



The First Word

April 2018

First United Methodist Church, Racine

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Easter: Why Celebrate?

JESUS ANSWERED THEM, "DESTROY THIS TEMPLE, AND I WILL RAISE IT UP IN THREE DAYS!" (John 2: 19).

In less than two weeks Christians around the world will be joining their hearts and minds with ours in joyful prayers, praises, worship and fellowship ascribed to our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

WHAT A WONDERFUL EVERNT!

The questions: *what is this "Easter" and why celebrate it?*

Church Historians tell us that "Easter," also known as "Pascha" is a festival celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, described in the New Testament (1Cor. 15:1-57) that occurred on the third day of his burial after his crucifixion on Calvary C30 AD. It marks the culmination of the Passion of Jesus, preceded by Lent, a forty-day period of fast, prayers, and penance.

As to its origin, little is known about Easter Season, even in the Bible. Generally, it is assumed that the name "Easter" originated from a pagan figure called "Eastre" or "Eostre" who was celebrated as the goddess of spring by the Saxons of Northern Europe. Consequently, most of those deeply loved traditions, practices and elements used in observance of "Easter Season" may not be found in the Bible. Some of the prominent Easter Symbols were borrowed or adapted from secular cultural practices. For examples: the Easter bunny is believed to have been introduced to America by the German immigrants who brought their stories of short-tailed creatures called "Osterhase" or "Oschter Haws" who delivers decorated eggs to well-behaved children on Easter Sunday. Other mythical traditions include decorating eggs for Easter that dates back to at least the 13th century according to some sources, the Easter Candy and Easter parade all of which have formed part of this fundamental Christian belief and holiday celebrations.

While it may be true that most of those symbolisms of the Easter Tradition came from pagan practices, it is equally true that all of them point toward the sanity if life- New birth, new life and Hope that result to praise and joyful celebration! This is the very reason for which God sent His Son Jesus into an estranged world so that by giving his on the cross, all who believes might be saved from the power of sin and death penalty. (John 3:16-17). The Easter symbolisms offer and reinforce our faith and beliefs in new life made possible through our Risen Lord and Savior.

Easter Sunday further attests to the truth and reliability of Jesus' response to the Jews who threatened to kill him when he turned over their tables in the temple: **"Destroy this temple, and I will build it in three days!"** (John 2:19). The word **"Temple"** herein referenced is Jesus' own body. As the Apostle Paul puts it: Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? (**1Cor. 3:16-17; 6: 15-20**). Jesus Christ is the first fruit of the resurrection (**1Cor. 15:20**), that reassures all true Christian believers theirs too.

Easter means **"You can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there!"** (Clarence W. Hall).

Death didn't have the final words on Jesus' life and still does not have the final saying on the lives of Jesus' disciples, both then and now, including you and me! Death could not hold Jesus captive in the grave, but eventually Rose on the third day following his excruciating death and burial. Halleluiah, He is Risen and Alive!!

My friends, following forty days of Lenten prayers, penance and fast, Easter brings us new and vibrant life. No matter what your journey has been and where you might be on your walk with Jesus Christ, let not this opportunity for revival and renewal your life and spirit passes you by! **Join the Celebration!** Open your heart to the "Risen Lord and he will surely raise you up no matter how low you might be on your journeys of faith and deed!

A BLESSED and HAPPIER EASTER!

Rev. Jakes

SCRIPTURES AND THEMES – 04/2018

1st Sunday –Easter/ Holy Communion

04/01/2018

Psalms 118: 1-2, 14-24

Acts 10: 34-43

1Corinthians 15: 1-11

Mark 16: 1-8

Theme: The Resurrection: a trustworthy response....

2nd Sunday – Easter - 04/8/2018

Psalms 133: 1ff.

Acts 4: 32-35

1John 1: 1-2:2

John 20: 19-31

Theme: Alive, Well and glorious

3rd Sunday- Easter - 04/15/2018

Psalms 4: 1ff.

