



First Christian Church
1609 East Ash St. Goldsboro, NC 27530
Church Telephone/Fax: (919) 735-3092 Minister's Cell: (919) 920-4192
Church email: fccgb1609@gmail.com Minister's email: pbziemer@gmail.com

Visit us online at www.firstchristiangoldsboro.org this week for sermon videos, devotional materials, and Holy Week Services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday

Weekly Conference Calls

Sunday at 10:00 AM, Tuesday night at 8:00 PM and Thursday at 2:00 PM. NOTE THAT ON TUESDAY NIGHT, APRIL 14, our Board will be on the Conference call, so we won't have our regular call that night.
Here is all you do: Dial 712-770-5505 and then wait for instructions to enter access code, which is 300904#

Easter Sermon 2020

"Easter Answers and Answering Easter"

It's early Easter morning. Perhaps it looks like some pictures of sunrise we have posted online. But this is different because it is the day we have right now. The Easter which is ours once more. Go out soon to feel and hear and see it again - the crisp promise of the new day that changes everything. Feel the wet dew on your hands as you touch some of the flowers you would have broken to flower the Cross. Perhaps you will make a small cross of broken twigs and flower it. The rest of the

colorful blossoms will stay on their branches. They will continue to grow. As the light rises, look at their color.

When we go out early on Easter morning with those who headed for Jesus' tomb, we re-enact something sacred which can't be spoken, but must be spoken. On this day, we retrace the steps of those who went out early, women with their hands full of spices and their hearts laden with the sickness of grief.

Come again with them and hear the silence broken with some questions which we, like them, long for Easter to answer:

Who will roll the stone away? The Biblical story is rich with accounts of God calling people from despair to hope through stones, *some* inscribed by God's own hand which become sacred commandments shaping the way we relate to God and each other, *some* heaped up to witness all those places and times God showed up to save those facing death in the wilderness and facing life in the land of promise, and *some* even attached on the priest Aaron's sacred vestments to represent God's promise to forgive the sins and brokenness of his people. Sometimes God told the people to bring stones together; sometimes Jesus told them to lay down their stones. Jesus even said he was the cornerstone upon which the living temple is fashioned. Through God's mercy, God's people gathered, arranged and lay down many stones, and each told its own story. But this stone at the tomb? This stone seems harder, colder, heavier than the others. On the cool wetness of that morning, and this, that stone seems immovable but not mute. It seems to scream loudly that death is stronger than life.

Who will roll this stone away? All the faith, all the courage, all the strength they and you and I can muster won't budge that stone. It took courage for these women even to raise this question. Courage because

of the suffering they anticipated they would find on the other side of that rock. If somehow, they could get in, they would do the best they could to clean up death, to dignify it and to give their beloved Messiah his final farewell. It takes courage when your heart is breaking, as many hearts are breaking even now, to prepare for death: prepare the body, prepare the family, prepare the heart. Then suddenly the shocking surprise. The unthinkable happens. The stone is rolled away, and the tomb has been emptied of its inhabitant. They and we do not need to put a mask on death, give it the best face we can, because Jesus is not dead. He is risen!

The silence of our Easter morning is also broken with a second question from Luke 24:5-9: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" In Luke's account, even with the stone rolled away, the women given names here - Mary Magdalene, Johanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women - are confused, for *"when they went in, they did not find the body."*⁴ *While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.*⁵ *The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.*⁶ *Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,*⁷ *that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.'*⁸ *Then they remembered his words,*⁹ *and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest."*

So, why do we seek the living among the dead? Why do we turn down the same dead ends? Why do we perpetuate and even nurture attitudes or behaviors that bring death, not life? Without the transformative power of Easter, we have no power to get outside our heads, to escape addictive and repetitive behaviors that deaden rather than enliven us, or to escape our tendency to sin and so separate ourselves from God, each other and even ourselves. In Mark's account, the women question each other. Here, their conversation partners include angelic beings and the answers to their questions lie not with

them alone but from a Source beyond themselves. They need to hear something other than their own fearful thoughts and so do we. And God brings it: "Remember." Today, as you stand in such fearful places, hear God's Words above the deafening roar of fear and dread: "Remember."

