



APRIL 2022

# THE LAMPLIGHTER YORK FIRST MORAVIAN

## WHY DOES GOD LET THESE THINGS GO ON?

Artillery shells destroy a maternity hospital and kill new mothers and babies in Ukraine...A man walks into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut and kills 27 children and adults. A Boeing DC 737 crashes in China killing all 137 people aboard...

Why does God let these things happen? If God is good, and God is all powerful, how can God let these things go on? If God cannot stop these things, then he is not all powerful. If God has the power and chooses not to use it, then he is not good! But with all the suffering and tragedy happening in our world, God cannot be BOTH good and powerful!

As a teenager I watched my mother's breast cancer reduce her to a shell of herself and almost destroy our family life. When I needed to write a thesis for my master's degree, I wrote one hundred twenty pages on "God and the problem of evil." When I was a pastor in Lebanon a woman who was coming to our church called and asked me to come to her home to help her tell her five children that their father had placed a gun to his head and pulled the trigger.

What can we say about all this? If God is good, why does God permit such suffering in our world? Why doesn't God do better? How can God let these things go on?

FIRST. Much of the evil and suffering in our world doesn't come from God, but comes from the wrong use of human freedom! A tow truck driver blocks part of a street and an angry driver slugs him and fractures his head... Is that God's responsibility? Was that God's will? NO, NO! A thousand times NO. I believe God weeps when people hurt each other and kill each other. These things are NOT God's will, but God cannot do anything to stop this without destroying the freedom which makes us morally responsible beings. One of the differences between us and animals is the ability to make moral choices. When our kitty does something I don't like, I sometimes holler, "Bad cat!" And Kathie says, "Steve, she's just a cat!"

Then, why doesn't God intervene to stop people when they make bad choices? Imagine how that would work... "How are planning to spend Saturday night?" "Drinking and partying and maybe we'll take a few snorts of coke..." "Bad choice! Choose again!" At what point would you want God to stop intervening? "Keep your nose out of the way I do my taxes; and don't say anything about the money I earn under the table on which I pay no taxes...."

Think of all the suffering and tragedy in the world that can be traced to the bad use of human freedom. Several thousand people die of chemical poisoning in India because a company based in the U.S. does not take the same safety precautions they must take here. I once heard a lecture by a thoracic surgeon who said that he had operated on more than 2,000 patients for lung cancer and every single one of them was a smoker.

Tell the story of Rabbi Harold Kushner and his book, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" (Aaron Kushner died of progeria at age 14) "One reason is that being human leaves us free to hurt each other and God cannot stop us without taking away the freedom that makes us human."

If we are honest, we must admit that much of the evil and suffering in the world is not God's responsibility, it belongs on our doorstep!

SECOND. Some of the tragedy and suffering is due to the nature of the world which God created. I have a dear friend who lost his older brother when he fell to his death climbing a mountain. A plane loses part of its tail section and plunges into a hillside. These tragedies are the consequences of the law of gravity. Yet we could not live on the surface of this planet without gravity.

Fire breaks out in the old Weaver piano factory and kills two firemen - yet it would be difficult to live without fire. The same fire that warms our homes and cooks our food also burns our bodies... Rabbi Kushner says "There are no exceptions for nice people..."

Jesus in MATTHEW 5:45 says, "He makes his sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust." What if this were not the case? What if it rained only on the fields of good people? What if there were no fixed natural laws? What if God suspended the law of gravity every time an airplane had engine trouble or a mountain climber fell? What if the properties of matter and the laws of motion were suspended every time a bullet was headed for an innocent person? What we really want is a world where things change from moment to moment depending on what we wish to happen? "Lord, please command those artillery shells to become foam rubber..."

You and I also need to remember that there is much goodness and beauty in the world. Most children travel to school and get home safely. Most airplanes arrive at their destination. Most babies are born without defects. Most people who get cancer recover including my Kathie... Perhaps it is more appropriate for us to ask, "How could God do this to me?" when something good happens! When I was a pastor, one thing that bothered me was the people who lived all their lives without God yet they wanted place the blame on God when things went wrong...

FINALLY. I've found that when people are suffering from evil or tragedy, they are not helped by reading my paper on "God and the problem of evil." People in distress do not care about philosophical explanations, what they really want is sympathy and comfort! We want to know that we are not alone. We want to know that others care about us. And we want to know that God has not abandoned us. Years ago I was amazed by the answer a seventy year old widow with nine children gave to the question, "When did you feel most close to the Lord?" And Ruth said, "When my second husband died...and I thought I heard the Lord tell me that things would be okay. And my neighbors, my children, and the members of my church all came and helped me and things turned out all right..."

Brothers and sisters, it all depends on how you look at things. If you expect to find God in the midst of tragedy and suffering, I believe you will find him. Corrie ten Boom spent part of World War II in a German concentration camp because she and her family harbored Jews in their home. After the war she was asked what she had learned through this terrible experience. She said "I learned that there is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still."

