



JAMESTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

411 Liberty Street, Jamestown, PA 16134

(724)932-2101

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April 23, 2020

Dear JPC family and friends,

Thank you for the many constructive suggestions and positive comments concerning these weekly communication letters and the worship services we have begun posting on the church web site. Your feedback has been such an encouragement as we strive to stay as connected as possible during these challenging times.

You may be aware that Governor Wolf has just announced a three-phase plan to provide some easing of COVID-19 restrictions on individuals and businesses. Restrictions would be eased on a county-by-county basis, beginning with areas of Pennsylvania that have been lightly impacted by the virus. This is encouraging news! Please pray for the Session as we seek to discern how the governor's three-phase plan will apply to our community, and how soon we may be able to return to regular worship services and other gatherings. Until we can do that in a prudent way, we will continue to send out weekly worship materials and other updates.

- The pre-recorded worship services have been very well received and can be accessed through the church web site.
- Thank you to everyone who took part in the chicken-and-biscuit supper last Saturday. A total of \$650 in donations was received and will go to benefit the Jamestown Food Pantry and healthy snack Backpack program.
- On Saturday May 2nd there will be another Saturday Supper featuring pasta, salad and dessert, by take-out with pickup times starting at 4:30. Limited delivery may be arranged for those who are homebound. Orders must be called in advance to the church office (724-932-2101).
- Yes, the Nursery School is doing a Spring Flower Sale again this year! Please see the enclosed materials for further information.

Yours in the love of Christ,

Pastor Sue

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

A special thanks to Pastor Sue, Cindy Loveridge, Janeen Mihoci, Susan and Dale Anderson and Jarron Mihoci for their time and dedication to our on-line worship services!

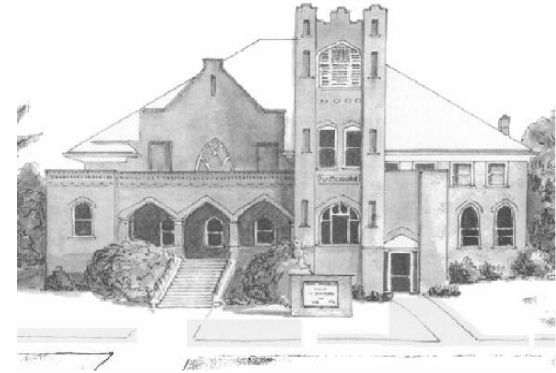
Linda Kappelt has made several masks that she has offered to anyone who needs one. They are located on the pew across from the church office. Thank you, Linda, for helping us to stay safe and healthy

For the next few weeks, Linda Pinney will be working on site (that is, at the church) on Monday afternoons and Thursday mornings. On Tuesday morning, and Wednesday and Friday afternoons, she will work from home. Windstream has activated call forwarding from the church so she can pick up any phone calls to the church office. She can also check EMail and voice mail remotely.

Because we miss you – we would like to include a photo collage on our website of all the folks in our congregation. Please forward a photo of you and/or your family to Janeen Mihoci by text or by email: 724-456-9368 or jnj900@windstream.net (No names will be used on the website). Any questions, please feel free to contact Janeen.

Happy Birthday!

04/26 Amanda College	05/03 Samantha Stevenson
04/27 Phyllis Smith	05/03 Sara Stevenson
04/27 Nancy White	05/04 Sue Courtney
04/28 Cindy Loveridge	05/06 Alicia Robbins
04/30 Michael Costa	05/10 Dave Volosin



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“Worshipping Together ... Even While Apart”

A Resource for Worship at Home
Third Sunday of Easter – April 26, 2020

To prepare our hearts and minds for worship, let us take a few moments in silent prayer.

Call to Worship: *(based on Revelation 4:8,11)*

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,

Who was, and is, and is to come!

Let all creation bow before His throne.

The Lord our God created all things; He alone is worthy to receive all glory and honor and power and praise. Come! let us worship the Lord!

Closing Refrain: “He is Lord” #234

“Like Waking Up From a Dream”

Luke 24: 13-35

The New Testament tells us that after Jesus was resurrected he was seen by many different people in different places, over a period of 40 days, before he ascended into heaven. This morning we look at one particular meeting that took place in the afternoon of the day Jesus’ tomb was found empty. Listen now to the beginning of that encounter, as it is found in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 24, verses 13 through 24.

“Now that same day two of his followers were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked together and discussed these things, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him: “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?” “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what’s more, it is now the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive! Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women said ... but him they did not see.”

The Gospels tell us quite a lot about some of the people Jesus appeared to -- like Mary Magdalene and Peter and James and John. But this is the only place in Scripture where Cleopas is mentioned. Who the other person is, we are never told. It may have been Cleopas’ wife or another family member, because – as we will learn – they lived in the same house in Emmaus. But then ... we don’t know much about Emmaus. Scholars disagree about its size and location. Luke tells us it was seven miles from Jerusalem, but was it north? South? East or West? We simply do not know.

