



# *Callings from the Lakeshore*

## **Calvary & St. Paul Lutheran: Two Churches, One Body**

### 2025

## **Notes from the Pastor's Chair**

Recently, I was asked how we live in a world filled with so much hate, a world with people whose ideals stand in such sharp contrast to our own, a world where we see the rights and freedoms of so many eliminated. I have been trying to answer this question for many months now. The truth is that I have no easy answers.



Despite the strong desire to cover your ears and eyes and not see what is going on around you, that is not a good choice. As painful and anxiety-inducing as the information is, we need to hear it. The world is no longer functioning as it has been for so long. The rules of equality, fairness, and lawfulness seem to have been tossed out the window. Information is our key.

Our faith in a God that gathered the marginalized is being put to the test. Jesus sought out the hungry, the sick, and the women. We are still called as followers of Jesus to do the same, to seek out the least among us and care for them. We are not called to ostracize them more by deporting them back to places they haven't lived in years, to places of violence they fled from, where they can't make a living and care for their families.

This country was founded on people finding refuge on its shores; first the British, then the Irish, the Germans, and the Polish. People are still seeking refuge on our shores. What has changed is that suddenly, we want to pick and choose who finds refuge. That is not what Jesus calls us to do as followers. Jesus tells us that every person is our neighbor with no conditions. That is both good and hard. Every person, regardless of any conditions or categories we assign, is our neighbor. They are worthy of the same love we show our favorite friend, beloved aunt, or cherished grandfather. The tension comes in when they act in ways that hurt, endanger, or minimize other neighbors. We are called to not just speak out but to act for the well-being of those who are being ostracized.

I have no easy answers as to how we live in this world. It can and should begin with prayer to the God who created each of us in God's image. It should include finding safe spaces to have open and genuine conversations about our concerns and fears. It needs to include trying to find ways to engage those who have different beliefs. It includes us continuing to engage the world in the ways that Jesus taught us, such as caring for strangers, the homeless, the immigrants, the LGBTQIA community, and people of color by fighting for basic needs, preventing discrimination, and standing with them. We continue to learn and grow and ask questions about each other and the world and how to make it better. We do so in little ways each day. The race is long and worth running. No one is alone along the way. God is always with us. Reach out to your fellow members, and we will be there for you as members of the Body of Christ.

### CALVARY WORSHIP TIME:

Sunday 8:30am.

### ST. PAUL WORSHIP TIME:

Sunday 10:15 a.m.



### WORSHIP SERVICES ONLINE

Worship services for both churches continue to be recorded and shared for everyone who is unable to come to in-person worship. Recorded services can be found on each church's website. The link for online worship is included in weekly emails for both churches. If you need help finding services online, please call the church office.



## *In our Community & Beyond*

### MONTHLY TREP FOOD DRIVES (CALVARY)

Calvary is hosting monthly food drives for TREP. Each month is a specific focus. **March's focus is canned fruit, canned potatoes, Jello, & condiments** but all donations are welcome. Many recipients do not have storage for flour, sugar, etc. so cookie mix pouches are preferred. Any items for TREP can be placed in the grocery cart inside the main entrance.

### PETER'S PANTRY & BLESSING BOX DONATIONS (ST. PAUL)

There is a basket near the church office at St. Paul to drop off donations for Peter's Pantry. Thank you for all the donations we find in the basket each month! Your generosity to those in need is appreciated. If you have items for the Blessing Box, please place those directly in the box outside. Items should be able to withstand freezing temps during winter months.

### MEALS FOR MANITOWOC WARMING SHELTER

The WOW group at St. Paul has (and will continue to) provide meals for the Warming Shelter during its open season. Calvary will also be providing a meal. If you are interested in helping or contributing to these dinners for the homeless in our community, please contact the church office.



