

FRIENDLY MESSENGER

April 2024

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Easter Reflection

We live in an age of anxiety. There are wars and rumors of wars. We tread carefully with even friends and neighbors for fear of being caught in the crossfire of the “culture wars”. We are acutely aware of atrocities, famines and sorrows everywhere around the world. Our phones constantly message us with the latest headline of unspeakable human suffering. The sick systems of our culture malfunction and create distress in our hearts, mind, bone and sinew. Everyone, it seems is plagued with one malady or another. We cry out but the soil keeps losing nutrients, weapons of mass destruction keep piling up, the climate keeps getting more and more forbidding etc. etc. etc. It all feels utterly out of control. Like death itself.

Every generation has felt the despair of out-of-control sin and injustice. Every generation has felt the hopelessness and crisis of meaning that is the unfathomable mystery of our mortality. Fear of death being fear of the unknown which is so utterly beyond our control. “Is it all just a meaningless void” is the persistent question that echoes throughout the ages.

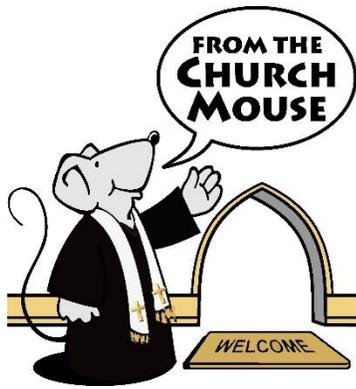
We dread meaninglessness yet often succumb to this “spirit of the age”.

Embracing the cross, is to embrace the hope and meaning of the resurrection. Jesus prayed to let the ‘cup pass from him”, that he be spared the cross, but he accepted it and carried it anyway because his trust in God was greater than any fear. Greater than the fear of rejection; greater than the fear of being hated and despised; greater than the fear of failure; greater than the fear of pain and torture; greater than the fear of betrayal; greater than the fear of death. His trust in Gods love to overcome hatred, to overcome failure, to overcome pain and torture, to overcome betrayal, mockery and rejection, his trust in the power of Gods love to overcome fear and death made him fearless. Perfect love casts out fear. And this fearlessness inspired a fearlessness among his disciples that acted like a pebble in a pond: ripples of fearless love have pulsated throughout time and space and history transforming our world in marvelous mysterious ways that continue to this day. Ripples that to this day give oppressed people hope and provide purpose and meaning to people’s lives as they abandon fear in favor of loving service. Released from preoccupation with the self they are free to connect with the entire sum of love throughout humanity, throughout creation, throughout all that is or ever truly was. This connection is a tremendous reservoir of healing holiness bringing about shalom, grace and peace even in the midst of humanity’s darkest deeds. The cowardly disciples who betrayed Jesus initially turned into heroes of faith who fearlessly promoted an ethic of unconditional love. They saw in Jesus’ death and resurrection the power of God and God’s love to create anew, to restore, redeem, revitalize, and recreate so that God’s realm, a realm where agape love would be written on everyone’s heart and practiced perfectly, would be manifest on earth as it is in heaven.

Where O death is thy sting? Christ is risen, risen indeed. Perfect love has cast out fear.

Blessings,

Pastor Jack



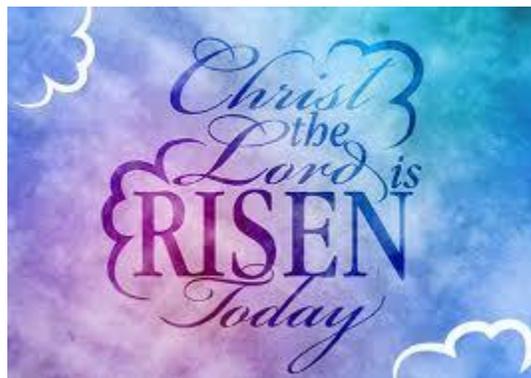
Hi everyone! Well, here we are in April already! The Easter season is so intense with Ash Wednesday, Lent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and culminating with Easter Sunday. Jesus sure went through a lot for us, didn't He? And all so OUR sins can be forgiven and we can look forward to spending eternity with Him. It amazes me. I don't know how He endured it all, just for us. Ash Wednesday reminds us that we are created from nothing and go back to nothing. Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust. God is SO GOOD!

Lent, when we may give up something but how many of us listened to Pastor Jack and gained something instead? More love. More faith. More trust. More patience. More hope. More. I think many of us tried in one form or another and I'm certain that many succeeded. Doesn't it make you feel better than giving something up? More at peace with ourselves; more satisfied; more accomplished. With these accomplishments, I feel so much better in body, mind, and spirit and closer to our Lord than ever.

Palm Sunday was a good reminder of how the crowd waved palm branches greeting and honoring Jesus as He entered Jerusalem. I like to make little crosses to put around the house with mine. I also like to curl one around a broomstick to lay across a family picture. It reminds me of how blessed I am and I get a warm, fuzzy feeling inside whenever I look at it. Maundy Thursday is a sad time, the night of the Last Supper when Jesus told everyone that they should love one another. Imagine being so kind and thoughtful at such a prolific time! He even washed His disciples' feet to demonstrate kindness. This He did, knowing what lay ahead for Him. Unbelievable.

