



From the Pastor's Desk

Spiritual Warfare: In the Hands of God

The topic of “spiritual warfare” has come up regularly in JTTW, Sunday school, and conversations; and rightly so, as we go through our day, we often catch glimpses that there is more going on than what “meets the eye.” There is a cosmic spiritual battle that rages in the unseen realm as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians where we are commanded to put on the armor of God and to *“be strong in the strength of the Lord, and in the power of His might.”* (Eph. 6:10) He goes on to write, *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places [spiritual realms].”* (Eph. 6:12)

Since his initial rebellion against God, Satan has been mightily at work trying to *“steal, kill, and destroy”* as he tries to extinguish God’s work in this world and in our very lives, with consequences both now and for all eternity. (John 10:10a) Thankfully, in the very next breath, Jesus declares, *“But I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10b)



But it does take struggle, warfare, and sacrifice to bring forth life in the midst of death. Today I was reading about how God both provided for and protected His people in the wilderness. In Exodus 16, God gives manna [bread] for His people to eat. In the next chapter He gives them water from the rock to drink. Both the manna and the water point us to Jesus, who in the New Testament, declares, *“I am the Bread of Life”* and *“I am the Living Water.”* (John 4:14; 6:48; 7:38). As I read the next paragraph in Exodus, I noticed that right after these wonderful blessings and provisions of God, came an outright attack against God’s people. Satan could not slowly starve them, so he tries to kill them in battle.

The text from Exodus 17 reads:

⁸ *Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim.* ⁹ *So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow, I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.”* ¹⁰ *Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.* ¹¹ *So it came about when Moses held his hand up,*

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Saint Valentine is said to have ministered to Christians during the persecution by the Roman Empire.

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that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus, his hands were steady until the sun set.

¹³ So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. ¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." ¹⁵ Moses built an altar and named it 'The LORD is My Banner'; ¹⁶ and he said, "The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

Moses sees the spiritual dynamic in this fight. He knows that this will only be won by the working of the Lord. God was working through Moses' outstretched hands. When his hands were up, the Israelites prevailed, but when they dropped, evil prevailed. God was at work, but working through a vessel that was frail, weak, and human. Moses could not maintain the position. Aaron and Hur had to come to his rescue and stand side by side with him and hold up his hands. With his hands held steady until sunset, the battle was won.

Moses was an Old Testament "type" or example of Christ. In the New Testament, we find another Man who comes to the rescue of His people and stationed Himself on the top of the hill. This was the God-Man, Jesus Christ. The spiritual battle for our souls was raging all around in the spiritual realms. Few could see it. Most only saw a man being crucified upon a cross, with his hands securely held up by nails; but God was doing battle with sin, death, and the devil; and the hands of Christ were held up, not by simple nails, but by sacrificial love.

Neither Moses, nor anyone, could hold the position, but Jesus held the position in the darkness of Good Friday, and He won the victory of salvation for all God's people. Because of this, we go to the altar in prayer, and we gather around His banner in praise. We also recognize that we are weak in our own strength, in facing the challenges of each day in the wilderness of this life, and that our hands drop. We need others to stand with us in spiritual warfare and to hold us up by pointing us to the Lord and to the promises in His Word. Therefore, as we go through our days, and face the attacks of the enemy, we do so in the strength of the Lord, and in the power of His might knowing that He has won the victory for us in Christ at the cross, and that through Christ we can have "life more abundantly." (John 10:10)

*In Christ,
Pastor Carlson*



Focus on RLC Supported Missions and Benevolences

REFUGE FOR WOMEN

One of our Christmas Giving Trees at church was for the new refuge for women. In part, with your generous donations, the house will be ready for its opening in March or April. It will serve as an emergency shelter where women who have escaped human trafficking or sexual exploitation can find help and hope.

Thank you, Jill & Roger Kurtz for organizing this!

Pictured is a vehicle load of gifts on their way to the refuge house.



The Chmiel Family in Ukraine

The Chmiel family, missionaries in Ukraine, sent Christmas greetings back in December. Here is a short excerpt from their letter: "We in Lviv consider ourselves blessed by being both relatively safe and comfortable. After four rounds of Russia's massive strikes on critical infrastructure of Ukraine, Lviv still has gas for everyone and electricity for about 30% of the city at a time. Our family is doing ok, keeping busy with life and ministry, and we are surprised to observe how a human mind gets used to things you would have never thought you could get used to." At the end of their letter, they added:



"Dear friends at Ruthfred, Thank you so much for how you reached out to us during this hard year for us. We really appreciate it! Please keep Ukraine in your prayers! Merry Christmas!

