

Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Olivia Bengtson, 10th grade

My favorite Easter activity is the egg hunt in the front yard of the church. The weather starts to get warmer so kids can do Sunday School outside. The songs during the service become much more upbeat and happy, so the services are encouraging!

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Toren Miller, 7th grade

I remember the Maundy Thursday service and how they take everything off the altar and dim the lights and everyone walks out quietly out of the church. It is so different because it is quiet and dark, and I usually see the church very bright and full of music. I like that it is different than the usual services.

Friday, February 19, 2021

Nicholas Dreier, 9th grade

My favorite Easter memory is hunting eggs and hanging out with my cousins and family.

Saturday, February 20, 2021

Amy Dreier, mother to youth grouper Nicholas Dreier

My favorite Easter memory is that my mom would buy my sister and I those great big straw colored floppy hats and we would wear them. My sister was 8 years older than me and I don't think she was very thrilled about it, but I loved them and loved dressing like her. We would always go to church and come home and have a big Easter egg hunt and then a big meal of ham and scalloped potatoes.

Sunday, February 21, 2021

Pastor Chris Deines

We begin this season on Lent with a term that I think would be good to unpack. It is found in the text today from the Gospel of Mark 1:9-15. Like many words in the Christian faith, the term "Kingdom of God" is abstract in its meaning. As Barbara Brown Taylor says about these theological terms, "They have no weight, no smell, no shape, no temperature, no direct reference for lived experience. "

Fourteen times in Mark's Gospel the term "Kingdom of God" is used. So what is the "Kingdom of God"? The book Crazy Talk, a theological term dictionary, defines "Kingdom of God" as "a time that hasn't happened yet but already has begun, a place that doesn't exist yet but where you already live." As Yoda might have said, "Be confused; be very confused." The Kingdom of God refers to the time and place where God's will is done.

What do you think would be a good definition of the Kingdom of God? I'll start. The Kingdom of God is love totally actualized.

Monday, February 22, 2021

Ty Miller, 12th grade

One of my favorite Easter memories was serving the Easter brunch for confirmation. It was nice to see and talk to everyone in our church.

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Trayton Miller, 11th grade

I love the new beginnings that come with Easter.

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Sawyer Lysell-Alkire, 9th grade

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Some things I did as a child, I still enjoy as a teenager. At Easter, I still like to hunt eggs, especially if there is candy and money in the eggs. As I get older, I still enjoy playing video games. But being in high school, I have learned that I need to spend more time on schoolwork, and I have to work harder to stay organized than I did as a child. As I get older my parents also expect me to do more around the house. Alot of times I wish I was younger because it was easier.

Thursday, February 25, 2021

Ericka Lysell, youth group leader at Bethany Lutheran Church
Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on
your own understanding.

This year has definitely been a struggle in so many different ways. We have all doubted our faith at times when faced with challenges. I have found that while many things have not been the way I hoped, I have found some silver linings in 2020. I miss church in person, but every Sunday I get to watch with my Granda Warren and he greets me with a Dr. Pepper. It's been hard not getting to have in person visits with friends that live far away, but zoom has given us an opportunity to get together regularly. Trusting in the Lord is something that we all should do, whether things are going well in life or if we are struggling, although while struggling is much more difficult.

Friday, February 26, 2021

Phillip Hett, father to youth grouper Jillian Hett

Matthew 28:5-6 The angel said to the woman. "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."

Do not be afraid. This is the Easter story found in Matthew 28. Two women, Mary Magdalene and another woman known simply as the other Mary, went to the tomb of Jesus, but Jesus was not there. An angel of the Lord had rolled back the stone that covered the tomb and sat on it. The book of Matthew says his appearance was like lighting and his clothes were white as snow. Imagine the shock of the women that Easter morning. They came expecting to see a body but instead found an empty tomb. "Do not be afraid," the angel said. Fear is a presence in our lives. We have all felt its grip at some time or another. Fear can stifle us and can hold us back. Fear can keep us from reaching our goals and our dreams. Fear can even immobilize our very thoughts and words. When it comes to proclaiming the good news of Jesus, we are not immune to the restraints of fear. It can disable us and thwart our every effort. When it comes to proclaiming the good news of Christ, what fears are keeping you back?

