

# Christ's Messenger

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH The American Association of Lutheran Churches



"To know Christ,  
and make Him known."

June 2022



In the Hands of the Refiner

## The Question of Suffering

There is so much happening around the world today, in our own country, in our own State, and in our own city. There is so much pain and suffering. It hits home, not from what we may hear about others we know, but it hits closer – in our families. Our hearts go out for the families of the slain teachers and children of Uvalde, Texas. The tragedy was evil and despicable; and both unexplainable and horrible. We hear of wars, rumors of wars, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, tornados, heat waves, pandemics, illnesses, which all can bring people to their knees. They can bring Christians to their knees too. Suffering is everywhere.

So, we conclude that suffering happens to everyone, Christian and non-Christian. In this June Messenger we will talk about how suffering can affect the Christian life. I ask the question: Can suffering be used by God to get our attention and to accomplish His purpose in our lives?

Ecclesiastes 7:14 says, *"In the day of prosperity be happy, But in the day of adversity consider—God has made the one as well as the other so that man may not discover anything that will be after him."* The following questions are designed to help us in the day of adversity:

- (1) How am I responding to it?
- (2) How should I respond to it?
- (3) Am I learning anything from it?
- (4) Does my response demonstrate faith and love for God and my neighbor?
- (5) How will God use it in my life?

### Suffering Defined

Suffering means to endure hurt or pain, to experience evil, sustain afflictions, to be miserable, and to endure hardships. It is also something to make us think. God allows suffering to get our attention and to accomplish His purpose in our lives in a way that would never occur without the trial. Suffering does not occur all the time.

### Illustrations of Suffering

It may be cancer, it may be an illness or loss of someone close to you. It may be a personal failure, job loss or a major disappointment. It may be a rumor that is damaging your reputation, it may be something that brings you grief and anxiety, or it may be persecution for the sake of Christ.

### The General Causes of Suffering

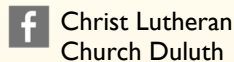
- (1) We suffer because we live in a fallen world where sin reigns in the hearts of men.

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President:  
Quitdee Carson

Vice President:  
Carolyn Lofald

Treasurer:  
Sandy Carlson

Every Month:  
Wednesdays:  
6:30 PM Adult Bible Study

Esther Circle:  
First Thursday of each  
month at 10:00 AM

Council Meeting  
Second Thursday of each  
month at 6:30 PM

AA meets at the church  
every Monday at 6:30 PM

(2) We suffer because of our own foolishness. We reap what we sow.

(3) We suffer sometimes because it is God's discipline. Hebrews 12:6 says, "For those whom the Lord loves he disciplines and he scourges every son He receives."

(4) We may suffer persecution because of our faith—especially when we take a stand on biblical issues, i.e., suffering for righteousness sake.

Of course, all of these do not apply at the same time. All suffering is not, for instance, a product of our own foolishness, self-induced misery, or sin. It is rare that suffering doesn't reveal areas of weakness and wrong attitudes that need removal like dross in the refining process.

**1 Peter 1:6-7** says, "Be glad about this, even though it may now be necessary for you to be sad for a while because of the many kinds of trials you suffer. Their purpose is to prove that your faith is genuine. Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise and glory and honor on the Day when Jesus Christ is revealed." (GNT)

## The Nature of Suffering

(1) **Suffering is Painful.** Suffering is hard; it is never easy. Regardless of what we know and how we understand its principles, it is going to hurt. 1 Peter 1:16 says, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials." i.e., — "to cause pain, sorrow, grief").

(2) **Suffering is Perplexing.** Suffering is sometime mysterious. We may know some of the theological reasons for suffering from Scripture, yet when it strikes, there is still a certain mystery. Why now? What is God doing? Suffering is allowed to build our trust in God.

(3) **Suffering is Purposeful.** Suffering is not without meaning in spite of its mystery. We might not know it now, but its chief purpose is the formation of Christ-like character.

Romans 8:28-29, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."

(4) **Suffering Proves Us.** "Trials" in James 1:2 refers to that which examines, tests, and proves the character or integrity of something. Therefore, suffering is that which proves one's character and integrity along with both the object and quality of one's faith.

(5) **Suffering is a Process.** As a process, it takes time. The results God seeks to accomplish with the trials require time and endurance.

Romans 5:3-4 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.

James 1:3-4, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

(6) **Suffering is a Purifier.** No matter the reason, even if it is not God's discipline, it is a purifier, for none of us will ever be perfect in this life.

Philippians 3:12-14, “Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

**(7) Suffering Provides Opportunity.** Suffering provides opportunity for God’s glory, our transformation, testimony, and ministry, etc.

**(8) Suffering Requires a Response.** Suffering requires a response if it is to be successful in accomplishing God’s purpose in your life. We all want the character; but we don’t want the process, which may be suffering. Because of our sinful human nature, we can’t have one without the other.