**Ash Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Calvary: 4pm**

**St. Paul 6:30pm**

### **Calvary & Ecumenical Services**

**The following services are at 6:30pm**

March 12th - Grace Congregational (Two Rivers)

March 19th - St. Peter the Fisherman (Two Rivers)

March 26th - Holy Family Hospital Chapel (Manitowoc)

April 2nd - Zion United Methodist (Mishicot)

April 9th – Calvary

### **St. Paul Services**

March 12 & April 2 – 6pm



Please consider sending cards & notes to our homebound members. They are still very much a part of our church family, even if we do not see them. For safety reasons, the list will not be published in the newsletter as anyone can access it online. However, you can pick up a list at church or email Alyssa for a copy.

***Recently we received a card from a homebound member at St. Paul. It reads: "Just wanted to say hello to all of you at church. And to say I am doing ok. Also to thank you all for sending me cards, I really love getting mail. The days get long here and receiving mail brings cheer to my days."***

# UPCOMING EVENTS



## **CALVARY'S QUILTERS**

**Every Tuesday, 9am-11am**

No experience needed. All are welcome. Quilts are made and donated annually to Lutheran World Relief. Meets in the lower level.

## **WOMEN OF WORSHIP (WOW) AT ST. PAUL**

**Wednesday, March 5 at 11am**

WOW meets monthly at St. Paul for planning of events & fellowship. All women from Calvary & St. Paul are welcome to attend.

## **DAYS FOR GIRLS AT ST. PAUL**

**Monday, March 10 at 1-4pm**

Days for Girls International is a group that helps to provide reusable period products for millions of girls and women around the globe. No sewing experience (or experience of any kind) is necessary. Men & women are welcome to lend a helping hand.

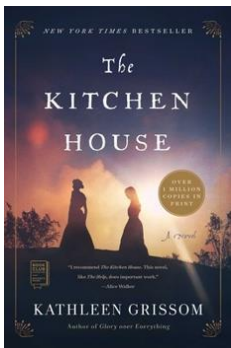
## **FAITH CIRCLE AT ST. PAUL**

**Tuesday, March 18 at 10am**

Faith Circle is a group of women who meet monthly for a Bible study along with some Fellowship time. All are welcome!

## **BOOK CLUB AT ST. PAUL**

**Thursday, March 27 at 3pm**



In March, Book Club will be reading **The Kitchen House** by Kathleen Grissom. If you're interested in joining, please let Joy know ([joycarlson4@gmail.com](mailto:joycarlson4@gmail.com)) and you can be added to the Book Club email list. We have library copies available to borrow.

## **NOISY OFFERING AT ST. PAUL**

The February Noisy Offering will be collected for **Pink Heals on Sunday, March 16**. Pink Heals Manitowoc County's mission is to financially and emotionally assist women, men, and children battling any type of cancer in Manitowoc County.

**FOR A FULL LIST OF EVENTS, PLEASE SEE THE CALENDAR PAGE!**



# CROSSWAYS

CAMPING MINISTRIES

## 2025 Retreats

- Mar. 7-9: Building Youth Groups (Upper Elementary and chaperones) @ Imago Dei
- May 27-28: Rooted (for adults) @ Pine Lake

**Summer Camps: So many options!** Check them out online - info below.

Registration open now! Email [info@crosswayscamps.org](mailto:info@crosswayscamps.org) with any registration questions. Go to [crosswayscamps.org](http://crosswayscamps.org) to sign up!



### SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AT ST. PAUL

Scholarship applications for St. Paul are due April 15<sup>th</sup>. If you would like a scholarship application, please contact the church office. Donations can be made at any time throughout the year to the scholarship fund. Please indicate this on your offering envelope.



### RECYCLING OPPORTUNITY

Do you have ink cartridges lying around? Calvary has a box in the gathering pew for the recycling of used ink cartridges. They take all types except the long toner cartridges from larger printers. St. Paul members if you would like to bring yours in to be recycled arrangements can be made to get them over to Calvary. The more we recycle the less that end up in the landfill!

### SCRIP

It's easy to buy cards and support this ongoing Calvary and St. Paul fundraiser.

- **At Calvary see Cindy Schmidt.**
- **At St. Paul stop in the office before worship.**

If you have any questions about our Scrip program or what type of gift cards are available, please ask. Scrip gift cards are a practical, easy way to give a little extra to Calvary and St. Paul while shopping for items you already need!





