



From the Pastor's Perspective

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Thanks to Ben Gallagher (See John 20:1-18) 04-01-2002

No foolin', it's Easter!

I'm so excited that this year, Easter falls on April 1...April Fools Day! (The last time was in 1956, and the next time will be 2029.) It's the perfect way to tell the world that Jesus didn't stay dead!

Imagine, when the soldiers placed Jesus' lifeless body in the tomb, Satan's sneered satisfaction at finally thwarting God's plan to save people. All evil must have been celebrating!

But then, on Sunday, the tomb breaks open and Jesus emerges...alive! I know it didn't happen quite like this, but I imagine God's thunderous voice shaking through Hell proclaiming, "April Fools! The joke's on you!" And "the joke" is on Satan, because Jesus' resurrection sealed his fate. Happy April Fools Easter!

Jesus' resurrection sealed our fates, too! It unsealed our graves and brought those who trust in Jesus the reward of life eternal. Easter seals (pun intended) the greatest victory in—and outside of—history! This victory can be yours, if you grab a hold of Jesus and don't let go.

But grabbing Jesus means you do need to let go, of other things. As we journey to Easter, our Lenten series is, "I give up." We're learning that in order to hold Jesus, we need to give up what God asks us to surrender.

We need to give up excuses (Feb. 18), addiction (Feb. 25), anxiety (Mar. 4), our plans (Mar. 11), our truth (Mar. 18), our comfort (Mar. 25), and our wisdom (Apr. 1). It is only when we give these up that we have the capacity to hold on to Jesus and the Easter victory He brings.

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Monthly Church Events

For weekly events see the calendar

March 1	12:00 pm Sarah Circle 6:30 pm AMT Meeting
March 3	9:00 am United Methodist Men
March 5	6:30 pm Small Group Design Team
March 7	5:30 pm M&M (Pot luck)
March 9-18	Pastor David on vacation
March 10	5:45 pm Adult Fellowship
March 11	Daylight Savings Begins
March 14	10:00 am Birchwood 11:30 am Romeos and Juliets NO M&M TONIGHT
March 16	5:00 pm Unload Community Care Truck.
March 17	6:00 am Community Care Set-up 8:00 am Community Care
March 18	HYMN SING 6:30 pm Lifeline
March 20	10:00 am Rebecca Circle
March 21	5:30 pm M&M Pancakes (Served by the men)

Pastor's Perspective Cont'd

We need to give up. We need to give up all the selfish desires we have for ourselves. And here again is God's April Fools Easter blessing: when we give up our selfish selves, we find who we were created to be. When we deny ourselves to receive Jesus, April Fools!, we receive who we really are.

This Lent, I invite you to give up. When you do, you win! Happy April Fools Easter!

March 22	6:30 pm Bluegrass Festival Meeting
March 26	6:30 pm CMMT Meeting
March 28	5:30 pm M&M Nancy's Choice 6:30 pm Holy Week Service
March 30- April 1	7:00 pm Good Friday Service 7:00 pm—6:30 am Easter Morning Prayer Vigil

Holy Week and Easter Services:

Sun., March 25: 10 a.m. Palm Sunday Worship
Wed., March 28: 5:30 meal, 6:30 Holy Week Service
Fri., March 30: 7:00 p.m. Good Friday Lifeline Service of Prayer
8:00 p.m. Prayer Vigil begins
Sun., April 1: 6:30 a.m. Easter Sunrise worship
8:00 a.m. Easter Breakfast hosted by the youth
9:00 a.m. Easter Worship
10:00 a.m. Easter Breakfast hosted by the youth
11:00 a.m. Easter Worship

Prayer Vigil:

A core practice of our church is for us to pray together. Our Jubilee Year is also a year of prayer. Therefore, we will again host our annual Easter Prayer Vigil from 7:00 p.m. Friday, March 30 through 6:30 a.m. Sunday, April 1. Our goal is to have continual prayer during this whole time. To do that, a sign up sheet with half hour time slots for both praying and for being a "shepherd" in the building is available in the church lobby. You can also contact the office to sign up. If you are unable to be present physically, we invite you to pray at a dedicated time wherever you are. Check the church web site for prayer resources.

Lenten CROSS Prayer:

As we begin the Jubilee Sabbath "full on" this Lent, the Prayer Team is inviting us as a whole church to pray the Lenten Cross prayer (because we are following Jesus to the cross!).

Please pray this prayer at least once every day, and whenever you see a cross. Pocket prayer crosses and prayer cards are available at the Welcome Center in the church lobby.

Lenten "Cross" Prayer

Come: Pour out your Holy Spirit on your church.
Renew: Awaken in us a hunger for more of You.
Oneness: Bind us together to the work God is calling us to.
Stretch: Push us into boldness.
Send: Give us your heart for the lost.



M&M

March 7: Meal: Potluck
More: Bible Chat Pack

March 14: Cancelled! (Spring Break)

March 21: Meal: Pancakes by the Men
More: Growing Up Pages

March 28: Meal: Nancy
More: Holy Week Service



Small Groups A Success!

