



Congregational Connections

Monthly E-Newsletter of First Congregational Church, UCC | Port Washington, Wisconsin | April 2022

CELEBRATING EASTER IN CHURCH THIS YEAR!

I'm really ready for spring to be here. I'm sure you all are too. The longer days are so nice now that I have recovered from the daylight savings "spring ahead". The birds are beginning to sing their greetings, the buds on the trees are beginning to show themselves, the sun is on a little higher arc in the sky—it's wonderful. Easter is approaching and I'm looking forward to a "real" Easter with all of you and celebrating the depth and meaningful joy of worshiping together on April 17th. Last Easter we were still worshiping virtually, and the Palm Sunday cinnamon rolls were delivered to cars in the parking lot as a "drive thru" event. Needless to say, I think it will be a little nicer to be able to enjoy cinnamon rolls together as we start our Holy Week and be together over three different worship services on Easter morn.

Easter is not quite as popular a cultural event as Christmas, in fact I think it ranks behind Thanksgiving and maybe even Halloween in its relative popularity. Of course, our Puritan/Pilgrim ancestors had no room for either Christmas or Easter (clearly, they were no fun). They viewed them as pagan celebrations and believed they brought out the worst in people who would celebrate in the worst ways with lots of drinking and laziness. While Christmas got a "make-over" in the 1800's thanks to Charles Dickens as well as a shift in messaging to children, giving of alms to the poor and the popularization of Santa, Easter had no such luck.

Easter eggs and the Easter Bunny are no match for St. Nick! Plus, Easter is a little more difficult to deal with in a secular way. Its story of empty tombs and frightened, amazed disciples doesn't lend itself to those who don't know the full story. At the same time, the themes of resurrection and miraculous victory snatched from the jaws of defeat are ones that if you look, can be found all over the place. The hero who sacrifices everything and gives up his own life, only to be somehow restored is one that can be found in stories from the "Chronicles of Narnia" to "Pokemon: The Movie", from "Lord of the Rings" to the original "Matrix" movies,

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...CELEBRATING EASTER continued...

from "Harry Potter" to "Frozen", the theme is there in popular culture if you look for it.

"But the message of Easter, that of an adult man who was horribly killed, only to rise from the dead, is much harder to secularize. Celebrating Easter demands celebrating something so miraculous that it cannot be reduced, as Christmas can, to a heartwarming story about motherhood; its supernatural elements are on display front and center. It's a story about death and resurrection."

- Tara Isabella Burton, 03-29-18, Vox.com

It's why being here at church as we tell the story of Holy Week is important. We can't rely on the world around us to tell the stories of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, or to retell the parables that Jesus used to disarm his opponents and detractors in the Temple. You need to be here at church to do that.

You won't hear about Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial and the disciples abandonment elsewhere on the most popular cable channels. There will probably not be any Easter specials to help frame the message of resurrection and eternal life in a way the kids will understand. But we'll be doing that here at church.

We'll be working extra hard to tell the stories again, to help all of us begin to understand what it means that Jesus suffered and died on the cross. That Jesus stood up to the social, economic, military, religious, and political powers of his day. When it seemed like the worldly powers had triumphed and all was lost, an impoverished, First Century, woman in the hours just before dawn discovered an empty tomb and encountered the risen Christ. God triumphs after all, and we are blessed because of it.

See you in Church!

Peace,

Pastor Scott



WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Congratulations and a warm welcome to our newest members who were received into our community of faith on Sunday morning, March 27:

Don and Connie Cross

Jeff and Tyfani Ulicki (children Taylor & Thomas)

Steve and Carol Davidson

Kristen Wolf (daughter Kendra)