An even greater question is how do we combat those fears? At the empty tomb, the women were gripped with fear and were in danger of its crippling effect. But the angel gave them a reason not to fear. The angel said, "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said." He has risen! When fear holds you back, take comfort and strength in the Risen Savior. He has risen! When you have doubts, when you struggle to walk the Christian faith, when even the very thought of mentioning the name of Jesus scares you, take comfort and strength in Christ alone. He has risen! With the risen Christ by your side you can do all things in his name. Do not be afraid!

Saturday, February 27, 2021

Jessica Peck, mother to youth groupers Clara, Marteina and Whitley McElroy from her youth group devotional in 1991.

Psalms 55:16 But I call upon God, and the Lord will save me.

I believe this is true. If you ask, He will answer you and help you as much as He can.

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Pastor Amy Truhe

"No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ... I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

Genesis 17: 5 & 7

Lent is the time when changes that are internal and deep are asked to be made. Here, God has changed the name of God's faithful servant—Abram to Abraham. With this change, God makes a promise that God will always be the God to Abraham and his offspring.

While I know it is totally God's way to make things new, while I know that love is always creative in a good way, this name change is really drastic. The idea that Abram is to be known differently, called something new, is really a big change. And, as is God's way, with the change comes a promise. God will not leave us to fend for ourselves. God promises to be God, our God, everlasting. No matter the changes and challenges of life, God is our God.

Monday, March 1, 2021

Rachel Brunsell McCullick, mother to youth grouper Sara McCullick from her youth group devotional in 1987.

Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Don't do something because it will be good for you- do it so it helps someone else. Don't just think of yourself, think of others. Try looking at things through other's eyes.

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Scott Brunsell, father to youth groupers Conner, Ayla Smith Bolan and Ava Brunsell from his youth group devotional in 1990.

Ezekiel 43:2 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east; and the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shoe with his glory.

This means the coming of God will be glorious. All will celebrate, and there will be music. The earth will shine with the glory of his presence. Though we may not see this, we must lead our lives as though he will be here tomorrow.

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Kenny Bengtson, father to youth grouper Olivia Bengtson from his youth group devotional in 1986.

"The soldiers made a crown out of thorrny branches and put it on his head; then they put a purple robe on him."

A crown was used by kings, but they made a crown of thorns for Jesus. He was mocked and made fun of. It hurt Jesus very much!

Thursday, March 4, 2021

Alexa (Peterson) Reed, mother to youth groupers Tytus and Taytum Reed from her youth group devotional in 1992.

Mark 2:2-7 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

This means to me that the Sabbath day was made for man to relax, worship God and take it easy. Sabbath day was not made for just another working day for man. The God given purpose of Sabbath is a day intended for man for his spiritual, mental, and physical restoration.

Friday, March 5, 2021

Margo Lysell, mother to youth grouper Haven Lysell from her youth group devotional in 1992.

Psalm 18:1-3 "I love you, O Lord, my strength." The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so I shall be saved from enemies.

God is our security; his strength is like a rock. He will praise him for my deliverance by praising and singing.

Saturday, March 6, 2021

James Roraback, father to youth grouper Mary Roraback from his youth group devotional in 1995.

Isaiah 40:31 "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint."

All those that serve God are helped by God and will feel better.

Sunday, March 7, 2021

Pastor Chris Deines

Jesus put together a whip out of strips of leather and chased them out of the Temple, stampeding the sheep and cattle, upending the tables of the loan sharks, spilling coins left and right. He told the dove merchants, "Get your things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a shopping mall!" John 2:15-17 MSG

I wonder, hypothetically, what practices we have today in which Jesus would turn the tables. I think it is easy to slip into the judgment seat as we read this text. But this text makes me uneasy. It is more likely we would be the targets of Jesus' actions because as sinners who are in need of God's grace, we have made the church a means to our own ends. Paul Shupe says, "Jesus with the whip and cord".... shows us that "Jesus speaks for us, yes, and with us, but also to us, and even against us." We are comforted and convicted in this passage as ones who sit on the seat of the judgment throne and on the temple floor with coins and tables askew. We as followers of Christ reflect and pray about the "ministry" we do in Jesus' name. For too often what is righteous often becomes self-righteous and mirrors the values of the world, not the one we follow. Jesus' temple cleansing means to repent and return to the ways of God, away from our own.