Good Friday was the fateful day when Jesus was crucified, spat on, mocked, denied, and suffered unfathomable pain. All this, He did for US! He sure must love us an awful lot! Then came Easter Sunday, a spectacular day when Jesus arose from the dead. Imagine the beautiful sight when Mary saw her precious son after painfully and helplessly witnessing His death. This was such a miraculous time! That's why, after Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, we decorate our church beautifully with flowers, sing hymns of glory, and celebrate, all for His unending glory. Halleluia! Christ has risen! Amen and Amen

Your thankful church mouse,
Nick





If you have some **news**, an **article**, or an **announcement** that you would like included in the newsletter, please leave it in the office with Sue Anderson or email her at deegram@charter.net by the **20th** of each **month**. Thank you!



ZOOM OR YOUTUBE



Our Sunday services will be available via Zoom and afterwards on YouTube! If you are at home and would like to join us virtually on Sunday mornings at 10 am, you can do so by following this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83102423294?pwd=RjhHZGNkZDZlYODNHWVFabnRVZ2Vldz09>



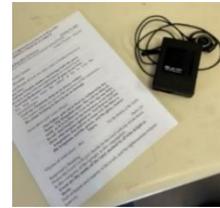
You can also find our latest services here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDQmijukLaC24hwdyayupdg> or by searching "First Church, Worcester" in YouTube.



Accessibility Items Available for Worship!

Did you know that we now offer large print bulletins? That's right! They are available in the narthex as you enter the sanctuary. We also have hearing assistance devices that make hearing what is said at the pulpit much easier! They are also in a basket on the table in the narthex.



Carpet Fund



Our sincere thanks for your continued contributions to our Teddy Bear Bank in the narthex before the service and in the parlor following it. You're filling him to the brim with exciting anticipation! We're getting there, slowly but surely!



Hospitality

Please join us in the parlor for coffee and goodies every Sunday after worship. If you are able to host a coffee hour, there is a sign-up sheet on the table. If you bring the goodies, beverages and paper goods. You don't even have to bake, store-bought is A-OK. It doesn't have to be fancy either. Fruit is always good and so are crackers and cheese. Also, two or more people can sign up together.

Hope to see you there and maybe adding your name to the sign-up sheet!



"Hospitality is about connection, not perfection." ~ Sandy, The Reluctant Entertainer

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP



Come and join us on **WEDNESDAYS at 10:00 am** for some great fellowship and fun! Our plans for April include a relaxing day of unwinding after such a busy Holy Week , an exciting game of BINGO, a delicious lunch at The 308 Restaurant, East Main Street, East Brookfield, MA, and a day of chit-chat and catching up with the possibility of doing a spring craft.

Of course, our plans are always subject to change, so stay tuned!



Carty Cupboard

The First Sunday of Every Month



Many thanks for your Carty Cupboard donations! In March, we donated **11 more bags** of groceries! Donating not only non-perishable items, but also personal care items and/or baby items, which are always welcome. I learned that last month, they ran out of food so, let's see what we can do to change that. I know they'll appreciate your generosity and you'll feel good about giving.

Thank you for bringing joy into someone else's life, one bag at a time!



Deacons Fund

On the first Sunday of every month, we take up a collection that is used to provide one-time, emergency assistance to a neighbor in need. Blue envelopes are included in your bulletin for this offering. Every little bit helps. Your contributions are greatly appreciated!



Thank you for the difference you make!



Large or Small, We Appreciate Them All

We are truly blessed to have such loving supporters in our church. Thank you for your generous contributions. Helping others is so rewarding!





Easter Flower Recognitions



Our sincere thanks to everyone who ordered the beautiful flowers for our sanctuary this Easter!

*Norman & Susan Anderson – In memory of our parents
In memory of Sue's brother & sister, Albin (Skip) and Marie
Waskevich
In celebration of Christ's Resurrection*

Bev Bean – In celebration of my family

*Bob & Marianne Bourgault – In memory of John and Pauline Clukey
In memory of Roy and Betty Bourgault*

*Ellen Dalbeck – In memory of Wes and Betty Dalbeck
In memory of friends who have passed
In honor of my grandson, Zach Hopewell*

Shelly Hoyle – In honor of my son, Joe

*Leanne & James Jezerski – In memory of William and Pauline Greene
In memory of Clifford and Marjorie Greene
In memory of Edward and Evelyn Jezerski*

*Mac & Connie MacInnes – In memory of Linwood, Alice & Lenny Hodgkins, Dan
& Katherine MacInnes & Alan MacInnes*

Ruth Nickerson – In memory of my husband, Peter

*The Scherdell & Bailey Families – In memory of Ray and Jeffrey Scherdell
In honor of Paul Scherdell*

Donna Spaulding – In memory of loved ones who have gone before me

I hope Everyone had a Wonderful Easter!

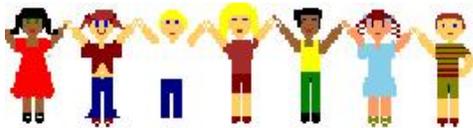


Thank you!

