

“He Lives! He Lives! Christ Jesus Lives Today!”

Today our nation is hovering under a foreboding and gloomy cloud of the fear of death as we sense the spread of the Covid-19 virus in our midst and we watch the death toll numbers continue to climb. At times anxiety is palpable. There is a serious sense of mortality that hangs in the air. It is rather like a darkened Pittsburgh day when the sunshine just cannot break through the clouds. It makes me think of Holy Week in a new way. What was it like to stand at the Cross and see the dark and heavy clouds move in; to see the power of death sweep over the barren terrain of the hill of Golgotha—“The Place Of The Skull.” It certainly would have been a chilling experience. Watching Jesus being nailed to the Cross and knowing that death was going to be the final outcome would leave one with a haunting feeling of helplessness and despair.

I remember when my first grandfather died when I was ten years old. I did not shed a tear throughout the entire time of visitation or through the funeral service until the casket was carried out of the sanctuary. All of a sudden, death was real to me, and I felt the finality of it. It’s sting and pain stabbed me deeply to the core. I wept uncontrollably, barely able to see through my tears to find my way out of the sanctuary. It seemed death had won a dreadful and decisive victory. All seemed lost.

The women who watched Jesus die, along with the men who placed His body in the tomb, felt that same way. With the death of Jesus, all did seem lost. The disciples huddled in the Upper Room in fear “sheltering in place” behind locked doors. Would death be coming to them next?

Thankfully, the Easter morning sunrise revealed that The Son Rise had indeed taken place! The light of truth pierced through the heavy darkness and transformed their souls! Jesus was alive! Because He lives, they (and we also) have new life both now and forever.

The Apostle Paul would later write powerful words regarding Resurrection and what it means for us when he declared that in Christ, “Death is swallowed up in victory. Where O death is your victory? Where O death is your sting? . . . Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (I Corinthians 15:54-57) I love proclaiming those triumphant words at the gravesite, for we know that even though “From dust we were taken, and to dust we shall return; one day from the dust we shall rise again!”

I love the passage from the Book of Job (who lived roughly 4,000+ years ago), where Job declares his faith in God’s promise of a coming Savior who not only saves our soul, but would one day physically resurrect all who believe unto eternal life. Job (19:25-27) writes, “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!”

Another favorite resurrection quote that I love is from Lutheran Pastor Kohlbrugge, who wrote, “When I die . . . and someone finds my skull, let this skull preach to him and say, ‘I have no eyes, nevertheless I see Him; though I have no lips, I kiss Him; I have no tongue, yet I sing praise to Him with all who call upon His name. I am a hard skull, yet I am wholly softened and melted in His love; I lay here exposed on God’s Acre [field], yet I am there in Paradise! All suffering is forgotten! His great love has done this for us when He carried His cross and went out to Golgotha.’” This Easter Season, let us celebrate and share the Good News of this New Life with others!

God bless you and keep you, now and forever,
Pastor Carlson

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The submission deadline for the next Herald is **Saturday, April 18, 2020.**

The email publication date is **Friday, May 1, 2020.**

From the Editor

THE RUTHFRED HERALD WILL continue to be published by email. However, due to the current public health crisis the Herald will not be sent by regular mail until it is safe for our volunteers to meet again.

If you know anyone that receives the Herald by mail only, now would be a good time to pass along to them that they can sign up for the Herald Email list. All they need is to send an email to ruthfredherald@gmail.com with their names in the body of the email.

Thank you to all of our Herald readers. We all want to stay connected as best as possible during this time. I hope you all stay confident and healthy—we will get through this together.