### Calvary

- Frankie (Joe & Bonny's granddaughter in NICU).
  - Sloane (4-year-old with cancer. Her grandparents are friends of Cindy Schmidt.)
  - Scott and Samantha Spiering (Roxanne Spiering's family)
  - Mary Keck (Kristin Keck's mother) cancer
  - Harold Keck (Kristin Keck's father) cancer
- Prayer requests can be made by emailing the office at [churchcalvarylutheran@gmail.com](mailto:churchcalvarylutheran@gmail.com) or by calling the church office at (920)793-3917.

### St. Paul

- Dick K., Amy, Linda, Mary, Harold, & Karen

Prayer request can be made by emailing the church office at [stpaulmanitowoc@gmail.com](mailto:stpaulmanitowoc@gmail.com) or by calling the office at (920)-682-2228.

If you would like prayer but would like to keep it confidential, please feel free to contact us with those as well.

## ☺ A LITTLE BIT OF LAUGHTER!





Calvary	
No March birthdays	
St. Paul	
3 <sup>rd</sup> – Lana Sieracki	22 <sup>nd</sup> – Michael Mowrer
5 <sup>th</sup> – Karen Ably	22 <sup>nd</sup> – Alice & Rudie Schultz
6 <sup>th</sup> – Cindy Frank	23 <sup>rd</sup> – Dan Newberg & Dan Trost
8 <sup>th</sup> – Dick Klien	25 <sup>th</sup> – Cathy Groelle
9 <sup>th</sup> – Sharon Schwantes	29 <sup>th</sup> – Delores Jung
11 <sup>th</sup> – Joanne Fote	30 <sup>th</sup> – Dana Kornely
14 <sup>th</sup> – Chris Schultz	

Happy  
ANNIVERSARY

**Calvary**

NO ANNIVERSARIES THIS MONTH.

*If your birthday or anniversary is not listed or is listed incorrectly, please notify the church office.*



**SPRING**  
**CHILI WARM-UP**  
**& BAKE SALE**

**Saturday, March 29, 2025**  
**11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

**First Lutheran Church**  
**Fireside Room**  
**521 N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Manitowoc, Wisconsin**

**Adult: \$8.00**

**Children under 12: \$4.00**

*Includes chili, dessert and beverage*

**Hot Dog: \$2.00**

**Takeout (One quart): \$8.00**



## **Calendar of Events**

### **AA meetings happening weekly at Calvary:**

Mondays – 7pm  
Wednesdays – 7pm  
Saturdays – 6pm

Date	Event	Time	Location
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Confirmation Class	11:45am	St. Paul
4 <sup>th</sup>	Quilters <b>Alyssa off</b>	9-11am	Calvary
5 <sup>th</sup>	WOW	11am	St. Paul
	Ash Wednesday Services	4pm 6:30pm	Calvary St. Paul
6 <sup>th</sup>	WOW Warming Shelter Meal	????	St. Paul
9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>DAYLIGHT SAVINGS!</b>		
10 <sup>th</sup>	Days for Girls	1-4pm	St. Paul
11 <sup>th</sup>	Quilters	9-11am	Calvary
	Council Meetings	5:45pm 7:00pm	Calvary St. Paul
12 <sup>th</sup>	Finance Meeting	2pm	St. Paul
16 <sup>th</sup>	Noisy Offering (Pink Heals)	During worship	St. Paul
18 <sup>th</sup>	Quilters	9am	Calvary
	Faith Circle	10am	St. Paul
18 <sup>th</sup>	Quilters	9am-11am	Calvary
20 <sup>th</sup>	Newsletter articles due	1pm	Both churches
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Coffee Hour	After service	Calvary
25 <sup>th</sup>	Quilters	9-11am	Calvary
27 <sup>th</sup>	Book Club	3-4pm	St. Paul
<b>For Lenten Service Schedules, please see page 2.</b>			

**CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

1921 Adams St. Two Rivers, WI. 54241

Email: [churchcalvarylutheran@gmail.com](mailto:churchcalvarylutheran@gmail.com)