Tomasz and Miriam, Hannah, Kristina, Lydia and David

Continued on next page ...

Chosen People Ministries

In a recent newsletter, president Mitch Glaser shared how Maxim, an Israeli staff member, is working with the many Russians and Ukrainians who are immigrating to Israel. "We are engaged with this growing group of almost one hundred thousand, and more enter Israel daily. Many have arrived with just the clothes on their backs, and some receive help from the Israeli government." Maxim recently organized a family conference for these immigrants entitled "Our Family Starts With Me". He writes, "The most important part of the retreat was our time with the parents. They are receptive to the gospel and our love for many reasons, especially because they are hurting. I thank God for this opportunity and the newly opened doors."



No matter how many more weeks of winter Phil may predict, it's not too early to start thinking about VBS! This year's dates will be July 24th to 28th. Mark your calendars and consider volunteering, even if for only a day. It really is such a great time! More to be announced later.



Life Quotes from Lutherans For Life

“When someone struggles with the overwhelming guilt of a past sin, like abortion, repentance and reconciliation are the only source of relief. There is hope! ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:9). Through all our days, the Lord never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is a patient God, waiting and wanting all to come to repentance and be saved.”

Deaconess Pamela Buhler and Deaconess Chrissie Gillet, Word of Hope
– A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org

Dear Ruthfred Lutheran Church,

Words cannot express enough our gratitude and thanks for your support of our Gospel-motivated, life affirming ministry. Your gifts of thoughts, prayers, and monthly stewardship offerings are a blessing to all of us at Lutherans For Life, and we thank God for you! Thank you for partnering with Lutherans For Life and assisting us in applying the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to sanctity of life issues.

Once again, we thank you for your support and partnership in our mission to equip Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices for life. May God continue to bless Ruthfred Lutheran Church, now, and in the years to come!

In Christ,

David A. Probst

Director of Development

Lutherans For Life

(812) 603-7970

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Preschool News



Our preschool classes have been learning about Jesus' miracles, Jonah and the whale, and various nursery rhymes. Both classes are continuing to learn the alphabet through a variety of fine motor and gross motor activities. We love our students and are thankful to have them here in our preschool!

**Registration is open for both the 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes
for the 2023-2024 school year.**

Visit ruthfred.org/preschool to register online.

Questions can be directed to preschool@ruthfred.org



Member Profile:**by Mettelise Ziegler**

Sonny & Sydney Dalessandro

Sonny and Sydney have been married for just over two years. They have a five-month-old daughter named Zoe who was recently baptized at our church, ahead of their formal membership.

We tend to stereotype people. You know. Generation Z plays computer games all day. Or Gen Z is not interested in religion. That sort of thing. That is certainly not the case with the Dalessandro's, who are both in their early twenties and very much excited about Ruthfred.

The couple met at Bethel Park High School. Originally from Plum, Sydney spent much of her childhood at church with her single mother. Sonny came from Brookline to Bethel Park, also with his single mom. While dating, the pair often talked about their personal convictions and set goals for their future. They determined that one day, they would be married, own a home, work hard and raise a Christian family.

Sonny and Sydney did work hard and still do. They purchased a house in Bethel Park when Sydney was just nineteen. Sydney graduated from the South Hills Beauty Academy and until the baby came, worked for her mother-in-law, Kristy Balzer, at Pirates & Princesses Kids Salon in Peters Township. Incidentally, this business has a strong reputation as a supportive place for special needs children to obtain haircuts. Sonny works as a mechanic at the Allegheny County Airport to support his family. He is skilled with most of the vehicles and mechanical systems at the property. His job has made it possible for Sydney to stay at home to raise the couple's daughter.

Sydney was confirmed at a Lutheran Church in the South Hills, attending with her mother Christine Desiderato. When COVID-19 turned the world upside-down, many churches remained closed longer than Ruthfred, including theirs. This became an opportune time to go "church shopping." Sydney and Sonny found our congregation which Sydney describes as welcoming and kind. Intrigued, both mothers began attending Ruthfred as well. The New Members Class is now a family affair. Soon we hope to be welcoming Sonny, Sydney and Zoe, as well as their mothers Kristy and Christine into our church family.



90+ Birthday Club



Bob Reith	February 6th	93
Bob Christman	February 10th	97
Kenneth Ebel	February 27th	91

Happy Birthday !!



