

Order of Service for the Lord's Day

Second Sunday of Easter ~ March 30, 2008

Eleven O'clock, A.M

Pastor: Rev. Dr. James E. Swanson Liturgist: Nancy Blewett
Organist & Choir Director: Beverly Antis

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THE SERVICE OF WORSHIP BEGINS WITH THE MUSIC OF THE ORGAN
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THE PRELUDE *Partita on "O Sons And Daughters"* Wilbur Held

THE CHORAL INTROIT *Hail Thee, Festival Day!* R. Vaughan Williams

*THE PROCESSIONAL HYMN 113

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today CHRIST IST ERSTANDEN

*THE PRAYER OF ADORATION

THE PSALM OF THE DAY Psalm 118:4-24 (*Pew Bible p. 541*)

THE CALL TO CONFESSION

THE CORPORATE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Dear God, for the day you have given us, with all its pleasures and possibilities, we thank you. For your gifts of life and love and family, of labor and rest, of silence and speech and song, we praise your holy name. Forgive us that too often we are ungrateful, though your goodness surrounds us; that we feel alone when there are many around us who care; that we despair when your strength is near at hand.

Tear down the walls that isolate us from others, make strong the ties that bind us, and help us to walk together in your ways, that we might be reconciled to you and to one another through the grace of our risen Lord Jesus and the power of your Holy Spirit.

A TIME FOR SILENT CONFESSION

THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: ...Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

People: **In Jesus, the Christ, we are forgiven!**

*THE GLORIA PATRI 579

GLORIA PATRI

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

from "A Declaration of Faith" (1977)
The Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS)

We are certain that Jesus lives!

He lives as God with us,

touching all of human life with the presence of God.

He lives as one of us with God.

Because he shares our humanity and has bound us to himself in love,

We have an advocate in the innermost life of God.

We declare that Jesus is Lord!

**His resurrection is a decisive victory
over the powers that deform and destroy human life.**

His lordship is hidden.

**The world appears to be dominated by people and systems
that do not acknowledge his rule.**

But his lordship is real.

**It demands our loyalty and sets us free
from the fear of all lesser lords who threaten us.**

**We maintain that ultimate sovereignty
now belongs to Jesus Christ in every sphere of life.**

Jesus is Lord!

He has been Lord from the beginning.

He will be Lord at the end.

Even now he is Lord! Alleluia! Amen!

*THE GREETINGS OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP

THE CHILDREN'S SERMON & NOISY OFFERING

THE SHARING OF JOYS, CONCERNS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE CHORAL PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Alleluia, Alleluia! Give Thanks

Donald Fishel

THE FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON Acts 2:14a, 22-32 (*Pew Bible p. 113*)

Liturgist: This is the word of the Lord. All: **Thanks be to God!**

THE ANTHEM

Litany for Easter

Gordon Young

THE EPISTLE LESSON 1 Peter 1:3-9 (*Pew Bible p. 216*)

Liturgist: Here ends the reading of the Epistle. All: **Praise be to you, O Lord.**

*THE GOSPEL LESSON John 20:19-31 (*Pew Bible p. 110*)

Pastor: The Gospel of our Lord. All: **Glory to You, O Christ.**

*THE CONGREGATIONAL CANTICLE 111 (*vs. 1, 2 only*)

Good Christians All, Rejoice and Sing!

GELOBT SEI GOTT

Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!

Now is the triumph of our King!

To all the world glad news we bring:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

The Lord of life is risen today!

Bring flowers of song, bedeck the way;

Let every tongue rejoice and say:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

THE SERMON

" THE DYNAMICS OF DOUBT "

Dr. Swanson

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER (using "debts" and debtors")

THE CHORAL RESPONSE *Six Fold Amen* Robert Lau

THE PRESENTATION OF TITHES, OFFERINGS, AND GIFTS

THE OFFERTORY ANTHEM *Sons and Daughters, Let Us Sing* W. Martin

*THE DOXOLOGY

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow:
Praise Him all creatures here below:
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

*THE UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Almighty God, who in the resurrection of Jesus Christ has given us victory, we yield our lives and our substance to you. Consecrate these tithes and offerings and empower us through the ministries you have given, to work so that your Kingdom is established and Christ's triumph is announced wherever there is need. Unto you and you alone do we give all the glory and honor. Amen.

*THE RECESSIONAL HYMN 108 *Christ Is Alive* TRURO

*THE BENEDICTION

*THE CHORAL RESPONSE

May The Road Rise Up To Meet You Robert Lau

*THE TIME OF SILENCE

*THE CHARGE AND DISMISSAL

Pastor: May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father,
 who loved us and graciously gave us
 eternal encouragement and good hope,
 now encourage our hearts and strengthen us
 in every good deed and word.

People: **Amen.**

Pastor: Let us go in Peace and serve the Lord!

People: **Thanks be to God!**

THE POSTLUDE *Postlude in G Major* Dietrich Buxtehude

*Those who are able please stand.