Website: [www.calvarytworivers.org](http://www.calvarytworivers.org)

Phone: 920-793-3917

**Church Office Hours**

Wednesdays 9:00am-1:00pm

**CALVARY CHURCH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

President & Treasurer, Joe Bitto

[bittohoney@charter.net](mailto:bittohoney@charter.net), (920) 304-6808

Vice President, Cindy Schmidt

[Cas3761@gmail.com](mailto:Cas3761@gmail.com), (920) 901-7449

Secretary, Kim Braun

[Kbalma1@charter.net](mailto:Kbalma1@charter.net), (920) 905-5303

Financial Secretary, Lori Williams

[drlwilliams2010@gmail.com](mailto:drlwilliams2010@gmail.com), (920) 588-0109

**CALVARY COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Diane Grasse (920) 764-8065

Stan Phelps (920) 901-3887

Bruce Larson (920) 755-4069

Kerry Rivest

Lisa Shimanek

**ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

2601 S. 10<sup>th</sup> St. Manitowoc, WI. 54220

Email: [stpaulmanitowoc@gmail.com](mailto:stpaulmanitowoc@gmail.com)

Website: [www.stpaulmanitowoc.org](http://www.stpaulmanitowoc.org)

Phone: 920-682-2228

**Church Office Hours**

Mondays 10:00am-2:00pm

Tuesdays: 9:00am-1:00pm

Thursdays 9:00am-1:00pm

**ST. PAUL CHURCH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

President, Dave Kriewald

[Dkriewald1@gmail.com](mailto:Dkriewald1@gmail.com)

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Financial Secretary, Julie Dahleen

Neil Erickson

Shirley Oseiczaneck

Lana Sieracki

Linda Wallander

**Pastor Heather Yerion Keck**

[pastoryerionkeck@gmail.com](mailto:pastoryerionkeck@gmail.com)

cell: 816-820-4108

**Office Hours:**

Mondays 1:00-4:00 – St. Paul

Tuesdays 9:00-1:00 – St. Paul

Wednesdays 9:00-1:00 Calvary

Thursdays 9:00-1:00 – Calvary

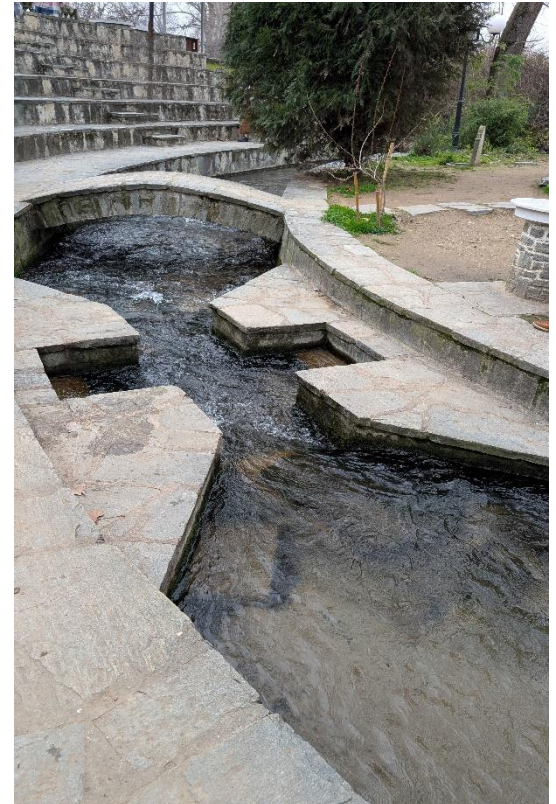
\*Other times by appointment.

## Pastor's Trip to Greece & Turkey

In January, I had the privilege of going to Greece and Turkey. It was a trip organized by Wartburg Theological Seminary, where twenty-two current students, thirteen alumni, two faculty members, spouses, and a synod employee embarked on January 7th for an eleven-day trip to trace Paul's footsteps. Our trip roughly followed Paul's second journey described in the book of Acts.

Most of the group met at O'Hare to take the eleven-hour flight to Istanbul and then a short flight to Thessaloniki, Greece, our home base for a couple of days.