Monday, March 8, 2021

Ericka Lysell, mother to youth grouper Sawyer Lysell-Alkire from her youth group devotional in 1992.

Psalm 123:1-2 Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved; they abide forever.

Your faith in God is like a mountain, it is very strong, and you cannot move it. A mountain is here forever, just as your love for God should also remain here forever.

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Rebecca (Norlin) VanDerWege, mother to youth grouper Avery VanDerWege from her youth group devotional in 1986.

Psalms 116: 1-4 I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he inclined his ear to me. Therefore, I will call on him as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the Lord 'O Lord, I beseech thee save my life."

Sometimes when I'm depressed or have a problem, I feel alone. I'm not though, because God is always with me. Last year when my Grandmother died, I felt deserted and cheated. Then I thought, God is with me always. I can talk to God any time and be comforted. He will always listen to our requests and comfort our pains.

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Avery VanDerWege, 11h grade

Easter is one of my favorite holidays, mainly because of the traditions that come with it. Every year when we were little, my sister Morgan and I would get to go shopping to pick out an Easter dress. Sometimes matching, sometimes not. Then each year on Easter morning we go to church and participate in the egg hunt and breakfast. After the service, we head over across the street to my Grandma and Grandpa Norlin's for lunch. We're usually welcomed with Easter treats purchased from local Lindsborg stores. In the evening, my family heads to my Aunt Eva's (Van Der Wege side) house in Smolan. We enjoy our traditional meal of sloppy joes and then walk down the block to the Smolan park to anxiously await the call that the Easter bunny has came. When we get back to the

house, all of us cousins have an Easter egg hunt in the yard outside. Most likely you'll get candy or jelly beans, but if you're really lucky... you may get a couple quarters. However, my most favorite part about Easter is the hope and joy that seems to fill everyone—young and old.

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Larry Van Der Wege, father to youth grouper Avery VanDerWege

As somebody who grew up in a non-denominational Christian church, observing Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent was new to me. Easter was very big in our church and family but the season leading up to it wasn't ever discussed. One of the many things I have enjoyed about becoming a Lutheran with my marriage to Rebecca has been the season of Lent.

The Ash Wednesday service is always very moving to me. The recognition of the fact that from dust we are formed and to dust we will return is profound. It also prepares our hearts and minds for what is to come. At the same time, I must confess that I haven't ever "given up" anything for Lent. I worry that if I did, it would be more of a "check the box" type of thing and wouldn't fulfill its purpose. I truly admire those in our church who faithfully devote the time and attention to all aspects of the Lenten season. I feel I need to focus my efforts on less and not more, so the Lenten and Sunday services leading up to Easter receive the attention and work to prepare my heart and mind. Holden Evening Prayer and the other service liturgies are powerful.

I hope I'm not committing blasphemy and opening myself up to harsh judgement. Even as I approach middle age, I continue to grow in my faith and still have much room for improvement. That's what Lent is about and the blessed grace of Christ continues to help me develop during my faith journey.

Friday, March 12, 2021

Rhea Mader, mother to Olivia Mader

When I come to the alter waiting for the pastor to place the cross of ashes on my forehead I am humbled by the pronouncing "you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Each time I reflect on my birth and baptism, neither of which I remember. My memory also easily flashes to the baptism of my children and witnessing them being marked with the cross of Christ.

One day I will die. One day my children will die. Our bodies will return to dust; yet, I have faith in the eternal love of God and rejoice in the gift we have of experiencing life in a body. When we are born we take our first breath in. When we die we breathe our last breath out. Everything in between is what we call life. Lent gives me the time to reflect on what it means to live awake knowing God.

With the births of two of my four children, I was blessed to witness the first breath in. I was there when they were marked with the cross of Christ. When the end of my life comes, I would be honored to have them there with me to witness my last breath out, knowing that I also have been marked with the cross of Christ and I'm forever held in the loving arms of God.

Memento, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris. Remember, that thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return.

