

We Are Called To Be The

Easter People!

Greetings Friends in Christ,

Alleluia — Christ is Risen indeed!

Easter Sunday has come, perhaps gone by the time you read this. We've celebrated the miracle of Christ's resurrection and now we're on to more Springtime activities. But wait a minute, back up a second! The Easter holiday may be past, but not God's call to live into Easter. You see, we as believers and followers of Christ are now called to be witnesses of this resurrection. We are called to be Easter People!

We are called to be Easter people who witness the risen Christ through an alive and vibrant faith that is recognized by others and passed on from generation to generation. We are called to live into the mission of the church, to share the gospel in thought, word, and deed.

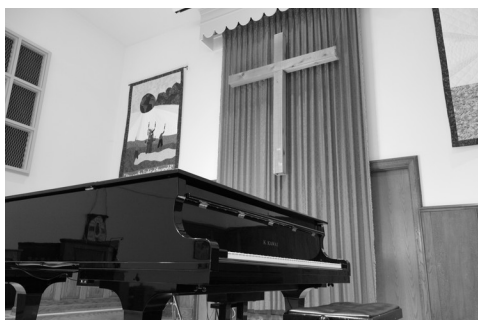
In past generations this seemed easier — almost everyone went to church, and if you wanted to be "somebody" in society, you'd better be able to identify what church you went

to and show up there most Sundays. But now we live in a culture that no longer emphasizes or requires church membership to fit into society, and that's both negative and positive.

Those who come to church, for the most part, are here because we want to be, and in doing so we find others with an alive faith that nourishes ours. On the other hand, we don't have the backup from society of why having faith in God and going to church is important. It just isn't

there anymore, and this is something that's been extensively written about. So, we as Easter people, now more than ever, need to be able to authentically articulate our faith, express why it is important to us, and help each other grow together into deeper discipleship. And in some ways, that's a new area for us as Presbyterians, but I think it's both exciting *and* challenging!

As Easter people, Jesus calls us, no, really, he commands us to share the Good



News, the gospel story. I have a friend and mentor who says we ought to be able to discuss God in our lives just as easily as we discuss the sports page or March Madness. He also says we ought to know the history and story of God just as well as we know our United States history. Granted, some of you might not even like sports, and the same can be said about history, but the point he's making is well taken. It begs the question: **are we comfortable talking about our faith?** Now don't get me wrong, I'm not talking about spouting off biblical details or trying to convince and argue someone into becoming a Christian. What I'm asking is: can we authentically and comfortably express and share why our faith is important to us and why being part of church makes a difference to us *and* if we're working on growing into a deeper faith.

Because one thing I am convinced of is that people are hungry for a community that gives meaning to their lives and connects them with the Holy One, a power greater than they are who can guide, nourish them, and accept them. A community that connects them with God who sent us Jesus to show us the way to live, to die,

and begin anew. It's true for mature Christians and those just beginning the process. It was true during ancient Biblical times — it's still true today.

Moreover, more and more people are now joining or coming back to churches **without much, if any, faith background**. That too is both exciting *and* challenging because God asks us to be part of this journey with them, as we attempt to follow Jesus. Worshiping together, learning together, and sharing our faith stories, our questions and struggles does make a difference in our lives, for our community, and future generations.

In the process of living as Easter people, I encourage you to get involved in a daily devotional such as d365.org or the *Lectio 365* app on your smart phone, or another devotional practice! Come to worship regularly; join adult faith opportunities on Sunday mornings or throughout the week; get involved in various mission opportunities...

Because when we make an effort to grow as Easter people, our own lives are nourished and positively change as well as others. It's part of the journey, walking and learning together in how to follow the path of Christ.

Like a seed, God has planted faith within you.
Like a plant, God has nurtured you toward maturity.
Like a blossom, God has brought forth the promise again.
New life! New hope! Go out into the world as Easter people!

In Christ's love, light, and hope,

Gail

Rev Gail E. Monsma
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TRANSITION TEAM UPDATE

What is the Transition Team?

- It's a group of 7 people: 4 from First Presbyterian Decatur (Shannon Allen, Judy Kish, Marcia Sikkema, David Vliek) and 3 from First Presbyterian Paw Paw (Joan Pohl, Tom Shoemaker, Andy Thorburn) along with Rev. Gail Monsma.
- They've been meeting monthly for almost a year to discuss how this shared partnership is going and to explore where God is leading us.

What are they doing now? Congregational Self-Studies!

- A Congregational Self-Study is required before a church can begin to look for an installed pastor. (see below outline)
- There will be one from each church to give our backgrounds, future hopes for each church, and what we are looking for in an installed pastor, etc....
- These studies will then be used in a Pastoral Search and given to serious candidates for background information and expectations
- They will also be used to inform the congregations of who we are now and where God is calling us.
- The Transition Team hopes to have these completed by the end of April.
- They'll then go to the respective Sessions for review, then on for approval from the Committee on Ministry of Lake Michigan Presbyterian, and then to the congregations.

Congregational Self-Study Outline:

- Introduction
- Mission Statement
- Who We Are:
 - ✓ Our History
 - ✓ Current Staff
 - ✓ Membership Numbers & Demographics
 - ✓ Financial Review/Information
 - ✓ Mission and Outreach Ministries of the Church
 - ✓ Community Connections
 - ✓ Demographics of Community
- Summary of Focus Groups
- Future: What is God Calling Us to Be/Do?
- What are we looking for in Future Pastoral Leadership
- Overall Summary and Recommendations of Transition Team

How will this team keep the congregations informed?

- We are working on scheduling times to meet with members of each congregation to have the chance to hear concerns and any questions on what the transition team has been working on.
- We could meet for coffee or lunch or right after church service in a townhall meeting.
- If you would like to meet individually, please reach out to someone on the transition team that is listed in this article or in our bulletins and stay tuned for these dates/times.
- We are also looking at bringing in a facilitator to help our congregations ask questions about our future and share their views about our path together in some way, shape or form.
- Finally, please know nothing is settled on what a future between our two churches will be. This is still being explored!

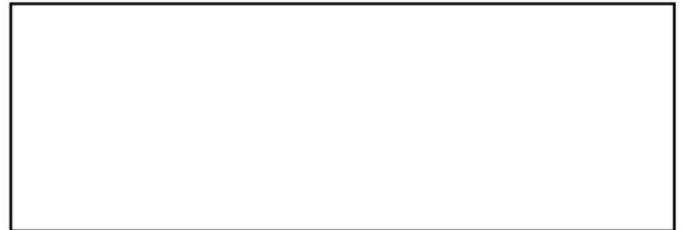
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Presbyterian News

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Last month we asked everyone, "How has faith guided your life?" and Joan Pohl responded with a very good question of her own:

HOW DO PEOPLE DO LIFE WITHOUT FAITH?

April Anniversaries

- 4-5 Rick and Sally Yarbrough
- 4-5 Fred and Sue Martin
- 4-13 John and Carrie Faul

April Birthdays

- 4-2 Joan Pohl
- 4-4 Jerry Miller
- 4-7 Kristen Welling
- 4-11 Marlene Suter
- 4-15 Sally Yarbrough

To Lie At Anchor or Go Places?

"Most church boats don't like to be rocked; they prefer to lie at anchor rather than go places in stormy seas. But that's because we Christians view the Church as the object of our love instead of the subject and instrument of God's.

"Faith cannot be passive; it has to go forth — to assault the conscience, excite the imagination. Faith fans the flames of creativity altogether as it banks the fires of sin."
- Karl Barth

From the book Credo, by Karl Barth, available all April in the Church Library Kiosk.