

THE TOWER

APRIL 2013

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A NOTE FROM THE MINISTER

“Easter Is More Than a Day”



Easter Sunday is over. We enjoyed a glorious sunrise service, a hearty pancakes and sausage breakfast, and a beautiful Easter cantata by our choir and Sunday School children. Now what?

The common perception that Easter is only a single day is still widespread, though it is clearly marked on the church/lectionary calendar that Easter is an entire season of 49 days, even longer than its preceding season of Lent. The church itself buys into this misconception by labeling the Sunday following Easter as “Low Sunday,” probably because of the low attendance that Sunday compared with Easter. Also many clergy take that Sunday off, which reinforces the idea that everyone needs a rest following the frantic pace of Easter Sunday activities. After celebrating the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the expectation persists that there will be a lull in congregational participation. Supposedly people can take only so much God, church, and religion.

This idea that things should slow down after Easter Sunday is simply wrong. If anything, the jubilant experience of Easter should inspire us to continue living as “resurrection” people for the rest of the year. We do not celebrate the resurrection of Christ on only one Sunday a year. We celebrate it 52 Sundays a year! That’s why we celebrate on Sunday in the first place. Did you ever wonder what allowed the first followers of Jesus Christ, all of whom were Jewish, to have the audacity openly to violate the Fourth Commandment by changing the sabbath from Saturday to Sunday? These were devout Jews taught from their childhood God’s holy Word from Exodus 31:14, “You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death” How is it possible that these committed believers in God could have set aside the traditional sacred day of the week for another? The answer is simple: Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by God on Sunday! This was such an earth-shattering event that the day had to be memorialized from then on as a new day for worship and praise to God.

In most places in the Bible, after such wondrous religious encounters, people became more engaged and devoted in their spiritual lives, not less! This was especially true after Jesus’s followers became convinced that he was resurrected. Peter preached boldly in spite of severe persecution from the authorities, both religious and civil. This is the same Peter that on the night of Jesus’s arrest was so frightened, he

couldn't even admit in public that he knew him. This is the same Peter who saw with his own eyes how the temple police beat Jesus mercilessly, and no doubt was told about the crucifixion by the women who were eyewitnesses. This same Peter was so transformed that he became Christianity's first dauntless preacher of the Gospel. The reality of the resurrection changed him from cringing to courageous. The apostle Paul underwent perhaps an even more miraculous transformation. As Saul of Tarsus, he was a vicious persecutor of Christianity whose blood boiled at the mere mention of the name of Christ. On the road to Damascus, however, he encountered the living Christ, resurrected from the dead. After that, he was such a changed person, he had to go by a new name. These men could not sit still or keep their mouth shut about Christ after Easter! These men were compelled by the resurrection to a life of deeper, more communal, and more public faith in God than ever before.

So if the stories of our faith tradition narrate an expectation that the experience of the risen Christ leads to more participation, not less, why do our energies start dwindling following Easter Sunday? Part of the problem lies with the leadership of the church. We can do a better job at teaching the faithful that the season of Eastertide lasts seven weeks until Pentecost Sunday (the 50th day after Easter Sunday). The time of Eastertide should be one long celebratory feast. But it rarely seems that way. We Congregationalists don't seem to be very good at partying (could this be our Puritan background haunting us to be deathly afraid that someone somewhere might by some chance be having fun?) We seem to have a hard time at sustaining celebration. We're much better at anticipation than we are at enjoyment. That might be true of most Americans. Just think of Christmas. Remember when we were children counting the days until Christmas? As a youngster, when it was still November, I could rattle off the exact number of days until Santa would be delivering his marvelous presents. But the day after Christmas, all the excitement and merriment was gone. By the way Christmas is also more than just one day; it's 12 days long, the "12 Days of Christmas."

Every Sunday in church we are in fact celebrating Christ's resurrection from the dead. In that sense, we who are followers of Christ and believe that he is alive today should be living in light of that belief every day of the year, just like the first group of Christians who turned the world upside down because of their faith. They realized that "going to church" was not a chore or duty, but something to which they eagerly looked forward. Christianity was not something that they practiced just one hour a week, but every hour of every week. They became convinced that Easter is the real deal because God's love in Christ has conquered all that is evil, even death itself. And

they proved that by being willing to be martyred for their faith. There is much truth to the saying that “the seed of the church is built on the blood of the martyrs.”

If the Easter message could penetrate our lives not just on Easter Day, but always, we too could be transformed like the original followers of Jesus. We have a wonderful message to proclaim to our friends and neighbors. There is a God who cares about us more than we can possibly imagine. Nothing can come between us and that love. But we must appreciate that love. We should never take it for granted. As much as the apostle Paul preached about God’s everlasting love for the world, he was always quick to remind his churches that they should never accept God’s grace in vain. Paul himself always was vigilant to persevere in the faith lest he himself should be disqualified for the prize, always striving so that somehow he too might attain the resurrection of the dead. It was the Easter faith that kept Paul going to the end so that he could say, “I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

If we agree with Paul, then there cannot be any “Low Sundays” on the church calendar. There cannot be any “low” weekdays either for that matter.

Happy Easter, for the next 49 days, and throughout the year!