Yours in Christ,

Steven Rothermel

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“The Cross Was His Own”

Dear Congregational Family,

I miss you all so much! It has been incredibly difficult to not gather together in worship services in the sanctuary, as well as to visit you in your homes! God created us for community and to be gathered together. If we ever doubted it, now we know how important it is to be together physically. Even all of our social media technology and virtual reality does not meet our needs of real-life contact. Let me note four things together:

1. Our Church Family

We have been doing our very best to continue the ministry of our church family throughout this time and will continue to do so by:

- PRAYING!! Hopefully we are all doing this!
- Recording the worship services (Wednesday and Sunday) and putting them online on our Ruthfred.org page, as well as YouTube, podcasts, Facebook, etc. Thank you to Andrew, David, Bob, Fred, Vicar, and to our musicians and vocalists for this! Thank you to Paula for putting the bulletins online as well! This has been an absolute delight to have our services online! Please keep watch for our Holy Week Services on Maundy Thursday and on Good Friday. **On Easter Sunday, we are planning to livestream the service at 9:00 AM.**
- Making phone contact with as many of you as possible. Thank you Pat for your ministry!
- Having over 100 people reading the Bible together online and “chatting” with each other about it! (Thanks Don!)
- The Two on Tuesday emails. They contain the weekly updated information for our church.
- Ruthfred Facebook postings. In addition to the worship services, I have also been posting a “Two Minutes Together” devotional every other day.
- Sending out the Herald (by email).
- Hopefully sending out a postcard soon, as we have members who do not interact online with any social media venues.
- Continuing Confirmation classes and youth group gatherings by Zoom. Thank you Brandon for your extra work on this!

However, one of the most exciting things to me, is the abundance of ministry that is taking place through you, our members—both to one another and to any around you in need! Thank you for being the church in action! I have been saying since last Saturday when our council made the decision, that *“Our church building is closed, but the ministry is open!”* In some ways, the ministry has been expanded! It is different, but it is effective in sharing the Good News of Jesus our Savior with our neighbors! So many of you have shared the worship service and devotional postings and have been praying for others. Keep up the good ministry! The needs and opportunities around us are only going to increase in these next weeks and months.

I know that many of us (especially those of you who are extroverts!) feel like we are imprisoned; whether quarantined in your house or simply by the extra regulations surrounding your work situation.

I am reminded of the Apostle Paul, who was literally imprisoned in Rome when he wrote the letter to the Philippians. In his letter, which ironically is known as his “most joyful” letter, Paul reminds his dear friends in Christ that:

- He is praying for them.
- He is confident of God’s good work in their lives through their every circumstance.
- He is using the opportunity to tell those around him about Jesus.
- Because he is in prison, others have been stepping up and sharing the Gospel! (AMEN!)
- He is praying to be released and he is expecting to survive; but he is also prepared to die, and he is at peace with that.
- He senses the presence of Jesus with him.
- He is confident that God will give him the strength to go through whatever comes his way.

There are many other good lessons as well, but those are a few good examples for us that we can immediately utilize. A few minutes reading through this little letter would be a good investment of time today! Paul would later write to Timothy (II Timothy 2:9) that “*he was imprisoned, but the Word of God was not imprisoned.*” Another translation puts it this way, Paul is “*chained, but the Gospel is unchained.*” That is so true for us today! We are not able to do all that we used to do, but the Gospel is going forth, even in new ways! Praise be to God!

2. Our Finances: Thank you!!

Thank you to so many of you who have continued to faithfully give as you are able to the ministry of our church! This is of significant importance as we desire to:

- Continue our ministry at Ruthfred.
- Continue to worship the Lord through our tithes and offerings.
- Continue to support our many benevolences and missions through Ruthfred’s benevolence fund giving.
- In order to do this, you may:
 - Give online at ruthfred.org. It is easy and secure to sign up for online giving. It is all set up, and a growing number of people have been utilizing it this past year already.
 - Give your offerings by mailing them (as many of you have been doing) to the church office.
*Please include your offering envelop number when you do this to help Ron more easily record your gift. Thank you to Ron for his careful work!

3. Our Future

Only the Lord truly knows the future! As of today (Sunday), the government has extended the directive of “social distancing” to continue through the end of April. But, as the Lord tells us, “we see through a glass dimly,” which is certainly the case. It’s cliché to say it, but it’s true, “We don’t know what the future holds, but we know WHO holds the future.” Because of this, as a church staff and council, we are making long range tentative plans for what lies ahead, and together as a congregation we follow Jesus, our Good Shepherd, into the future with hearts full of faith.

