

HE HAS RISEN!



He Has Risen Indeed!

By God's Grace we are together in spirit. We continue to pray and wish everyone blessings of health & strength and that their everyday needs are met.

Reverend Kraft recorded an Easter service for our congregation. Although it is not an Easter service that we are accustomed to, nevertheless, in it Reverend Kraft reminds us of God's timeless message contained in Christ's death and resurrection. Times and circumstance may change, but God's love and saving grace remain constant.

Rev. Kraft's sermon will be available to view on Easter Sunday morning along with past vintage services on our new YouTube Channel. At present, the easiest way to access the channel is to go to our website at: provpresch.org and then click on the link there that will take you directly to our YouTube.

Thank you Phil for setting this up. If your television service provider or SmartTV has the YouTube app, then you can watch it on your television instead of, or in addition to your computer monitor, laptop, tablet, or phone.

Rev. Kraft has with grace opted to forego the customary pulpit supply fee for this service. That money is being donated to the Burlington Food Pantry on behalf of Reverend Kraft and Providence Presbyterian Church.

An Unusual Easter

Rev. Dr. Richard Herman

There is nothing "normal" or "typical" about Holy Week and Easter this year. COVID-19 has messed with our "usual" ways of experiencing and celebrating the apex of the Christian year in the *Paschal Triduum*—the three days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday—followed by Resurrection Day or Easter Sunday.

Yet ... *maybe that's way it should be!* For, as a friend reminded me, there was nothing normal, typical or usual about how Jesus' followers experienced those days. The Rev. Dr. Emily C. Heath indicates: *"The first Easter didn't happen at a church. It happened outside an empty tomb, while all the disciples were sequestered at home, grief-stricken and wondering what was going on. So, we're going to be keeping things pretty Biblical this Easter."*

On the evening of the first day of that week, the disciples were together. They had locked the doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus came in and stood among them. He said, "May peace be with you!" Then he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were very happy when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, "May peace be with you! The Father has sent me. So now I am sending you." He then breathed on them. He said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." ~ John 20: 19-22

Like the original apostles, we will find ourselves behind closed doors on Easter Day. They feared Jewish authorities who put their Lord to death. While we may not fear opening the door to those out to persecute us for following Jesus, it's still fear for our safety that will keep us isolated, behind doors, socially distant, grieving losses and wondering what is going on.

We yearn for the usual—to go to church on Maundy Thursday evening. In the descending darkness to come into a dimly lit sanctuary and together meet Jesus at the Table in response to His invitation to "do this in remembrance of Me."

We yearn for the usual—to gather with our community for a Good Friday Vigil Service from Noon to 3pm, to hear the "Seven Last Words of Christ from the Cross" and meditate on what Jesus did, in His love, to free us from our sin.

We yearn for the usual—to linger in the mystery of Holy Saturday as a sacred hush descends while the Lord of Life lay dead in the tomb.

We yearn for the usual—to get up on Easter Morning, to dress up for church to gather with family and friends as the sunrises in a serene cemetery setting or as we hear a triumphant trumpet voluntary lead us to worship in a lily-decorated sanctuary. To hear the pastor declare "He is risen!" and a gathered throng joyously respond, "He is Risen Indeed!?"

Yet, while we yearn for the usual, God's invitation is to enter into the *unusual*; for there's nothing "usual" about resurrection. Startling—yes. Wonderful—certainly. But, "usual"? Never.

That's why Thomas couldn't wrap his head around it. That's why Cleopas and his companion didn't recognize their risen Lord walking right beside them on the road to Emmaus. That's why angels had to ask the women, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" There was nothing normal, routine, expected or usual about resurrection.

Right now, there's lots of speculation about what it will be like "when life gets back to normal." But when a dead man gets up out of the grave alive, there's no going back to anything; at least to anything that we think of as normal or usual. The way is now *forward* toward something unusual or even supra-normal.

Simon Peter learned that lesson (in John 21) when he said, "I'm going fishing." Although he'd seen Jesus alive, he still didn't understand that this changes *everything*. He wanted to go back to the familiar, to what he understood, to how things were before; and he wasn't alone. The rest said: "All right. We'll go with you." So, they all went fishing and caught nothing. The fisherman went back to fishing for Tilapia and came up empty. That's the way it often is when we try going back to the old life and the risen Jesus beckons us to go forward.