FELLOWSHIP HOUR immediately follows this worship service downstairs in the Assembly Room. Everyone is cordially invited to attend. Hosting today's Fellowship Hour is Betty Anderson.

GREETINGS TO ALL this day who have come to worship.

We want to get to know you, especially if you are a visitor!

Please introduce yourself to others sitting nearby during the passing of the peace. Following the worship, everyone is invited to share a time of coffee, tea and fellowship downstairs in the Assembly Room. (exit at the rear of the sanctuary, go down the stairs and past the Library to the entrance near the Sallman painting of Christ knocking at the door.)

YOU WERE GREETED TODAY by Linda Peters.

THE FLOWERS in the Sanctuary are given by Ann and Larry Morrison in honor of their son, Benjamin's 21st birthday.

In The Life of Our Church

Prayer Concerns:

Enid Dunmire Shoulder surgery scheduled this Thursday, April 3rd at West Penn Hospital in Pittsburgh

Doug VanDeusen Released from Butler Memorial Hospital

Mary Lee Marten Improvement and progress in her recuperation from eye surgery

Marion Campbell Re-hospitalized last week and released Friday

Karen Swanson Recovering from recent surgeries

Betty Butler Recovering from knee replacement surgery

Grace Sechler At home, improving from recent hip replacement

Dr. Thomas Stover Mary Lee's brother in Euless, TX, recently diagnosed with cancer

Bill Wilson At St. John's Specialty Care Center in Mars, PA

Bob and Joan Moore In the nursing home (Concordia at Rebecca)

Mary Elizabeth Goehring In the nursing home (Concordia)

Julie and Bud Bruno For improved strength and health (at home)

Ray Welling Health concerns

Celebrating Birthdays: *March 30* - Benjamin Morrison
 April 1 - James L. Coulter
 April 3 - Beverly McClaine
 April 3 - Karen McJunkin
 April 3 - Rebecca Brook King



21st Birthday Wishes !

Happy Birthday to Benjamin Morrison, Larry and Ann's son, who is celebrating a milestone birthday TODAY as he turns 21 years old!



CHURCH DIRECTORY UPDATE:

New phone number for Betty Anderson: (724) 256-5243

In Sympathy: The sympathy and prayers of the congregation are extended to the family of Ola E. Vensel, a former member of Covenant Church, who passed away on March 24, 2008 at Ohesson Manor in Lewistown, PA. A funeral service was held at Thompson-Miller Funeral Home on March 27, officiated by The Reverend Stanley Reep of St. Paul's Lutheran Church of York, PA. Interment at Butler County Memorial Park

Kerygma Bible Study continues . . . this week

Wednesday, April 2 at 1:00 pm

(in the Assembly Room, Covenant Church)

Leader this week: Pastor Jim

Future study dates: April 16, April 30



Thank you for your support and extending a “helping hand”

- 2008 Easter & Spring Flowers of Remembrance - \$290.00
- 2008 One Great Hour of Sharing Offering - \$721.00
- Missions: Rogelio Guimong’s Chemo Fund - \$760.00
(Rogelio is Shari Swanson’s father in the Philippines)

BUSINESS AWARD:

Congratulations to members Ann Morrison, Senior Vice President, Citizens Bank of Butler, PA and Linda Burkley, Principal, Ardis Communications, Harrisburg, PA recipients of the Commonwealth’s Annual Best 50 Women in Business Awards for 2008.

An independent panel of judges selected the top 50 candidates based on their dedication to business growth, professional and personal accomplishments, community involvement, and advocacy for women in business. Honorees will be invited to several events in the state’s capitol in Harrisburg, PA on May 19 and will be highlighted in special supplements in several business journals throughout the commonwealth. Victoria A. Hinterberger, CEO, Butler County Radio Network Inc., Butler, PA was also a recipient of the award.



BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS:

Repairs to fix the crumbling plaster on the Men’s and Ladies Lounge bathroom walls have been completed by Ron Davidson. A new sink and vanity were also purchased and installed in the Men’s Restroom (a generous gift from John & Mary Reefer). A few more decorative touches will be added soon. Thanks!



SPRING CONCERT & SALAD LUNCHEON - Sunday, April 20th

A Salad Luncheon will precede the concert and will be held in the Assembly Room during Fellowship Hour on April 20th. *Suggested donation - \$5

Michael Desnoyers, Tenor and Matt Altdorfer, Trombone will share the billing in a spring concert to be held following the luncheon at 1:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary.
**The luncheon donation will be used to benefit Mr. Rogelio Guimong (Shari Swanson’s father)*

Resurrection Possibilities

According to Acts 2:24b: “. . . it was impossible for [Jesus] to be held in [death’s] power.” Why? What did Jesus say and do that death cannot destroy?