Acts 3: 12-19

1John 3: 1-7

Luke 24: 36-48

Theme: The Two Faces of Faith.....

4th Sunday – Easter - 04/22/2018

Psalms 23: 1ff.

Acts 4: 5-12

1John 3:16-24

John 10: 11-18

Theme: Jesus: "The Good Shepherd!"

5th Sunday – Easter - 04/29/2018

Psalms 22: 25-31a

Acts 8: 26-40

1John 4: 7-21

John 15: 1-8

Theme: Jesus: "The True Vine..."

6th Sunday – Easter/Holy Communion

05/06/2018

Psalms 98: 1ff

Acts 10: 44-48

1John 5: 1-6

John 15: 9-17

Theme: Love: an option or a way of life.....

HAPPY BIRTHDAY IN APRIL!!

- 1 - Jeanne Cape
- 2 - Gwenn Pfeiffer
Kelly Castro
- 3 - Fiona Craig
Lyle Meekma
- 4 - Jeanne Whiteside
- 5 - Samantha Fernholz
- 9 - Evelyn Schnaare
- 10 - Betty Oakley
- 14 - Casey Boehm
- 16 - Andy Madsen
- 20 - Rodney Cook
- 23 - Amy Magnuson
- 26 - Gwen Swanson
- 28 - Courtney Johnson
- 29 - Irv Christensen
Rose Pettus
- 30 - Bill Fawcett

ALTAR FLOWERS IN APRIL

All dates are open

FOOD BANK DONATIONS

The "Food Bank Item" for April will be jams and jellies. Bring your donation any time. Here is another fun donation to the food pantry: Donate birthday kits to local food pantries. Put a paper tablecloth, matching napkins and plates, candles, a box of cake mix, and canned frosting inside a disposable baking pan, which goes into an extra-large Ziploc bag. Choose a specific theme or just make it all-inclusive. Each kit is less than \$10. Give a needy person or child a happy birthday!

LOOSE CHANGE OFFERING

FOR APRIL will help send members to one of the Wisconsin United Methodist Camps. Simply place your loose change, or more, in the small brown envelopes found in the pew racks or on the sanctuary tables and

place it in the offering plate.

USHER SCHEDULE

Apr. 1

Jeff Fernholz
August Grulich
Ricky Castro

Apr. 8

Chuck & Jane Bragg
Jan Rosellini

Apr. 15

Roger & Betty Oakley
August Grulich

Apr. 22

Jeff Fernholz
Ricky Castro
Jan Rosellini

Apr. 29

Chuck & Jane Bragg
August Grulich

LOOSE CHANGE OFFERING

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WE NEED YOUR RUMMAGE

NOW!!

The United Methodist Women will sponsor a rummage sale on Saturday, April 21st from 9:00 am - 2:00 pm in the Social Room. We need your help in providing items to sell. Please bring your clean, resalable items to church any time. No clothing, please. Chairperson Lenore Creuziger (633-4637) will also appreciate your offer to help with the **set up on Thursday and Friday at 9:00 am**, at the sale on Saturday and clean up. Contact Lenore or Liza in the office today! Also, the youth group will be selling bakery at the sale so bring

your donations of baked goods on Friday or Saturday morning.



We are very blessed that First Church has in the past been able to provide funds (75% of the registration) for our members to attend one of these camps. We pray this practice will continue – and you can help by making your donation to the Loose Change Offering during April. If you want to know more, check out the Conference camps at www.WIUMCamps.org. Carol Feest will again be directing Grandparent/child camp at Lake Lucerne July 8th – 11th and several of our members are planning to attend.

HOT MEAL PROGRAM

First Church is responsible for the Hot Meal at St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Monday, April 16th. If you can provide a casserole, please sign on the sheets located on the sanctuary tables. Please deliver your casserole to St. Luke's by 4:30 pm on April 16th and thank you for your help with this important outreach ministry.