After a short night's sleep and not yet over jet lag, our journey began with a bus trip to Philippi. This is where Paul preached his first sermon in Europe and where Paul baptized Lydia and her household after she heard Paul preaching. Lydia is important because she is the first recorded European convert to Christianity. She is first mentioned in Acts 16:14-15 and described as a purple cloth dealer from Thyatira, a region known for its dyeing industry. The fact that Lydia was a dealer of purple cloth, the color of royalty, meant that she was a woman who held influence in her community. Lydia's story is still important today because too often in the Bible, women are not named, so when they are, it should alert us that we have something to learn from them. Connecting with this place and story, where a strong affluent woman answered the call of God, fed my own sense of call to God. In a world that doesn't always want to hear my voice because of who I am, being reminded of the strength and courage of a woman to answer that same call over two thousand years ago renewed my strength in these challenging days.



While there, we had an opening worship service with a reminder of our baptism and time to take in the church's beauty dedicated to Lydia. It was filled from floor to ceiling with imagery of Paul, his journeys, and Lydia in the form of mosaics and paintings. The beauty and solace of the chapel were breathtaking and served as a foretaste of things to come.

That day, we continued to the remains of the city of Philippi. For many of us on this trip, this was the first time we had experienced anything this old. I don't know what I was expecting, but walking among the remains of cities long before the first century was awe-inspiring.

Travel broadens your perspective and pushes you to ask different questions. So, as we walked among the stones where early Christians and Romans went about their lives, trying to figure out how to live together, at times successfully, at other times in active opposition to each other, we found ourselves reflecting deeply on the fact that human nature hasn't changed much and wondering if this is frustrating and disheartening for God.

We tried to focus ourselves on these new experiences in ancient ruins and foreign cities. Still, it raised questions about our current lives and situations as we reflected on the places we were learning about and seeing.

On the trip, twelve others and I are presently serving congregations, and we have all read the letters of Paul before, but this time their texts were hitting us a bit differently. We all know the trials and tribulations that Paul endured for spreading this new message - he was beaten and jailed repeatedly. The rise of criticism of pastors for preaching the gospel feels harsher, stronger, and more prominent lately. We discussed whether or not we thought Paul worried about that as he was evangelizing or accepted that this kind of thing was prone to happen.

We had a guide for each country that traveled everywhere with us. They provided us with historical facts about the locations, the country, the religious atmosphere of the country, and the relationship between the two countries. This was very beneficial because, even for a history major like me, they provided a lot of localized information. You can't just apply knowledge from the first century to the twenty-first century. As a pastor, you must learn to interpret God's word for today. Being there and seeing places that are written about makes them more tangible and relatable.

Students were required to write a piece about an interaction with a person that enhanced their trip in a cross-cultural way. The intent was to help them engage with locals.

My interactions with the guides, people in the cafes, people on the streets, and the police were similar to interacting with people here. The guy at the corner snack stand that I got to know well in Athens had better days than others like we all do. The hotel's front desk staff were just as enthusiastic as you would expect when forty people with luggage showed up and filled the lobby for quite some time, since there is one elevator for the whole hotel.

There were the typical cultural differences that took some time for me to process through my American mind. I didn't see a single ice cube in two weeks; water was room temperature no matter what, and people sat outside in covered cafés to eat in the cold or rain. Since returning, I have been repeatedly asked whether I felt safe in Greece and Turkey. We had a free morning and spent most of the day wandering around Athens, making our way to the First Cemetery of Athens [Modern] and then to the local flea market with no concerns or issues beyond usual big city common sense. I had to find a pharmacy on a Sunday, and this walk took me through some non-tourist areas. I soon noticed that I was a definite minority on the streets. It mainly was Greek men gathered for coffee and a meal, and even when I encountered Police presence in one area (which I later learned meant that this was an area of frequent trouble), not once did I feel unsafe. I figured out that as a woman, it was the calmest and safest I'd felt in months. I felt nothing but respect in this country. I am not saying that this is universal, and there are, of course, problems that I was not aware of, but it did make me aware of the difference.

