



Grace United Methodist Church

Easter Sunday

April 4, 2021

OUR WELCOMING STATEMENT

God's love is for all and God's grace is present in all creation. God's spirit draws us into community. We are filled with genuine care and love for one another.

Honoring the diversity of our faith journeys, our welcome is extended to all – people of all races, sexes, ethnic backgrounds, generations, physical and mental abilities, economic conditions, sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. No matter who you are, no matter where you are in your life, you are welcome here.

We are all invited to bless this church with our love, our presence, and our participation.

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND GREETING ONE ANOTHER

CALL TO WORSHIP

God meets us at the sites of life's bleakest encounters.

God captures our attention from the grips of despair.

Hope catches us by surprise, in miracles ordinary and extravagant.

In the way something holy lingers, even after death.

In the people's persistence toward liberation of life.

In companionship through sorrow, no one left alone.

Faithfully, love rises to reassure us: Christ lives!

Jesus is alive. God is with us. We rejoice!

OPENING PRAYER

Holy Mystery, your presence is a wonder. Rolling open the tombs within and around us, you declare life where we thought there was only death. May your Spirit move among us, awakening us to the possibilities that persist. Possibilities for joy, for new life, and for the mending of the world. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 24:13-35

On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. They were prevented from recognizing him. He said to them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?" They stopped, their faces downcast. The one named Cleopas replied, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?" He said to them, "What things?" They said to him, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning and didn't find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see him." Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all

the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets. When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?" They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying to each other, "The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!" Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

HYMN UMH 302 "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"

SERMON Pastor Nate Nims

COMMUNION

ANTHEM

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE PRAYER JESUS TAUGHT

Resurrecting God, even in a world aching with loss, and crying out for repair, the joy of Christ is our steady companion. The same Spirit that has sustained hope through the centuries promises to see us through these days. Inspire us to might hang on to beauty, work for justice, and celebrate the gifts of grace we give and receive. May our lives be filled with hallelujahs, proclaiming Christ is risen, hope springs eternal. All this we pray through Christ who taught us to pray saying, **Our God (Father, Mother, Creator) who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

CLOSING HYMN UMH 318 "Christ Is Alive"

Guide to Prayer and Study: April 5-10

Monday, April 5

Read - Luke 24:1-12

Notice - The loyal women who'd seen where Jesus' body was laid (Luke 23:55) went back "very early in the morning on the first day of the week." They didn't go to worship, but to finish getting his dead body ready for permanent burial. The body wasn't there. But even when the women reported that two men in gleaming clothing had asked, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" their report "struck the apostles as nonsense." None of them expected what happened on Easter. Author Phillip Yancey said the gospels' honesty showed in how they told of the resurrection: "Accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb sound breathless and fragmentary....the early reports seem wispy, mysterious, confused. Surely conspirators could have done a neater job of depicting what they would later claim to be the hinge event of history." * What made the gospel stories' reliability vital to the apostles' faith (and to yours).

Pray - Jesus, there was nothing ordinary or predictable about the stunning, world-changing day when, against all odds, you rose from the dead. Help me take in, and live out, all the ways that day changed everything about how I see the world. Amen.

* Phillip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995, p. 212.)

Tuesday, April 6

Read - Luke 24:13-32

Notice - Unrecognized, Jesus joined two disciples discussing recent events. They were let down ("we had hoped"), sad, stunned that some women said Jesus' body was not in the tomb. They didn't say they believed it, but it puzzled them. Jesus explained "the things written about himself in all the scriptures" for them. As he blessed and broke bread, they identified him in a flash of insight and memory. The two disciples may well have been husband and wife (cf. John 19:25; "Clopas" and "Cleopas" were likely the same person). They urged their road companion to stay with them, as a married couple would. If they hadn't, they'd have missed the joy of recognizing the risen Jesus. How do you, individually and as a family, go about inviting Jesus into your life? How have you learned to recognize his presence amid everyday life's pressures? How can you find ways to extend the hospitality and welcome that these persons did, even as we continue to be socially distant?

Pray - Loving Lord, when I feel discouraged, disillusioned, or disbelieving, please join me on the road. In times like these I especially need your living, loving presence setting my heart on fire. Amen.

Wednesday, April 7

Read - Luke 24:33-43

Notice - After meeting the risen Christ at Emmaus, the two disciples rushed to share the news with the others. As they were speaking, Jesus himself appeared. Jesus greeted his followers characteristically: "Peace be with you" (in Aramaic, shalom). "This greeting constituted an implicit prayer to God for the well-being of the person addressed." * What choices and disciplines have you found that allow you to claim Jesus' peace for yourself? How can you apply that peace especially to the areas of life right now where fear and anxiety abound? Bruce Larson writes that Luke was "a Greek familiar with the Greek philosophy that the body and its appetites were evil. The soul and mind were good. The Greeks believed that in death the mind and spirit were freed from their bondage to the body....Luke, in spite of his Greek background, underscored the Hebrew theology...of the unity of body, mind, and soul."** What does this story tell you about the goodness of our bodies? How does the resurrection show us that God loves creation and the unity we find within this world and life?