4. One Final Word

Next week is Holy Week and then Easter Sunday. I am sure that for many of us, this will be the first time that we have not been in a church building for Easter Sunday. Our plan right now is to livestream the service so that we can at least be together in that regard. It will be available to view later, following the “live service” as well.

In this season, when our nation (and world) is gripped with uncertainty and fear of death, Jesus comes and announces, “I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.” Jesus follows this up with a question, “Do you believe this?” My prayer for each of you, is that you can answer with a resounding “YES, I believe!” Let’s pray for opportunities to share this Good News of LIFE with others this Easter Season!

God bless you and keep you,
In the love of Christ,

Pastor Carlson

Official Acts

February 17, 2020 – March 15, 2020

Nothing to Report

Council Highlights

March 9, 2020

- Council approved Nathan Donolo and Steve Cox as new members of the Finance Committee, joining at-large members David Battiste, Becky Evans, and Peggy Glasser; Trustee Pete Huwe; Financial Secretary Connie Munn; Finance Manager Ron Thorhauer; and Treasurer Chuck Morrison.
 - Council approved the transfer of \$4,000 from the Current Fund to the Benevolence Fund.
 - Beth Blanc has submitted a letter stating her intent to retire from the position of Head Teacher of the Ruthfred pre-school after 20 years of service.
 - Jim Grimm has notified Ruthfred that he has retired and consequently will no longer be using his considerable talents to beautify our sanctuary via his floral arrangements.
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Announcements

Although the Easter Basket outreach project is regrettably cancelled for this year, we are planning an outreach project for when we are more certain of being able to safely reconvene in public. We on the Easter Basket committee thank you in advance for the donations we have already received and assure you that, as much as possible, they will be passed on to and appreciated by those in need.

THANK YOU from Bev Rowan and Jeanine Szalinski.

Member Profile

By Mettelise Ziegler

Jenna Schwartz

Do we older adults think that all teens share characteristics that justify our dismissive attitude? Do we generalize? Teens do not know what they want. They are self-involved. They do not know anything about real life. What can they possibly teach the rest of us?



Jenna Schwartz is a senior at Bethel Park High School. Her indomitable spirit and faith have led to an enviable, deep, trusting relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jenna was a member of her family's church when she felt a nudge to look elsewhere. Consequently, beginning in her freshman year, Jenna tried different churches. Then, tragically and suddenly in her sophomore year, Jenna's mother died.

Four months after her mother's death, Jenna was on a band trip to Myrtle Beach. She became friends with our own Logan Huwe who invited her to Ruthfred's youth group. From her first time attending, Jenna felt like she belonged. "I absorbed it," Jenna said.

For some people, a tragedy like the sudden passing of one's mother would make them pull away from God, but Jenna drew closer. She not only attends TNT with the high school youth, but she helps out with SWAP (6th – 8th graders) on Sundays. She volunteers at Kids Time on Wednesday evenings and has developed a relationship with her "church grandma" Janet Paterra with whom she texts, meets for coffee, and shares prayers.

Jenna attended the Free Lutheran Youth (FLY) convention last summer, an event she called "life changing." She is close to several families in our congregation and grateful for healthy relationships, even as her own chronic health situation has resulted in surgery and threatened to slow her down.

A good student, Jenna is Head Bethette in the Bethel Park Marching Band and will pursue a degree in occupational therapy at Geneva College this fall. She works at the Chipotle Restaurant near South Hills Village after school and on weekends. When she has time, she likes to knit and draw. A student of the Bible, Jenna is into Bible journaling, where she uses markers and pens to add notes and illustrate passages that are significant to her.

Jenna joined Ruthfred last April as a junior in high school. She is showing us what we should already know. Faith is a gift. It is not the result of education or age. It shows us the glory of God. And it is precious.

