

The Reverend's Ruminations

"He is risen!" "He is risen indeed!" The chorus of our joyous Easter Sunday celebration is still echoing in my ears, as I hope it is for you. It was such a beautiful weekend, and all the memorial flowers at the front of the sanctuary were a breathtaking reminder of not only God's creative hand, but our Savior's resurrection. Sure, we've had a few grey and cool days since, but just like the rain they sometimes bring, perhaps it's best that not every day is sunny and 80 degrees. Sometimes we need to be reminded to contemplate the stormy or challenging days of our lives as well. Some of them are part of the story of our Savior's post-resurrection appearances—and the challenges he presents to us.

Whether it's being re-commissioned with the disciples to forgive or retain sins, seeing ourselves in Thomas' very understandable doubtfulness, or being challenged to pick up the task of fishermen or shepherd, there is much for each of us Easter people to do and contemplate as we carry the Good News of the gospel into a bruised and hurting world. We need only turn on our TVs or open a newspaper to find many in need of the Savior's love.

Here in our own sanctuary, it's encouraging to see some new faces from time to time. Granted, they are often just visiting with relatives, whether for Easter or a big event like confirmation or graduation, but other times a visitor may come church shopping or just visiting in town. I hope that no matter the occasion, you have taken an opportunity to make them feel welcome. As followers of the Risen Christ, we have two basic calls in our Christian life. The "great commission" (to go and make disciples of all the nations, as referenced in Matthew 28) calls us to be fishermen—a job some of you might love doing on the lake, but which can feel a little awkward the first time it's done for people. Fear not, if a bunch of real-life fishermen and laborers could do it in Palestine, then any of us can do it too!

We, like Peter, are also called to actively participate in the life of Christ's church. In John 21, Jesus challenges Peter three times as they walk along shore of the Sea of Tiberias: "*Feed my lambs...Tend my sheep...Feed my sheep.*" You may not feel like you are the shepherding type, but anyone who has been involved in the life of the church has something to offer to (or gain from) others. We have all been down at some time or another, and know what a blessing it is to have someone reach out when you need a listening ear, some friendly advice, or a shoulder to cry on. We've all had questions about our faith, or church politics, or a particular Bible passage, and as helpful as the internet might be for research it can't replace human interaction and discussion about such moveable, personal, and spiritual subjects. A congregation is a place to gather and connect shepherds with sheep—even though you may not realize which one you are in a particular week!?!

Jesus our Resurrected Savior prays for us in John 17:25-26: "*Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*" Fishermen and shepherds of First Congregational UCC, this is your call—to share that love with friends, neighbors, and the world so that the power of Christ's love can remake this world. Share the good news—our Savior is risen!

Yours in Christ's service,
Rev. Cory Germain