Jesus’ message went beyond resisting the normal injustices that come with human civilization, and certainly far beyond the easy admonition from First Peter (3:11) to “turn away from evil and do good.” Jesus’ message transformed Saul of Tarsus – whose job may have been to witness the stoning of Stephen on behalf of conventional Jewish piety – into Paul, who declares that nothing can separate anyone from the justice-compassion of God, seen in Jesus who became the Christ. Jesus rises from beyond death to remind us that God is not violent, and justice is not about revenge.

God’s distributive justice-compassion is not an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, which is the normal course of justice in human civilization. God’s distributive justice is *radical fairness*. When Jesus says, “love your enemies,” he confronts us with an impossibility. In the words of Jesus Seminar founder Robert Funk, “those who love their enemies have no enemies.” Loving our enemies flies in the face of every military action taken on the part of government anytime, anywhere. Loving our enemies means bringing non-violent justice-compassion to every social and political situation that arises. Loving our enemies puts our lives and liberty at stake.

Whenever we take on that radical abandonment of self-interest – whenever we resist the forces of injustice in the workplace, in government, in our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, Jesus is reincarnated – rises again – in us. It is faith – trust – in that ongoing, ever-renewing resurrection that will save us, not from individual, physical death, but from the injustice that keeps us from recognizing our participation in the Kingdom.

--S. Raven, D. Min. (from a posted blog at LCC, Liberal Christian Commentary)

“When Jesus appeared to his disciples, they were hiding upstairs in a locked room—the friends who knew him best, who had betrayed him, who had pretended they didn’t know him, who had run away when he was dying, who hid when he was arrested, who were frightened and ashamed. It would have been tempting to ask “With friends like these, who needs enemies? But according to scripture, Jesus appeared among them and greeted them. Most importantly, he did not greet them in anger, saying, ‘What happened?’ ‘Where were you?’ ‘You messed up.’ He greeted them saying, ‘Peace be with you.’ ”

“No matter who you are, no matter what you’ve done or think you’ve done, whoever you have betrayed or let down, no matter how far you have gone from God... Jesus doesn’t say to you, ‘Where were you? You messed up.’ Jesus greets you saying, ‘Peace.’ You are not accused, or discouraged from fellowship... you are invited.”

--Laurel A. Dykstra

In Iraq, Christians are Dwindling

Avak V. Asadourian, archbishop of the Armenian Church of Iraq, told Ecumenical News International that Christians are fleeing Iraq. Christians make up less than 3 percent of the country of 27.5 million.

Young people “are faced each day with death and destruction,” Asadourian said. “They are faced each day with being kidnapped or facing the agony of having a loved one who is kidnapped.” In Mosul, he said, a Syrian Orthodox priest was decapitated, apparently for refusing to “adopt another religion,” and a Chaldean priest and his three assistants were shot dead.

Iraqi faith “is strong enough to face martyrdom,” Asadourian said. But, he added, “Unless something is done, I am afraid that Christianity will face a slow demise not only in Iraq but in the entire region where Jesus Christ lived and worked.”

Asadourian asked for churches in the West to intercede with their governments about the plight of Iraqis. He said the four years since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq were “the most difficult by far” of his 28-year ministry in Iraq.

Similarly, Canon Andrew White, an Anglican priest in Baghdad, told a CBS-TV crew for *60 Minutes* that “things [in Iraq] are the most difficult they have ever been for Christians, probably ever in history.”

White told reporter Scott Pelley that after being targeted by Islamic extremists, the majority of Iraqi Christians have fled or been killed. Many bodies have never been found, White said, calling the killings an example of “religion gone wrong.”

Baghdad neighborhoods that were once Christian strongholds are now virtually empty of Christians, according to the CBS report.

White said all of his parish leadership were “taken and killed. ... I regularly do funerals here, but it’s not easy to get the bodies.”

According to the Middle East Council of Churches, such experiences aren’t unusual. The MECC General Assembly said on Nov. 30, 2007, that its members report that Iraqi Christians “are forced to emigrate, their churches are assaulted and their clergy are killed.”

To help, the World Council of Churches launched “Accompanying Churches in Situations of Conflict,” an initiative of intervention through local congregations, Christian and interreligious dialogues, regional cooperation and interreligious advocacy. According to a September 2007 statement from the WCC Executive Committee, “more than half of Iraqis live in abject poverty,” and one in six “is internally uprooted or among the 2 million people who have fled the country.”

Forty percent of refugees are Christian, said the World Council of Churches statement, “a sign of the failure of policies that were purported to bring stability and peace to Iraq and even to the entire region.”

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTERTIDE

March 30, 2008

Whenever we're afraid and hiding out,
all locked up, not daring to contemplate the future,
God comes to us in the midst of our fear
and says, "Peace be with you."

Whatever doubts churn in our minds,
whatever sins trouble our consciences,
whatever pain and worry bind us up,
whatever walls we have constructed
or doors we have locked securely,
God comes to us and says, "*Peace be with you.*"

-- Jenee Woodward, *Textweek*

The Reverend Dr. James E. Swanson, Pastor

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