**(9) Suffering is Inevitable.**

1 Peter 1:6, “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,”

1 Peter 4:12, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;”

The question we must each face is not, ‘if’ we are going to have trials in life, but when, and how will we respond to them?

1 Thessalonians 3:3, “so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.”

1 Peter 4:19, “Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”

**(10) Suffering is a Struggle.** It’s going to be a battle all the way. That’s why they are called “trials” and “tests.” Even when we understand the purpose and principles of suffering, and we know the promises of God’s love and concern given in His Word for handling suffering, dealing with the trials of life is never easy because suffering hurts.

In order to handle suffering, and be enabled to cooperate with the process with inner joy and tranquility, we must seek prayerfully God’s purpose and reason for suffering. This, therefore, requires us to trust in, and rely upon in the promises of God.

Compare the blessings seen in the testimony of the Psalmist in Psalm 119:

Before affliction = Straying and ignoring (vs. 67a)

During and in affliction = Learning and turning (vs. 71)

**When under affliction:**

- (1) Determine Causes if we can (Is it because of something I have done?)
- (2) Determine Objectives (What is God wanting to do in my life or in others?)
- (3) Determine Solutions (How does God want me to handle this?)

**After affliction:**

- (1) Knowing and changing (vs. 67b, 97-102)
- (2) Resting and valuing (vs. 65, 72)

We must understand that God’s chief purpose for our lives is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. God has determined in His plan to use suffering for our spiritual development.

## The Purpose and Reason for Suffering

**(1) We suffer as a testimony or as a witness.** When believers handle suffering joyfully and with stability, it becomes a marvelous testimony to the power and life of Christ that we claim and name. Suffering provides key opportunities to manifest and magnify the power of God through His servants. It provides opportunities in the following areas:

- a. To glorify God before the angelic world.
- b. To manifest the power of God to others.
- c. To manifest the character of Christ in the midst of suffering as a testimony to win others to Christ.

**(2) Suffering develops our capacity and sympathy in comforting others.** 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 says, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.”*

**(3) Suffering keeps pride down.** In 2 Corinthians 12:7, the Apostle Paul saw his thorn in the flesh as an instrument allowed by God to help him maintain a spirit of humility and dependence on the Lord because of the special revelations he had seen as one who had been caught up to the third heaven.

**(4) Suffering is how God trains us.** God lovingly and faithfully allows suffering to develop personal righteousness, and maturity in our walk with Him. In this sense, suffering is allowed:

- a. **As discipline for sin** to bring us back to fellowship through genuine repentance.
- b. **As a pruning tool** to remove the dead wood from our lives (weaknesses, sins of ignorance, immature attitudes and values, etc.) The desired goal is increased fruitfulness. Trials may become mirrors of reproof to reveal hidden areas of sin and weakness.
- c. **As a tool for growth.** Suffering causes us to rely on the Lord and His Word. Trials test our faith and cause us to use the promises and principles of the Word. Psalm 4:1 says, *“Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.”* Suffering teaches us the truth of learning to “wait on the Lord.”
- d. **As a means of learning what obedience really means.** It becomes a test of our loyalty. If a father tells his son to do something he likes to do, like eat a bowl of ice cream and he does it, the child has obeyed, but he hasn’t really learned anything about obedience. If his dad, however, asks him to mow the yard, that becomes a test and teaches something about the meaning of obedience. The point is obedience often costs us something and is hard. It can require sacrifice, courage, discipline, and faith in the belief that God is good and has our best interests at heart regardless of how things might appear to us. Regardless of the reason God allows suffering into our lives, revealing areas of weakness.

Suffering itself is not the thing that produces faith or maturity. It is only a tool that God uses to bring us to Himself so we will respond to Him and His Word. It forces us to turn from trust in our own resources to living by faith in God’s resources. It causes us to put first things first. Ultimately, it is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit that produces faith and mature Christlike character. The key word is “the proof of our faith.” “Proof” is the word which looks at both the testing which purifies, and the results, the proof that is left after the test. The Lord uses trials to test our faith in the sense of purifying it, to bring it to the surface, so we are forced to put our faith to work.

**(5) Suffering causes continued dependence on God.** Suffering is used to cause us to walk in God’s ability, power, and provision rather than by our own. It causes us to turn from our resources to His resources.

**(6) Suffering reveals the characteristics of Jesus Christ (The Fruit of the Spirit).** This is similar to point (4) above with more emphasis on the process defining the objective; becoming Christ-like. This has both a negative and a positive aspect:

**a. Negatively:** Suffering helps to remove impurities from our lives such as indifference, self-trust, false motives, self-centeredness, wrong values and priorities, and human defense and escape mechanisms by which we seek to handle our problems. Suffering in itself does not remove the impurities, but is a tool God uses to cause us to exercise faith in the provisions of God's grace. It is God's grace in Christ (our new identity in Christ, the Word and the Holy Spirit) that changes us. This negative aspect is accomplished in two ways:

(1) **When out of fellowship with the Lord:** Suffering becomes discipline from our heavenly Father. This involves known sin, rebellion and indifference to God.

