



## Our Worship in April

### April 1 Palm/Passion Sunday

Texts: Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29 and Luke 19:28-40

Message: "Letting Go"

This morning we focus on the tradition known as Palm Sunday. What was Luke trying to say by having Jesus riding a colt into Jerusalem? What does this text have to say about the shape of our ministry at First Church?

### April 5 Maundy (Holy) Thursday

The Love Feast (7 p.m.)

For Brethren, the traditional love feast remains the profound central act and symbol of the church's life. The Love Feast is the celebration of the ordinance Jesus taught. It is not just taking communion, but has four basic parts: an examination period, feetwashing, an agape meal, and the Eucharist. It is an examination of our faith walk and a time of worship, service, and fellowship with your sisters and brothers. This year we will be adding a "handwashing station" as an alternative for those people for whom kneeling and feetwashing is a difficulty.

### April 8 Easter Sunday

Text: Luke 24: 1-12 and Matthew 28: 1-10

Message: Resurrection Happens

Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ a world of possibilities open up and can become real to us. We can hear the challenge to "go and tell and baptize and teach" in a new way. Join us for Easter worship. Celebrate with us as our covenant of membership is renewed.

### April 15 2nd Sunday of Easter

Texts: 2 Corinthians 2: 14 - 3: 6 and John 20: 19-31

Message: Markings

Thomas needed to see the marks on Jesus hands. Paul praises the church at Corinth for the manner in which they demonstrated their faith. What are the markings others see in us?

### April 22 3rd Sunday of Easter

Texts: Acts 9: 1-20 and John 21: 1-19

Message: Another Chance?

One of our members is fond of saying that "God is a God of second chances." This morning we will look at some biblical characters who received another chance. Maybe we'll see a little bit of ourselves in the stories.

### April 29 4th Sunday of Easter

Text: Revelation 7:13-17

Message: Is This Heaven?

How many stories about heaven have you heard? If you have a good one, serious or humorous, Pastor Kres would like to hear it. Then, we will take another look at John's vision in Revelation.

## A Good Friday Walk

The 21st annual Good Friday "Way of the Cross for Peace and Justice" will be held on April 6 beginning at noon at the Supreme Court Building, 2nd & Capitol. The two and a half hour prayerful walk remembers Jesus' passion and its connection with the sufferings of injustice experienced in God's people in our world today. The walk sponsors include: the Office for Social Concerns and Office for Missions (Springfield Diocese), the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, Pax Christi (Springfield), the Dominican faith community, and First Church of the Brethren. Join with others in this ecumenical experience of prayer. Bring walking shoes and an umbrella (if needed) for this two mile walk. In the case of severe weather the prayers will take place at the Church of the Brethren meetinghouse. For more information please call Sue Morris, 523-4049.

## Easter Breakfast

The Nurture Commission will be organizing an Easter morning breakfast potluck on April 8th. You are invited to bring a dish to pass (casserole, rolls, or other breakfast dishes). Drink and table service will be provided. The breakfast gathering will begin around 9:15 am. We will conclude the breakfast just prior to our Easter worship. The breakfast hour will also be an opportunity to greet and welcome Grace Sweatt and Karen Everingham who will be joining the membership of First Church during the 10:30 am service.

## The Vine and the Branches (John 15)

It is called an "immersion retreat." It is designed to be a ten-day event for those who are just beginning their 18-month Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program. Christy, Joel, Dennis, Orlando and I decided to take our trip to San Francisco from March 5-14. The program organizers believe that a lengthy immersion retreat enables the participants to grow in their awareness of each other while taking in all the sights, sounds and experience of a new different culture. Here are just a couple of reflections on my trip to the Bay Area.

