

# Easter messages from your local churches

## From Death to Life

Looking out at Heppner this time of year we see green grass, daffodils blooming, and tulips popping through once-dry soil now moist with the spring rain. The dark cool mornings are giving way to radiant blasts of sunshine dancing over rolling hills above our town.

All of this life crashing through the darkness of winter is a vivid picture of another in-breaking of life that happened on the other side of the world 2,000 years ago when Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He literally rose from the dead. How is that even possible?

The resurrection of Jesus is not a fairy tale or merely a good story. The resurrection of Jesus is an historical fact. Jesus Christ was put to death on a Friday by having His body nailed to a cross by the Roman Empire. He was pierced with the spear of a Roman soldier and blood and water came out (John 19:34). He couldn't have passed out or faked death. He was dead; this is certain. He was then placed in a tomb, a cave carved into rock with a giant stone in front of it. He was left for dead, but then on the following Sunday morning, He came back to life.

He was dead, not breathing, no heartbeat, cold, unresponsive, and then He was alive again, full of color, talking, and cooking breakfast for His disciples. How is that possible? There is only one explanation: This is a miracle, a miracle only God Himself is capable of.

If this is true, and the historical evidence suggests that it is, then Jesus was no ordinary man. He was the God-man. Jesus was God in the flesh, the Savior of the world, the one who has tangibly demonstrated that He has power, even over death itself.

Since He has power over death, He has the ability and authority to give us power over death as well. The Bible gives a detailed explanation of this in I Corinthians 15. It says that even though we are bound to death (we inherited it from Adam), Jesus has replaced that with a new and better inheritance, which is life (15:22). Death has been swallowed up in victory (15:54), and that victory was achieved on Resurrection morning!

This is good news! This is a reason to celebrate and rejoice. This means that you do not have to die. Yes, it is true; you can be alive forever! You can know this peace and joy by believing that Jesus really did rise from the dead. When you, by faith, believe this truth, you will like Jesus die (once), be placed in a grave, and then be raised from the dead to life just like He was raised!

Sounds fantastic? Sounds impossible? It is fantastic and from our limited human perspective seemingly impossible, but nevertheless good and true. When your eyes open to the reality and truth of the resurrection, it is life-changing.

There is no better time to embrace this truth than today. This Easter, believe in Jesus. Believe by faith in His Resurrection, and your life will never be the same. Your greatest enemy, death, will wither and die and in its place, out of the dry barren soil of your heart, will spring forth green lush life eternal.

Tripp Finch, Pastor  
Willow Creek Baptist Church

## Maundy Thursday reenactment open to all



A reenactment of the Last Supper will be held at All Saints Episcopal Church this Thursday. -Contributed photo

On Thursday, March 24, the Shared Ministry of Hope Lutheran Church and All Saints Episcopal Church will observe Maundy Thursday with a narrated reenactment of the Last Supper at All Saints beginning at 7 p.m.

Jesus and his 12 disciples will be portrayed by men from several local churches, and their story will be told as they gather for a final meal in the upper room. As communion is shared with the congregation, the scene in the upper room will freeze into the image famously portrayed by Leonardo da Vinci.

A Good Friday service of lessons, hymns and prayers around the cross will be held at Hope Lutheran Church beginning at 7 p.m. Festive Easter Sunday worship will be held at All Saints beginning at 10 a.m.

Everyone is welcome.

## Meet a minion at the SAGE Center

Meet-and-greet includes dance party, minion glasses, and 'Despicable Me'

BOARDMAN—Meet to come meet the minion at a minion and join a dance party at the SAGE Center April 1 and 2.

The Center is planning a meet-and-greet April 1 at 5:30 p.m. where, in addition to meeting a minion, ticket holders can not only join the minion dance party, but also have banana-split flavored ice cream, receive minion goggles, and then at 7:15 p.m., watch "Despicable Me" in the movie theater for \$7. There is also a \$5 option

to come meet the minion at 7:30 p.m.

The same options apply April 2, with the meet-and-greet starting at 12:30 p.m. for \$7 and the movie starting at 2:15 p.m., or the \$5 option to meet the minion at 2:30 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased in advance at the SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman, or over the phone by calling 541-481-7243. For more information, go to visitsage.com.

