ecumenical partner churches for the first time throughout Holy Week serving thousands of people. We started new ministries such as Book Clubs, 'Ohana Groups, Movie Nights, and Pride Connection. Pastor Moses represented CBTS and Faith Action on KAKOU Hawai'i's Town Hall on PBS. ANC and CBTS partnered together to donate goods and monies to those affected by the Maui fires through various efforts. In September our Family Retreat provided meaningful connections and relationships. And October gave us the opportunity to demonstrate our love for all people through the Honolulu Pride Festival. To God be the glory!

In addition, our church family has grown by another 35 members this year, and several other new attenders and supporters have joined the community. We added new ministry team members shoring up our music and worship ministries. Our spiritual formation evolved through book clubs, intentional potlucks, spiritual retreats and 'ohana group connections. Our worship participation has increased to about 120 people on Sundays. While most of American Christianity continues to decline, Calvary by the Sea is moving in the opposite trajectory. To God be the glory! We are truly living into our values of being inclusive, intentional, and involved with our community and the world. Yet, there is much more to be done. **God calls us into greater inclusivity, further intentionality and a higher level of involvement for the sake of the world.**

In 2024, I sense the divine calling us to collectively devote ourselves to the younger generation. To greater inclusion and prioritization of our children, teens, college students and young adults in the church and local community. Recently, I read about the Trevor Project, a non-profit organization focused on youth suicide prevention. They offered new key findings about young queer people ages 13 to 24.

- 41% of queer youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year
- 14% of LGBTQ youth attempted suicide in the past year
- Nearly 2 in 3 queer young people said that hearing about potential state or local laws banning people from discussing LGBTQ dynamics at school made their mental health a lot worse

The Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan information think tank, offered findings about children and youth as well.

- The number of children and teens killed by gunfire has increased by 50%, doubled over the last two years due to gun violence

- 40% of teens say they often decide not to post something on social media because they worry people might use it to embarrass them
- Nearly 46% of teens report experiencing cyberbullying, with offensive name-calling being the type most commonly reported

The Barna Research Group found that roughly 7 out of 10 American adults who regularly attended church as children, still attend regularly today. Did you hear me? While the majority (81%) of those who did not attend church as children are still absent from church today.

**What do these facts say about our children, teens, and young people?** At the very least, it says they should matter more to the church, because they matter to God. Jesus said, *“Allow the children to come to me, and do not hinder them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children.”* Jesus also said, *“Whoever is faithful with little is also faithful with much and the one who is dishonest with little is also dishonest with much.”* Clearly God has been faithful with us, but have we been faithful to God? Have we been faithful to God with little? Have we hinder our children and teens? Have we neglected the value of children, teens and young people in church? God knows our hearts and in spite of our failures and mistakes, still calls us to greater things. Isn't this amazing?! This is the holy love and grace of God for us.

**As your pastor, I am calling upon us to faithfulness in 2024. To participate and engage the upcoming year with us. To regularly give of our personal gifts and time. To regularly give of our financial gifts. To focus on greater inclusion and prioritization of our children, teens, college students and young adults. A generation that desperately needs our radical welcome and love.**

For this reason, I invite you and your family to participate in our stewardship campaign. **To be faithful in giving, tithing, and donating what you can to support our ministry to young people in 2024.** To make progress in the love and acceptance of our children in worship. To make progress in offering additional programming and events geared towards teens and young people. To engage the younger generations now, rather than later, so that perhaps in their maturing age, they will still attend church and find meaning in it. I believe this is a our call worth striving for in 2024!

**There are 3 options by which to express your faithfulness and response to this call in 2024:**

- Fill out a **Generosity Card**. We understand that your financial circumstances may change during the year, and so the Generosity Card only represents an estimate.
- Sign up to give automatically using **Tithely**, which allows a donation via the internet or text using your computer or smartphone. A sheet giving instructions for using **Tithely** to give on either a one-time or recurring basis is enclosed.
- Sign up to give using **Simply Giving**, which is operated by the ELCA to support recurring withdrawals from your checking account. Setting up **Simply Giving** requires completing the enclosed form.
- If you're uncomfortable with automatic giving, please continue to make donations during the worship service or by mailing a check to the church office.

We ask that you **return your Generosity Card, Simply Giving form or enroll on Tithely, by the First Sunday of Advent, Sunday, December 3rd in order to help our Congregational Council in finalizing our 2024 budget.** You may drop cards and forms into the offering plate on Sundays, mail it to the church, or drop it off in person Tuesday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. An envelope is enclosed. You may also take a photo of the Generosity Card and email it to [info@calvarybythesea.org](mailto:info@calvarybythesea.org)

With a faithful and grateful heart,

The Rev. Dr. Moses D. Barrios, *Senior Pastor*  
 Jewell Tuitele, *Congregational Council Moderator*  
 Bill Bekemeier, *Stewardship Committee Member*