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Olivia Mader, 10th grade

My favorite memories of Easter are going to my grandma and grandpa's farm. We begin Easter Sunday by going to church with our family in town. My grandma invites a bunch of people like my other grandma and grandpa and all my aunts, uncles, and cousins

from the other side of my family. She also invites some neighbors and my other aunts and uncles families. We have way too much food and lots of good desert. In the afternoon some of my aunts and uncles go hide eggs and other treats all around the farm. Then we all go hunt eggs and treats. Even the adults. My grandma said she usually finds eggs in the summer when she is gardening and it makes her smile.

Dear God, let us love you with all our hearts, just as you love us with all your hearts. Amen.

Sunday, March 14, 2021

Pastor Amy Truhe

"The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." 6Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ... 8And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." 9So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live." ~Numbers 5-6, 8-9

What would you do to survive a plague? What would you do to survive a pandemic? Here in the Old Testament, before Jesus came to fulfull the law, the people got tired of the same ol' food as they wandered in the wilderness. For forty years, they had the same food EVERY SINGLE DAY. 40. Years. They were grumpy. They told God they were grumpy and they complained to Moses. God responded like an unhappy parent and send serpents among them to chill them out. The serpents bit the people and they died. So they went to Moses and asked Moses to tell God they were sorry,

asking God to get rid of the serpents. And God responded, "Put one of those serpents on a pole and if they look at it, they will live." We do not know how many people thought that was a stupid fix for the poison of the serpents. We do not know if the people talked about hurting their necks as they looked up or if they thought that only the weak people would die from the serpent's poison. We DO know that those who simply looked at that serpent lived.

God's ways become difficult for us when we want to believe that we are in control, that we need more than we have but what we have is not in a manner we like or want or remember from another time. God always has a simple solution to our challenges. Look to God. Offer your heart and your ear to God. God will always offer a way out.

Monday, March 15, 2021

Ceeley Friesen, 7th grader

One of our favorite Easter traditions is to retell the story of Easter using Resurrection Eggs. My mom bought these eggs and book for us to use each year leading up to Easter. Each symbol in the eggs tell an important part of the Easter Story. We started it when I was small, but I still enjoy using them to this day to remind me why we celebrate Easter. The week leading up to Easter is called The Holy Week (or Passion Week) and includes Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday (The last Supper) and Good Friday. Easter is a very important date to remember that Jesus fulfilled a prophecy, and through his death has given the gift of eternal life in Heaven to those who believe in his death and resurrection.

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

Torsten Nelson, 8th grade

I like going to church, and learning about Jesus's life and how

he gave it up for us. One special memory that means a lot to me is when we watch An Easter Carol (Veggietales) together. It tells about Mr. Nezzer, who thought Easter was about eggs and candy. He was visited by an angel that sang a beautiful song, "Hope's Song". She shares Jesus' story. Mr. Nezzer finds out the true meaning of Easter. These are things that help me remember the true meaning of Easter.

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Jeanne Lucas

Ash Wednesday and Lent have always been my favorite time in the Christian year. There's something holy about getting ashes, and I love the silence of the service and the meaning behind it. days. It seems to me that is the way we should live for each other. Knowing where we come from and where we will go is powerful.

In honor of Jesus's 40 day fast in the desert, and his victory over temptation, I always have tried to give something up. But recently, I have started getting rid of things. The last two years I have gotten rid of 40 things in my house that I didn't really need anymore. That seems to me a very small example of what life should be. Getting rid of the extra, and focusing on what is important, has meant a great deal to me.

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Gabe House, 8th grade

Last Easter I came home and I went around my yard and grabbed a lot of eggs. Of course they were plastic, but it was still fun. I got lots of candy, mostly snickers but still good.

Friday, March 19, 2021

Jodie Miller, mother to Ty, Treyton and Toren Miller

The hymns have always been my favorite part of service but that is especially true at Easter. By far, the most meaningful service for me as a Christian is the Palm Sunday service. For a number of years, Jim Ruble sang the hymn "Were you there" as part of this service and it gave me goosebumps every time. You can't help but put yourself in the context of the song and in doing so feel the magnitude of the event, and acknowledge the great sacrifice that was made for us all!