(2) **When in fellowship:** Suffering becomes the loving and skillful handy work of the Vine Dresser to make us more productive. It involves unknown sin, areas we may not be aware of, that are nevertheless hindering our growth and fruitfulness. In this case, suffering often constitutes mirrors of reproof.

**b. Positively:** when believers live under suffering joyfully (i.e., they endure and keep on applying the promises and principles of the faith), Christ's character will be more and more manifested as they grow through the suffering. This means trust, peace, joy, stability, biblical values, faithfulness, and obedience in contrast to sinful mental attitudes, blaming, running, complaining, and reactions against God and people.

**(7) Suffering reveals the sinful nature of humanity and the righteousness of the justice of God.** Suffering at the hands of others (persecution, violence) is used of God to "fill up the measure of their sins." It shows the evil character of those who persecute others and the justice of God's judgment upon them.

**(8) Suffering broadens our witness.** In the process of producing Christian character and enhancing our testimony to others, suffering often opens up doors for sharing the Gospel we could never have imagined. Paul's imprisonment resulted in the spread of the Gospel within the elite imperial praetorian guard. The Apostle continually rejoiced in the Lord, but if he had been complaining, sulking, and bitter, his witness would have come to nothing.

One last thought: Whatever trial may be disturbing your heart, the best remedy is to open your Bible and read God's Word. Upon reading and meditating on God's Word, your heart will then easily come to rest as you cast all your cares upon Him.

1 Peter 5:6-7, *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you."*

Have a most wonderful summer!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary DeSha". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Gary DeSha

June 2022

Dear CLC Family and Friends,

## THE GIFT OF STORYTELLING

“Mom, tell us a story” are some of my favorite words in the whole wide world. When my children were small, every night at bedtime I would tell them a story. Sometimes it would be a story from a favorite book, but other times it would be a made-up story that would paint a picture in their minds of something special we did that day or something silly or something important they needed to learn. Then I would sing to them about Jesus and sleeping, and finally we would pray. Do you have a storyteller in your life, or maybe you are someone’s beloved storyteller?

When a missionary from Wycliffe Bible Translators was with us in May, he shared with the congregation how they use storytelling in their ministry. Before the Bible can be translated in writing into a new language for a people group, Wycliffe calls upon the tradition that crosses all countries and languages and customs - the tradition of storytelling. Storytelling not only lays the groundwork for the translation process, it is also how they begin sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ in a community or country.

If you were in church that day, you may have noticed how excited I was at hearing about their testimony and ministry, and especially about “storying” the Bible. Their approach grabbed my imagination because everyone loves a good story, and also because it was something new to me that has me thinking and imagining about outreach to children in our community. Just think of it! Choosing a favorite Bible story and faithfully retelling in a way that makes it come alive, relevant, and life-changing. Restoring the love and comfort of storytelling with small groups of children, but also capturing the process on video to expand our reach. Teaching children how to become Bible storytellers, writing and sharing songs that tell a Bible story, equipped to share, preach, and teach beautiful truths from God’s Word to their family and friends.

Jesus is a gifted storyteller. His parables reach right into the hearts of his hearers with an earthly story that shares a heavenly meaning. His stories transform lives and I want to become a storyteller like Him to bless others and glorify God. I also want to investigate how to equip children to become Bible storytellers. **Help me this way:**

1. ***What is your favorite Bible story? Send me an email with your answer as soon as you finish reading this.***
2. ***Pray for me and for our congregation to develop a fruitful outreach to children.***

Blessings and love,

**Sue**

320-815-1561

[suedesha@gmail.com](mailto:suedesha@gmail.com)



## June Maintenance Report

The Esther Circle is ready to start their planting on the June 2nd at 10 AM. Hoping the weather will cooperate! It is such a blessing to have the church grounds looking so nice!

We are still looking for a few volunteers to help with staining the garage. Please let me know if you are interested. Working around the weather also!

**\*\*Please watch your step** when coming in the basement entrance – the asphalt has settled down, but please be cautious! We are still praying about the best way to fix this issue.

Thompson Lightning Protection has installed our lightning protection system on our roof. This will dissipate the lightning. We have now completed our earthly diligence in protecting our church.

We are waiting for MN Power to redirect the light on the pole in our parking lot to point toward Ensign Street. This will be a LED for better visibility.

The middle awning window in the upstairs parking lot entrance has a seal leak. Glass Guru will be replacing that for us.