Dear Easter People,

Our Lord and Savior, “Christ is risen!” Let’s praise and sing halleluiah, glory to God in the highest! As we all know, “Christ is risen” is not just a proclamation of an event that we celebrate on Easter Sunday morning and be done away with, but a Christian mantra and battle cry for Christ’s soldiers of the cross.

“Christ is risen!” Indeed, he is alive and well! Notice the present tense “is” in the proclamation. Christ is and will ever be present with, amongst and by all who truly belief and accept him as personal Lord and Savior. It is his ever-presence that reinvigorates our faith and makes our life more vibrant. **Yes! Christ is alive now, this very moment! Alleluia!**

The importance of Christ’s Resurrection to our journey of faith and deeds cannot be over emphasized. Christ’s Resurrection energized and transformed his first disbelieving, reluctant and fear-gripped disciples into a movement of unstoppable and contagious evangelists that changed the world.

Like the first disciples, let’s allow Christ’s Resurrection to revive our faint faith and transform our spiritual life. For we are called to fearlessly take the gospel, Good-news, to the four corners of the world, beginning with our respective Jerusalem, wherever and whenever that might be. Growing together, sharing, and supporting the cause of our new life are the basic marks of our belief in the Resurrected Lord and Savior and Christian Discipleship. The following are available options: daily prayers and Bible reading, participating in worship services, joining a small spiritual formation group or beginning one, serving the Lord with your gifts of talents, offerings and tithes through your local congregation’s ministries and mission that extend God’s love and care into local, national and global communities in the name of our “Risen Lord.”

Remember, the importance of the Resurrection as a continuing event for today, tomorrow and forever is more powerful and intense as it fulfills the promise of new and endless life. This is Victory over death!! Let’s continue to rededicate ourselves to, and not get weary of sharing this extraordinary news throughout this Easter Season and beyond for the transformation of lives in the name of our Resurrected Lord and Savior, Jesus, “The Christ!”

Christ is Risen! Even Today, yesterday and forever! Hallelujah!!

Easter blessings,

Rev. Jakes

Living Separate and Apart – By Keith Boyette

In this third of four articles addressing efforts by The United Methodist Church's Council of Bishops (COB) to resolve our denomination's irreconcilable differences, we examine the final option still under study by the church's leadership — the "Multi-Branch, One Church Model." The multi-branch approach is an attempt to permit United Methodists to sort themselves out around where they stand on the presenting issues – our sexual ethics, definition of marriage, and ordination standards – while still claiming to be one church. One has to commend the COWF and the COB for ingenuity if nothing else. But the effort has serious flaws.

The [COB described this model](#) as follows: "[It] is grounded in a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services and one Council of Bishops, while also creating different branches that have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization and justice. The five U.S. jurisdictions would be replaced by three connectional conferences, each covering the whole country, based on theology and perspective on LGBTQ ministry (i.e. progressive, contextual, traditional branches). Annual conferences would decide which connectional conference to affiliate with; only local churches who choose a branch other than the one chosen by their annual conference would vote to join another conference."

Both the Commission on a Way Forward (COWF) and the COB have referred to this model as sketch three. As with sketch two (addressed in our [last article](#) in this series) the legislation to implement a multi-branch model has yet to be released, but what we do know about it so far makes it problematic for a number of reasons. At its heart, the multi-branch model seeks to hold the institution of the UM Church together in name only while we live separate and apart in the same house.

First, sketch three will require structural changes in the UM Church and thus will necessitate numerous amendments to the church's constitution. This means for sketch three to be implemented it would have to garner two-thirds of the votes of the delegates at the special called General Conference *and* two-thirds of the votes of all the delegates voting at all the annual conferences. This creates the very real possibility that a majority of delegates would support adoption of the multi-branch model but not enough to secure the two-thirds vote required. It should be noted that there are versions of a multi-branch plan being discussed which would not require constitutional changes and therefore could be adopted by a majority vote. Unfortunately, the COB has not advanced such plans to date.

