

CALVARY COURIER

November 2026

October Council Highlights

Devotions: The Council opened with devotions read from The Good News We Almost Forgot by Kevin DeYoung, focusing on Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 7 (Questions 20–23) on True Faith. The reflection highlighted that true faith is not merely knowledge and conviction, but a deep-rooted, personal assurance birthed in us by the Holy Spirit through the gospel. Council reflected on how we are joined to Christ, the Second Adam, receiving the gift of salvation and total assurance that our sins are forgiven.

Prayer: The Council spent time in prayer for various needs within the congregation and community:

- Pastoral prayers were offered for traveling families, various congregational members facing illness, surgeries, and ongoing medical treatments, as well as restoration and healing for broken relationships among families and friends.

Sharing and Appreciation: Council celebrated several encouraging highlights and praise points across the ministry of Calvary:

- Strong support and participation in the GEMS fundraiser.
- The launch of the SERVE 2027 site, with sign-ups opening November 1st. We are hosting a SERVE event this year and will follow up with our own group going to a SERVE location. Potential trip locations include Niagara Falls, Pease (MN), and Muskegon (MI).
- Positive community outreach by 725 Ministries, serving snacks and supporting over 30 neighborhood students after school at The Reserves.

Mutual Censure: The Council engaged in discussion around intentionality in welcoming visitors and onboarding new attendees. Reflecting on concepts from the book Future Focused Church, the Council discussed moving beyond organic greetings toward more systematic ways to turn strangers into familiar faces and ensure new visitors feel welcomed and connected.

Staff Reports & Ministry Updates:

- **Pastor Nate:** Reported on a smooth kickoff for fall education programs, youth groups, and Sunday school, with all volunteer positions successfully filled. He shared highlights from young adult events and announced upcoming dates: a SERVE 101 presentation during the November Council Meeting, further leadership training, and the Youth Group Dinner & Auction on November 18th.

- **Pastor Sheldon:** Highlighted a smooth transition into fall programming, preaching schedule, and ongoing pastoral visitation efforts. He expressed appreciation for the continued support of the Council and leadership team.

- **Pastor Roger:** Presented updates on ongoing pastoral care and visitation across care districts, noting steady engagement across care groups.

- **Pastor Josh:** Received updates on Pastor Josh and his family as preparations continue for his arrival next summer.

Nominations & Governance:

- **Elder and Deacon Nominations:** The Council continued progress on the elder and deacon nomination process, reviewing nominee responses and planning follow-up conversations to complete the slate of nominees.

- **Preparations for Congregational Meeting:** The Council discussed logistics, reports, and agenda items in preparation for the upcoming annual Congregational Meeting.

Financial & Facility Items:

- **Budget Finalization:** The Council reviewed and finalized the upcoming budget proposal for presentation and approval at the Congregational Meeting.

- **Deacons' Report:** Deacons confirmed tuition support for Ryan Bouwkamp at Calvin Theological Seminary for this semester, with ongoing review as additional funding sources materialize.

- **Door Replacement Proposal:** Reviewed and discussed property proposals regarding facility door replacements. Replacement of the kitchen door was approved along with an upgrade of the Southwest door. Both doors will have handicap-accessible openers.

- **Custodian Position:** Discussed updates regarding the church custodian position and ongoing staffing coverage.

Closing: Council closed the meeting in prayer, seeking God's wisdom and discernment for the work and ministry of Calvary Church.

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YAH Patriotic Day

A Patriotic Trip for the Young At Heart Group

It was a rainy day outside, but the sun shone in the hearts of the Young At Heart group as they traveled on October 15, 2026, to the First Freedom Rock in Menlo, Iowa and to the Iowa Veterans Cemetery by Adel, Iowa.

