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NORTHMINSTER *Life*

**Maundy Thursday Service
April 1st at 6:00pm**

**Easter Sunday Worship
April 4th at 10:30am**

We are so thankful to be able to celebrate Easter in our sanctuary this year! We invite you to join us for our Maundy Thursday service to remember the last supper and coming crucifixion of Christ. Then, please join us again on Easter Sunday as we celebrate the miracle of His resurrection! We are still encouraging caution (with the wearing of masks and distanced greetings) for everyone and will continue live streaming all of our services for those who are unable to attend in-person, but are so excited to see more of our members and friends returning to the sanctuary.



HE IS RISEN!
Alleluia!
HAPPY EASTER

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SHADOWS OF OUR FUTURE SELVES

As spring unfolds, as vaccines go into arms, and as our congregation's life together inches back toward a new normal, our Adult Discipleship committee is delighted to offer an Easter season study, starting Sunday, April 11 and/or Wednesday, April 14.

Pastor Ralph will lead a series called **SHADOWS OF OUR FUTURE SELVES**, a conversation about the shape of New Testament hope for life after life after death. As a Bible study, the series will lean heavily on the 15th chapter of First Corinthians, but other scripture passages will be lifted up along the way. Additionally, various photographic images and selections of poetry will add color and texture to our theological discussions.

This study will be offered two different ways on two different days: Join Ralph in person each Sunday (April 11-May 23) before worship at 9:30am in the Fellowship Hall. Or join Ralph online in a Zoom call each Wednesday evening at 7pm (April 14-May 26). Same study, same themes, same texts ... two different venues. Do one ... or do both! We hope this time of fellowship and learning will be a blessing after nearly a year-long hiatus from Sunday School and Bible study.

Lunch on the Lawn - April 18th

You're invited to celebrate spring with us with Lunch on the Lawn. Bring a blanket and/or chair and a picnic lunch to enjoy some post-pollen spring fellowship after the worship service. We can't wait to see you there.

MUSIC NOTES

Happy Resurrection Day to all of you! We so enjoyed hearing our bell choir present a rousing prelude for Palm Sunday, to recreate the festive feel of that first Palm Sunday Procession and Triumphal Entry.

Easter Sunday will have us rejoicing and celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord with stirring hymns and a string quartet playing glorious music. Please plan to join us, in person or via livestream, and invite others to join you.

Even though COVID restrictions continue for now on choral singing, it's so nice to have some choristers sitting in the choir loft helping to lead on the hymns each week. If on any Sunday you would like to join us, we would welcome you. Just arrive at 10:20, wearing your mask, and enjoy being in "choir" with us.

Have a Blessed Easter Season!

NPC YOUTH

The time has FINALLY come! We are excited to announce that youth activities have begun again! Sunday, March 28th, the youth gathered after the worship service for lunch, discussion, and to pack blessing bags for our neighbors, Macon Recovers. We will continue doing a lot of fun, but meaningful, projects, so mark your calendars for the following dates:

April 11 (after worship, lunch provided)
April 25 (time TBD)
May 16 (time TBD)
May 23 (time TBD)

If you have any questions about our youth group and activities, or would like to volunteer to help with meals or activities, please contact elder Melissa McDougald at juragal@gmail.com.



LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR

Every now and then a pilgrim feels stuck.

The circumstances of life — the consequences of their own actions, perhaps, or the inflictions of others' trespasses upon them — create an impossible, immovable situation. A roadblock. A room with no doors or windows; no way out. Stuck. This kind of logjam is deadly.

And so the pastoral question arises: Can you imagine any way that God could be at work in this situation? Any way that God can redeem this mess?

Answer: No, I cannot imagine any way out of this. I do not see any way forward.

It would seem to me that for persons stuck in a spiritual gully, Easter morning is a particularly startling and happy occasion. In the most unlikely of ways, God chose to work things out for Jesus. The impossible situation of his death — the "ugly ditch" of the cross, as one person has called it — is turned upside by a now-empty tomb. And once again I am reminded that we belong to a religion whose roots lie in the oddest of facts: that a man came back from the dead. If you are looking for a sensible and respectable faith, orthodox Christianity is likely not the place. Try Reader's Digest, or Scientology ... because there is nothing sensible about resurrection.

For some, the fact of Jesus' new and different Sunday-morning-life is intellectually too embarrassing to claim, or empirically too impossible to believe, or socially too bizarre a thing with which to be associated. Fair point. But for any of us stuck in places of deathly impossibility, Friday-cross and Sunday-resurrection are the very power and presence of God.

One theologian describes Jesus' journey to the cross on Friday as a walk into a dark room, a chamber with no doors or windows or perceivable egress. The room's name, baldly, is death. He took upon himself the sins of the world and they killed him. We killed him. Sin killed him. No more and no less. We say a prayer of lament on "Good" Friday because it is worth sitting for a moment with the raw fact that he died. And for us, no less. (In order to feel the power and punch of Easter morning, perhaps we must pretend for a moment that we really don't know how the weekend ends up — a practiced naiveté.)

He died. And there the story ends.

[pause]

Impossible story! Dreadful ending.

[pause]

But then God does an amazing thing. Suddenly — out of nowhere, it would seem — a door appears in that deathly room. An impossible portal, but an exit nevertheless. It is a door through (not around) death and out to the other side, into previously unimaginable resurrection life. This same Jesus, dead before, is now restored to a constituent yet transformed life.