Second, the multi-branch approach is premised on a belief that, but for our disagreements over our sexual ethics, definition of marriage and ordination standards, the UM Church shares a "unified core that includes shared doctrine and services." As many have noted over the years, the assumption that there is unity around "shared doctrine" is not true. The COWF's mission statement acknowledges the theological differences that exist in the UM Church: "Serious matters of human sexuality and unity are the presenting issues for a deeper conversation that surfaces different ways of interpreting Scripture and theological tradition."

The Wesleyan Covenant Association has consistently maintained that there exist in the UM Church very different understandings of the authority and interpretation of Scripture, of who Jesus is and what it means to be his disciple, of the nature of sin, the way of salvation, and the meaning of sanctification. Despite claims to the contrary, we do not share a doctrinal core. Or, put another way, there are such disparate understandings regarding the role and authority of our doctrinal core that any unity we purportedly have is undermined.

Furthermore, significant constituencies within the UM Church, including the WCA, question the need for and effectiveness of many of our general church boards and agencies. We do not want monies we tithe to the church to be used to advance agendas that do not reflect our theological and missional commitments.

Third, the multi-branch model's continuation of a single Council of Bishops over the various branches is unacceptable. As currently constituted, the Council of Bishops is not representative of the various branches of the church. If a multi-branch model is pursued, many orthodox, evangelical clergy, laity, and congregations could not accept bishops who advance or countenance teachings that run counter to our church's biblically rooted sexual ethics, definition of marriage, and ordination standards. Furthermore, a conservative, evangelical branch will not accept as a bishop one who lives in defiance of these teachings, and who, in fact, could not be ordained according to the standards it would continue to promote, defend, and require of its clergy.

Fourth, the multi-branch model would not resolve the conflict present in the UM Church. We would experience conflict as annual conferences go through the sorting process and further conflict as local churches determine whether they are going to remain with their current annual conference or align with another annual conference in a different branch. The three branches would be at odds with one another. Conflict would be institutionalized in the proposed COB.

Fifth, our witness would be ambiguous. On matters of great import to both church and society a multi-branch model UM Church would send a very confusing message regarding boundaries for sexual expression and the institution of marriage. In one branch, marriage would be taught as being between one man and one woman; in another branch, marriage would be taught as being between two persons; and in still another branch, a *laissez faire* or mixed approach would be adopted. The idea that our church could continue using the term *United* in its name under such a scheme is simply unrealistic. This is not a debate over the color of a church's carpet or its worship styles; it's about God's intended design for human sexuality and the sacred institution of marriage. The WCA has consistently maintained that the differences within the UM Church are irreconcilable. We do not expect others to compromise on their deeply held beliefs and commitments regarding these matters, and we trust the same consideration is extended to us as well.

The COWF and the COB are to be commended for their ingenuity, but lacking substantial modifications, the multi-branch model is unlikely to engender the broad support necessary for passage. One is left with the impression that this model is the equivalent of a Hail Mary desperation pass. It appears to be so committed to preserving institutional unity that it is willing to *institutionalize* the divisions in the church as long as they function under the institution. This is not a plan for a healthy and vibrant church built around core doctrine and core mission, and therefore it would fail to reenergize United Methodists for the challenging days ahead.

Finally, the COWF has consistently stated that an exit ramp should be incorporated into whatever legislative proposal the COB places before the special called General Conference. An exit ramp would allow local churches to leave the denomination with all their property and assets if the plan adopted by the called General Conference is objectionable to them. We note that the COB does not make reference to an exit ramp in discussing sketches two or three. The WCA believes the inclusion of an exit ramp is essential. Following the special called General Conference the UM Church must be freed from this conflict and empowered to move forward with as much unity as possible. We urge the COB to make explicit its commitment to the inclusion of an exit ramp in any legislation proposed. Forcing local congregations to accept whatever plan is adopted would undermine unity and only perpetuate a conflict that has gone on for far too long.