It was great having artist Ray “Bubba” Sorensen II come and talk to us about his Freedom Rock initiative. Ray painted his first Freedom Rock in Menlo, Iowa, in May 1999. Every year he repaints on the same rock. He begins painting it around the first of May and finishes the project every Memorial Day. One year, while painting the rock a group of Vietnam Veterans riding their motorcycles across country stopped to visit the rock. They asked if they could throw the cremated remains of fellow veterans around the rock. Ray said, “No, because they will just blow away. Instead let’s put them in my green paint, and they will be painted on the rock”. Ever since Vietnam Veterans have sent Ray the cremations of fellow Vietnam Veterans to be painted on the rock. The Freedom Rock at Menlo weighs approximately 60-90 tons. Ray has painted a Freedom Rock in every county in Iowa since 1999, some of the closest ones being located by the Marion County Court House in Knoxville, the Caldwell Park in Oskaloosa, and Central Park in Sully, Iowa. Ray’s goal is to paint a Freedom Rock in all 50 states. He recently returned from a trip painting a Freedom Rock in Alaska.

Our next stop was at the 100-acre Iowa Veterans Cemetery which opened in 2008. Presently only 33 acres are being used for burials. Over 9500 Veterans, spouses and their dependent children are buried at the cemetery. There is an average of four burials a day, but there can be as high at eight burials a day. Burials can be in both crypts and cremains. An Iowa Union Civil War soldier, Joseph Chedester, has his cremated remains recently buried in the cemetery with full military honors on November 11, 2025. Chedester died on August 18, 1929, in Des Moines, and his cremated remains sat unclaimed in a Central Iowa funeral home for nearly a century before being discovered and identified by the nonprofit “The Final Salute.”

By the end of the day, we as a group had renewed appreciation for our veterans and their stories as depicted on the Freedom Rock. Our day was concluded with a wonderful supper at the Machine Shed Restaurant in Urbandale. Just guess who had the biggest dessert?



Fran's Many Hands for Haiti Trip

I was privileged to go once again to Haiti, serving with Many Hands for Haiti, with the support of Calvary congregation. I went there for three weeks from September 2nd through 25th.

My primary responsibility was to build the necessary furniture for the eighth-grade classroom, which (to my surprise) started September 7. This included 24 desks, 24 chairs, 4 picnic tables, as well as storage cabinets for the students and for the teachers. The Many Hands for Haiti primary school is planned to eventually offer classes up through ninth grade, presently having about 250 students. If God continues to give me health, I hope to go there again at the end of January to complete the last of the furnishings for the entire school. For the past seven years, the oldest class always got the new desks that I had made. This year the school principal decided it was time for a change. The desks that the seventh grade class were using (the ones I made last year) were given to the new eighth grade class, and the current seventh grade class received the new desks. They were SO EXCITED!!!

I continued training two Haitian staff members to learn how to do more maintenance tasks around campus. These two men have been working for Many Hands three days a week as the technicians that maintain all the PET Mobility carts in the area. They are now helping maintain the Sylvain campus as well as the four other feeding centers on the two extra days. These fellas were a great help to me for the 3 weeks I was there, doing all the sanding and much of the painting. I am working myself out of a job!!

This year I introduced something new for the students. I held a shop class for two groups of 12 students. From leftover wood, I prepared kits of parts for them to make either a small car or a small pickup. The 7th & 8 th grade kids came down to my shop area after their regular school day and learned how to sand parts and screw them together. They had a great time. The principal even suggested that maybe I was available to come down for a month next year and have more shop class!! (I think maybe just another after-school session might be arranged)



Van Kooten Wedding

Congratulations, Ryan Van Kooten and Nicole Steiger

The wedding of Ryan Van Kooten and Nicole Steiger took place on Friday, October 16, 2026, at Red Rock Convention Center near Gallup, New Mexico. Ryan, a member of Calvary, is the son of Dan and Andi Van Kooten. His grandparents are Gerry and Marilyn Harms and Wilma Van Kooten, all of whom attend Calvary Church. Nicole is the daughter of Jacob and Donna (Monsma) Steiger. Her grandparents are Ken and Dottie Monsma, who also attend Calvary Church.

