

Dear Members of the Body of Christ,

The Fifth Sunday of Lent is April 2<sup>nd</sup> and then we enter the week of the passion beginning with Palm Sunday on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Welcome to the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

During Holy Week we will remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the most holy days in the Christian year. Oh much fuss surrounds Christmas, some folks get more stirred up about Christmas, but it is the death and resurrection of Jesus, not his birth, that sets him apart from all humans.

We Lutherans take Holy Week very seriously because we believe in the Theology of the Cross. Luther explained that we know God only in the humiliation and passion of Jesus Christ. That is why Palm Sunday begins with a joyful celebration and concludes very soberly as we prepare for the week of the Passion of Jesus. In remembrance of the passion, we will worship on Wednesday, April 5<sup>th</sup> with the final Lenten season soup supper and Taize service at English Lutheran. We will gather on Maundy Thursday to remember the Last Supper, we will sit at the cross on Good Friday. We will gather on Easter Sunday to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus. Why all the fuss? Because we believe that through his death, Jesus forgives our sins and through his resurrection, we receive eternal life. We are not reenacting these events, but gather in worship to prayerfully remember who saves us from our sinful nature and claims us forever.

Maybe you have noticed that there are many children's books about the Easter Bunny but few books about the death and resurrection of Jesus. We humans like to avoid or ignore the unpleasant but we Christians are there as people suffer. It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to be present for others during unpleasant times. I hope you search diligently to locate Easter books that include the death as well as the resurrection of Our Lord for the young ones in your lives.

The sign outside Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Northside Pittsburgh boldly announces **Visitors expected!** As the ministers of St. Paul Lutheran, I hope you expect visitors at worship. I hope you invite others for worship. I hope you provide hospitality to the strangers who enter our doors. Now is the time to return to the Lord, Now is the time to invite family and friends. Now is the time to invite lapsed members of this congregation. Members will prepare to read lessons, hand out bulletins, welcome those who arrive at worship, distribute the holy meal. All of this preparation is because we expect worshippers, including visitors, to be present with us during Holy Week and Easter.



One Easter story, recorded in Luke, is the account of two who were walking to the village of Emmaus. Jesus joined them on their journey as the two told the astonishing account reported by some women: **Jesus is alive! He lives!** These disciples still did not recognize Jesus, but invited Jesus to join them for a meal and a night's rest. As a result of **inviting the stranger**, the two disciples soon recognized the presence of our Lord in their midst. We are compelled to invite others to hear the good news by participation in worship so that all the world can come to know and experience the presence of Jesus.

We at St. Paul are preparing to include you and your family, your friends, neighbors and whomever else you invite to join us for this most holy week. Invite others, include them, let them know that Jesus saves, Jesus forgives, Jesus lives, Jesus loves.

I look forward to worshipping with you in the days ahead.

Shalom,

*Pastor Bev*



Palm Sunday 10:15 – April 9. Join us for the procession of palms in Strobel Hall.

Maundy Thursday Service with Holy Communion 7:00 PM on April 13.

Good Friday Service of Light and Darkness 7:00 PM on April 14.

Easter Sunday, April 16 – No Sunday School – Worship at 10:15 AM.

## **Easter lifts the fog**

A friend stood one day where he could view the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. At first it was completely shrouded in early morning fog. But as the sun rose, the fog lifted between the upright piers of the bridge, leaving the land anchors still unseen.

Is it not so with life? We see only what is between the great piers called birth and death. But Easter lifts the fog from both. Easter is the time when we see more completely the anchorages that sustain life.

—George Mecklenberg