## Living through the Sadness

Last Sunday we did a new thing at church. We celebrated Palm Sunday as we normally would, with children swinging palm branches and all of us celebrating Jesus, the King, entering Jerusalem.

But as worship continued we moved into the more somber story of the last supper, trial and crucifixion. Over the years, our attendance at Maundy Thursday services has waned. Along with the rest of the country, it seems our desire to hear the sadder parts of our faith story has gone by the wayside.

But these stories are important. Not just because they are part of our faith story, although that makes them hugely important. But also because it is important for us to hear sad stories so that we know, when life hits us with sad stories of our own, we will live through them. We will survive when we experience loss that is more personal and acute for us. It does not, however, mean that we won't be sad at those times. It simply gives us the opportunity to prove to ourselves that we have what it takes to grieve, to sit with sadness, but to not let it consume us.

As we go through this Holy Week, we celebrate, remembering Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. We despair as we see him arrested and tried. We lose hope as we see him die on the cross. And we are filled with new hope as Easter Sunday comes and we remember the story of Mary and friends finding the tomb empty.

This sounds a bit like the way life works, with its ups and downs, trials and celebrations.

It is my prayer that as we remember these stories of our faith each year, we may be better able to live our own lives more fully, embracing the bad with the good, knowing that in the fullness of life, we experience life as Christ did, and that through Christ, the light will always outshine the darkness.

We hope you will join us for our Easter celebration at 11 a.m. (which will also include the baptisms of Anson McCabe and Tessa Sellee!) as well as Easter brunch at 9:30 a.m. However, if you don't happen to make it, we wish you a very happy Easter and pray that you experience new life in Christ.

Stacy Shelton  
Ione Community Church

## Not Just Empty Words

Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. Forgive the same person seven times in one day. Do not be afraid. Do not worry. Do not fear those who kill the body and after that can do nothing more.

These are words of Jesus, reported by Luke the Evangelist. There's a lot more like them. Spoken by anyone else, we might write them off as pious platitudes, impossible and impractical expectations in a fear-drenched me-first world, and quite possibly the words of a lunatic who obviously knew nothing about the realities of 21<sup>st</sup> Century life on Planet Earth.

But Jesus isn't just anyone. God raised him from death to life, and crowned him Lord of all. Because Jesus' tomb is empty, his words are not. If we simply brush off what he has to say, we'll miss the greatest truth of all: that Love wins.

There's more to that story, of course. Open a Bible and read through one of the Gospels. Ask questions. Come and see us on Sundays at 10 a.m.

Rev. Katy Anderson  
All Saints Episcopal Church & Hope Lutheran Church

## Holy Week and Easter Service Schedules

### Willow Creek Baptist

Easter Sunday, March 27, 9:30 a.m. small groups; 10:45 a.m. worship service. Nursery care is available for children.

### Ione Community Church

Easter Sunday, March 27, 9:30 a.m. Easter brunch; 11 a.m. Easter celebration service.

### Shared Ministry

March 24, Maundy Thursday service at 7 p.m. with reenactment of the Last Supper at All Saints.

March 25, Good Friday service at 7 p.m. at Hope Lutheran Church.

Easter Sunday, March 27, festive Easter Sunday worship at All Saints beginning at 10 a.m.

### St. Patrick's Catholic Church

March 23, 7 p.m. Mass with Benediction.

March 24, 7 p.m. Holy Thursday Mass with washing of the feet.

March 25, Good Friday, Stations of the Cross beginning at noon; Passion of the Lord at 7 p.m.

March 26, Holy Saturday Mass at 7 p.m. with Easter Vigil.

Easter Sunday, March 27, 11 a.m. Mass with blessing of the Paschal Candle and procession to the church.

### St. William's Catholic Church

March 25, Good Friday, Stations of the Cross at 5 p.m.

Easter Sunday, March 27, 8:45 Mass with blessing of the Paschal Candle and procession to the church.

