

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

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Association Minister Message

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FINDING JESUS. “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him...I have seen the Lord.” John 20:2, 18. “Unless I see...I won’t believe.” John 20:25. We know the story and for almost 2000 years have celebrated Easter Joy declaring “Christ is Risen...Christ has risen INDEED!” The Resurrection story is the basis for the Christian faith, a story of miracle affirming God’s ultimate power over death, sin and evil.

John and other gospel writers are very informative about Jesus’ rising from the dead. There are also many details about the disciples’ reactions when they went to the tomb after the crucifixion with the intent of completing the burial ritual. Their reactions were not very affirming. Mary Magdalene, Peter and the “other” disciple came to the tomb and they thought Jesus’ body was stolen. They forgot what Jesus told them: “...yet they did not understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead.” When Jesus first appeared to the “locked down disciples,” Thomas was not with them and wanted proof. “Unless I see...I won’t believe.” For three years Jesus mentored disciples, taught them lessons of faith and gave them authority to share the Good News of God’s transforming love, including authority to cast out demons. At the crucifixion the disciples fled and even Peter denied he even knew Jesus. The people who followed Jesus hailed Jesus as a messiah on what we call Palm Sunday and yet by Friday they demanded that He be crucified. It seems they weren’t quite sure who Jesus was. For them, *FINDING JESUS* was still mysterious, even though He had changed their lives. Their doubts and fears limited them to accept Jesus’ call to do ministries. It took them 50 days (Pentecost) to finally realize Jesus as the Christ and join Him in the Resurrection Proclamation.

It was Mary Magdalene who reports to the hidden disciples, “I have seen the Lord.” After Jesus appeared again to the disciples with Thomas present, “Thomas responded to Jesus, ‘My Lord and my God!’” Where is Jesus found? Jesus is found in times of reconciliation among family members and peace among nations, in strength and comfort during times of sickness and death, healing in moments of surgeries and pain, forgiveness in moments of betrayal and giving hope in moments of despair, love exhibited instead of hatred, appreciation for blessings and generosity in times of need of/for/with others. But most importantly it is “*FINDING JEUS*” IN YOU! The resurrected Christ is a living presence in shared faith by word and deed. *FINDING JESUS* is not at the tomb but in our ministries and ministries of hope and inclusion. *FINDING JESUS* is in the ordinary as well as extraordinary. *FINDING JEUS* is in “loving God, our neighbors and ourselves” as resurrection people—alive with “*alleluias!*” and gratitude UNLIMITED. “Christ is risen...Christ is risen INDEED!” Easter is not just one day but always. Thanks be to God. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS.*