**Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church LC-MS**

Monthly Newsletter --- March 2023

699 Stambaugh Avenue, Sharon, PA 16146

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“THE ROCK and THE SWORD”

“Built upon the Rock of Christ and wielding the

Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.”

**From the Pastor:**

**Useful Applications of Scripture (Part 5): Consolation**

*The following is the last in the series of “Useful Applications of Scripture”. Previous parts can be read online in the October, November, December 2022, and February 2023 issues of our newsletter (*[*www.saintspeterandpaul.net*](http://www.saintspeterandpaul.net)*).*

The last application that I will be describing for you is the “consoling” use of scripture. This is addressed in Romans 15:4, *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and consolation of the Scriptures might have hope.”* Scripture passages used or applied in this way are often seen as comforting and encouraging to the hearts and lives of believers. With the firm hope in Christ crucified and sins remitted for His sake, Christians can find that throughout all life’s troubles, God will be there to shield and deliver them.

The most important thing to remember about this use of Scripture is that it is built off the foundation of God’s promises. Encouragement given with no basis in the Word of God is empty and of little or no comfort. Faith, which grabs hold of and clings to the promises brought to the saints through Christ’s life and merits, brings consolation to the one in need. We are given many examples in the Bible of saints of old who were rescued from all manners of adversity. Whether we draw from the hope of Daniel in the lion’s den, the story of Joseph being sold into slavery, or from countless other examples, one can find all reason not to doubt or give up in the midst of trials and tribulations. Throughout the Old Testament, God shows forth His steadfast love as He promises mercy to people who obviously deserve nothing but wrath and hell. Then, in the New Testament, God’s promised mercy comes through Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior of the world. Christ builds on the joy of the promised eternal life foretold by the prophets as He teaches about His own death and resurrection which will be for the life of all people.

Each believer has much need of the consolation which the Scriptures provide because the devil, the world, and our sinful nature upset us in such ways that we lose patience while waiting for God’s return and the culmination of all the promises brought through the Scriptures. Jesus teaches us that whatever is “lost” to us in this life (sacrificed for the sake of following Him) will be restored to us 100-fold in the life to come. Living the cruciformed life (a Christian life molded by Christ’s suffering and death) comes with a great cost in this world.

All the things which this world holds in such high esteem and which receive the greatest of value aren’t worth pursuing at the cost of faith in Jesus Christ  This means, however, that the Christian is bound to lose relationships, jobs, property, and the like in order to follow Christ to the end. Saint Paul writes, *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us”* (Romans 5:1-5).

How does the Christian survive a world hostile to the Gospel and the cruciform life of the Christian? -It is through a conscience that has peace with the Father through Jesus' blood and merit. Possessing God’s abundant grace and mercy is far better and more secure than possessing all the treasures of the kingdoms in this world. Christians live with joyful and good consciences willed with patience knowing that they shall find restored to them in glory all that was taken or given up in this life for the sake of the Gospel.

Consolation, as used in Scripture, is first and primarily the forgiveness of sins, but it is not only that. It is also the encouragement, through the suffering of the saints and most especially the suffering of Jesus, to patiently endure all the crosses which the dear Lord sends us, knowing that they lead us to being conformed to the image of Jesus who trusted the will of Father and was raised by His glory never to die again. We, too, shall follow where Christ goes, though the road will be narrow and filled with many miseries; still yet, we will find our consolation in God’s mercy and favor.

In Christ,

Pastor Deal

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**Mark Your Calendars**

* **Trustees** will meet Monday, April 10th at 7 pm.
* The next **Constitution & Bylaws Meeting** will take place Wednesday, April 19th, beginning at 7:15 pm.
* The **Interior Committee** will meet the following Wednesday, April 26th, at 7:15 pm.

All meetings will take place in the Church Library.

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**Thank You for Serving in April:**

**Elder:** Jonathan Baisch; **Ushers:** Jerry Krivosh, Barry Nelson, & Jeff Sutton; **Altarware:** prior~Diane Riefstahl & Marie Flaugher (04.09 & 04.30); after~Marie Flaugher (04.09, 04.23, and 04.30) & Elizabeth Haenftling (04.02 and 04.16).

**CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AT A GLANCE**

Blue: Pledged as of 03.19.2023 $184,320 (92.16%)

Orange: Remaining

$15,680 (7.84%)

Total Contributions

as of 03.19.2023:

$164,906 (82.45%)

Previous: $161,844 (80.92%)

New: $3,062 (1.53%)

Remaining: $35,094 (17.55%)

*Amounts used are based on*

*weekly deposits reported.*

It’s not too late to submit a Capital Campaign pledge card! Pledge cards are available on the table outside Pastor’s office. If circumstances have changed and you need to update your pledge card, please see Jonathan Baisch. Updated pledges help our Trustees plan more effectively and efficiently.

**CELEBRATING IN APRIL!**

**Birthdays:**

Dillon Hamilton 4 - 2

Patricia Parker 4 - 3

Bill Nelson 4 - 7

Kim Revale 4 - 13

Henrietta Holcroft 4 - 24

\*If birthdays or anniversaries have been omitted, please let the church office know. Thank You!

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**ATTENTION AUDITORS!** A **Quarterly & Monthly Audit** will take place following worship, Sunday, April 23rd in the library. If unable to attend, please phone Bev Chlpka at 724-962-4806.

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**REMINDER:** Please let the church office know of any changes to your address, phone, cell phone or your e-mail address!

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**LIKE & FOLLOW our Church’s Facebook page (Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church)!**

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**Word of Hope: 1-888-217-8679**

The only 24/7 CONFIDENTIAL Hotline that is distinctly Lutheran, bringing healing found in Christ, to those whose hearts have been broken by abortion.

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**Church Office Hours** for Holy Weekwill be Monday and Wednesday from 10:30-4:30 and Thursday or Friday, as needed. Beginning April 10th, the office will be open Monday and Thursday from 8:30-4:30.

 Please call ahead if needing someone to let you into the church to make certain someone is here to do so.

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***Please keep the following***

***in your prayers:***

Evelyn Baisch

128 Wilcox Rd.

Austintown, OH 44515

501-253-8292

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Millie Elavsky

1209 Maple Dr.

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-342-0345

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Nancy Robertson

P.O. Box 1358

6 Stone Ridge Blvd.

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-977-0107

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Viola Sakony

616 Smith Ave.

Sharon, PA 16146

724-272-1905

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Rudy & Jean Tomko

2629 Romar Dr.

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-979-4360

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Betty Ann Wolf

7777 Arthur St., SC

Masury, OH 44438

330-448-1080

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Ed & Millie Zachar

1320 Old Forge Rd.

Niles, OH 44446

330-652-9316

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**Choir members** are reminded that there will be rehearsals held following the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday “Stations of the Cross” services. Additionally, the choir will meet at 8:15 Easter Sunday morning for a brief practice. Please speak with Chris Nelson if you should have any questions.

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**TRUSTEES’ UPDATE**

In March, several projects were the focus of our attention. Included in these projects were the repairing/re-patching of the stair treads on the southwest exit to Stambaugh Ave., the prepping and painting of rooms in the old part of the church (Room 4 and the janitors’ closet are complete), and getting quotes for possible air conditioning of the offices and sanctuary.

 *Anything Masonry* has begun its work repairing and sealing the stone work on the exterior of the building. This project should conclude in April.

 The Trustees wish to thank all those who have been assisting with the many projects around the church during this time.

 The next Trustees meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 10th at 7 pm.

 As always, please feel free to speak with a Trustee with any concerns or place a note in Mike Flaugher’s library mailbox.

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Submissions for the May issue of **“The Rock and the Sword”** newsletter are due to the secretary’s office Monday, April 24th at noon. This includes meeting dates and times for the church calendar.

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**FOOD PANTRY SUNDAY**

The second Sunday of each month has been designated as “Stock the Food Pantry Sunday”. Your financial contributions will be greatly appreciated! Donations may be placed in a pew envelope and placed in the offering plate. Please be sure to indicate your envelope number and designate the donation to the Food Pantry.

