

# Calvary Listening Sessions

Summary of Conversations in September 2024

## Description

The Calvary Stewardship Team was tasked with hosting several listening sessions with a large cross-section of the church. During this time, it was also announced that Senior Pastor Mike Marion would retire at the end of the appointment year in June 2025. With this knowledge, the listening sessions also provided a space for the congregation to share their hopes and dreams as the pastoral leadership changes.

The team hosted 9 listening sessions during September 2024, including the following groups.

- Sunday Schools
  - SAR
  - New Life Connections
  - Faithful Connections
  - Figuring it Out
  - R3
  - Ages and Stages
- Sessions open to all
  - Facetime Sunday School Hour
  - Wednesday night session
- Other Groups
  - Youth Group

Each listening session followed the same agenda. ([View the Facilitators Guide here](#)) The basic questions asked at each session included.

1. What brought you to Calvary?
2. What keeps you at Calvary?
3. What are your hopes for Calvary?

The notes for all 9 sessions were summarized using the assistance of AI to avoid any bias.



## What Keeps People at Calvary

- **Relationships and Community Involvement:** Most attendees stay due to strong personal relationships, involvement in small groups or Sunday School classes, and a sense of belonging.
- **Youth and Family Programming:** Many appreciate the ongoing support for youth ministries, the mission work, and the engagement of families across generations.
- **Inclusivity and Welcoming Culture:** Calvary's inclusive and welcoming environment, with a focus on mercy ministries and justice work, is highly valued.
- **Traditions and Music:** For some, church traditions such as the choir, hanging of the greens, and music ministry remain important reasons for staying at Calvary.

## Hopes for Calvary

- **Strong, Dynamic Leadership:** Many expressed hopes for a dynamic new pastor who can foster connections, help the church grow, and engage with the congregation deeply.
- **Growth in Attendance:** A common theme was the desire to attract more young families, children, and middle-aged adults, especially in the context of community outreach and engagement.
- **Continued Inclusivity and Justice Work:** Several groups hope Calvary will continue to be a leader in social justice and inclusion while balancing this with theological soundness and tradition.
- **More Opportunities for Involvement:** Suggestions included more visible and organized volunteer opportunities, clearer communication about how new people can get involved, and leveraging technology to connect the community.
- **Respect for Tradition While Embracing Change:** Participants shared hopes that Calvary can maintain its traditions, such as certain liturgical practices, while also adapting to new challenges, like pastoral transitions and societal shifts.

These sessions indicate that while Calvary faces challenges in leadership transitions and growing its congregation, the church's strong sense of community, inclusive spirit, and commitment to mission work are the bedrock upon which members hope to build a sustainable and dynamic future.

These findings will be used by SPRC and Church Council as they consult with our District Superintendent and Bishop about the next Lead Pastor. If you have questions or concerns please contact John Furrow at [jwfurrow@gmail.com](mailto:jwfurrow@gmail.com) or 316-285-2905.