Chris from Benson Electric has completed all that we have asked to have done. The thermostat issue for the back hall has also been resolved. We will be purchasing a coach light to place above the front entrance windows.

The border around the outside play set has been repaired. We are looking into replacing the glider for the swing set.

We have been abundantly blessed to have the funds and ability to have these repairs made and to keep our church in good order! Thank you for your monetary gifts and prayers!

In Christ,  
Carolyn Lofald



### CLC Food Share

The next food packing date is Tuesday, June 14.

June distribution is Thursday, June 16 from 11:30-12:30.

Thank you so much for all of your prayers and support of this ministry!

**Sunday services are livestreamed on our Facebook page:**

**Christ Lutheran Church Duluth at 9:30 AM**

**You can also log onto our website [clduluth.org](http://clduluth.org)**



Christ Lutheran Church Duluth



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## June Ushers, Trustees & Scripture Readers

## Financial Update

### June 5

**Ushers:** Bill & Jan Arezzo

**Trustees:** Laurie & Laura

**Scripture Reader:** Sue DeSha

April Income: \$11,222

Expenses: \$11,213

Monthly income was over expenses by \$9

### June 12

**Ushers:** Carolyn Lofald & Jim Carlson

**Trustees:** Laurie & Jim

**Scripture Reader:** Mark Wiita

YTD Income: \$54,194

YTD Expenses: \$46,121

YTD income was over expenses by \$8,073

### June 19

**Ushers:** Keith Youngren & Mark youngren

**Trustees:** Bill & Grace

**Scripture Reader:** Jim Carlson

April Mission: Union Gospel Mission  
\$665

Full financial reports are available in the office upon request

### June26

**Ushers:** Grace Wells & Wendy Pickar

**Trustees:** Wendy & Carol

**Scripture Reader:** Sue DeSha

*If you have a conflict with these dates, please contact Jim Carlson at 218-343-6755*



### **June Mission of the Month: Camp JIM**



During the late 1800's and early 1900's immigrants left their farms in Europe to seek opportunities in MN with the development of logging camps here. Promised years of gainful employment ended abruptly when the trees were cleared. These immigrants were left to their original trade of farming. Unfortunately Northern MN in particular proved to be a poor career choice leaving many in poverty. The America Sunday School Union "ASSU", now known as In Faith saw this as an opportunity to reach these rural people with the Gospel of Christ. Starting in the 1920's many ASSU missionaries came to this region. Arnold Frei Camp JIM (Jesus Is Mine) was one of those missionaries.

In 1932 while leading many serving in many Sunday school groups, Rev Arnold Frei was given the vision by to start Camp JIM (Jesus Is Mine) as a place where people of any income could come, hear the Word of God and grow in their faith. Later in the 1970's he separated the camp from the ASSU in an effort to help it continue to grow and keep its focus. They continue that vision of reaching the next generations regardless of social-economic standing as a non-denominational Christian camp.

Camp JIM exists to lovingly teach and model the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, and to encourage people to grow in faith and service.



PLEASE PRAY FOR....

*Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.  
James 5:14*

Our pastor & the leadership of the church  
The ministry at Union Gospel Mission  
All of our students from pre-school to college  
Our country, military & police  
The teachers and students at all schools

Mission of the Month: Camp JIM  
Persecuted Christians throughout the world  
The steadfastness of our faith  
Lutheran Vicar Mwavu Ronald and his  
two churches in Uganda

**THOSE WITH HEALTH NEEDS:**

Dick McLean	Barb Hanson	Mary Jenny
Carol Johnson	Jane McLean	Mark Malander
Florence Kubiak	The Lund Family	Donna Swanson
Brian McDonald	Carol Schramm	Carol Schneeberger
Judy Stocke	Carol Sogard	Darlene Saaf
Del Sandberg	Tom & Marlene Stauber	Maggie Kaptonak
Kathy Stevens	Linda Anthony (Dick McLean's Daughter)	

*If there are any people who have been accidentally overlooked, please contact the church office. We apologize for any oversights.*



Our sympathy to the family of Carl "Corky" Swanson who passed away May 26, 2022. Please remember Donna and the family in your prayers.  
Services will be held at the church on June 1, 2022. at 11:00 AM.

Evelyn Johnson's funeral service is Friday June 3. Visitation at 2 PM, funeral at 3 PM at the Cremation Society of Minnesota.

Our sympathy to the family of Priscilla Olson who passed away May 30, 2022. Please remember Don and the family in your prayers.  
Services will be held at Christ Lutheran Church on June 11, 2022. Times to be determined.

*All the days ordained for me were  
written in your book before one of them  
came to be. How precious to me are  
your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
Psalm 139:16,17*

# Happy Birthday!

Jan Arezzo	June 19
Chuck Morris	June 19
Dick McLean	June 23
Bonnie Kubiak	June 29