Easter is the time to remember what God told us and what God has done for us. When God remembers, we live. When God remembers his covenantal love for his people, they live (Gen. 9:15); when God remembers the barren, they become fruitful (Gen. 8:1, Gen. 30:22, I Sam. 1:19); when God remembers the enslaved, prophets with ears to hear are called to join God in the great work of liberating them. Easter is God's answer to our fear he will forget us, leave us in our sin, leave us broken, leave us to return to the dust. Easter is God shouting with joy: "I remember! I remember you are dust (Job. 7:7). I remember your sin no more (Is. 15:40, Heb. 8:12). I remember you are mine! Jesus hung on a cross between two thieves also sentenced to death. One mocks Jesus; the other asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. Jesus answers, "This day you will be with me in Paradise." And so, this Easter, remember that God remembers, and that as people of the resurrection, we are to remember his mercy and to bring resurrection hope to those who have never known it or who have known but have forgotten. In John 11 when Jesus arrives at the home of Mary and Martha after their brother Lazarus has died, he asks, "Do you believe in the resurrection?" Jesus will continue to show up in places of deadness to bring life, in relationships that are dead, in people who are dying. As Dorothy Sayers is credited with saying, "Christ did not stop the crucifixion; he rose from the dead." We will not escape physical death. Easter is the good news that while Jesus died, we will not find him dead on Easter morning; we will find him alive! On all those chilly mornings and nights when we think death has the last word, God speaks up. God speaks up and shows up on Easter!

The silence of Easter is also broken by other questions from John 20. In that account, as Mary stands weeping outside the tomb, bending over to look in, two angels, sitting where Jesus had been lying, "one at the head and one at the feet," ask why she is crying. She tells them they have taken Jesus away and she doesn't know where to find him. Just then she turns around and sees a man who repeats the question, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Believing him to be the gardener, she pleads with him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Then ¹⁶Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher)." When he speaks, she recognizes him. Do we? In our faith tradition, we acknowledge that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was present at creation and so in the Garden of Eden. Do we recognize that the keeper of the original garden in paradise shows up on Easter not to return us to some lost innocence, but to restore all of creation to our Creator's heart?

So, why are we weeping? Why are we still entombed in our grief or fear? God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has remembered us and offers us new life. It's time to get up. Right in the middle of COVID19, even when we can't get out, we can get up. Right in the middle of whatever threatens to deaden your body, mind or spirit, get up because it's Easter and you can. As Romans 8 reads, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwells in you." Paul goes on to say, "...you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with

him....[so] "consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us." (Romans 8:11-18).

Easter also has a question for us. Luke goes on to say in verse 11 of chapter 24 that the account of the resurrection seemed to some "an idle tale," and some did not believe them. "But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves, then he went home, amazed at what had happened." Which will it be for us? Will this be a fantastic story we heard about, a bit of tantalizing gossip about some man that cheated death? Will it merely be an idle tale that does not continue to live on in us? Or will the good news of Easter be our good news too? Is it a story that happened to others or a story about what happened to us and for us, and what continues each day to happen to us, for us, between us and God, and among us and others? Is it merely a tale about some great miracle working, charismatic leader a long time ago or the story of the Jesus' power to save us from sin, deadness, and death right here and now? Easter invites us this morning and in the mornings that follow to get up, run back to the tomb, stoop, look in and then run back home and into the world, amazed. So, get up. Run back to that scene! Stoop and continue to look back inside this event and then run away from death into life, inviting others to do the same. Easter is the invitation to replace anguish with amazement. Will we? The story goes that Sir Winston Churchill planned his funeral which would be held at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. A bugler was to take his place in the dome of the cathedral to play the final benediction. At the end of the actual service, the bugler began the mournful "Taps," *"Day is done. Gone the sun. From the lake. From the hill. From the sky. All is well. Safely rest. God is nigh."*

Then came the surprise. After a pause, following Churchill's instructions, he broke out with a round of "Reveille." *"It's time to get up. It's time to get up. It's time to get up in the morning!"*

On this Easter morning, don't live in your head. Don't live in your distracted feelings. Don't live in the past. Don't live in the future. Live every moment in the power of God's ever present and ever vibrant love and mercy. In John 11, Jesus proclaims not "I *will* be the resurrection one day." He proclaims, "I *am* the resurrection and the life." For in remembering us, God "re-members" us today. Right now. God brings us together as members of one body, with Christ as the head.

