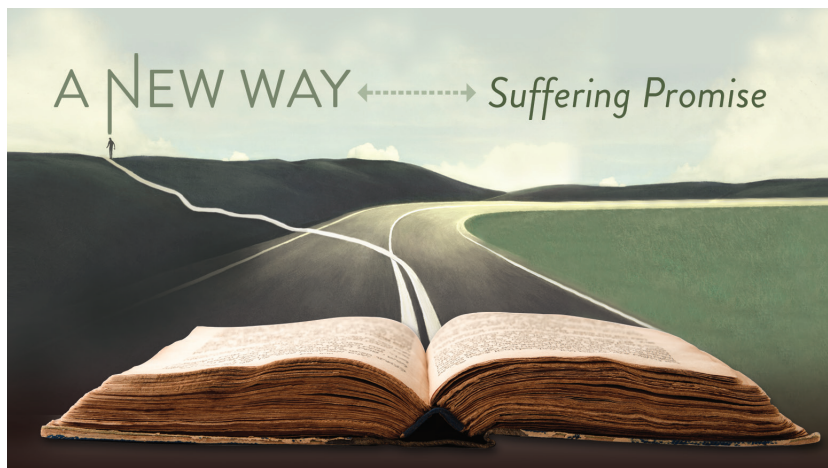




January 4 – 5, 2025

**Suffering Promise**  
Genesis 21



## MUSIC THIS WEEKEND

**CONTEMPORARY**  
SAT 5:30 pm | SUN 10:30 am

**I Thank God  
Build My Life  
Worthy Of It All  
Washed By The Water**

**CLASSIC | SUN 8:45 am**  
**Praise to the Lord, the Almighty  
Who You Say I Am  
Better Hands**

**BELL CHOIR: Musical Offering  
Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee**

**MESSAGE: Paul Dean  
Communion (All Services)**

## JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

**Classic: Sun 8:45 am | Contemporary: Sat 5:30 pm, Sun 10:30 am**  
Resources, livestreams, playlists and podcast links at [popmn.org](http://popmn.org)

**Saturday evening contemporary worship is now in the chapel!**  
Join us in the chapel on Saturdays at 5:30 pm

## JOIN US FOR COMMUNITY

**Grief Support Series | Mondays | 6:00 pm | Chapel**  
Our next 10-week series begins January 6!

**Spring musical auditions | Sunday, January 12 | 12:30 – 2:30 pm**  
Kids in grades 3-5 – come audition for the Praise Choir spring musical, *The Agape League*. Contact [ehagen@popmn.org](mailto:ehagen@popmn.org)

## JOIN US FOR MISSION

**Mission Outpost open house | January 11-12 after all services**  
This is a great chance to get a look at all the inspiring things that Mission Outpost is doing, and to see how you fit in to the picture.

**Mission Outpost Volunteer Orientation  
Tuesday | January 14 | 6:00 pm**

This is a great chance to get a look at all the inspiring things that Mission Outpost is doing, and to see how you fit in to the picture.

## JOIN US IN GENEROSITY

**Thank you for your gifts!**



## Connect With Us

We are here to love God and all people by being the heart, hands and feet of Jesus in the world so that all might know that they are loved. We are an open and affirming church. We value growing a relationship with God and with each other, and showing up for people in need in this community and beyond. **Welcome to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church!**



**Connect** with  
Prince of Peace!  
Scan here to  
join our mailing list  
and find ways to  
get involved.



Scan here to  
donate to  
Prince of Peace's  
**Mission &  
Ministry.**



Scan here to  
make a **prayer  
request** or to  
have a member  
of the Spiritual Care  
Team contact you.

**PAPER COPIES OF THESE FORMS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE CONNECT DESK.**



## Trust the Story | A New Way | **Suffering Promise**

### What do we do with suffering?

There is so much suffering in this story, so much pain and so many broken relationships. If it seems jarring to start a brand new year with discussions about suffering, remember that God starts with a promise. A promise has been cast into this world of suffering, even now.

Abraham has been giving a promise, but he is skeptical. The promise seems both ludicrous and delayed. He doesn't trust the story, and begins to live from a place of scarcity, seeing only what he lacks. He sees only his own suffering, which makes him suffer more.

Sarah suffers, too, for the same reasons. She doesn't trust the story, the promise. In Genesis 16:1-6, she decides to do something about it. But what she does – using Hagar (a slave) to produce a child, regretting it, and dealing harshly with her – is a messy heap of sexual abuse, twisted power dynamics, inhumanity and control.

- Think about a time in your life when you reacted badly out of scarcity, insecurity, or a belief that you are not inherently good. What happens when you don't trust the story – the story that says you are good, you are enough, and there is a promise of hope for your future? Do things go awry when you see only suffering?

This story keeps repeating. Hagar is like the Israelites' story, only flipped upside down: she is an Egyptian slave under the control of Israelites. Hagar's child makes her a threat to Sarah; the growing Israelite population threatened the Egyptian Pharaoh enough that he had their male children killed. Hagar flees from oppression, just like the Israelites.

Hagar, too, is given a promise: that her descendants will make a nation. Far from a minor character, her story is central at the intersection of world religions.

- Can the same person, or group of people, be the both the oppressor and the oppressed? Where is that happening today? When have you been the oppressor? When have you been the oppressed? Were you able to trust the promise in either of those situations?

- Have you considered God as a major player in stories outside our scriptures? What does it mean that Hagar is given a promise that is fulfilled in the Quran instead of the Bible? Have you ever had a painful break from a place you love, only to find your promise lived out somewhere else? Does God's provision have boundaries?

"This story shakes us out of simplistic notions about God's call, God's promises, and God's faithfulness. The God of Israel works through all the complex mess of human history, through the lives of deeply flawed and broken people who never seem to get things right. There is no perfect person in all of the Bible's stories. Every character in Genesis is as flawed as each one of us. ... We recognize in this weird, strange story people who are, like us, deeply and irrevocably human." \*

- Is this idea disturbing or comforting? Have you imagined that heroes in the story of God have to be somehow pure or holy? What changes when they're regular people, capable of feeling and spreading both love and pain? Is the wilderness of loss, confusion, sorrow, pain and general mess more fathomable when you know that God is in the trenches with you?

\* This quote (and the reference for much of this content) is from Rev. Ming Chen Lo Rohrer (Grace) at [faithward.org/women-of-the-bible-study-series/hagar-the-woman-who-named-god/](http://faithward.org/women-of-the-bible-study-series/hagar-the-woman-who-named-god/)