Ponderable Quote:

If God does not exist, then life is futile. If the God of the Bible does exist, then life is meaningful. Only the second of these two alternatives enables us to live happily and consistently. Therefore, it seems to me that even if the evidence for these two options were absolutely equal, a rational person ought to choose biblical Christianity. It seems to me positively irrational to prefer death, futility, and destruction to life, meaningfulness, and happiness. As Blaise Pascal said, "We have nothing to lose and infinity to gain."

William Lane Craig

Song of the Month

By Tom Glasser

Blessings

Lyrics & Music: Laura Story

One of the songs sung at the January contemporary liturgical service was "Blessings" by Laura Story. The song features a beautiful piano accompaniment performed wonderfully by our worship team pianist Ben Carlson. The first verse starts off innocuously enough talking about typical things that people pray to God for:

*We pray for blessings, we pray for peace, comfort for family,
protection while we sleep. We pray for healing, for prosperity.*

The second half of the first verse hints at the darker turn the song is going to take:

*We pray for your mighty hand to ease our suffering.
And all the while, you hear each spoken need,
yet love us way too much to give us lesser things.*

To see what I mean by "darker turn", consider the second verse:

*We pray for wisdom, Your voice to hear.
We cry in anger when we cannot feel You near.
We doubt Your goodness, we doubt Your love,
as if every promise from Your Word is not enough.
And all the while, You hear each desperate plea,
and long that we'd have faith to believe.*



It soon becomes clear that the main theme of "Blessings" is the age old problem of suffering and possible ways we as Christians can view and endure it when it happens. It is always with great trepidation that I speak or write about this topic. No one wants to suffer, and I don't believe God wants anyone to suffer. In my personal life, aside from a life-long struggle with the speech impediment known as stuttering, I have thus far been spared great suffering. In fact I often identify with the psalmist who wrote: "The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places." (Psalm 16:6). Jesus did tell us, however, that "in the world you will have tribulation". (John 16:33) One doesn't have to look very far to see examples of suffering amongst our families, friends, and fellow church members. The faith and courage with which many of them bear their trials or sorrows are inspirational examples for us to follow.

Ms. Story herself has not been spared from such questioning, doubting, and suffering as she writes and sings about. "She and her husband, Martin, came face-to-face with this as newlyweds when he – a former college athlete – was diagnosed with a disabling brain tumor that upended all their expectations for their future." In the choruses and bridge of "Blessings", Story uses a "What if" device to suggest ways to view and process the trials we may have to face in life.

Continued on next page ...

*'Cause what if your blessings come through raindrops?
What if your healing comes through tears?
What if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know you're near?
What if my greatest disappointments, or the aching of this life,
is a revealing of a greater thirst this world can't satisfy?
And what if trials of this life, the rain, the storms, the hardest nights,
are Your mercies in disguise?*

*When friends betray us, when darkness seems to win, we know
that pain reminds this heart that this is not, this is not our home.*



Laura is a Bible teacher, worship leader, bestselling author, and Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter who also has a master's degree in theological studies and a doctorate degree in worship studies. In her latest book, "So Long, Normal: Living and Loving the Free Fall of Faith", she writes "If we can believe that God is writing a greater story, we may be able to move ahead without definitive answers to life's pains, confident that in kindness and mercy, he is exposing any faulty foundation so that we will cling instead to what cannot be shaken: his forever-faithfulness."

Sources: laurastorymusic.com; churchsource.com



Official Acts -- January 2023

Baptisms:

Scarlett Rose Fyalkowski -- 01/01/23

* Casper Ivan Rothermel -- 01/08/23

* Autumn Lorelai Vos -- 01/22/23

-

Funerals:

* James Agnew -- 01/10/23

Ruth Anne (Reithmiller) Wilkinson -- 01/21/23

* Indicates member



Worship Team Members for February 2023

Acolytes:

8:30 AM Elliot McMinn (5th)
Jonathan Tarrant (12th, 26th)
Evan Gusky (19th)
11:00 AM Asher Manzo
7:30 PM Ash Wednesday
Ryan Handshue (22nd)

Crucifers:

8:30 AM Morgan Dolence (12th)
Holly Miller (26th)
11:00 AM Morgan Dolence (5th)
Courtney Felicetti (19th)

Ushers:

8:30 AM Bernard Pattera &
John Ruzicka
11:00 AM George Barrett &
Ray Urksa

Counters:

8:30 AM Chris Clark &
Tom Sanders
11:00 AM Mark Riley &
Kurt Ziegler

Altar Guild

Dianne Groves

Coffee Hour

Arlene Fees

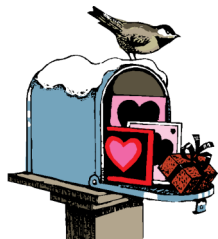
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~Psalm 84:10
(KJV)~

For a day in thy courts
is better than a thousand.
I had rather be a
doorkeeper in the
house of my God, than
to dwell in the tents
of wickedness.

