

Whom Do You Serve?
Sermon February 26, 2017

Almighty God, you have promised when two or three are gathered that you are there. May we have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts open to you prompting. Amen

Today is our Annual Meeting. It is a tradition at Calvin that, in February, the annual meeting will occur, when we gather to discuss the past year and make considerations for the upcoming year.

Today, we are also celebrating another powerful day in Jesus' life – the Transfiguration - and therefore a powerful day in the life of our church, which is His church.

In our New Testament Scripture reading, we see a dramatic revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. In those dramatic moments, Moses and Elijah, the giants of the faith, are present with Jesus on the mountain. In their presence, Jesus' figure is transformed. We read about a mystical Cloud of God which is coming from the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (Luke 9:35)

Today we might ask “what is all this transformation about”? If people outside of this church will ask you “what is all this about?”, what would you say?

We all have a temptation like Peter to say silly things like: “let's build a tent here for all of us and let's stay here forever”.

There are many messages in this story:

- God showed to the disciples that Moses and Elijah are living persons, so there is an eternity and God's people are part of eternal life. We all have to know that our lives will not end after we die but we have an eternal home as well.
- Jesus changed his appearance to show to his disciples that He is eternal.
- Jesus changed in order to show us today that if we want to bring more people around Him, we have to change as well.

Today, I would like to highlight the last message: *in order to show us today that if we want to bring more people around Him, we have to change as well.*

We are here as God's children, called to **serve** God and each other.

In our Old Testament reading and golden verse, Samuel declared that he and his household were called to serve God and God's people. Samuel was transformed since his childhood and was raised as the servant of the Lord.

In order to serve our Lord, our world, and our congregation, we must seek to be transformed ourselves. We must see our need to be converted into the person of Christ. We need to change our lives and the way we serve in order to help people in the 21st century to find Christ Jesus.

God had called the Corinthians to be God's church, and God was actively at work transforming the believers from one degree of glory to another. "All of us ... are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18) Transformed... one degree of glory to another. This has to be our story.

How do you serve the Lord on a scale of 1 to 10?

On a # 5, people say that they are committed to attend church regularly, but this is not enough for our ministry. We all have to be influenced to move further, higher on the scale. We all have to be transformed to be closer and closer to God's glory by serving.

In a few months, I am planning a visioning retreat with Session and the Committees of Calvin Church to plan for the next 3 years. A new, practical Calvin Vision Statement will be created.

With your help, I would like to build here at Calvin a more inclusive, committed and caring church that engages our intergenerational communities, shares our story, demonstrates a Christ-like way of living, and facilitates spiritual growth.

The extended Vision Statement and the objectives to reach the Vision Statement will be divided into different working groups to create a strategy. In 3 years from today, we will review what has been done.

By the grace of God, last year 2016 was a very active year in our congregation's life. Besides innumerable committee meetings, we were part of many excitements here at Calvin.

Mary Hetherington created an awesome banner which is hanging above the main door in the narthex. We had a fun Vacation Bible School in August, a Halloween party for the children, and many exciting youth programs led by our previous Program Coordinator, Abbey. We had a very successful Alpha program, which is an introductory or refresher program in Christianity. We had fun family game nights and movie nights, a memorable Picnic at Anne and Evan Snider's farm; we hosted several potlucks, garage sales, Christmas bazaar, a senior's tea event, and golf tournament. We had special services at Pentecost and Christmas, and to celebrate the Christian unity.

In 2017, we already had a very inspiring ecumenical service at St. Francis Roman Catholic Church. Then we had a Taizé service here at Calvin where more than 50 guests gathered from the area. We had a fun and successful fundraising event organized by Betsy Dickie. Hopefully, Roger in the play has been enjoying many home cooked casseroles.

Following the departure of Abbey, the Personnel Committee had another very successful hiring, Michael Turman, who, with his commitment and faith, will help our congregation to create a more active and inclusive congregation. Michael is already loved by our children, youth, and all of us.

My plan is to build a more inclusive, committed and caring church here at Calvin that engages our intergenerational communities, shares our story, demonstrates a Christ-like way of living and facilitates spiritual growth. For this I am working on quite a few mission plans and programs with Michael, our Clerk, our session, and those who are fully engaged in our Church's mission.

I am planning a visioning weekend with the session and one with all the committees. With the Mission and Stewardship Committee, we are planning a day when we will celebrate our country and our diversity as Canada is created by so many nations around the world. We are planning 3 workshops in March, April and May which discuss interesting and constructive topics for the whole congregation to learn to grow.

The Alpha course will start again on March 21, 2017. This will be a 12 week program. Every Tuesday we will have a special social time with coffee and cake. Then we will watch a 30 min video and then we will have an intensive and constructive discussion. In the middle of this program, on Saturday May 6, we will have a half day program together with Creekside Church when the main topic will be the Holy Spirit.

We will have special services before Easter, Pentecost and Christmas, which will help us to focus on these holidays.

I will continue to lead the "Lunch and Learning" Encounter on Tuesday at noon.

We will continue to have our potlucks, and youth barbeque events. We are planning our picnic for June. Brad Fairly and Margaret Gadsby have graciously agreed to host the event for our members and adherents.

In the second part of the year, I am planning to celebrate "500 Years of Reformation" in a very special way with pamphlets and special guest speakers.

We are a church community that has to be transformed by the music and programs, and also by our own faith, commitments and engagements to serve God and to serve others. We continue to have a perspective that is open to the community around us and invites them in.

Today, when we gather for our annual meeting, we have to be thankful to God for how much we have grown in the last 3 years as individuals, as groups, and as a community.

Also, we have to realize how many changes we have to make in order to continue to grow in our faith and our commitments. We have to realize how much we owe to God, to ourselves, and to our congregation.

Please consider how much you received from God so far, and how you could be transformed to serve. Consider what you are achieving here, Sunday by Sunday, and how you might live your life as an example of concern for others. How could you more effectively reflect the light of Christ in His service to transform others? Amen