

The Purpose of the Church
Sermon - Feb. 25, 2018

Dear Beloved,

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MY CHURCH?

Today is our Annual Meeting. For this, it is very important to discuss the question: What is the purpose of our church? What is our call? To be more personal I am inviting you to raise the question in a more personal way: What is the purpose of MY CHURCH at Calvin, at MY CALVIN FAMILY? As actualization, I will invite you to stand in front of the cross, asking yourself: What do I do to fulfill the purpose of MY CHURCH?

I use the term MY because God gave US an opportunity to create a place of worship here at this place. The first members of Calvin built for us this building where we can gather and worship and do our mission, but it is OUR responsibility to sustain this church and to do OUR mission such as MY call, MY mission and MY service for God in MY Calvin family.

Who are you?

Before we answer these questions, first we have to define WHO WE ARE. And I am asking you in a personal way: **Who are you?**

We are a lot of things: Canadians, mothers, fathers, parents, siblings, friends, teachers, leaders, business people, workers, members of Calvin, volunteers, committee members, board members, session members, music leaders, ministers – we are Christians.

These days the world is watching the Winter Olympics. I am sure you noticed that every Canadian on the athletic team wears the same uniform. Why? Because they want to be identified as a part of the team they represent. I noticed that my children always loved wearing their high school team's uniform. They were asking me, too, to buy it and to wear it. They wanted me to be identified with their team as I cheered for them. I have t-shirts, polo shirts, sweatshirts, and sweaters from their High School. I wore them with pride because I wanted everyone to know that I am associated with my daughters, and with their schools and teams.

What identifies you as being part of God's team here at Calvin?

I am very happy to see you attending our worship services regularly. I am sure there is a reason why you are coming back to worship with us again and again. I am sure you were experiencing, here with us and amongst us, that the Lord is good and blessed are those who put their trust in Him.

I am also very thankful for those who came forward, offering their services in different committees and took some roles on their shoulders after they realized that simply coming to the church, occasionally or even regularly for them, was not enough.

What identifies you as being a mother or father?

Those who are raising their children as young parents would say: I love my children, I care for them, and I provide what they need to have a peaceful and happy life at home. Those whose children have left the nest would say: we have a loving connection with our children because they appreciate how we raised them; they bring our grandchildren regularly to our house to babysit them; or we are going to their house to spend time with our grandchildren, and all together we are a loving family.

We are identified as parents based on how much our children love us and how much we do for them. If we did a great job as parents, our children would love us, and they would trust in us. They know that we care, we do things for them; and while we live, we will sacrifice ourselves for their happiness.

What identifies you as being a member of Calvin?

Being a quiet worshipper, Sunday by Sunday, can give you a great feeling that you are part of this congregation. But now, maybe it is your time to move one step higher and be a more active member.

We appreciate that you are attending our services regularly, we appreciate your financial support very much, and without your support, our congregation would not be able to keep up with its plans. But if we would not have active members- who are working hard in committees, who are picking up members on Sundays and giving them a ride to the church, who are feeding others in need -we would not be identified as a living congregation.

Please ask yourself now: what identifies you as an active member in your living church? What tells the other members clearly that you represent Jesus Christ here in your church?

The Christian concept of MEMBER means COMMITMENT.

Please come forward if you can and offer God and this congregation yourself. With your commitment, your church will better succeed.

Your commitment gives stability to your church. Unfortunately, in a church, like in a family, there are spiritual battles. People are different. Everybody has a different opinion about church, leadership, and decisions. It faces opposition in many ways, and the congregation needs to have a solid core of people who support its good and sacred direction by offering their time, talents and treasure. For our church to be more successful, we all have to step up to higher levels of commitment. The more members at Calvin who will accept more responsibility, the more stable and secure our church will be.

Being a church attender is not the same as being a church member.

If you are attending the church events, and you see things as an “outsider”, you might feel in power to criticize the work of the church. But you cannot see the work as an “insider” if you are not there during the discussions when they struggle to make the best decision: you will never understand their effort and their intentions.

I would like to ask all of you: if you find any mistakes in the church committees’ work, in Board work or in Session’s work, before you raise your negative concern. please come, commit yourself and join those committees and help them to do their work much better with your help.

Attending committees will allow you to be a part of your church more actively.

Somebody said: **“For the leadership of the church there is nothing like knowing people have "skin in the game" especially as decisions are made.”**

Today is another great opportunity, my beloved, to promise to God that you will take your commitment to Christ seriously enough to commit to Christ's church in our community.

Your commitment will give you the opportunity to make key decisions affecting your church's future. You can help our church be the one place where Christ’s glory is increasing.

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:1-3

Our Lord Jesus Christ is telling us that the purpose of the church is **the same** purpose for which we were made: to glorify God, and to take the gospel into our children’s and grandchildren’s lives, and into the world. We can glorify God by living our lives as Christ did, by loving our enemies, by sharing the good news with others, by loving one another, and by our good works which will glorify God. We must also be certain to ascribe to the Lord the credit for all the good things we have. When something good happens to us, we should always thank God for it and tell others that it is God who is most worthy to praise and ascribe credit to. Let’s acknowledge Him in all things. Amen