Dan and Andi took their family on a trip to Rehoboth, New Mexico, in September 2025. They wanted to show everyone where they started their teaching careers back in 1986. The family ended their time together on Sunday by going to the church that Dan and Andi attended when they lived there. It was at this church service that Ryan and Nicole met due to the fact that Ryan's sister Megan had spent time with Nicole at Calvin University and at Snow Mountain Ranch in Colorado. Nicole shared her number with Ryan, and they began a long-distance relationship, talking to each other on the phone often. When Nicole came to Pella to visit her grandparents in October 2025, they had their first in-person date. The rest is history, and they were engaged at the top of Wheeler Peak, the highest point in New Mexico, on May 15, 2026.

The wedding ceremony was held outdoors in the shadow of the beautiful New Mexico red rocks. Ryan's attendants were his brother and two sisters. Nicole's attendants were her brother and two sisters. Ryan's nieces and nephews served as ring bearers and flower girls.

Ryan is continuing his construction work in New Mexico. He is working with another builder in the area. Their schedule is already filling up. Nicole is the director of the preschool program at Rehoboth Christian School. They currently live in a house that Nicole owns, but they will soon be moving to a home that has a view of the red rocks. Ryan and Nicole both enjoy hiking, cooking together, traveling, and hanging out with friends. They hope to do a lot of camping in the future.

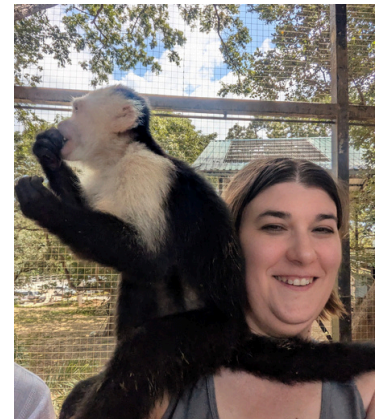
The Calvary congregation is thankful for how God brought Ryan and Nicole together, and we wish them God's blessings in their married life.



Welcome Office Manager

Kristen Mass has been a member of Calvary since 2017 and served as Interim Office Manager beginning in April 2026 before officially becoming Office Manager in October 2026. Originally from Council Bluffs, Iowa, Kristen graduated from Iowa State University with a B.S. in Psychology and worked at Nationwide Insurance before becoming a stay-at-home mom. She married her high school sweetheart, Cory, in 2006. Cory has worked at Vermeer for nearly 20 years. After living in Ames and Altoona, they moved to Pella in 2014. During her years at home with their three children, Abrianna, Brighton, and Josephine, Kristen volunteered with Mainly Music, served as a Girl Scout leader, and helped with numerous field trips.

In her free time, Kristen enjoys baking, playing video games, watching HGTV, and traveling, especially going on cruises when time allows. Much of her time is spent supporting her children's many activities, including volleyball, track, dance, football, trap shooting, and sporting clays. Kristen has enjoyed getting to know more members of the congregation since becoming Office Manager and looks forward to helping Calvary run smoothly and efficiently.



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November 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Jackson Wood	2	3 Lance Nunnikhoven	4	5 Jean Engle* Jana Rus	6 Norma Roose* Larry Ribbens	7 Ryan Bouwkamp Lydia Van Beek
8 Roger Jansen* Denise Roose Crystal Ceritos	9 Emma De Haan Nathan Rus	10 Melissa Wehrle Scott Huisman Beth De Vries	11 Nora Sandbulte	12 Abrianna Mass Ryan Nugteren	13 	14 Jay Schelhaas
15 Blake Gallaher	16 Belkys Gil	17 Morgan Carley Lenora Van Norden*	18	19 Betty Elscott Lisa Schelhaas	20 Galyn Vande Zande	21 Isaiah Rus
22	23 Cosette Clendenen Karla Hofman John Van Gorp	24	25	26	27 Jeff Robinson Daryl Pommer	28 
29 Micah Herdegen Christy Van Zee	30					
			