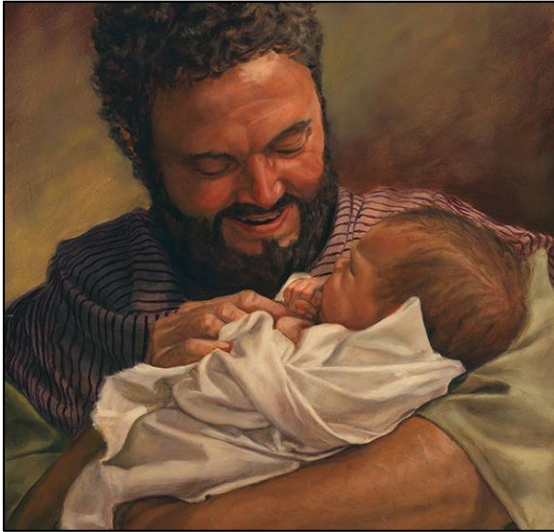


Calvary Church

A Reconciling Congregation



*“At times, we want to be
in complete control, yet God
always sees the bigger picture.”*

- Pope Francis

December 21, 2025

4th Sunday of Advent

CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP

GATHERING

Gathering Song: “The Carol of Joseph (I Believe in You)”
(for KING & COUNTRY)

Welcome & Announcements

• Visiting with us?

- We're glad you're here! We strive to make our worship space—in-person and virtual—as welcoming and accommodating of different needs as possible. If you have questions, concerns or suggestions, please contact Pastor Tim.

• Congregational giving (rounded)

- Dec 6-14: \$455 / weekly budget: \$1,827

• “White Basket” special offering

- ODECOIN: donations support Christmas meals and gifts for poor children and families in Costa Rica
- To donate: cord.whitaker@gmail.com / 919-308-5115; checks can be made payable to “Cord Whitaker” or “Calvary UMC” (memo: ODECOIN)

• “Red Basket” special offering

- Reconciling Ministries Network: [rmnetwork.org / allmeansall.org/donate](http://rmnetwork.org/allmeansall.org/donate)

• Congregational feedback survey: coming in January

• Book study: Jesus and the Disinherited (Howard Thurman)

- allmeansall.org/book-study
- beginning week of Jan 12 (exact timing TBD)

• PA-IPL Annual Convening Watch Party: Sunday, Jan 25, 2-4 pm

- allmeansall.org/convening
- virtual workshops also offered Jan 26-29, 7-8 pm
- contact Sparrow to join others from Calvary, or to get involved in Calvary's PA-IPL/Green Team: sprwfrancis@gmail.com

- **Previous sermons:** allmeansall.org/sermons
- **Previous bulletins:** allmeansall.org/bulletins

Calendar

Today, Dec 21

- **12:45-2 pm:** 2nd Sunday Potluck – Christmas Edition
(monthly)
- **7 pm:** Blue Christmas Service (hybrid)
 - Calvary (Chapel) – 48th St entrance; use link below for details to connect virtually
 - allmeansall.org/blue
- **8:30-9:30 pm:** Spiritual Reflection Group (also Jan 4)
 - allmeansall.org/spiritual-reflection-group

Monday, Dec 22, 6:30-7:30 pm: Yoga (weekly)

- Calvary (Chapel) – 48th St entrance
- allmeansall.org/yoga

Tuesday, Dec 23, 6 pm: Midweek Prayer (weekly)

- allmeansall.org/midweek-prayer
- 1st, 3rd & 5th Tuesdays: 3 pm / 2nd & 4th: 6 pm

Wednesday, Dec 24

- **10-11 am:** Yoga (weekly)
 - see Dec 22 for details
- **12 pm:** Interfaith Prayer Vigils for Immigrant Justice (weekly / New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia)
 - Philadelphia ICE Office / 114 N 8th St
 - contact Pastor Tim to get involved with Calvary's NSM Team
- **7 pm:** Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols (hybrid)
 - Calvary (Chapel) – 48th St entrance; use link below for details to connect virtually
 - allmeansall.org/christmas

Saturday, Dec 27, 1 pm: Meditation (weekly)

- Calvary (Board Room) – 48th St entrance
- westphillyinsight.org

Sunday, Dec 28, 11 am-12:30 pm: Virtual Worship (1st)

Sunday after Christmas)

- allmeansall.org/virtual

CENTERING & CONNECTING

Breathing Our Way In

Singing Our Way In: "Drawing Nearer" (*Christopher Grundy*)

Even in the midst of all of this,
trouble on the news, no peace within,
still there is a light in the distance,
drawing nearer, drawing nearer.

So, open up our eyes to see your light.
Open up our arms, they're clenched so tightly.
Come in like a thief and steal our hearts
like a baby, like a baby.

Lighting the Advent Candle – Love (*Katherine Hawker, John Humphries – adapted*)

One: As we come to the end of our Advent journey, we
light the candle of love.

Let us pray. Even in the midst of all of this, O God, grant
us the courage to love and keep loving. We pray love.
Love for others. Love for self. ... Love for family. Love for
friends. Love for neighbors. Love for strangers. Love for
enemies. ... Love for the lonely. Love for the lost. Love for
those sick. Love for those left out. ... Love for everyone.
Love for the world. Love for life. Love for you. Love for the
unexpected challenge. Love for the vulnerable one.
Love for the presence of God. Amen.

**ALL (sung): O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thy justice here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Call to Worship *(Roddy Hamilton – adapted)*

One: Across the universe, Creation waits for the prophets to speak their words of expectation and their vision of renewal.