The first cycle of church-wide small groups was a great success! Our goal was to “sit with Jesus” and listen to the Holy Spirit. We did that by taking the weekly worship Scripture passage, reading it three times, and sharing what we were each hearing the Holy Spirit say to us through the passage. The key question was, “How does what you have heard the Holy Spirit say to you apply to your daily life?”

Our goal was to have 80 people in small groups (representing roughly 80% of our Sunday worship attendance). We are so excited that 85 people were a part of this small group series!

Participants have shared:

“It is so amazing to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to other people.”

“I joined two groups so I could hear other perspectives.”

“Although I attend, I really didn’t feel connected to this church. But this group helped me make friends with new people.

“This is my church!” “Every time we met, people shared such good insights.”

“This really helped me take seriously my own daily walk for Jesus.”

“We could be open and honest. I worked on my faith.”

“It’s so good to hear other people have similar struggles.”

“I’m so sad to have the group stop. I can’t wait for April!”

Small groups are paused until after Easter. But good news! We are hosting the next series of church-wide groups starting April 8th. We again invite EVERYONE to join a group, preferably a different group with different people, next time. This next cycle will be more of a traditional “study” as we learn together how to engage the Bible in life-giving and transforming ways. Be watching to sign up in March!

Mission Trip to Dulac, LA

I (Pastor David) was blessed to be able to be a part of the mission trip to Dulac, Louisiana, this year. It was the 25th year our church has been sending a team to this high-poverty, heavily-damaged-by-multiple-hurricanes, and ethnically Houma American Indian area. Some of our group worked with thread and fabric, creating blessings of clothes, quilts, and whatever was needed. Others took up tools and used muscle to get all sorts of necessary projects done. For me, highlights included meeting the local people (including a visit to the local courthouse!), visiting the day care, actively making a difference for God’s people, the great seafood, and building deeper relationships with the other 13 team members. We also took a couple of excursions to understand the local bayou ecosystem better, and to tour the UMCOR Emergency Distribution Center with tens of thousands of flood buckets, school bags, and relief kits, ready to ship out to wherever natural disasters create the need.



God showed up in many places. It was a spiritual retreat, of sorts, as each day was a journey with God including devotions, prayer, service, and being tightly-knit with others who were there to serve God. One day, when I was at the local courthouse inquiring about a permit to construct a wheelchair ramp onto a lady's home, a gentleman sitting in the room overheard me explain our mission team's work. As we were leaving, he asked more about where we were from, what we were doing, and why we were doing it. He got so excited and exclaimed, "Thank you so much for coming here to help make our community better! This is so wonderful, and we are so grateful! May God bless you!" We came to be a blessing, and yet this local man was a blessing to us. To me, this was the voice of God! You should consider going next year! The work days are March 24-28, and the cost is about \$500. Talk to anyone who has gone on the trip for more information. Make plans now to go!

AMT Update

Our church has stepped into the Jubilee Sabbath year in a number of steps. One step was last fall when we paused children's programming. The next step was last December when we paused our administrative teams and many other activities. Lent has marked the beginning of being on "Full Pause," and we invite all church activities outside the "three legs" of our Jubilee year into a time of pause. (The "three legs" of our Jubilee Sabbath means that we focus only on the areas of 1) Simple, Soulful Sunday worship, 2) Fellowship Wednesdays, and 3) Church-wide Small Groups. We also continue all the ways we pray together as a church.) In a few months, we ask all ministries and groups into a time of "dreaming a new dream" by assessing how our ministries and groups fit into our church's mission statement. Our goal is by the end of the year to have our church better aligned with our God-given purpose.

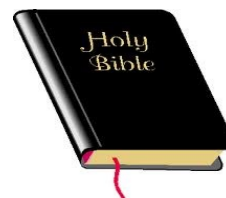
Not everyone is excited about this season of pause. That's okay! It may look different for different people and groups. We still invite everyone into this time of Sabbath because we want to capture God's vision for how we can move from being a good church to being a great church. We do that best when we stop and dream. You have permission to take a break! Church staff and leadership are going to, as we lead by example.

AMT has committed to helping groups and ministries find creative ways to pause. Some ministries may continue, but a bit differently. Others may take a break. We do ask everyone to work differently when taking our break. Instead of working as usual for God's Kingdom, we are invited to the work of prayer and discernment. It may feel different, but it is important. It may be harder, but it is vital.

In Christ,

Marilee Leonard

Worship's Word



Worship is a central activity of the church. We gather in worship to praise God and listen to his word. We pray together in worship as we unify to be the hands and feet of Jesus on this earth. There are many in our culture who would claim to be "spiritual" but feel that a connection to the church is unnecessary. It is my view that such a person will always be truncated in their walk with God. We are humans created for relationships and our faith cannot flourish without each other.

A church is not a church without worship, relationships and discipleship. This is why we have sought to pare down the activities with which our church is involved. We want to get back to the heart of what it means to be a church. So, our focus has been solely on Sunday services, small groups and fellowshiping across generational lines.