Here are a few things we DO know:

- The two considered themselves close followers of Jesus – part of the “Jesus movement.” They called the women “our women” and the apostles “our companions”
- They had *hoped* that Jesus was to be Israel’s redeemer, the promised Messiah -- a hope which seemed to end with Jesus’ death;

- Then just a few hours earlier, they heard confusing news about Jesus' tomb being empty, about the angels, and that today was somehow significant as the "third day."

Beyond this, Luke tells us almost nothing about these two: not their age or the kind of work they did or their status in life; not even their relationship to one another. They could be *anybody*. And maybe that's the point. They could be *any* disciples, could be *any one of us*. Luke gives us just enough information to put ourselves in their shoes.

We have one big advantage, of course: we know "the rest of the story." But at that point, all *they* knew was that Jesus had been arrested, crucified, died and was buried.

Well, there was that somewhat creepy mystery of the empty tomb, but Cleopas and his friend weren't sticking around Jerusalem to find out the answer to that puzzle. No; they were on their way to Emmaus, back to familiar surroundings and the established patterns of daily life. But that doesn't mean they could forget what happened in the past few days -- couldn't just put it behind them. Instead, they kept going over and over it again, trying to make sense of things. Don't we do that, too, when we're confused? When we're distressed and hurting? When we're trying to get a grip on a world that seems suddenly out of control?

As they talked, a stranger began to walk along with them. Luke tells us it was Jesus, their teacher, and yet – for some unexplained reason – they were "kept" from recognizing him. The stranger had heard their discussion and asked them to explain. Soon they were pouring out their sad story. Let's finish out the passage now. Luke 24:25-35. I'm going to paraphrase, so you will want to read the text later for yourselves.

Cleopas and his companion explained that the prophet Jesus of Nazareth had been killed, but now on the third day his tomb was empty and no one knew why. Then the stranger chided them, saying "Don't you realize what's going on? Didn't the prophets say the Messiah would suffer in this way before coming into his glory?" Then, beginning with Moses, he began to explain all the things the Scriptures said about himself. Meanwhile, the three of them kept walking toward the village of Emmaus. When they arrived, Jesus acted as if he was going to continue traveling alone. But the two urged him to stay the night with them. It was getting late, and the road could be dangerous, so Jesus agreed to stay. When they sat down for the evening meal the strangest thing happened. Even though he was a guest in their home, it was Jesus who picked up the loaf of bread to serve the others. He blessed the bread, and he broke it and began to hand it to them. Simple, ordinary movements they had seen him make, time and time again.

It was then ... as they watched that familiar gesture – it was then that their eyes were opened and they recognized the Risen Lord.

Then ... Jesus vanished. Disappeared! Yet they were filled with great joy, because they knew beyond any doubt JESUS WAS ALIVE! It was like waking from a nightmare to

discover you are safe after all. The two companions were so excited that even though night had fallen, despite how tired they must have been, they ran the whole way back to Jerusalem. When they got there, they found the other disciples already gathered together, saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen!” Then Cleopas and his friend told about the stranger on the road, and how they recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Thus ends our passage from the Gospel of Luke.

The wonderful message of this encounter with Jesus, is that Jesus doesn’t turn away from us when we are feeling sad and discouraged. He comes to us, and walks beside us ... and, if we are willing to listen, through the Holy Spirit he will help us to understand that even when life is terribly hard, God is faithful and good. And when we invite Jesus to come in, to abide with us, we discover that he has been with us, waiting for us to recognize his presence, loving us all along.

Singer/songwriter Keith Green wrote a song in which he described a life without Christ, as being like the “longest dream” (and he wasn’t talking about a pleasant dream, either). This is what he says: Like a foolish dreamer trying to build a highway to the sky,

All my hopes kept tumbling down and I never knew just why.

Until the day when you pulled away the clouds
that hung like curtains on my eyes.

Well, I’ve been blind for all these years though I thought I was so wise.

But then – you took me by surprise.

Like waking up from the longest dream, how real it seemed ...

Until your love broke through; until your love broke through.

Keith Green doesn’t say that all his earthly hopes were suddenly fulfilled. Instead, God opened his eyes to what is truly important, truly precious, truly lasting. God’s love “broke through.” God never intended for us to go through life as though we were in some kind of bad dream. Jesus came and died and rose again so that we, receiving his sacrifice for our sake, can wake into new life, true life, as his beloved children.

Life can be hard ... but God is ALWAYS good. So when real troubles bring confusion, sorrow and pain – and they will, yes, sometimes they will – do not despair. Instead, let your heart be warmed and your spirit lifted, again and again and again, by what is truly important, truly lasting. Friends, the Lord will never leave you nor forsake you. And nothing in all creation can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen? Amen.