Saturday, March 20, 2021

Haven Lysell, 11th grade

Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

My Mom picked this verse out for me during confirmation. She's tried to tell me this basic thing my whole life. We have to keep doing good and being good people even in tough situations and when we've had enough, because eventually sometimes when we least expect it, those good things and actions will add up to something big for us or someone else even if we can't see it. In my sports, school, and in my life, I try to remember to always do good because of it. It's a good thing to remember, because we do all get tired and worn down sometimes, but keep doing the good, because the Bible has told us that it'll make a big difference in the world some day for ourselves and others.

My favorite thing about Easter at church was always the big Easter egg hunts with the other kids and the fun we would have that Sunday morning together.

Sunday, March 21, 2021

Pastor Chris Deines

We read in Jeremiah 31, "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt."

A new covenant. I remember my fourth and fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Redmond, giving us a contract each week. We would sign the contract basically saying that this week I will complete these assignments. We then at our own pace and time completed the assignments from the contract that we signed. I can't recall the exact speech she gave about the importance of honoring the contract and fulfilling our end of the bargain. She kept her end of the bargain as she sent me to 5th and then to 6th grade; I completed the contracts to make it possible. In the reading from Jeremiah, the prophet talks about a new covenant with God. And there are no spoilers here; God keeps covenants. The covenant is this-- we will know God and God will forgive our iniquity and remember our sin no more. What I find interesting is that there is no "our end of the bargain" in this covenant. This is grace. God saw that the people who were taken out of slavery in Egypt broke the covenant, and so God says, "You know, what these folks need is a covenant they can't break." We enter into this covenant or contract with God and there is nothing we can do to fall short on our end. God will uphold his covenant for this generation and the next through the cross of Christ.

Monday, March 22, 2021

Margo Lysell, mother to youth grouper Haven Lysell

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

This last year has been a struggle to say the least and it has also had the largest amount of very average people who think they're experts on everything known to man-infectious disease, constitutional law, education, you name it. And if we don't know, we have Google at our hands to find out the answer in a second, or at least the one we want to fit the narrative of what we've decided is the truth. We have to admit that we are living in an extremely tough time that doesn't have a lot of definite answers and it makes us very uncomfortable and anxious. We have to feel as if we have control over life and the simple fact is there are many things we don't. We have to accept that God is in control and trust in Him, not ourselves or any other of the people or things on Earth that we very often mistakenly do put our trust in. It's hard as humans to admit that only He knows and understands this whole grand scheme we call life. Have faith my friends, trust in the Lord, He will see us through.

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Erica Kruckenberg Easter Memory from Plano, Texas 1988 (a very long time ago according to my children)

Growing up in Texas we enjoyed great weather during Easter so our egg hunts as children were often outside. My mom would fill the eggs the night before and my dad would run around the back yard and hide the eggs for us to go and find the next morning. One Easter morning my younger brothers got up before everyone else had and thought they would be pretty funny and move all the eggs inside and hide them and make mom think she was going

crazy. Well they were on the path to greatness until they were ready to make the final trip inside with the last eggs. There was a gust of wind that the door to the backyard blew closed and locked. So there stood my brothers in their underwear with handfuls of plastic eggs and it started to rain. So, they began pounding on the back door to wake someone up to let them in. My dad was in a deep sleep and was startled awake by the pounding and immediately thought that someone was trying to break into our house. He leaped out of bed grabbed the nearest protection item he could find - the vacuum hose extension attachment and ran to the door to fend off the bad guy only to find his two sons, drenched from the Texas thunderstorm holding handfuls of plastic eggs. After the initial shock was past and we all had a good laugh my brothers ended up being the Easter morning heroes because the chocolate was all safe and dry inside. Now if they could only remember where they hid all the eggs.

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Jeanne Lucas

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; And they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Isaiah 9:2 modified

I appreciate the seasons of the church year. I look forward to the colors, symbols and hymns of each season. There is "darkness" in our world today, just as there was when Isaiah wrote this passage.

In recent years I have learned more about the season of Epiphany. Pastor Len Dale at Bethany's Global Mission Sunday, called this "the season of moving out" I love the image of Christ the Light of the World that gives us hope and courage to "move out" and live fully today. We have heard the Christmas story and now are to share this good news.