Pray - Jesus, I am so grateful that you conquered death and offer me the hope of resurrection! Help me rejoice in that hope and count on it, even now as an alarming virus sweeps across the world. Amen.

*Zondervan, NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook (Kindle Locations 234651-234653)

**Bruce Larson, The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 26: Luke. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, p. 355.

Thursday, April 8

Read - Luke 24:44-49

Notice - Just as Jesus did on the road to Emmaus, Jesus explained the Scriptures to all the disciples. He taught them to reflect on the big picture of Israel's history from Moses to the Psalms, to see that in the Christ (anointed one) there is salvation and justice. That was more than just information. He commissioned them to share his message of repentance and forgiveness of sins. "You are witnesses," he said, promising that God's power would help them spread his message to all nations. The resurrection called on even Jesus' followers to rethink some of their assumptions. In verse 45, Luke used a great phrase: "He opened their minds to understand the scriptures." Have you ever experienced this kind of "opening" in your Bible study? How can you create space for Jesus to open your mind to more fully understand him and his message?

Pray - God, keep me alert for chances to faithfully share your story. Give me courage when afraid, confidence when unsure, passion when indifferent. Help me share my personal story of a changed heart and life. Amen.

Friday, April 9

Read - Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:1-8

Notice - Luke didn't write one book, but two. Jesus' story continues into the sequel book of Acts. Jesus told his followers to share his teachings and follow Jesus' ways, but not using just their own courage or cleverness. They were to wait for the Holy Spirit's inspiration so that they could "make disciples of all nations....to the end of the earth." Surely the creator God could have written Jesus' story in the clouds or spoken it from the skies. But God's divine wisdom made people the primary means to carry out the mission: "You will be my witnesses." Whose witness has shaped your life? In what ways have you been able to live out Jesus' commission to be one of his witnesses? How did Jesus' vision make it vital for his family of believers to always keep a mission-driven, outward focus for their life together?

Pray - Jesus, I love the audacity of telling 120 people in a small Roman province to reach "to the end of the earth." I love the Holy Spirit's power that keeps that mission moving. Fill me with that vision and that power. Amen.

Saturday, April 10

Read - Acts 1:9-14

Notice - In our reading today, verse 14 is like the first note of a theme that runs through the whole story of the early Christians in Acts: "The spirit of unity and the practice of prayer are major features of community life (see Acts 2:1, 42-44; 3:1; 4:23-32; 6:6; 13:1-3; 16:13, 16; 20:36-37; 21:5)." Some of this group had argued about which of them would be the greatest at the Last Supper (Luke 22:24), and they would have disagreements in the years ahead (Acts 15). What united them in Acts 1? What do you think Mary, the apostles, Jesus' brothers, and the other women would have prayed about? We need that prayerful, worshipful unity to carry out the mission Jesus gave us as much as they did. In what ways can you cultivate a spirit of unity, even amid occasional differences of opinion or approach, with those who join you in serving God?

Pray - Jesus, I can get busy, devoted, and distracted by many things. Remind me how important it is that I devote myself to prayer; help me to center myself in your grace. Keep my connection with you living and active. Amen.

Happy Easter!





Join us for the Flowering of the Cross today from 1:00-3:00 p.m.
The cross will be located near the playground on the west side of the church.
Bring your own flowers from home or use the flowers we will provide to transform the cross into a promise of new life. The finished cross will be displayed on the north side of the building near the memorial garden.



Grace currently has a membership to Amplify, a media ministry of the United Methodist Publishing House. You can look at free options at <https://amplifymedia.com/>, even without the Grace “code” for our membership. If you would like to look at other content, please email bob.dean@iaumc.net for information on how to access all the materials with Grace’s code.



Save the Date: Spring Clean-Up Day - Saturday, April 17 starting at 9 a.m.
Please bring rakes, garden shears, work gloves, and sunscreen. Face masks and social distancing will be required.



If you need help scheduling an appointment for your COVID-19 vaccination, call the church office, and we will have someone contact you to offer assistance.

WORSHIP LEADERS: Rev. Nate Nims; Rev. Bob Dean, liturgist.

RESOURCES USED IN THIS SERVICE:

Opening Prayer from enfleshed (www.enfleshed.com.)

All music used under OneLicense A-727197

Guide to Prayer and Study modified from cor.org

† In hymns, prayers, and liturgies, use language that makes worship meaningful, enriching, and inclusive.



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Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter at GraceDesMoines

In-person services are suspended for the time being, Please join us online for worship.

Watch the livestream of the 10:15 am service on the GraceDesMoines Facebook page
or on our YouTube channel..