CL



February, 2023

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 JTTW 9:15 Children's Choir 5:45 Forkless Dinner 6:00 Bell Choir 6:30 JTTW 6:45 Confirmation 6:45 Kids' Time 6:45	2 Presentation of Our Lord  GROUNDHOG DAY	3 Men's Prayer Group 7:00 a.m. (Fireside Lounge)	4
5 Septuagesima Holy Communion 8:30 Fellowship Breakfast 9:45 New Member Class 9:45 Holy Communion 11:00 Holy Communion 6:00 CITY MISSION FOOD	6 JTTW Leaders 9:30 Craft & Sew 9:30 Elders' Meeting 7:00 Happy 93 rd Birthday Bob Reith	7 Worship Team 7:00 	8 JTTW 9:15 Esther Noon Children's Choir 5:45 Forkless Dinner 6:00 Bell Choir 6:30 JTTW 6:45	9 Knit Wits 10:00	10 Men's Prayer Group 7:00 a.m. (Fireside Lounge) Happy 97 th Birthday Bob Christman 	11 Mary Bible Study 9:30 (Fireside Lounge)
12 Sexagesima Worship Service 8:30 Sunday School 9:45 New Member Class 9:45 Worship Service 11:00	13 JTTW Leaders 9:30 Elders' Prayer Time 7:00 Council Meeting 7:30	14 Worship Team 7:00  Happy Valentine's Day!	15 JTTW 9:15 Children's Choir 5:45 Bell Choir 6:30 Confirmation 6:45 Senior Choir 7:30 	16 Ruth 2:00	17 Men's Prayer Group 7:00 a.m. (Fireside Lounge)	18 Martin Luther, d. 1546 Contemporary Liturgical Worship Service 6:00
19 Quinquagesima Worship Service 8:30 Sunday School 9:45 New Member Class 9:45 Worship Service 11:00 	20 JTTW Leaders 9:30 Craft & Sew 9:30 	21 Worship Team 7:00	22  Sunrise service* 6:30 JTTW 9:15 Lenten service* 2:00 Children's Choir 5:45 Lenten Supper 6:00 Confirmation 6:15 Bell Choir 6:30 Senior Choir 7:00 Lenten Service 7:30 *	23 Knit Wits 10:00	24 St. Matthias, Apostle Men's Prayer Group 7:00 a.m. (Fireside Lounge) XYZ Noon Herald deadline	25
26 1 st Sunday in Lent Worship Service 8:30 Sunday School 9:45 New Member Class 9:45 Worship Service 11:00 GIFT Bible Study 6:30 (Arelts' House) Young Adult Bible Study 6:30 (A&C Vogel's House)	27 JTTW Leaders 9:30 Happy 91 st Birthday Kenneth Ebel 	28 Worship Team 7:00	* with Holy Communion 			



2023

Youth Ministry Calendar


Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 	3	4
5 Sunday School 9:45 SWAP @ Church 6-7:30	6	7 TNT @ Church 7-9	8	9	10	11
12 Sunday School 9:45 SWAP @ Church 6-7:30	13	14 TNT @ Church 7-9 	15	16	17	18
19 Sunday School 9:45 SWAP @ Church 6-7:30 	20 	21 TNT @ Church 7-9 	22	23	24 <u>30-Hour Famine</u> Meet @ 7:00 p.m.	25 Go Home @ 2:00 p.m. 
26 Sunday School 9:45 NO SWAP tonight	27	28 TNT @ Church 7-9				

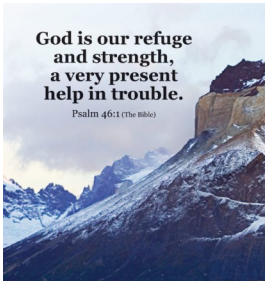
Reading Through the Bible 2023

"One Story that Leads to Jesus"