To improve and guide these experiences, we have actually launched work groups who meet to talk about how to improve each of these areas of focus. Our worship work group has been brainstorming for the past few weeks of ways to incorporate kids into our services, involve different models of prayer, create an engaging song set and address stage design.

Worship is not entertainment or performance, but we want to present to God the best that we can offer. How can creative ideas and traditional mores come together as seamlessly as possible? How can the sacred space of a sanctuary still be inviting to the haggard sinner? How can one service engage entire families? It is a difficult task, but it is one that we tackle knowing that God's power is made perfect in our weakness.

Each week is a bit like a Pixar film: anyone can enjoy the characters and themes even though it is all couched within a brightly colored kid's movie. Pixar movies are so consistently successful because they originate from a compelling story. The cartoon nature of the film is simply a method for delivering a story that affects us. It goes without saying, but I have staked my life on the idea that our church originates from the most important story possible. It is a story that we are a part of, a story that grows to involve others around us, a story that can save and guide and transform the darkest of hearts. Our story is the Gospel, it is a story that must be told, and we are the storytellers.

For the King,

Andrew



Lent is starting out strong with the youth group. We are following along with the main service message and discussing "Surrendering: who we are for who He is". We are taking a look at each of the topics from a teen perspective and seeing how these areas are affecting our spiritual walk.

Also, this month we are planning a bowling night; the last one was snowed out.

You don't want to want to miss out on Easter morning; the youth will be serving a waffle bar breakfast starting at 8:30am. There will be a free will donation to raise money for the 2019 Mission Trip. We will also be helping shepherd for those that are participating in the prayer vigil the night before.

RED ROCK CAMP

It's that time of year again! Time to sign up for Red Rock! This year, we will be going the week of June 24 through July 1st! Red Rock is celebrating it's 150th Anniversary, and we get an extra day at camp as a result! Check the website for registration forms and cost, as well as scholarship information.

Cassi

KID'S CORNER

Small groups have been a blast!

Being part of a small group can pose an initial challenge. You might not be completely comfortable with everyone else in the group. You might not be totally interested in the given topic. You might even think it is a waste of time. However, with a little willingness to step out of your comfort zone, you will find that small groups can provide huge benefits!

The vast majority of our church body (over 80%) have stepped out to engage with others through a small group! For some, this was a new idea, for others it was simply a new group experience. Either way, we celebrate this milestone!

Having our church meet together in small groups allows for many benefits that cannot be achieved any other way. Generations are exposed and interact with other generations, people can hear and share new ideas regarding the Bible, prayer concerns can be addressed together, new friendships can be formed. The Holy Spirit can work whenever and however he pleases, but there is something about meeting together that brings delight to the heart of God and allows him to work.

Small groups are important for our kids as well. For the past six weeks, families have been meeting in groups on Wednesday nights. During small group time, kids interact with other adults who are not their parents. They get to hear stories about church and faith. Some of them are funny and some more serious, but our kids are able to be integrated into the life of our church. They are able to form relationships that would never have a chance otherwise.

After some time with the group, kids were invited to join me for a time set aside just for them. We played some silly games and did some fun activities, but we also engaged kids with the Bible in a unique way. It's called Reader's Theatre. The Reader's Theatre model is nationally known and sanctioned by professional educators. It is not a curriculum, but rather a unique way by which the Gospel can be meaningfully delivered. I dare say it would even benefit adults! All it requires is a simplified script of the Biblical story, some imagination, and some kids to act out the roles! Even those too young to read can participate! During our times together, kids have clamored to play the part of Peter or Jesus. They look forward to embodying and internalizing the story. They do a much better job of imagining the tumultuous sea or the angry crowd than I do. The best part is, like the *Lectio Divina* method, we can act out the short script numerous times so kids can get a chance to play different characters. When kids are involved in the story, they can learn with all their senses. They are able to appreciate God's Word at a heightened level.

Small groups start up again in April! I look forward to more opportunities to make Scripture come alive with our kids. Stay tuned for more information and make sure you sign up!



Events and Info

Adult Fellowship

March 10th at 5:45 pm. Watch for the sign-up sheet in the lobby.

Romeo's and Juliet's

March 14th at 11:30 a.m. More details to come; watch for updates on locations.

Holy Week Services and Activities

Wednesday, March 28th 6:30 pm

Holy Week Service

Friday, March 30th 7:00 pm

Good Friday Service

Friday March 30th through Sunday April 1st

7:00 pm—6:30 am

Prayer Vigil

Tax Aide

AARP will continue providing Tax Aide to residents of Forest Lake on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9-3pm until April 11th.

Appointments can be made by calling 651-675-7126.

Lifeline Sunday March 18th at 6:30 pm

Sometimes God can feel distant and it seems like we are alone. If you are weary and disconnected, come and seek God's presence. Lifeline is a simple gathering of prayer and praise. Come and be filled!

Community Care

Saturday March 17th 8 am - 11 am

Truck unloading Friday, March 16th at 5pm