Another big thank you for the miles of smiles that you put on excited faces at Dodge Park Rest Home with your contributions to this beautiful Easter basket that Ruth provided and arranged, right down to the adorable bunny! Thank you, Ruth and thank you Pastor Jack, Tom and Marianne for delivering it!



Youth Outreach



Reach out to your friends and invite them to join our Youth Group. They'll see just how much fun it is and how much it enriches their lives!

"The youth is the hope of our future."
- Jose Rizal

We had fun celebrating St. Patrick's Day at FCC!



Please continue to hold Pastor Jack in your prayers as he works through his health issues. Connie MacInnes requests prayers for her niece Linda and friend Marie Samuelson whom is very ill; Judy Mitchell requests prayers for her granddaughter, Ellanora; Sue & Norman Anderson request prayers for their daughter, Melanie Anderson, Sue's brother, Danny Waskevich and their friend, Roger Waite. Dawn & Matt Ahaesy request prayers for Gina Ahaesy. The Deacons request prayers for Dolores Trzcinski, Jeanne Fassett, Paul Scherdell, and Joyce & Armand Thienel. Our prayers are also with Normairis Rivera's son, Joey. Kristin Olson requests prayers for Mitch Bourque. We ask for continued prayers for Hampton Bagdasarian who is having trouble with one eye; and for Erika Vecsey as she continues her battle with cancer. Greg Waters and Cindy MacLaurin request prayers for Cindy's mother as she continues her battle with cancer and recovery from a stroke. Ellen Dalbeck requests prayers for the McDermott Family.

If you would like to add a prayer concern or update our list, please email the church office at office@fcc-worcester.org or call the office at 508-752-4635.

Thank you, Bob and Marianne!



The next time you're in the parlor, be sure to look at the gorgeous quilt that's hanging on the wall by the kitchenette. Just looking at it tells you that a lot of love, not to mention work, went into it. Our thanks go out to Marianne who so lovingly stitched it and to Bob for hanging it at just the right height and position, not even crooked! What a beautiful Easter gift to our church! Thank you again!



Maundy Thursday

Our Maundy Thursday Soup Supper went extremely well. Our thanks to all who pitched in to make it a wonderful success. It was a joy to have Ketterly and some of her congregation join us. The Tenebrae service following the supper was beautiful and so very meaningful. Scott set up a display of candles, symbolizing Christ and his disciples, whose last supper together commemorate Maundy Thursday. He and Pastor Jack read scripture readings, recalling our Lord's suffering for his people. A candle was distinguished after each reading, the Christ candle being last, ending the service in darkness. We also had communion by intinction. It was a truly Holy night.





April

10 Kristin Olson 16 Khyllie Richard 22 Susan Cardin
24 Leanne Jezerski 26 Judy Langlois

May

07 Dawn Ahaesy 16 Donna Spaulding 17 Robert Olson
21 Christina Dalbeck 25 Beverly Bean 25 Heidi Hinson
25 Marsha Huntoon 25 Deborah Mirick 26 Phillip Cardin
26 Marianne Bourgeault



April

05 Dolores & Marie Trzcinski 18 Steve & Heidi Hinson



Time For Tea

© 6/6/01 By Susan L. Anderson



Illustrated by Jane Tilton

Out to the kitchen to have some tea
When I got there oh, dear me!
What did I come out here for?
Musta been to do a chore
Run the water to do the dishes
Doggie lets you know his wishes
Give the little guy a bone
What's that ringing? Oh, the phone.
Write a note to get some bread
Oh, the birds need to be fed
Go to closet for the feed
Now, what was it that I need?
Oh, the mop to wash the floor
Someone's knocking at the door

Back to the kitchen for some tea
Water's cold, oh, dear me!
Husband's home to my dismay
What the heck did you do all day?!
Tea cup sitting on the table
Dirty dishes, weren't you able?!?
Doggie waiting for a bone
Pen and paper by the phone
Birds chirping for their seed
Don't you ever see their need?!
I've been so busy every day
And you don't notice...think I play
Think I'll have a cup of tea
Water's cold, oh, dear me!



Monday

01 All Day ~ **April Fool's Day** 😊 "April hath put a spirit of youth in everything."

- William Shakespeare

Wednesday

03 10:00 am Fellowship ~ a relaxing day of unwinding after such a busy Holy Week

Sunday

07 10:00 am FCC Worship Service ~ Gluten free communion and non-alcoholic grape juice
Carty Cupboard donations ~ Deacons Fund Collection

Wednesday

10 10:00 am Fellowship ~ Come and have fun playing **BINGO**

Friday

12 1:00 pm Trustees Meeting in the conference room

Sunday

14 10:00 am FCC Worship Service

Wednesday

17 10:30 am Fellowship ~ meet in the church parking lot for a trip to The 308 Restaurant, East Main Street, East Brookfield, MA, for lunch

Sunday

21 10:00 am FCC Worship Service

11:30 am Council Meeting in the conference room

Wednesday

24 10:00 am Fellowship ~ chit-chat and maybe a spring craft

6:30 pm Deacons Meeting in the conference room

Sunday

28 10:00 am FCC Worship Service