***Who’s the Boss at Alliance Defending Freedom?***

(Submitted by Pastor Emeritus Arthur Baisch)

On 1 October 2022, the Alliance Defending Freedom [ADF] announced a new CEO and president, its first woman, Kristen Waggoner, succeeding Michael Farris, who had joined ADF in January 2017, following Alan Sears, ADF’s founding CEO, who had served for 23 years. Under Waggoner’s leadership on its US legal team, ADF has secured 13 of ADF’s 14 US Supreme Court wins since 2011. Since Farris and Waggoner joined its team, ADF has garnered recognition as one of the largest legal powerhouses defending God-given freedoms, and at the close of the 2021 fiscal year in June, it had crossed the $100 million revenue threshold. At the time of Kristen Waggoner’s appointment as CEO, Michael Farris indicated he would continue to serve ADF in key areas related to areas of his expertise.

It was also in 2022 that ADF achieved its 14th victory at the Supreme Court of the United States [SCOTUS] since 2011 with the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, wherein the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey.* This monumental decision upheld Mississippi’s Gestational Age Act, which limits abortions after 15 weeks. It is a victory that will be felt for generations and one that significantly advances our Generational Win effort to guarantee the right to life from conception to natural death.

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**We were chosen!** By directing designated Choice Dollars through Thrivent Choice, eligible Thrivent members choose where Thrivent Financial for Lutherans distributes some of its charitable outreach grant dollars among thousands of participating Lutheran nonprofit organizations and congregations.

 **Many thanks** to Thrivent Financial members **Marie Flaugher** and **Betty Wolf** who recently directed Choice dollars to our church!

 In 2022, Sts. Peter & Paul was the recipient of $857 in Thrivent Choice Dollars! We are grateful to those who so graciously direct their support to us.

 Don’t forget that in addition to Thrivent Choice Dollars, Thrivent has other resources and programs available.

* **[Personal Donations](https://links.members.thrivent.com/ctt?ms=MjIwNzc0NjES1&kn=7&r=MjE5OTQ0MjE3MjM5S0&b=0&j=MjU2MDU5MjM1MAS2&mt=1&rt=0" \t "_blank):**  **Anyone** can use the Thrivent online giving platform to make a donation to our organization. Thrivent pays the donation processing fees - that means 100% of the donation goes directly to the organization.\*
* [**Thrivent Action Teams**](https://links.members.thrivent.com/ctt?ms=MjIwNzc0NjES1&kn=1&r=MjE5OTQ0MjE3MjM5S0&b=0&j=MjU2MDU5MjM1MAS2&mt=1&rt=0)**:** Thrivent Clients can apply for a “Thrivent Action Team”. Thrivent clients bring together friends and family to form a volunteer team and Thrivent provides up to $250 in seed money and promotional resources to jump-start the volunteer project.
* [**Local Support**](https://links.members.thrivent.com/ctt?ms=MjIwNzc0NjES1&kn=23&r=MjE5OTQ0MjE3MjM5S0&b=0&j=MjU2MDU5MjM1MAS2&mt=1&rt=0)**:**   Thrivent clients also have access to support through local leaders from Thrivent’s Engagement Teams and Thrivent Member Networks.

For more information about these programs, check out [www.thrivent.com](http://www.thrivent.com).

**OUR 2nd QUARTER MISSION:**

***Support of a Concordia,***

***Fort Wayne Seminarian***

As determined at our December 2021 Voters’ Assembly, our annual second quarter local mission is support of a Concordia, Fort Wayne seminarian.

 Monies which are collected during this time will be sent to a randomly-assigned seminarian. These monies may be used in any way needed (books, tuition, living expenses, etc.). It is hoped that this gift will bring some joy and relief into the life of one dedicated to the study of His word in preparation for the ministry.

 Donations may be placed in a pew envelope and put in the offering plate. Please be certain to specify 2nd Quarter Local Mission and note your name and envelope number.

 Thank you for helping to brighten the day of a servant of God!

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**4th QUARTER 2022 MISSION**

**MAKES AN IMPACT!**

The final numbers are in! Thanks to your contributions and the LC—MS matching Life Grant of $2500, a total of $5884 was raised for Willow Women’s Center. This money is a blessing to the Center as it settles into its new home in Hermitage, PA and continues its mission of providing women, facing unplanned pregnancies, with quality medical services at no cost.

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If you would like someone’s name to be added to or deleted from our prayer list, please put a written note in the secretary’s mail slot by the office door.