## Great Green Parade winners announced

The winning entries of the 2016 Great Green Parade have been announced as follows:

**Irish Theme – Green:** 1. Grand Marshal's Float, 2. Hermiston Funrunners.

**Irish Floats – Business:** 1. Heppner Post Office, 2. Morrow County Grain Growers' CASE Apache Sprayer.

**Antique & Custom Vehicles:** 1. Blue Mountain A's, 2. Desert Shrine Club.

**Merchant Trophy:** 1. Bank of Eastern Oregon, 2. Community Bank.



## Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus' passion, death and resurrection are the most important events in all of history. Everything before those days was leading up to those days. Everything following those days is the opportunity to live the graces of those days, the grace of having the risen Jesus in our lives. We could presume that the first person to see Jesus risen from the dead was his own mother Mary. The Gospels tell us about Jesus appearing to the apostles, Mary Magdalene and many others. In the Gospel of John 20:1-9, we heard of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John seeing Jesus' empty tomb, and later in that chapter John tells us about Jesus' appearing to them that day. In Acts of the Apostles, Peter said that the Father "granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40-41). The life of Jesus and the meaning of his passion, death and resurrection has been impacting people ever since those days, more and more people every year. If you throw a stone into a pond it will cause a ripple to spread out more and more until eventually it gets to the edges of the pond and the entire pond has been affected. The graces of the death and resurrection of Jesus have been spreading out to more and more people ever since.

Those who were not privileged to see Jesus risen had their lives touched and impacted by those who did see Jesus and enjoyed the graces of the risen Jesus in their lives. Peter saw Jesus risen and his preaching impacted so many others. We read that three thousand people were baptized after Peter's preaching at Pentecost (Acts 2:41). Jesus continued to be present after his resurrection, present through those who

witnessed to him, present in the life of the Church. If you want to meet Jesus after his resurrection, the place to meet him is where the Church gathers. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus learned that Jesus was with them as he explained the Scriptures to them and then broke bread with them (Luke 24:13-35). Those two disciples learned that celebrating the Eucharist is where you can find Jesus. Jesus continues in the Church. This is expressed beautifully in the letter to the Ephesians, where the Church is described as the Body of Christ and Christ is the head and the whole body is joined to him (Eph. 4:15-16). How then can anyone who cuts himself or herself off from the life of the Church enjoy the fullness of Christ's life? After Jesus' resurrection, the place to find him is in the Church.

On Good Friday the blood and water from Christ's side on the cross symbolize the sacraments, especially baptism and Eucharist, originating from Christ on the cross. That life of grace from the side of Christ continues in the Church to all who receive his sacraments. When you receive a sacrament you meet Christ just as the apostles met Jesus risen from the dead. The sacraments are encounters with Christ. After Jesus' resurrection, the place to find the risen him is in the Church, especially in his sacraments.

We also find Jesus in the Church in the community of people who gather every week to worship God. Those who allow Jesus to touch them, allow Jesus to transform them to become more like Christ, and allow us to encounter Christ through the sincerity of their lives given to Jesus.

A beautiful experience is to encounter someone who is close to the Lord, and when you meet that person you know you are in some way meeting Jesus. This is experiencing the risen Jesus continuing in the Church. Meeting people like that assures us that saying "Jesus continues in the Church" is not just words, but is true because we have experienced Jesus ourselves. Jesus continues in the Church. We know because we have experienced Jesus in the Church.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:1-3).

There is a new way to live when we have Jesus in our lives. There is a way to live that is incompatible with having Jesus in our lives and there is a way to live that reflects having Jesus in our lives. But there is something troubling happening today. Those who now live with Jesus in their lives are more and more being misunderstood, their freedom to live with Jesus in their lives is being more and more hindered, so much so that we are beginning to enter into a time of persecution of Christians. The early Christians were persecuted in Rome and martyred. If our society continues in its present direction, how much longer before Christians will be martyred in this country for no other reason than that they have experienced the risen Jesus in their lives and live their lives in a way to reflect that? But it is better to have experienced the risen Jesus and lived with his life before dying, than not.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:1-3).

So dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us live in Joy of Easter with all our friends in Christ and make our special efforts to reach out to those who don't know about Christ. So they may know Jesus and manifest their joy outwardly as we are doing today. We shall live in faith in Jesus Christ that He is truly risen from the dead and bring Joy to the whole world.

The Lord is Risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Wishing you a Blessed and Joyful Easter.  
Rev. Fr. Papa Rao Pasala  
St. Patrick's and St. William's Catholic Churches, Heppner and Ione