Schedule for February

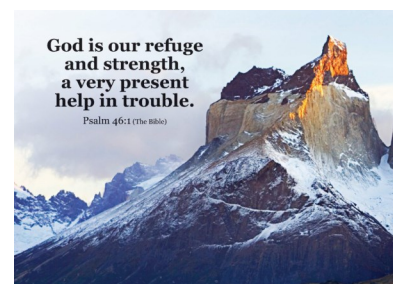
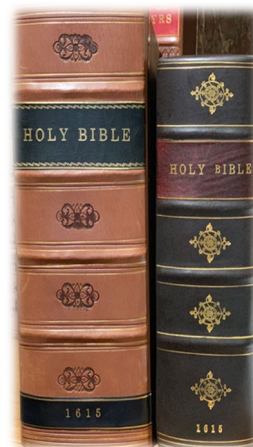
1st	Leviticus 8	Leviticus 9	Leviticus 10	Psalm 32	
2nd	Leviticus 11	Leviticus 12	Leviticus 13	Psalm 33	
3rd	Leviticus 14	Leviticus 15	Psalm 34		
4th	Leviticus 16	Leviticus 17	Leviticus 18	Psalm 35	
5th	Leviticus 19	Leviticus 20	Psalm 36		
6th	Leviticus 21	Leviticus 22	Leviticus 23	Psalm 37	
7th	Leviticus 24	Leviticus 25	Psalm 38		
8th	Leviticus 26	Leviticus 27	Psalm 39		
9th	Numbers 1	Numbers 2	Numbers 3	Numbers 4	Psalm 40
10th	Numbers 5	Numbers 6	Numbers 7	Psalm 41	
11th	Numbers 8	Numbers 9	Numbers 10	Psalm 42	
12th	Numbers 11	Numbers 12	Numbers 13	Psalm 43	
13th	Numbers 14	Numbers 15	Numbers 16	Psalm 44	
14th	Numbers 17	Numbers 18	Psalm 45		
15th	Numbers 19	Numbers 20	Numbers 21	Psalm 46	
16th	Numbers 22	Numbers 23	Numbers 24	Psalm 47	
17th	Numbers 25	Numbers 26	Numbers 27	Psalm 48	
18th	Numbers 28	Numbers 29	Numbers 30	Psalm 49	
19th	Numbers 31	Numbers 32	Psalm 50		
20th	Numbers 33	Numbers 34	Psalm 51		
21st	Numbers 35	Numbers 36	Psalm 52		
22nd	Deuteronomy 1	Deuteronomy 2	Deuteronomy 3	Psalm 53	
23rd	Deuteronomy 4	Deuteronomy 5	Deuteronomy 6	Psalm 54	
24th	Deuteronomy 7	Deuteronomy 8	Deuteronomy 9	Psalm 55	
25th	Deuteronomy 10	Deuteronomy 11	Deuteronomy 12	Psalm 56	
26th	Deuteronomy 13	Deuteronomy 14	Psalm 57		
27th	Deuteronomy 15	Deuteronomy 16	Psalm 58		
28th	Deuteronomy 17	Deuteronomy 18	Deuteronomy 19	Deuteronomy 20	Psalm 59





God is our refuge
and strength,
a very present
help in trouble.

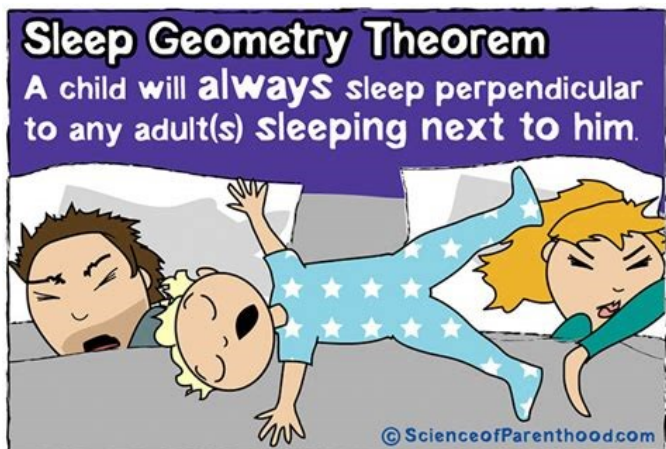
Psalms 46:1 (The Bible)



A joyful heart is good medicine.

Proverbs 17:22a

**For the parents of
young children
among us**



**Having a child makes you a parent.
Having a second child makes you a
referee.**



"Sure, I can explain this. Gravitational pull."



**One frazzled mom to another:
"Sleep -- an interesting concept I plan on investigating some day."**