

*Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.* *--Psalm 91:9-10*

These words of the ancient Psalm have a contemporary ring as we wonder, work, and worship in the worst of the COVID-19 Pandemic here in Saskatoon to date. This verse and others like it in Scripture are balanced by Jesus' reply to Satan when he was tempted in the Wilderness. Challenged to prove God's power and love by a spectacularly risky act, he simply quoted Moses: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Following Jesus, we take refuge in the Lord Most High, trust God's grace and mercy, rely on God's forgiving love every day, and work with medical advice, legal restrictions, best practices and good intentions for the wellbeing of all, praying, worshipping, and working our way through 2021.

In the last month, our community and our congregation have buried four members and two adherents. From Dr. Gary Hanson we have inherited a large screen tv, two paintings, several Russian Orthodox icons, the remnants of his library, and an extensive photographic collection. He died leaning into the Last Days, studying the Book of Revelation page by page, strong in the faith that "the Lamb will conquer...for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful" (Rev. 17:14b). Margaret Baun's legacy is clear, pure faithfulness in Jesus. We rejoice in her victory: "Our Redeemer—the Lord of hosts is his name—is the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 47:4). Dr. Roger Nostbakken refused pain medication only hours away from his death, so that he could be as conscious as possible for his final communion and prayers, confident in the presence of Christ as Psalm 91 says, "For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence...you will not fear the terror of the night or the arrow that flies by day..." Laura and Dave Wiebe were laid to rest in a graveside service, due to COVID fears in a family with mixed views on vaccination and masking. Almost two years had passed since Laura died, and almost one year since Dave's death. "For he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways" (Psalm 91:11) describes God's faithfulness in bringing them to their resting place. Theresa Anne Fisher (Terri) had clear foreknowledge of her death: she told her only daughter Shannon she would not be discharged from the Dube Centre and would not return to her home. That night she died suddenly and peacefully trusting God's promise: "When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honour them." God protected her throughout the valiant efforts of the emergency resuscitation team, and provided an honourable Christian burial despite her extreme poverty through the good work of Warman Funeral Home and SK Social Services.

As we draw near Reformation and All Saints Sunday, we remember those who have gone before us, we give thanks for their legacy of faith, and welcoming, worshipping, and working together we witness to the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

A mighty Fortress is our God! A sword and shield victorious! He breaks the cruel oppressor's rod! And wins salvation glorious!