So, go out soon to feel and hear and see and be present in it again - the crisp promise of this new day that changes everything. The stone has been rolled away. The tomb is empty, so don't crawl back in looking for the living among the dead. Instead, get up and live by him, through him and for him and others. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! We can start over! Grow, flower, bear fruit and flourish in him! Because of Easter, we who could never get up, have been raised up to live new lives, transformed by this unspeakable hope which we must nevertheless speak about and live out through this power and love we never saw coming. Hallelujah! He is risen and comes to raise us. May it be so.





Prayers of the Parish: Gracious God, we praise you for the resurrection! We come with joy to proclaim, "Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!" We ask you to heal those who are sick, recovering, awaiting treatments, waiting for test results. Let us pray to the Lord, remembering the following and our unspoken requests:

Grace Price, Eloise Kleinert, Mary Ethel Lewis, Kathy and G. A. Spain, June Anderson, Willie and Faye Rogers, Rick Rogers (Faye & Willie Rogers' son), John and Becky Selzer, Teenie Wilson, Rebecca Daniels, Mary Ellen Ham, Lorraine Loch, Val Watkins (Brantley's sister-in-law), the Spain's great granddaughter Katie, Molly McEldowney (Sharon Jones' daughter) and her brother, David Reynolds, Robert Strader (June Anderson's son-in-law), Jodie Hudson, Eddie Stewart, Linda Hilburn, Lee Summerlin, Gary Bartlett, Bill Smith, Gordon Aycock (friend of June Anderson), Chuck Allen, and the Kleinert Family,

We ask that you keep us safe from COVID 19 and protect those who have lost their jobs or are facing other challenges associated with this. For these, let us pray to the Lord. We ask for wisdom and governance for such a time and for those who make decisions that affect so many - our own government leaders, CDC, WHO, and support agencies. For these, let us pray to the Lord. We ask you hear the requests of all our hearts, spoken and unspoken, (PLEASE name your own at home) and we ask all according to your will, covered by your grace and mercy and in the Name of Jesus, Amen.

Communion (You may pick up individual communion packs at the entry table at the parking lot entrance Mondays from 10 to 12 or Tuesdays from 10 to 12 or use your own bread and juice at home. You may also drop off your offerings at that time)

Communion Meditation: The angelic figures at the tomb called the women to "remember what Jesus told them." Throughout the world today, even as you and I will not gather around the one physical Table of the Lord, we will gather around the Spiritual Table. As we gather, we will remember tables hewn from all kinds of wood with these words, "Do This In Remembrance." Easter is the time to remember what God told us and what God has done for us. When God remembers, we live.

Preparing the Lord's Table with Our Offerings - *In this time we are apart, please remember to share your offerings as regularly as you can by dropping them by the church office from 10 to 12 on Monday or Tuesday of each week, or by calling Wanda for another time, or by mailing in. Wanda will make weekly deposits each week during this time on Wednesday afternoons.*

Words of Institution - On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my Body broken for you. Eat this in remembrance of me." (COMMUNE) In the same manner after supper, Jesus took the Cup and when he had blessed it, he gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my blood of a new covenant, poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink it in remembrance of him." (COMMUNE)

Benediction Prayer: Go in peace, go in safety, go in trust, go in grace. Christ is risen! Get up through the power of the Resurrected Lord and go live in, through and for In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Announcements and Calendar

Board Meeting via Conference Call number on Tuesday, April 14, 2020 at 8:00 PM.

Elders Meeting via Conference Call number on Thursday, April 16, 2020 at 7:00 PM

How will we worship together?

A printed copy of our weekly Worship Service like this will be emailed to those who have sent in email addresses. Those without email may pick up from Church mailbox in parking area after 12 noon on Saturday prior to the Sunday service. Our shut-ins or others not able to get out will receive by mail. All services will be posted by video on our website at www.firstchristiangoldsboro.org.





Please remember the church in your offerings. You may drop by church office Monday and Tuesday from 10 to 12, mail in, or call church office to arrange with Wanda another time. You are also invited to give to our special mission offering this month, our Easter Offering.

Easter Service to feature General Minister and President

Disciples online Easter service will feature Rev. Terri Hord Owens as speaker. See (Brim Project) Disciples YouTube channel or individually:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qagRjCLv5g&t=26s> Communion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbKhIOSCBRE&feature=youtu.be> Music

<http://www.brimproject.com/index.html> Reimagining a New World

Easter Worship Resources available at Disciples YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbWb4i1jf6XOHmTvdICTjHg>