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Gary

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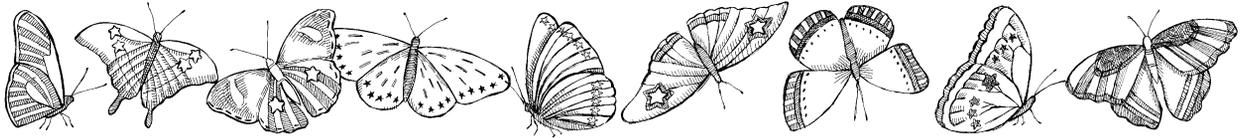
APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 7 Pat Czerny
- 25 Flora Sanko
- 28 Selys Rivera
- 28 Joshua Lindquist

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THE TOWER has many friends as well as members of Park Congregational Church who receive our monthly newsletter. It is a joy to know that the testimony of the mission of our church goes far and wide! If you have contributed to the cost of producing *THE TOWER* through a church envelope in your pledge box or if you have made a free will donation, we thank you sincerely. If you would like to contribute toward the cost of publication and mailing of *THE TOWER*, please mail your gift directly to Park Congregational Church, 111 Park Avenue, Worcester, MA 01609.

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Dear Park Congregational Church Family,

Thank you for all your longstanding prayers for my niece, Patricia Woodin, who was gathered into the loving arms of her LORD this past month. I am thankful for the words of comfort expressed in cards sent to me from the congregation. Your kindness will not be forgotten.

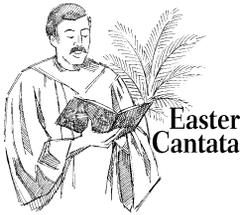
*With much appreciation,
Eleanor Fedeli*

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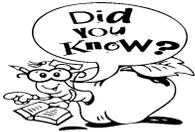
THANK YOU TO . . . Joshua Lindquist, Janelle Lindquist, Brittany Fisher, and James and Josep Rose for their Stewardship Testimony. Their words inspiring the congregation to commit to increased pledging reaffirmed that “Our Past *Will* Continue to Inspire Our Future.”

THANK YOU . . . Ron Devoe and Malcolm Beauvais for offering, preparing, and serving the delicious Easter Sunrise Pancake Breakfast. **FANTASTIC!!**



THANK YOU . . . David Rose, Organist and Choir Director, and the Park Church Choir for the beautiful Easter morning Cantata. Seeing the faces of our young people, Jessica Baronas, and Justin, James, and Josep Rose, singing along with the adult choir, and the Sunday School children offering their voices as well, was truly wonderful! Bless you, David, for this special gift of music to our Park Church Family.

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2013 VACATON BIBLE CAMP will be held on Tuesday, June 25, through Thursday, June 27, from 5:30pm - 8:00pm. **“TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN”** is the VBC theme this year and Wesley United Methodist is the host church. **PLEASE give your name to Miss Linda if you can help in ANY way!** There’s a place for everyone to help out and a **SPECIAL** place is being held just for YOU! Imagine! This is our 9th year of spreading God’s words and promises along with our sisters and brothers in Christ.

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COOKIE WALK, Sunday, April 7, Fellowship Hour



Bake and Buy! *Gordon Hall*



SUNDAY SCHOOL SPONSORED

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MOVIE MATINEE ON SUNDAY, APRIL 14, AT 11:30AM PRESENTS *PROMISES*

Several Jewish and Palestinian children are followed for three years and put in touch with each other in this alternative look at the Jewish-Palestinian conflict. The three filmmakers followed a group of seven local children between 1995 and 1998. They all have a totally different background. These seven children tell their own story about growing up in Jerusalem. Through this portrait of their generation, we see how deeply rooted and almost insoluble the problems of the Middle East have become. *Promises* doesn’t attempt to explain the children’s differences, but lets the kids speak for themselves. The results are funny, sad, and ultimately quite profound.

THE CHILDREN'S TOWER
April 2013



Dear Children,

Oh, boy! What a mess! Do I ever have lots to do to get ready! Get out the hose and towels! Time to clean up inside (the garden shed) and outside (the flower beds/bushes). Spring is here and it is time to plant our gardens . . . our beautiful gardens full of pretty green bushes, flowering plants, fragrant bushes AND plants, and, of course, plan colors that will attract and satisfy our glorious birds who are returning to us with their melodious songs! We plant seeds of all kinds that hold the promise of what is to come. Our gardens are much like the message of Easter. Think about it . . .

The seed is like a tomb. It appears lifeless, but God has made that seed to spring into new life! A miracle . . . like the one that occurred on Easter morning when the tomb that held the dead body of Jesus revealed the Risen Christ and the assurance of new life . . . Eternal Life!!

As we plant our gardens and watch them grow, let us in the same way watch our faith grow. Let us not keep our faith hidden in the dark where it cannot grow and thrive. Let us nurture our faith as we do our gardens on earth so that we will share in the beauty and fragrance of the most beautiful garden of all . . . the GARDEN OF PARADISE!

Happy Eastertide!

Your friend . . . Linda



On the afternoon of Friday, March 22, the Park Church Youth Group and the Sunday School children of the church visited St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church on Main Street in Worcester, and were escorted through and educated about the Stations of the Cross. The Monsignor Francis Scollen, pastor of St. Peter's Church, and Father Lee F. Bartlett III, whom we all know as a wonderful friend of our Park Church, led the youth and children in the liturgy of the Stations and welcomed the participation of their young audience. The magnificently carved figures of the Stations depicting the crucifixion of Christ are probably hard to be surpassed in any other church near or far. The experience of the afternoon by the youth, teachers, and parents who walked the Stations will long be remembered and, without doubt, contributed to the joy of Easter as never before. We are grateful to Father Bartlett for arranging for our visit and we look forward to having Monsignor Scollen visit us at our church!



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