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**Bible Memory Verses for March**

**For Adults:**

March 5: *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8*

March 12: *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

 *1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

March 19: *My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Proverbs 6:20; 23:22*

March 26: *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Ephesians 4:26-27*

**For Children:**

March 5: *The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. Isaiah 50:4-5*

March 12: *The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28*

March 19: *Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. John 12:24*

March 26: *Christ says: “For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.” John 17:19*

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**Coffee Fellowship is April 16th!**

Join us following worship, Sunday, April 16th for **Coffee Fellowship.** This month’s sponsors are Isaiah and Titus Deal.

 If you would like to be a 2023 Fellowship sponsor, please sign the sheet posted on the bulletin board in the narthex. Sponsors are asked to bring 2-3 dozen donuts/muffins/treats along with 1-quart juice to the Fellowship Hall kitchen prior to worship. Set-up, clean-up, and the making of coffee will be done for you.

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*Reflections:* *by Diane Riefstahl*

It has often been said that one of the kindest things you can do for your loved ones is to pre-plan your funeral. Most people seem to think this involves only making your funeral arrangements with a funeral home or pre-paying the funeral (which are both a blessing to your family), but pre-planning should involve planning the message you wish to leave behind.

 One of the most beautiful things I heard during Anson Holcroft’s funeral was that he had personally selected the readings and hymns to be used. They were his opportunity to witness one last time to those he held most dear his deep and abiding faith. It was his message of comfort to them. What a spectacular gift it was.

 I encourage all to consider doing what Anson had done. Funeral planning packets are available in the office. Pastor Deal will gladly answer any questions you might have about selecting appropriate texts and hymns.

 Your loved ones will find comfort in the fact that you cared enough to do so.

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ALTAR GUILD NEWS

The Altar Guild met Saturday, March 18th. Meeting hostess was Evelyn Baisch.

* Following a Bible Study presentation by Pastor Deal on “Almsgiving”, the Altar Guild voted to donate $100 to the current “Almsgiving” collection.
* The Altar Guild polishing committee met March 22nd to clean and polish items in preparation for the Easter season.
* The idea was discussed by members to approach Pastor Deal about *not* using our current white superfrontal on the altar Maundy Thursday this year as it is embossed with “Alleluia” (a term *not* used during the Lenten season). The parament committee hopes to make an appropriate superfrontal for the future.
* Room 4 (also known as the “sewing room”) has been painted and cleaned. Items have been put back and the room is ready for use.
* Payment of 2023 AG dues ($25/member) is due. Please turn your dues in to AG Treasurer Evelyn Baisch. Make checks out to Sts. Peter & Paul.
* Our next meeting will be May 18th at 2:15 pm.

**New members are always welcome!!!!**

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**REMINDER:**

If you do not have an email account or do not receive emails from the church, but wish to be notified of significant information concerning your fellow church members (such as births or deaths), please put a note in the Secretary’s mail slot asking to receive a phone call. Every attempt will be made to phone you within 24 hours of an email being sent out.

**In Sympathy**

Sincere sympathy goes out to the family and friends of David Nelson, brother of Barry Nelson, who passed away March 5, 2023. May those who mourn his passing find comfort in the knowledge that he now rests in the arms of our Lord.

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Remember thefollowing in prayer…

**~The Hurting and Healing:**  *Amy, Gerald Arthur, Evelyn Baisch, Ellen BaronCA, Lois BortnerCA, John Burdette, Bev & Joe Chlpka, Kathleen Coughenour, Kim, Anna Mae Daris, Susan Davies, Tim Dudash, Millie Elavsky, Joseph Fleet, Judith & Eddy Furey, Tim Haenftling, Austin Hamilton, Neil Huston, Joan, Darla Krajci, Barbara Kreske, Donna Kennedy, Jess Lavoie, Paul LucasCA, Sandy Marshall, Frank NiemeyerCA, Linda Parkany, Juanita Rentschler, Richard ReuningCA, Diane Riefstahl, Nancy RobertsonCA, Viola Sakony, Marty Scott, Kara, Fred Tonty, Angela WeserCA, and Ruth Wolf.*