The musical lines of this aria well picture the subject matter. The music is painful; it gropes. It moves hesitantly, like one reaching about in the dark for something sold. Its angular lines reflect confusion and disorientation. But all this ends with solid footing finally found: "upon them hath the light shined."

Messiah: The Gospel according to Handel's Oratorio, by Roger A. Bullard

Heavenly Father, help us to follow your light in this world of darkness. Help us to "move out" and share your message of love and light.

Thursday, March 25, 2021

Braxton House, 10th grade

One of my favorite Easter memories is when my brother and I woke up and we got to go outside and look for easter eggs. Sure we had to go to church and stay for that first. But when we got back we were so excited that my mom had to force us to stay inside until she had the baskets out and was ready to record it on her phone. I loved being able to run around the yard looking for the colorful eggs which had candy in them. The best part was always trying to beat my brother to see who gets the most eggs. One year we missed an egg and actually found it about three months later, and it was actually a caramel candy and the egg was full of ants that were eating the caramel. My favorite memories were always the ones where we were searching through the eggs to see what we got.

Friday, March 26, 2021

Jillian Hett, 8th grade

Easter is a time to celebrate and enjoy the beautiful weather. From the kids hunting for eggs in their backyard to the adults attending church. Easter is a time when hearts are happy and spirits high.

Even in the happiest times bad things can happen. Things like death have no season. I don't remember much, all I remember is seeing my grandpa for the last time. Our traditions and festivities were cut short by the sound of sirens.

But I also remember through all the grief and pain, there was happiness. I remember how my grandma, with her whole world crumbling around her, still made sure that me and my cousins had fun. How we had our easter egg hunt in the lawn of a hospital.

I think there is something to take from every experience, good or bad. You can make something good and memorable from every experience. Even in sadness there can be laughter and joy, and I think that is what easter about. The sadness of Jesus's death and then the happiness of finding him alive.

Saturday, March 27, 2021

Avery Kruckenbert, 10th grade

Every Easter we would hunt for Easter eggs. We would have our own around the house and then we would go to a community one. We would get An Easter basket every year and I remember one year a family couldn't afford an Easter basket so my brother and I gave our Easter baskets to them. Just reminds you what Easter is really about.

Sunday, March 28, 2021

Pastor Amy Truhe

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,8he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross." **Philippians 2: 5-8**

Today is Palm Sunday, the transition day from Lent to Holy Week, which is technically part of Lent and yet has it's own rhythm. This lesson from Philippians tells instructs us to have "the same mind" that Jesus had when he became human. Jesus was God and yet did not take advantage of being God. He did not lift up his divinity, rather, he set that aside, using the Godly powers he possessed only for the good of healing and loving, feeding and teaching, so that we could understand God's presence among us was truly a human person. God wants so much for us to live a life of love that God came to show us how that love can look in a human life.

To set aside the ways our social world tells us to live that offer division, ways that judge and discriminate, ways that push people apart rather than join people together, is to recognize that these ways are not of God and not of Jesus. As people who believe in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we are to also believe that living a life focused on how we can most abundantly show love that creates connections and shares abundance is our call from God. Just as Jesus was called to set aside a large part of his nature, his divinity, we are called to set aside a large part of our nature, our worldl

Monday, March 29, 2021

Lori Nelson, mother to youth groupers Torsten and Per Nelson I have so many memories from Eastertime.

The first thing that pops into my mind is the boys' baptisms. Since Easter is about rebirth, we often have baptisms close to this time. Pastor Humphrey baptised Per. Pastor Mai baptised Torsten. Both of their baptisms took place close to Easter. Just recently, we watched their baptism videos, which brought joy to our hearts.

Our Palm Sunday service has actually always been one of my favorite services, though. I love the reenactment of the story in church. I also love how all of the songs tie into the retelling of the story and how the congregation calls out like the crowd. When I directed the Children's Choir, there was a piece that the children sang in the balcony for it. It was set in a minor key about Jesus riding into Jerusalem that day on a donkey. The Sunday that I am recalling, the children sang it so beautifully, it gave me chills.