In our next and final article, we will address the work of the WCA in the coming months.

Keith Boyette is president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and an elder in the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church.



Bishop Hee-Soo Jung is pleased to announce the appointment of Tsuker K Yang to the District Superintendency of the North Central District of the Wisconsin Conference effective July 1, 2018. Rev. Yang will follow the Rev. Forrest Wells who, after serving three years in the North Central District, will continue to serve on the cabinet as South East District superintendent, replacing the retiring Rev. Deborah Thompson.

Rev. Tsuker Yang has served the Wisconsin Conference in various appointments and leadership positions since 1991, most recently serving the Palmyra and Pleasant Valley United Methodist Churches. He has coordinated and taught the Hmong Course of Study at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, has worked in partnership with the General Board of Global Ministries in Laos and Vietnam, and served as the Director of our Hmong House of Good News. With his appointment, Bishop Jung states, "I have great hope and excitement for the future ministry in Wisconsin. His amazing journey came into mind for a fresh light; and I offer my thanksgiving to God for his amazing presence and powerful witness. YES, from migrant as refugee to servant leader in our Church, grace abounds! His leadership for new ministry, and his rich multiple cross-racial experiences will be a gift for us."



Tsuker Yang steps into this new role with excitement and passion. "My greatest hope is to see the fruit of the 'Imagine Wisconsin Anew' initiative result in a strong position for growth and congregational vitality. I hope to close the gap between the Annual Conference and the local churches... to make everyone feel a win-win situation for the glory of God. I will engage with pastors and local congregations to be intentional in aligning their ministry with the vision and goals of the Annual Conference as their own, integrating both the discipleship system and congregational vitality initiative."



Forrest Wells moves from the North Central to the South East District to build upon the powerful legacy left by Deborah Thompson. "I celebrate and desire to continue a passionate mercy, justice, and mission focus that Rev. Deborah Thompson has brought. I will continue to work toward building positive, cooperative relationships between congregations, provide training and tools in vital leadership, and develop aggressive strategic plans to launch new ministries for new people that include all people. I am grateful to serve with good leaders on the cabinet and in the Conference, and look forward to continuing those relationships. I am humbled to serve the district from which I was sent forth in ministry from Kenosha: First, and in which I served three congregations, Whitewater: First, Racine: Trinity and Janesville: Cargill. Though my roots are deep in the district, I have much to learn about every clergy and congregation and community within the district. I am excited for the opportunities that surround us, and

that lay ahead in the South East District and the Conference." Bishop Jung said, "After three years of North Central District formation, Forrest will bring much wide and deep, vital, and efficient leadership to the South East District.

Bishop Jung and the entire cabinet celebrate and give thanks to Deborah Thompson for the dedicated and sacrificial leadership she has provided. "I celebrate Deborah Thompson's prophetic and bold leadership for the last six years."

We invite you to join us in wishing Deborah well in her new endeavors as she retires from a job well-done.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Each Sunday

Faith To Life Bible Study	9:00 am
Morning Worship	10:00 am
Fellowship Time	11:15 am
Keith Griffin Pokémon League	1:00 pm
Casa de Dios Worship Service	5:00 pm

Each Monday

OFFICE CLOSED	
Casa de Dios Bible Study	6:30 pm

Each Wednesday

Kiwanis Club Luncheon	Noon
Choir Rehearsal	6:00 pm
Young Adult Dinner & Discussion	7:30 pm

Each Saturday

Sack Lunch Program	Noon
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Sunday, April 1

FFRANC Breakfast	9:00 am
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Saturday, April 7

Controlling Community Violence	9:00 am
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Monday, April 16

Hot Meal at St. Lukes	4:30 pm
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Tuesday April 17

Finance Team Meeting	6:00 pm
Church Council Meeting	7:00 pm

Wednesday, April 18

Youth Set up Rummage Sale	6:00 pm
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Thursday, April 19

Set up Rummage Sale	9:00 am
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Friday, April 20

Set up Rummage Sale	9:00 am
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Saturday, April 21

Rummage & Bake Sale	9:00 am
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HAPPY SPRING!!