Song of the Month

By Tom Glasser

The Cross Was His Own

Lyrics: Unknown

Music: Edward Broughton

I typically prefer to write about songs and hymns that are familiar to most Christians, but this month I felt led to make my occasional exception to that rule. Rehearsing in the choir room one Wednesday evening, I was struck by the poignant lyrics of an anthem titled “The Cross Was His Own.” They view the life and death of Jesus from a slightly different angle that I have never heard expounded upon before.

**They borrowed a bed to lay His head
When Christ the Lord came down;
They borrowed the ass in the mountain pass
For Him to ride to town.**

**He borrowed the bread when the crowd He fed
On the grassy mountain side,
He borrowed the dish of broken fish
With which He satisfied.**

**He borrowed a room on His way to the tomb
The Passover Lamb to eat;
They borrowed a cave for Him a grave,
They borrowed a winding sheet.**



These are the words in the arrangement by Edward Broughton that the choir will sing on April 1st. It’s pretty obvious that the theme here is how much borrowing went on in the life of the Savior. I was thinking how there are other examples of borrowing that could be listed when a Google search revealed that the anonymous poem actually has a third verse prior to “borrowing a room.”



**He borrowed the ship in which to sit
To teach the multitude;
He borrowed a nest in which to rest –
He had never a home so rude.**

Starting with a borrowed stable for His birth, the incarnated Son of the Almighty God who created all that exists chose to live in poverty, apparently owning nothing more than the clothes on His back and the sandals on His feet. Throughout His ministry He depended on borrowing from friends and even strangers. The verses listed above are not actually complete, however. Each one ends with the following refrain:

**But the crown that He wore and the Cross that He bore
Were His own –
The Cross was His own.**




Technically, one might argue that the crown and cross were also borrowed. Yet I believe what the poet was saying is that no one else but Jesus could accomplish our atonement and in that sense the crown and cross were His—and His alone. Returning to the theme of borrowing, it is generally considered good policy to return what is borrowed if that is at all possible. The last thing that was borrowed on Jesus’ behalf was His grave. However, He was able to return that after using it for just a couple of days. Alleluia – He is Risen!

Bible in a Year Reading Plan April 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
			Samuel 21-24	1 Samuel 25-27	1 Samuel 28-31	2 Samuel 1-3
Holy Week						
Palm Sunday 5	6	7	8	Maundy Thursday 9	Good Friday 10	11
2 Samuel 4-7	2 Samuel 8-12	2 Samuel 13-15	2 Samuel 16-18	2 Samuel 19-21	2 Samuel 22-24	1 Kings 1-2
Easter Sunday 12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1 Kings 3-5	1 Kings 6-7	1 Kings 8-9	1 Kings 10-11	1 Kings 12-14	1 Kings 15-17	1 Kings 18-20
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1 Kings 21-22	2 Kings 1-3	2 Kings 4-5	2 Kings 6-8	2 Kings 9-11	2 Kings 12-14	2 Kings 15-17
26	27	28	29	30		
2 Kings 18-19	2 Kings 20-22	2 Kings 23-25	1 Chronicles 1-2	1 Chronicles 3-5		

Additional Calendar Notes

- There is no Church Calendar this month.
- As per public health guidelines, the church building is currently closed in order to comply with efforts to stop the spread of the current coronavirus. During this time, Ruthfred Lutheran Church will continue its ministry by all other means available.
- Sunday worship services are being recorded and can be viewed online. They are accessible at www.Ruthfred.org.
- Maundy Thursday and Good Friday Services will also be recorded and able to be viewed online at www.Ruthfred.org.
- **Easter is Sunday, April 12. The current plan is for Ruthfred's Easter Service to be livestreamed at 9 AM.** It will also be recorded and able to be viewed after.
- Stay tuned for additional guidance from our church leaders on when the church building will reopen.
- Although the church building is currently closed, the Church is always open. Look for ways to help others during this time, especially shut-ins.



God is our refuge and strength;
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be
carried into the midst of the sea.
Psalm 46: 1-2