ALL: May we gather 'round them today once more, and let their longing grip us and lead us into rebirth and blessing.

One: Come now, friends, let us gather at this meeting place of promise and prophecy;

ALL: of faith and freedom;

One: of hope and wholeness;

ALL: of love and life;

One: of justice and joy;

ALL: of peace and prosperity.

One: Let us listen through the ancient words, that we might be ready to hear a baby's cry.

ALL: Alleluia! Alleluia!

Opening Song: "Christmas Come Close" *(tune: Lim Swee Hong / lyrics: Shirley Erena Murray)*

Christmas come close in a child's crumpled face,
to the ragged and raw in a harsh birthing place,
in a surging of joy, in a bundle held tight,
in a breath, in a cry through the dark of the night.

Christmas come close to the place where we are,
in our longing for peace, for a sign, for a star,
for a certainty born in uncertainty's space,
for a mystery grasped that our blindness can trace.

Christmas come close to the world that is bleak,
giving hope a new home, making prophecy speak:
so the angels will sing, and the wise will be heard,
and the powers will take heed of this child and his word.

Christmas come close into focus and frame,
to humanity's heart for the child to make claim:
for the poor to be served, for the rich to kneel low,

for Magnificat now in the Christmas we know.

Passing the Peace

One: The peace of God be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

GROUNDING

Community Prayer (*Christian Aid and Edwina Gateley, inspired by Isaiah 7:14 – adapted*)

Emmanuel, God with us: in muscle and sinew, breath and bone; in vulnerability and risk, escape and refuge; in parable and healing, encounter and sign; in suffering and death, word become flesh; in resurrection, ascension, Spirit come down; in justice and grace, patience and peace.

Emmanuel, God with us, you are soaked in our world. Your Spirit lives and breathes in and through all that is. We are lost only when we do not understand that you are already with and in each one of us. Make it our task to recognize your initiative to be at home in us—to accept you with us. Then we cannot but be glad. Amen.

Silent Prayer

Special Music: Selected Carols

Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 7:10-16 (*A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church, Wilda C. Gafney*)

Again the HOLY ONE spoke to Ahaz, saying, **11** "Ask a sign of the HOLY ONE your God; from the deep of Sheol or the height of what lies above." **12** Yet Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not test the HOLY ONE." **13** Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, House of David! Is it not enough that you exhaust mortals, that you must exhaust my God also? **14** Therefore the selfsame Creator will give you a sign. See, the young woman is pregnant and she shall give birth to a son, and she shall name him Immanu-El. **15** He

shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. **16** For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are dread will be deserted."

Choral Alleluia (*UMH #186, Jerry Sinclair*)

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. **19** Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. **20** But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." **22** All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by God through the prophet: **23** "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of God commanded him; he took her as his wife, **25** but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

One: The word of God for the people of God.

ALL: Thanks be to God!

Choral Alleluia

Sing alleluia, sing alleluia, sing alleluia, alleluia. (*repeat*)

Sermon: "The Threat of Mystery"

Song: "This Time of Darkness Bears a Dream" (*tune: UMH #496, William B. Bradbury / lyrics: Hannah C. Brown*)

This time of darkness bears a dream:
no rigid rules are what they seem.
A change is swelling in the deep
while we on earth lie fast asleep.
Our skies will shake and oceans shift,
high summits fall and valleys lift.
Observe the stars and do not fear;
in hours of tumult Love draws near.

Who dares to hope this dream is true?
The brave at heart are far and few
but souls awaiting signs foreseen
perceive the trees and how they green.
So touch the soil, and feel it beat:
the pulse that heralds hate's defeat,
the life expectant breaking free
through Mary's blood and prophecy.

Awake, O children of the dream:
rise up to end the old regime,
reshaping ruins of our past
to welcome righteousness at last.
Pain yields to joy, a ripening fruit
from faithful branch and steadfast root.
Behold what labor can reveal.
Believe a dream and make it real.

SHARING

Offering Our Gifts

allmeansall.org/time-talent / allmeansall.org/donate

"Each of you must give as
you have made up your mind,
not regretfully or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver."

- 2 Corinthians 9:7



Prayers of the People

"Thanks be to God" / "God hears our prayer"

Sung Response (tune: UMH #294, Hugh Wilson / lyrics: John Pritchard)

O coming Christ, to you we pray,
to you hearts open wide.
Your justice bring, to wounds healing;
in joy let all abide.

ENGAGING

Closing Song: "This Little Light of Mine" (AAHH #549, African American spiritual)

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine (3x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Everywhere I go ...

All through the night ...

Benediction

Singing Our Way Out: "Pool of Love" (Alexa Sunshine Rose, Murray Kyle)

May the pool of love we have gathered here
Spread its wings and fly far and near
From the depths of our hearts to the farthest star
May our love bless everyone

Calvary United Methodist Church

Celebrating 130 years at the intersection of
48th & Baltimore / spirituality & justice

801 S. 48th Street / Philadelphia, PA 19143
215.724.1702 / office@allmeansall.org / allmeansall.org

Pastor Tim Emmett-Rardin: pastortim@allmeansall.org
(in case of pastoral emergency: 215.370.7411)

Norris Person (Music Minister): music@allmeansall.org

Shakirah Holloway (Office Administrator / Treasurer)

Beth Jemison, Bethany Weed, Cord Whitaker (Co-Lay Leaders)

Geraldine (Gerry) Felix (Church Council Chair)

Annie Haviland (Finance Committee Chair)

Jennine Miller (Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair)

Carl Ballinger (Trustees Chair)

For full leadership roster: allmeansall.org/leadership