You know the rest of the story.

Jesus wouldn't leave them alone. Appearing on the lakeshore, the rabbi/carpenter told the fishermen where to find fish and what to do to catch them. He'd done that same thing when He first met Simon (Luke 5). Now He's at it again, calling Peter forward. Forward to fish for people for the kingdom. Forward to taking care of the lambs of His flock and the sheep of His herd. Forward to wherever Jesus would now take him—"Follow me, Peter. You just follow me."

What does this mean for us *this* Holy Week, *this* Easter, when we yearn for the usual? Perhaps this is God's invitation to move ahead and not go back—even if we yearn for the usual. These *are* unusual days. Maybe, that's actually a *good* thing. Maybe it's time to look forward to what God is going to do that we don't yet know or anticipate rather than back to what we thought was "normal."

After all, Easter is anything but usual.

So, I invite you to look for the how the Risen Christ will come to you this year – as you gather behind closed doors. Listen for Your Shepherd's voice saying, "Peace be with you!" Then, feel His breath come over you as He begins a new work in you and through you when He says, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

He will come. The Risen Christ will come ... and that changes everything.

This is what the Lord says – Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? (fr. Isaiah 43)

'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!' (fr. Luke 24)



Providence Presbyterian Church

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord



Easter Sunday April 12, 2020

A Different Kind of Easter? Randy York

It seems that Easter will be different this year. That may seem a problem to one expecting a certain familiar experience. I believe instead that we are presented with an opportunity. The opportunity to see Easter differently. To be able to shake off the dust of a comfortable, reliable worship experience and risk meeting God like the disciples amid fear and concern. To be shaken from the journey that we thought we understood and be left in a questioning, unwanted situation. To be closed up by ourselves, feeling separation and an unknown future. Perhaps its an opportunity to meet the God of the resurrection afresh. To cast aside the prodigal and renew our relationship with a Father waiting for us to come home. Our comfort zone has been upended and we seek answers. The great theologian Leonard Cohen once said, "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." So, if you happen to rise a little early on Sunday and you watch the first light of morning break through the darkness, put aside your fear, feel secure in His grace, and remember He is risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Prayer Requests

Ginny Heal — Prayers for **Doris Krygier** who has entered hospice. She will celebrate her 107th Birthday in July.



Carol Shore — For her sister, **Karen** and the nursing center where she lives in Pennsylvania. She says there has been a reported incidence of the virus. Please raise up Karen and all concerned for God's protection and presence.

Randy York — For **Dominic Zulla**, Head of the Burlington Food Pantry for God's healing and protection. Dominic is dealing with underlying health issues while trying to be careful regarding the virus.

From All of Us — For **Ginny Heal & Carol Shore & Others** who are making homemade masks for Healthcare Workers. Together they have made hundreds of masks to help keep others safe. **Ginny also advises that she will make masks for anyone who asks who reaches out to her.**

Annette Slaney — For her Mom, **Ann Colijn** for peace during a rough week.

Becky Jensen — For continued prayers for the **PNC** as they carry on their mission.

Easter Flowers!



April Birthdays!

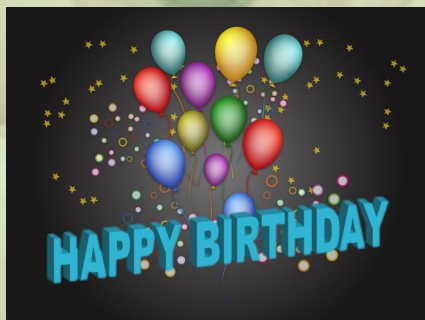
Barb York — April 1

Jim Chambers — April 1

Ginny Heal — April 14

Jane Cheslo — April 19

Joe Celkupa — April 19



If we have missed a birthday or there is an upcoming birthday that should be noted please advise Rick. You will be added to the list of birthdays for the month. We wish to celebrate all birthday honorees monthly.

Please take the time to call, e-mail, text, or send a card to these folks to wish them well and a very Happy Birthday!