All of the preparation for Easter and Christ's resurrection, is so special. The times of reading Bible stories with my boys when they were younger, dying Easter eggs, opening their resurrection eggs as we read the story, watching the Veggie Tales Easter carol, participating in the special Palm Sunday service, and watching the boys gather eggs on the church lawn before the Easter service, are all special memories. It is always all the more special when we sing, "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" on Easter morning, as it reminds me of my own childhood. As we think and prepare for Christ's resurrection, it is the total picture of what he has done for us and how we acknowledge and celebrate it.

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

Braxton House, 10th grade

One of my favorite Easter memories is when my brother and I woke up and we got to go outside and look for easter eggs. Sure we had to go to church and stay for that first. But when we got back we were so excited that my mom had to force us to stay inside until she had the baskets out and was ready to record it on her phone. I loved being able to run around the yard looking for the colorful eggs which had candy in them. The best part was always trying to beat my brother to see who gets the most eggs. One year we missed an egg and actually found it about three months later, and it was actually a caramel candy and the egg was full of ants that were eating the caramel. My favorite memories were always the ones where we were searching through the eggs to see what we got.

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Taytum Reed, 8th grade

My favorite Easter memory is when my cousins and I would go on easter egg hunts. One of my cousin's Brady is really good at climbing trees so he would hide a bunch of eggs in the trees. It was really fun to try and get them out of the trees but none of us could get them so Brady would climb to the top of the tree and let them drop. Whoever would grab the egg first would get it and we would all run around under the tree to try and grab them. Then we would dump out our candy and we would compare our piles and whoever had the most would brag. Then we would go eat pie and eat our candy.

Thursday, April 1, 2021

Whitley McElroy, 12tb grade

My favorite Easter memories would more than likely be when I was younger I would wake up with all my siblings and we would go out to the living room and open up our Easter baskets while our parents would watch us and we would get so excited, until our dad said that the Easter bunny had pooped in our Easter baskets (jelly beans). I enjoyed having family time and doing the Easter egg hunts and having food all day too. We usually barbecued and had fun playing with our family friends and just being in warm weather all together. Easter was always so fun as a kid because of mainly just having my family there and cherishing the moments we had together.

Thursday, April 1, 2021

Friday, April 2, 2021

Per Nelson, 9th grade

One of my favorite Easter memories was the set of resurrection eggs that we had. We had twelve eggs, each representing something different about lent. We would open them up and read a little bit of the Easter story with each of them. I also always looked forward to waking up Easter morning to our Easter baskets. We would get to look in them and then we would get dressed and go to church. At church we would always get to hunt for the Easter eggs and see what was inside them. After that we would get to enjoy breakfast at the church and then go to the service while we ate our candy from the eggs.

Saturday, April 3, 2021

Tytus Reed, 10th grade

My favorite memory about Easter would probably have to be when all of my mom's side of the family ends up coming to my grandma and grandpa's house. It is my favorite because I like to see all of our family and hear all the amazing stories that I haven't heard yet. Also, my great grandma always brings her famous Jello which is probably the best Jello ever made. I also like the fact that it is warm outside, meaning we usually sit outside on the deck to eat lunch. Then my mom's family usually ends up taking naps, so a lot of people head downtown to look around in all the shops.

Alexa (Peterson) Reed, mother to youth groupers Tytus and Taytum Reed

My favorite Easter memory isn't really just one memory. It is many memories and a day of family time. When I think of Easter I think of family. My mother's parents, her siblings and their families would always gather for Easter. When I was younger it was always at my grandparents and later it was tradition to gather at my mom's house. When I was younger, we would always have a big Easter egg hunt. My mom had what seemed like hundreds of eggs that she would hide. As I have grown older, I swear she has gotten rid of some of those eggs. We often spend time outside at Easter, but that also depends some on the weather. Being outside on this day reminds me of the newness of that time of the year. Of course, last Easter was not like the others. I am so looking forward to the next Easter that we can all be together again as I am sure many are. I know I will not take for granted the family time together at Easter and realize how lucky I am to have the family that I do.

"Praise be to the
God and Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ!
In his great mercy
he has given us new birth
into a living hope
through the resurrection
of Jesus Christ
from the dead."

1 PETER 1:3