United Methodist Women News

UPCOMING DATES

April 7 – Mission Action Day, Mauston UMC.
Themes: Health Care policy and Income Inequality and Racial Justice.

April 21 – Annual Rummage Sale. Items can be brought to the church at any time.

April 27-29 – Women's Retreat at Lake Lucerne Camp and Retreat Center. See the bulletin board in the Fellowship area for workshops and registration forms.

April 28 – Southeast Dist. Spring Enrichment Event, Wauwatosa UMC. Topics: Living as a Covenant Community and Missionary Conferences of the U.S.

May 18-19 Quadrennial UMW Assembly, Columbus Ohio. This is worldwide forum of United Methodist Women who gather to worship and learn more about the needs of women, children and youth in the 21st century. For more information go to www.umwassembly.org2018.

Sack Lunch

Hot Meals at St. Luke's Episcopal Church

More information on these activities is posted in the refreshment area in the back of the church.

The First Word is published monthly by First United Methodist Church

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Office Hours: Tuesday thru Friday, 8:30 - noon

Pastor – Jakes S. Voker

Editor – Liza Michna

If you'd like something in the May newsletter
Please email me or give me a call by April 20th

Thank you!!
Blessings,
Liza

Missions News

1. Tuesday, **April 10, 6:00 pm**-Hosting Mission Group meeting

2. **Thanks to all who support our Northside Food Pantry. The pantry supplies more than just food. We provide a Christian welcome, "listening ears" when someone just needs to talk, and provide a way for the clients to speak or pray with a pastor if needed. Those of us working in the pantry care about our clients and want you to know that these pantries in our city are making a difference. Your contributions and prayers are much appreciated.**

Patti Walker

On June 16-21, our church will be hosting a "Mission Work Team" of 75-110 youth and adults from representative congregations of the Dakota Conference of the United Methodist Church. They will be arriving Saturday June 16, 10 p.m. and staying until Thursday, June 21. They will worship and orient at church on Sunday, work at various mission sites Monday-Thursday, and depart church Thursday to drive to the Dells area Thursday night. They will be using our building as a base for sleeping, eating breakfast, evening worship, and dinner; they will making lunches to take to their work site. Showering facilities have been organized with the YMCA. Their buses will be parked at the hotel where the drivers are staying.

Jeff Cupery from Milwaukee, from the WI VIM committee, will be the contact person for mission project assignments. Plans are in the works for where they may best be useful in Racine. If you, as a church member, has a task that you need help with such as painting, dry wall, ramp, deck building or staining, please let the church know to be included in their plans.

The mission group finances its stay. They are independent because they provide their own "kitchen ladies" to prepare their food and the teams rotate through chores. Our church will provide a catered, evening meal on Sunday, June 17, for our guests to allow us to welcome and get to know these young people. (This will act as a fundraiser for our church, need not yet determined)

More information will be given as to how you can help after a committee meeting on Tuesday, April 10 at 6 o'clock. Your attendance will be welcomed as we work on this mission project for our church.

Your involvement with this project as we share this mission and outreach with our Dakota guests will be much appreciated. God's blessing as we do his will.

Patti Walker
Mission Group Committee chair

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

745 Main Street

Racine, WI 53403-1211

First United Methodist Church

The Vision statement:

- **To provide a community for people to experience God and find inspiration for daily living.**

The Mission statement:

- **To welcome and encourage all to live faithfully through Jesus Christ in ways that impact them and others.**

“A perfect church for imperfect people”