**~The Homebound:**  *Rudy & Jean Tomko, Betty Wolf, and Ed & Millie Zachar.*

**~Serving in the Military:**  *Curtis Sinewe and Joshua Solyan.*

**~Community & World Needs:**  *Those suffering from or affected by the coronavirus; those suffering due to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia; those suffering from loss and dislocation because weather disasters; those suffering from addiction and their families; Local, State, and National Government Leaders; the unemployed; our Second Quarter Local Mission: Support of a Concordia, Fort Wayne seminarian.*

## **2023 PALM Sunday Appeal** Pittsburgh Area Lutheran Ministries (PALM) supports regional missions that unite local congregations of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.  PALM supports student, homeless, blind, deaf, children’s ministries, and others.  PALM also publishes and circulates *The Pittsburgh Lutheran*.

## PALM has a Small Mission Grant Fund to address the short-term needs of the growing missions in our region.  Grants up to $500 are available to new PALM congregational mission endeavors on a rolling basis throughout the year.  The **2023 PALM Sunday Appeal** helps fund PALM’s Small Mission Grant Fund.  Please consider a one-time or recurring gift to support PALM.  All the funds raised in this way shall be given to the support and growth of this grant fund.  Donations can be made through Palm Sunday, April 2nd, by check (to “Pittsburgh Area Lutheran Ministries”, memo line “PALM Sunday Appeal”), or online at [**www.palmpa.org**](http://www.palmpa.org)

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**To listen to Pastor Deal’s sermons, phone 724-347-3620 and press Opt. 6.**

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**April 2nd is Palm Sunday!**

Be part of our processional as we enter the front doors of our church raising our voices to the Lord while singing “All Glory, Laud, and Honor”. The worship service will begin in the hallway by the steps to the Clover St. entrance, weather permitting.

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**SCHEDULE OF HOLY WEEK SERVICES**

**Palm Sunday**

**Divine Service**

*April 2, 2023*

9 am at Sts. Peter & Paul’s, Sharon

11:30 am at All Saints, Slippery Rock

**Holy Monday**

**Matins Service**

*April 3, 2023*

10 am at Sts. Peter & Paul’s, Sharon

**Holy Tuesday**

**Matins Service**

*April 4, 2023*

10 am at All Saints, Slippery Rock

**Holy Wednesday**

**Matins Service**

*April 5, 2023*

10 am at All Saints, Slippery Rock

**Maundy Thursday**

**Divine Service**

*April 6, 2023*

4 pm at All Saints, Slippery Rock

7 pm at Sts. Peter & Paul’s, Sharon

**Good Friday Services**

*April 7, 2023*

**Stations of the Cross Service**

7 pm at Sts. Peter & Paul’s, Sharon

**Tre Ore**

**Matins~Divine Service~Vespers**

Noon – 3 pm

**Stations of the Cross Service**

7 pm at Sts. Peter & Paul’s, Sharon

**Easter Vigil Divine Service**

*April 8, 2023*

7 pm at Sts. Peter & Paul, Sharon



**Divine Services**

**9 am at Sts. Peter & Paul’s, Sharon**

**11:30 am at All Saints, Slippery Rock**

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Easter Reminds Us to Thank God for Our Many Blessings

For Pastor Deal, who faithfully preaches the Word of God and administers the Sacraments…

For Catherine Carr, Chris Nelson, and the members of our choir, who joyfully share their musical talents with us…

For our Board of Elders, who prayerfully

watch over the spiritual welfare of our church family…

For our elected officers and boards, who guard the general welfare of our church…

For our church workers, who help with the day-to-day operations of this church…

And for you,

member of our church family,

for whom the greatest sacrifice of all was made.



**America’s Hunger for the Pure Gospel**

**By Rev. Dr. Adam C. Koontz**

*(Rev. Dr. Koontz is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Denver, CO, a supporting congregation of Luther Classical College. The following article was printed in the March 2023 issue of Ad Fontes, a publication of Luther Classical College.)*

The kind of hunger that announces itself loudly when you skipped a meal or two or the pains when you’ve gone far too long, without – or that kind of painful, loud, obvious hunger for spiritual things, for all joy and peace in believing, we see little in modern America. Church doors that once were beaten down by the crowds milling in to attend services stand on rusty hinges. Classrooms and “education wings” erected in times with more children generally and more children in church specifically are spotless in their emptiness.

Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. Our family and friends and coworkers may be alive in body, but in spirit they perish. They are starving to death. The famine we now endure is a famine, not of bread, nor of water, nor of processed foods, but of hearing the word of the LORD. The days are coming and are now here when such a famine is widespread.

Contrary to the predictions of many, especially in the 20th century, the shrinkage of Christianity as a force in people’s lives has not meant their “secularization,“ their complete satisfaction with going out to eat, youth sports, and drugs legal and illegal, the pleasures offered along with Netflix every night and weekend to keep the masses occupied with something other than God. It has not worked out well.

In one direction, Americans have not become less interested in “spiritual“ things, however uninterested they have become in the Bible and “organized“ religion. The more outré or odd, the more ground that’s been gained since the 1960s. Books on healing crystals, astrology, and Wicca crowd public library bookshelves that may have once had a complete set of Bible commentaries. “Spiritual“ practices and religious predilections can change overnight with the help of a search engine. The girl who was confirmed in your Lutheran congregation five years ago could be a Buddhist or a Wiccan by now, depending on what she has looked up.

But she is likeliest to be very little at all, spiritually speaking. In the other direction from the growth of strange spiritual or religious beliefs and practices distant from historic Christianity, we have fled into near-constant immersion in consumer experiences that always elude our ability to find contentment. Games of every description and on every imaginable platform, sports news that can fuel our betting, instantly available lewdness – all of these are ours anywhere all of the time. You could think of any other number of substances, foods, toys, clothes, or anything else a person might buy, subscribe to, or rent, but you could not think of how any of this has made our families stronger, our lives more purposeful and meaningful, or our hearts less terrified of insignificance today and death tomorrow.

The hunger and restlessness of hearts that are not at rest in Christ is of course everywhere. The hunger pains are numbered by the possibility that we could find something else that would bring us happiness if we had a little more money or square footage on our lot or a better job.

In a famine, it is not necessary that we become gourmet chefs. People are starving to death. They need a square meal, not caviar. Their flight into every strange, spiritual practice and religiopolitical superstition is evidence of starvation. Their desire to numb their lives through entertainment, gluttony, and distraction is evidence of starvation.

Feed them with the Bread of Life. Give them old, reliable words, the very Word of God, for their hearts to fasten on. We have always said “law and gospel“ are necessary for every person to hear, but we have sometimes said it so much that it sounded like “lawngospel” when we said it aloud and seemed like some kind of cliché when we rehearsed its necessity to each other. It never was so garbled nor so clichéd, but we perhaps failed to grasp what the stakes were: if we do not preach God’s truth about what our lives should be, and what His life, death, and resurrection for us are, we will surely starve to death.

If our family, friends, and neighbors (not the hypothetical ones, the ones across the street from our churches and our homes) don’t hear what God has said about who they are (boys and girls, no third option, for example) and what He would have them be (honest, brave, loving their families, for example), how will they ever know that they have a Father who has some kind of standard for life, that their lives are not collections of random events, strung together until death stops it all? In 2020 you saw how many people just wanted someone else to tell them what to do. Why not have them listen to the only true God tell them the truth of what to do and to leave undone instead of the traditions of men created to enslave them?

If they hear His truth about their lives, then their hearts will be shaken and all the security that they found in false gods and wasted time and disgusting things they look back on even now with shame – all that security will be laid bare as a delusion. Then – when they have heard the old, reliable Law – then they will rejoice to hear the truth of the Gospel. Its true freedom, its true liberation from death and the fear of death, the liberty it brings from all the schemes and inventions of men, the joy it brings with the certainty of life everlasting – all these can be theirs and your family’s and your friends’ and your neighbors’ right now.

The best time to say all these things to all these people, to preach the gospel to every creature, was 50 years ago when we saw it begin slipping from their minds, and cooling in their hearts. We should’ve acted faster back then. But the second-best time to proclaim these truths is right now.

They are surely hungry. They aren’t eating right. They’re stuffing everything down that will only make them worse off than they were before. Give them the Bread that endures. Give them the knowledge of the fear of God and of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Surely there is great hunger and great despair and great sadness. But the LORD says, “I will feed them” (Ezekiel 34:13, 14).