While journeying, we visited one of the most beautiful places I have ever visited: Meteora, Greece. There are twenty-four perpendicular rocks where 600 years ago Byzantine monks chose to worship God and build their cave-like Monastic of Meteora. There are currently seven monasteries and abbeys that sit atop these rocks. The groups visited the St Stephen and St Barbara monasteries. They were adorned with wooden galleries and corniced rooftops. These buildings hang dangerously near the edge of the rocks. The chapels in them hold exquisite examples of Byzantine art. I could easily imagine that, without forty of my now closest friends, peace and connection to God could be found in these places, which would be amazing.

After traveling up to this breathtaking site, we traveled to the nearby village and had a cafeteria-style lunch at the local German language school. The students were just returning to class as we made our way to their cafeteria. The staff fed us like we were growing teenagers. They had a hearty serving of what seemed like everything we could have wanted.

Our journey continued the next day with a visit to the Oracle of Delphi and a drive to the center of Athens. We arrived in time for a late dinner at the hotel.

On Sunday we rose to one of the best weather days we would see. The sun was shining, and the temperatures were in the low sixties. Our first stop for the day was the Acropolis. This morning was one of the highlights of the trip for me. We made our way through the winding streets to the base of the Acropolis but diverted to Areopagus (Mars Hill). This served as the meeting place for the Areopagus Court, the highest court in Greece and is the location of one of Paul's most important presentations when he was in Athens during his second missionary trip (recorded in the book of Acts 17:16-34) On Mars Hill, he addressed the religious idolatry of the Greeks who had an altar to the "Unknown God." We were gathered on the top of the second tallest point of Athens with the city surrounding us, listening to one of the daily devotions, when the church bells started. Initially, it was one church, and within two or three minutes, there was a chorus of bells from churches all around the city. I was transported in amazement.



We learned from our guide that Christian worship in Athens starts at 7 am on Sundays and lasts three hours. The bells are rung three times, at the beginning of the service, during communion, and at the end. This is not the first time that the bells of churches ringing have transported me, but it is the first time that it has made me question in what ways we in the Western World call out to our communities publicly to celebrate our faith. It drives me to keep probing at the thought; how do we continue to evangelize about the message of Jesus in a world that keeps shifting its focus? How do we keep telling and spreading the good news of a God that sent Jesus to live and walk among us so that we could relate to him as a person? The good news of a God that forgave our sins and is still doing so today, and will be doing so until we are united again? A God that understands we are both sinner and saint but still calls us to love and care for our neighbors as if they were ourselves? This moment on Mars Hill still sits in my heart. I was changed in ways that I am still trying to understand. I am trying to answer these questions



for myself, for you, my congregation, for our community, and this world. This trip, my ministry, and I have been made all the better for half an hour on an ancient boulder overlooking Athens.

The next day we woke up to the promised rain for our two-hour bus journey to Corinth. It would be a long cold day for all of us on the bus. The rain was relentless, but Corinth was one of the places most of us were looking forward to. Paul wrote two letters to the people of Corinth and spent nearly eighteen months of his life there. The archeological site also contains a museum of items recovered exclusively from there, which we toured. Due to the weather, we didn't fully experience the site. I am still sad about that. But while huddled under some trees, listening to our guide talk about the site and biblical history, a nearby mountain was completely engulfed in a cloud. One minute, it was completely visible, but the next minute, the top was not. I was immediately reminded of the story of Moses and Mount Sinai. I began to wonder how scary and amazing it must have been for those Israelites in the desert to witness a mountain suddenly disappearing behind a cloud of fire and smoke, and then to have the word of God appear with Moses. This moment reminded me of the beauty and wonder of creation unfolding before my eyes in this space where Paul spoke God into the hearts and minds of those in Corinth and beyond.

This marked the halfway point in our journey. We've spent too many hours in the bus to count and had one too many hours of late afternoon bus karaoke so we didn't miss things like the Aegean Sea on our drive back to the evening destination. We stayed in three of our five planned hotels. Ahead of us, the continent of Asia with our flight to Izmir, where we will travel to Ephesus.