Someone once told me, "If you ever doubt the love of God, take a long look at the cross." The cross shows us that God is not far away in heaven, but God has come to live among us and suffer and bleed and die for us.

"Oh how he loves you and me, Oh how he loves you and me,  
He gave his life, what more could he give.  
Oh how he loves you. Oh how he loves me. Oh how he loves you and me"

The cross shows us that human sin and evil is real - human wickedness crucified the best man who ever lived. But the cross also demonstrates God's method of dealing with sin and evil. God takes it upon himself, suffers under it, and triumphs over it by raising Jesus from the dead.

Yes, in this life, people still suffer and die, but in the resurrection of Jesus God has given us a living hope! Evil does have power in this life - but evil does not have the last word!

Christ has risen,  
Christ has triumphed,  
Christ will come again!

Sin and evil do not have the last word. Brothers and sisters, this is my great hope! Is it your hope also?

Rev. Steve Nicholas  
First Moravian Church  
March 27, 2022

# Holy Week



Holy week begins with Palm Sunday on April 10, with Rev. Ken Ross. We will pray the Palm Sunday liturgy with the singing of the Hosanna at the 10:30a.m. service. We have also been invited to share with Covenant Moravian in the readings for Holy Week. The reading for Palm Sunday will be held in their Christian Education wing at 4:00p.m. on Sunday. The readings will continue Monday through Wednesday at 6:30p.m. We will also share in the Maundy Thursday Communion service at Covenant at 7:00p.m. Thursday April 14. There may be an option to view this service on youtube. If the youtube option becomes available, we will let you know during the announcements on Palm Sunday morning. The Good Friday service will be held here at First Church on Friday April 15 at 7:00p.m. This service can also be accessed through the following zoom connections:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82932473763>

Meeting ID 82932473763

or dial in by location:

833 548 0282

877 853 5247

888 788 0099

833 548 0276

We will also be proclaiming the Resurrection at the Garden Tomb of Prospect Hill cemetery with a sun rise service at 6:00a.m. Sunday April 17.

Easter Day worship will be held in the sanctuary at 10:30a.m. April 17 with the zoom option. Mr. Lloyd Purswell will be providing the Easter message.

## Elders and Trustees News

### Unified Board Meeting

Meeting was held via zoom on March 21st. Worship was reviewed favorably. Services for Holy Week can be found on the previous page. It was voted upon and approved to make masks optional starting March 27th. The unified board also met with Melissa Johnson on March 20th. Although she was not able to provide a definite name, things are in the works for the church.

### Sensory Rooms

The Board of Elders would like to bring the congregation up to date regarding the Sensory Rooms. We had made significant investment in this ministry by transforming two of our un-used classrooms into sensory rooms that were designed to assist families with special needs children. Initially they were used several days a week by a team of therapist and about 25 families. During covid that service was suspended, but within the last six months there have been 2 therapist who have been assisting special needs families on a weekly basis. Though there isn't the same volume of activity as previously, the investment that was made is still making a difference. Please continue to pray for this ministry and the families with whom we have a part in making for a better life.

### Total Income & Offerings from Sundays 03/06/2022 to 03/27/2022:

General	\$5,266.00
Refurbishing	\$225.00
Flower	\$80.00
Recycled Freezer	\$14.00
Adams Electric	\$35.54
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,260.54</b>



### Did you know...

We have an online giving portal! If you prefer to catch the service via Zoom you can send your offering online! Just go to

- [mmfa.info](http://mmfa.info)
- click Giving Portal at the top
- Click 'F' and select First Moravian Church - York, PA

If you prefer to mail your offering you can send it direct to:

Wanda Hendricks  
3715 Fox Chase Drive  
Dover, PA 17315

### **April Birthdays**

3 Joseph Kotchmar\*  
4 Spener Lippincott\*  
11 Kathy McDannell\*  
12 Georgia Rishel  
18 Julia Folk\*  
24 Gloria Moore  
28 Kevin Lippincott\*  
Lori Lehigh

### **April Anniversaries**

10 Glenn & Cheri Miley\*  
13 Stan & Sally Senft

**For pastoral care until  
our new Pastor is received,  
please feel free to call any of the  
3 elders listed below.**

**Jeannette Sprengle 717-225-4304**

**John Knokey 717-848-9220**

**Steve Nicholas 717- 755-7412**

**\*Please do not call Steve  
on a Monday\***

### **Prayer Concerns**

Amy Ardison (Betsy Senft's sister)  
Pastor Jeff Coppage  
Ann Coppage  
Don Eckert  
Mary Jones  
Kathie Nicholas  
Karrie Rishel  
Cliff & Elaine Rowell  
Ruth & Clair Seiple

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## **2022 Watchword**

“Happy is the one who trusts in you, O lord of hosts.”

Psalm 84:12