

Dear First Methodist Family,

Easter weekend is knocking on our door in our "Encounters with Christ" message series. This weekend the message is "Jesus and a Paralyzed Man." The following weekend, April 14th, is when my Identical Twin Brother will bring a message called "Worship that Works." That is also Palm Sunday and it will be a great day. Then Easter Sunday will be here! What a great time of the year for the church. We're hoping to fill the balcony this year. I'll stand if you need my seat!

In the early days of the Christian church, as new converts became part of the Christian faith and the message of Jesus spread across the Roman Empire, the early Christians had a greeting for one another. Just as I might say to you, "**Good morning**", and you would reply, "**Good morning to you**," their greeting was "**He is risen**," to which the other replied, "**He is risen, indeed!**"

I include just such a greeting in every Easter morning liturgy. We'll say these words to each other during Easter worship. We'll each bring fresh flowers to place on a rough wooden cross as we experience the transformation of the old rugged cross into a cross that is filled with life. We will shout with the angels "**He is not here, but has risen!**" We will revel in those seven words that have changed the course of history in our world.

What turned the broken and heart sick disciples into courageous and bold kingdom builders? "**He is not here, but has risen!**" The discouraged disciples became strong and confident in their faith. They now knew that God had made Christ stronger than those who sought to silence him. They sang, they rejoiced, they healed, they taught, they preached, and they lived triumphantly. And they did not do these things for only a few days of passing enthusiasm after the resurrection of Christ, but they did them for the rest of their lives. Why? Because "**He is not here, but has risen!**"

But it took more than an event for this to occur. Just observing the event of the resurrection was not enough to turn discouraged disciples into messengers of hope, or to convert disillusioned disciples into proclaimers of the Christian faith. It took more than an event. It took a personal experience with the risen Christ. The **event** had to become an **experience** in order for their lives to be changed.

Easter Sunday is a day we commemorate and celebrate the resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ. Easter this year is on April 21. There will be an Easter service at 10:00 am. (Don't forget to bring a flower for each member of your family and maybe a few extra for our visitors.) The music of the church will be at its high point as the Lenten drama is transformed into an Easter celebration. The flower covered cross will be central to our service. We'll also have an Easter Egg hunt during Sunday School. What a fun and important time for our children. It's a good time to invite your friends and neighbors.

But we have two worship weekends and an important schedule before Easter weekend. We have this weekend and Palm Sunday first. The cross always comes before the crown. We have Holy week with Maundy Thursday Passion and communion on April 18th at 6:30 pm.

"He is not here, but has risen!" He is King of Kings and Lord of Lord's.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigns forever and ever. Amen.

We're also preparing for the arrival of the new (permanent) pastor in July. Matt Bailey and Family will be here this summer and we are busy renovating the parsonage. It is a good time to do the work since the parsonage is empty and it is much needed. If you'd like to help with the renovation cost, there are certain items needed and it would be great if you'd be willing to donate to meet the need. Touch base with the Trustee Chair, Roland Christian, he'll be glad to let you know what items are still needed.

SEE YOU THIS WEEKEND AT THE "ENCOUNTERS WITH CHRIST" PLACE!

Pastor Steve Ramsdell