Ephesus was the second biggest draw of this trip for the group. It was a major focus of Paul and one of the seven churches of the Revelation. We rose early to journey to the ancient city's

remains. Unlike on our Corinth day, the weather proved much better. It started as overcast, but by the time we walked from the top of the site to the bottom, the clouds had cleared, and it was perfect. We had ample time to explore all the parts of this city. We walked through where people lived, shopped, gathered and went about their daily lives. Our guide, Namik, provided historical context and explanations about the various ruins along the way.

We visited the nearby remains of the Temple of Artemis (very little is left). Still, it is important because the worship of Artemis caused a riot against Paul spreading his Christian message. The city protected Paul, and eventually, Christianity became the city's official religion. Paul spent three years in Ephesus. We had time to see the nearby museum while we were there.





Returning to the bus again, we traveled to the House of the Virgin Mary, where it is believed that Jesus's mother lived out her remaining days. It is a lovely, quiet retreat in the hills. Then, we returned to our fourth hotel of the trip, where we checked in at about ten o'clock.

We had a five am breakfast before our one-hour bus ride to the airport for our flight to Istanbul for our last day and a half of the trip. The airline had cancelled a flight in the middle, which led to this unexpected flight. We had an extra day in Athens and less time in Istanbul. They told us that driving to Istanbul would have been six hours, but in the end, by the time we all got up and cleared multiple (four) security checkpoints, none of us were sure that flying would be any quicker.

Istanbul! We arrived and went directly to the city. We wouldn't see our last hotel until after eight o'clock that night. We were off for a whirlwind of sightseeing. Our first stop was the Topkapi Palace, which was the residence of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and is famous for its collection of jewelry, porcelain, and religious relics. The religious relics were amazing to see.

We got to see the Hagia Irene, (St. Irene) which stands in the outer courtyard of the Topkapi Palace. The roots of this church go back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century when Emperor Constantine ordered it built to serve as the main church for Constantinople. The Hagia Irene was pivotal to the Second Ecumenical Council in 381 AD, which shaped many Christian doctrines still followed today. At this council, they established the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed from the Nicene Creed in 325 AD. Visiting the place where they argued and debated these credal statements was amazing for me because my final seminary project was on credal statements in the Lutheran Church. Standing in this place and imagining the passion the people had about ironing out these words we still confess today reminded me just how long the Church has existed, reminded me that the church has lived through difficult times before and will continue to do so in the future.

Turkey is 96% Muslim, so having a preserved Christian church is a fantastic thing. It escaped the drastic changes most Byzantine churches underwent when they were converted into mosques. The Hagia Irene was used as an arsenal and then a storage space for museum artifacts.

No trip to Istanbul would be complete without seeing the Hagia Sophia, a church from the 6th century that is today a mosque after serving as a museum for decades, along with the Blue Mosque. The Blue Mosque is known for its dazzling interior, and it didn't disappoint; no picture can truly do justice to its beauty.

In Turkey, the call to prayer rings five times daily in the minarets that dot the city skyline. Every time we heard it, I stopped and took it in, noting those around us who paid heed, those who ignored it, and those who were taking it in. Like the bells on Mars Hill in Greece, the calls to prayer churned up the same questions in me about how we reach people in the world.

Eleven days, five hotels, countless on the bus, five flights, two continents, forty people, and two guides. This trip changed my understanding of Paul's letters, not just the ones to the Ephesians and the Corinthians. It broadened the view of my ministry. Jesus sought out the people on the edge, those who were pushed out of the community for various reasons. Traveling to Greece and Turkey and experiencing life, even as a tourist, shows you that you can be on the edge in a heartbeat.

We didn't speak Greek or Turkish. We didn't worship on Sunday because it was in Greek only. We were quickly taken advantage of in cabs because we were different, and the locals knew it. We were the other for eleven days. For me, that is not as unique as it is to many people in this world; I am already one of the other. But for many people in our traveling group, it was the first time they had ever been the other.

Thank you for this chance to continue to learn and grow as your pastor.