"Impossible," you say. Yes. And true. The one true thing, in fact.

So let's be clear. Easter morning is not a celebration the already-well-ordered-life. Stay home and watch old movies or go golfing (weather permitting) if your world is already well settled and well managed and only needs a tap-on-the-forehead blessing from God.

No, Easter morning is for the lame, the paralyzed, the broken, the confused, the depressed, the stuck. Easter Sunday is for anyone who cannot see a way out of whatever room holds them captive—including that great big chasm that holds us all captive, hereafter referred to by the church as "sin." Easter is our annual morning to entrust ourselves again to following the Resurrected Jesus through God's unprecedented door of abundant life.

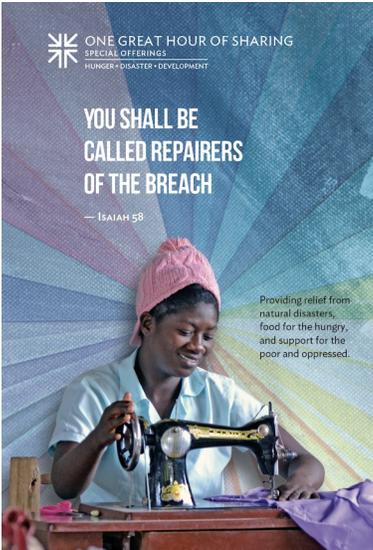
Or, the put it Paul's way in Romans 6:

That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country.

Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the Cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer at sin's every beck and call! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

Blessed impossible Easter. Thanks be to God. RWH

NORTHMINSTER OUTREACH & NEIGHBORHOOD



One Great Hour of Sharing is the single largest way that Presbyterians join together to share God's love with our neighbors in need around the world. Each gift helps to improve the lives of people in challenging situations through three impactful programs. The Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Program, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People - all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities. You may donate online, by mail, or in

person. Special offering envelopes will be provided in your bulletin on Easter morning (April 4 – the final day of collection).



The scripture tells us to "love your neighbor as yourself." What better way could you love your neighbor than helping them in times of need. The Good Samaritan Offering does this for the needs in our

community and for the needs of our congregation. **In the month of March, Centenary used some of our contributions to assist 3 different families with their rent. One couple recently lost their jobs. Another family got behind on her rent when she was out with the Covid virus, and another family was not able to get unemployment for 4 months, causing them to get behind in their rent. We were also able to help a veteran who was about to lose his home. Centenary and Northminster were able to help him pay his rent.** Thank you for your generous support of the needy people in our community!

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY



Current members pictured include Ron Wolfe & Frank Ellis

35 years ago, a Sunday School class at our church founded Macon Area Habitat for Humanity as an expression of faith in action to address Macon's serious need for affordable homeownership opportunities. This April we celebrate these past 35 years of building homes, communities, and hope in Macon-Bibb and Jones counties. Join the celebration by logging on with us on April 29th for an hour of stories, testimony, toasts, and vision-casting.

Grab a ticket and reserve your party box of goodies to enjoy during our 35th Anniversary Virtual Cocktail Hour by visiting www.eventbrite.com/e/145132105033. During this Zoom celebration, on Thursday, April 29th from 6:00 -7:00pm, we will hear from current and past MAHFH leaders, board members, homeowners, and supporters. This event is a part of our Covering our Base campaign. We are fundraising \$35,000 to put a new and greatly needed roof over our offices, training room, and construction storage facility. Email MAHFH Outreach Manager, Katelyn Borek, at kborek@maconhabitat.org for sponsorship details.

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATES

February Tithes & Offerings

Monthly Need	\$40,171.46
Given in February	\$55,617.65
Year-to-Date Need	\$80,342.92
Given Year-to-Date	\$117,412.09
YTD Variance	\$37,069.17

The Finance committee is pleased to announce the decision to transition our bookkeeping in-house. Hopkins & Associates bookkeeping services has served us very well over the years. Owner, Jenny Hopkins, is in the process of retiring. Our church member and long-time bookkeeper, Brent Gunn, has accepted our request to take over the bookkeeping. She will soon be in the office on Thursday mornings.

THANKFUL HEARTS

Dear Northminster,

Mary Ann and I chose Northminster as our church home in Macon in 1969 for many reasons. One of the biggest reasons was the welcoming, caring, and supportive members. Many have come and gone in 50 plus years, but those early traits are still alive and well. Your love and support for us, our children, and their families through calls, cards, food, and prayers over the past two years have been wonderful and greatly appreciated by all of us. Thank you!

Frank Ellis

Dear NPC Family,

We just want to say thank you to everyone for all you've done for us since my diagnosis. We have appreciated the calls, texts, Facebook check-ins, gift cards, meals, but most importantly the prayers. They have lifted me up when I needed them the most. I know I don't fight alone. This will be a long road of treatment, and I feel it's only just begun. However, with you all behind us, we will win!

Thanks again!

Donna, Jimmy, Brady, Trey, Ben and Mary Beth.

Dear Northminster Saints,

Thank you all for praying for me before and after my surgery. Thank you, also, for the carts, the gifts, and the food. You have been a real blessing from God

Love in Christ, Barbara Wolfe

Thank you to all who came out to help clean up the playground and keep our church campus beautiful in time for Easter. Whether you were here working hard in person or generously allowing the church to borrow your landscaping tools, you were an important part of getting this work done.