Our first stop was the Mercy Center, a retreat center 20 miles south of San Francisco, owned and operated by the Sisters of Mercy. The 40-acre site has a three-story building with multiple chapels, meeting rooms, single bedrooms, office space, and a dining facility. Numerous outdoors gardens, pathways, and a prayer labyrinth were woven into the hilly, tree-lined acreage. This was the "retreat" portion of our immersion retreat. We began our days with early morning walks, breakfast and prayer time. Our mid-morning meetings provided times of devotion, personal sharing, and reflections from the various

resources we were reading. Afternoons were for free time, reading and walking. The evenings were used to reflect, as a group, on scripture and where we were experiencing God at work in our lives. During the four and one half days at Mercy Center, I started five books and completed two.

The "immersion" part of our retreat happened, for me, when we moved into the city of San Francisco for the following five days. This was the portion of the retreat where we immersed ourselves in the thoughts and experiences of others. We spent a day with Fumitaka Matsuoka, former Dean of Bethany Seminary, who now heads a department at Pacific School of Religion in Berkley, CA. We attended worship services at Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, City of Refuge United Church of Christ, and a communion service at Grace Episcopal Church. Each of the churches has their own unique style. Each was selected to give us a "taste" of what various congregations were emphasizing in their ministries. A morning was spent with 71 year old, Presbyterian minister Glenda Hope. Glenda, along with her husband founded San Francisco Network

Ministries over 30 years ago. In the heart of the Tenderloin (one of S. F.'s poorest neighborhoods) Glenda spoke to us about how she has maintained her passion for ministry. On my own, I was able to visit a Korean Presbyterian Church, a Chinese American Baptist Church, and the Shrine of St. Francis. At each stop I found individuals who were more than willing to talk about their faith and faith communities.

Taking advantage of wonderful weather we, as a group, enjoyed times for trolley rides, visiting the sea lions on pier 39, dining-out, and walks along the beach and through the historic neighborhoods. We were also getting ready to return home. I noticed on about day eight how much of our conversations began to be about our loved ones and church families back in Illinois. As we exchanged hugs at O'Hare Airport after retrieving our luggage, there were words of thanks for the days spent together. But my greatest thanks are to you, my sisters and brothers of First Church, who encouraged my immersion and retreat.

One branch among many,  
Pastor Kres

### District Work Day

The 2007 Illinois/Wisconsin District Workday will be held at the Douglas Park Church of the Brethren on April 28. The work day is an opportunity for members of our congregations to meet for work and fellowship while providing much needed support to a local congregation. The Douglas Park Church of the Brethren is a congregation with a rich history serving the inner city Brethren in Chicago. This church is located in the heart of a very diverse and vital neighborhood. The day will kick off with a light morning breakfast and welcome (7:30-8:30 am) by Pastor Shirley Petracek who will share some of the hopes and aspirations of this congregation before the work gets started. A picnic lunch will be provided in the park and we will end the day with a brief service.

Terry Link will be traveling to Douglas Park early on Friday, the 27th. There are some tasks which need to be worked on prior to the larger group coming on Saturday. Terry would be happy to have someone join him. Overnight will be spent in the church. For more details of the kind of work to be done and the tools needed visit [www.yccob.org/YCCClips](http://www.yccob.org/YCCClips). Directions to Douglas Park are available from our church office.

### Licensing Request Approved

We received notification this week that the Illinois & Wisconsin District's Ministerial Leadership Development Team (MLDT) has unanimously approved Terry Link's request to become a licensed minister in the Church of the Brethren. This follows our church board's request (last fall) that Terry begin this process of discernment. We are announcing a church council meeting on April 22 for the purpose of affirming these first steps toward possible ordination in the church. The MLDT will be contacted with possible dates for a future licensing service and they will assign someone to officiate on behalf of the district. Continue to keep Terry, his family, and our church family in your prayers.

### Breakfast Proceeds & Thanks

Thanks to all the folks who assisted with last month's Pancake and Sausage Breakfast. Your help with donations, cooking, serving, dishwashing, etc. helped to make it a successful event. A special thanks to Susan T. who envisioned a new way of organizing the serving line and gave so much of her time to the physical preparations for the breakfast. A total of \$844 was received from this annual event.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the head stone of the corner.

(Psa 118:22)