

April 2026

BROADCASTER

A magazine of Worship Anew



God Reconciles



Matthew F. Leighty

Matthew F. Leighty
Executive Director

God is not finished yet

When I talk with pastors and church workers, I often hear the same thing. As they sit with people near the end of life, the biggest regrets are usually about broken relationships. It's not about careers or money. It's about the relationships they couldn't mend.

If you've lived long enough, you know this feeling. A relationship that earlier brought joy becomes a source of pain. Words are exchanged — or maybe they aren't — and the silence feels worse. One person reaches out. The other pulls away. And somewhere in the middle, the truth of what actually happened gets lost because both sides remember it differently.

I've watched this play out recently with someone close to me, and it reminded me that few things in life ache quite like a broken relationship that can't seem to find its way back together.

The good news — the best news — is that the most important relationship that was ever broken has already been restored. And it wasn't restored by us. St. Paul writes, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to

himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19a).

Sin broke us away from God. Completely. Not a small crack. Not a minor disagreement. Sin created a chasm between us and our Creator that we could never cross on our own. But God didn't wait for us to find our way back. He came to us. Through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Father reached across that chasm. He reconciled us. He closed the gap. He welcomed us home, not because we earned it, but because Christ earned it for us.

As the beloved hymn by Charlotte Elliott reminds us: "Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come" ("Just as I Am, without One Plea" LSB #570).

We come with nothing. No defense. No excuse. No way to make it right on our own. And God receives us anyway. That is what reconciliation looks like when



April 2026 | Vol 4 Issue 4

Worship Anew
5 Martin Luther Drive
Fort Wayne, IN 46825
(888) 286-8002

EDITORIAL STAFF

MATTHEW LEIGHTY
Executive Director

ASHLEY WIEHE
Director of Advancement

THOMAS MOLL
Director of Content

SHEILA BANKS
Communications Specialist

KATELIN MOQUIN
Copy Editor

PEYTON SWEET
Content Specialist

Worship Anew engages and equips aging adults with resources to live a full and abundant life in Jesus Christ.

Copyright © 2026 Lutheran Ministries Media

Scripture quotations (unless otherwise noted) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
Hymns are cited from the Lutheran Service Book (LSB) St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006.



God is the one doing it.

Because God has reconciled us to Himself, we are also called to pursue reconciliation with one another. But this is where things get harder, isn't it? Family relationships strained for years. Friendships that ended painfully. Words spoken — or left unspoken — that created distance we don't know how to close.

St. Paul understood this tension when he wrote, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18). Notice that he says, "if possible" and "so far as it depends on you." Paul knew that reconciliation between people isn't always achievable.

I think of two family members I had watched over the years, both strong-willed, both quick to speak. Their relationship had seasons of closeness and seasons of conflict, and there was always a constant tension that never fully went away. But they kept showing up. They kept coming back to the table. And over

time, something softened. It wasn't a dramatic moment of resolution. It was more like grace working slowly, quietly, imperfectly, the way it often does. Sometimes reconciliation doesn't look the way we expect it to. Sometimes it's simply two imperfect people who refuse to give up on each other.

But what happens when reconciliation isn't possible? What if the other person isn't willing, too much has been broken, or they're no longer here? Do we have to carry that burden by ourselves?

No. And this is where Scripture speaks such comfort: "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

Our hope isn't based on whether every relationship gets fixed in this life. Our hope is in the One who has already made all things right with Himself. The brokenness we see, including the relationships

we couldn't repair, isn't the end. Resurrection is the final word.

That is exactly what we celebrate this month. Easter is the proof that God's reconciling work is complete. The stone is rolled away. The tomb is empty. Christ is risen. The One who bore our sin, carried our brokenness, and bridged the chasm between us and the Father has conquered even death itself. Whatever remains unresolved in this life, Easter declares that the God who finished our salvation is not finished with us yet.

In this month's Broadcaster, you'll find more on this theme of reconciliation, how God reconciles us to Himself, and what it looks like to pursue peace with others, even when it feels impossible. I pray these pages encourage you this Easter season and remind you that the God who bridged the greatest chasm of all is more than able to carry you through whatever broken places you're navigating today.

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them."

2 Corinthians 5:18-19a

In This Issue

4 Good Friday
Pastor Punke shares the "Good News" as a guest pastor on "Worship Anew."

6 50 Days of Blessings
Join us in celebrating the blessings shared by Worship Anew.

9 Program Summaries
See what is on "Worship Anew" in April.

10 Springtime Social
How being social can help your physical health.

12 Is it Time to Reconcile?
Helping our strained relationships to begin to mend.

22 A Story to Share
Read an Easter story with your grandchildren.



THE GOOD NEWS

Pastor Punke shares about Good Friday as a guest pastor on 'Worship Anew'

*By Ashley Wiehe
Director of Advancement*

Training in the U.S. Air Force. Degrees in mathematics and computer science. Interests in basketball, choir, and theater. And a clerical collar to boot.

The Rev. Douglas Punke serves as the senior pastor of the Historic Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., and will provide the message for the Good Friday service on "Worship Anew" on April 3.

Punke didn't set out on the traditional path to becoming a pastor, but the Lord was working on his heart.

At 17, Punke enlisted in the U.S. Air Force right at the end of the Vietnam War. He served five years before enrolling in college to study mathematics and computer science. While at school, he became more active in his church. God was planting a seed for His future plans.

"That helped cultivate a desire to become a pastor, but it took a while for it to germinate and grow," Punke said.

So, he continued his studies and began teaching, but God was soon calling him to the church.

"After a while teaching mathematics and computer science, I had a desire to do more in the church," he said. "I didn't know what, perhaps teaching at one of our synodical schools. But it turned out that the Lord was moving me to seek the pastoral ministry."

From there, he came to Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne in 1994 and was ordained in the Holy Ministry in 1999. His first call was to Trinity Lutheran Church in Clinton, Mo., and then in 2003, he was called to Zion in Fort Wayne, where he has been for 22 years.

"It has been the privilege of my life," he said.

For Good Friday, he brings his wealth of experiences to the viewers as he shares about "Jesus' Death—Good News."

"I've discovered that some people avoid Good Friday services because it makes them feel bad," Punke said. "Some



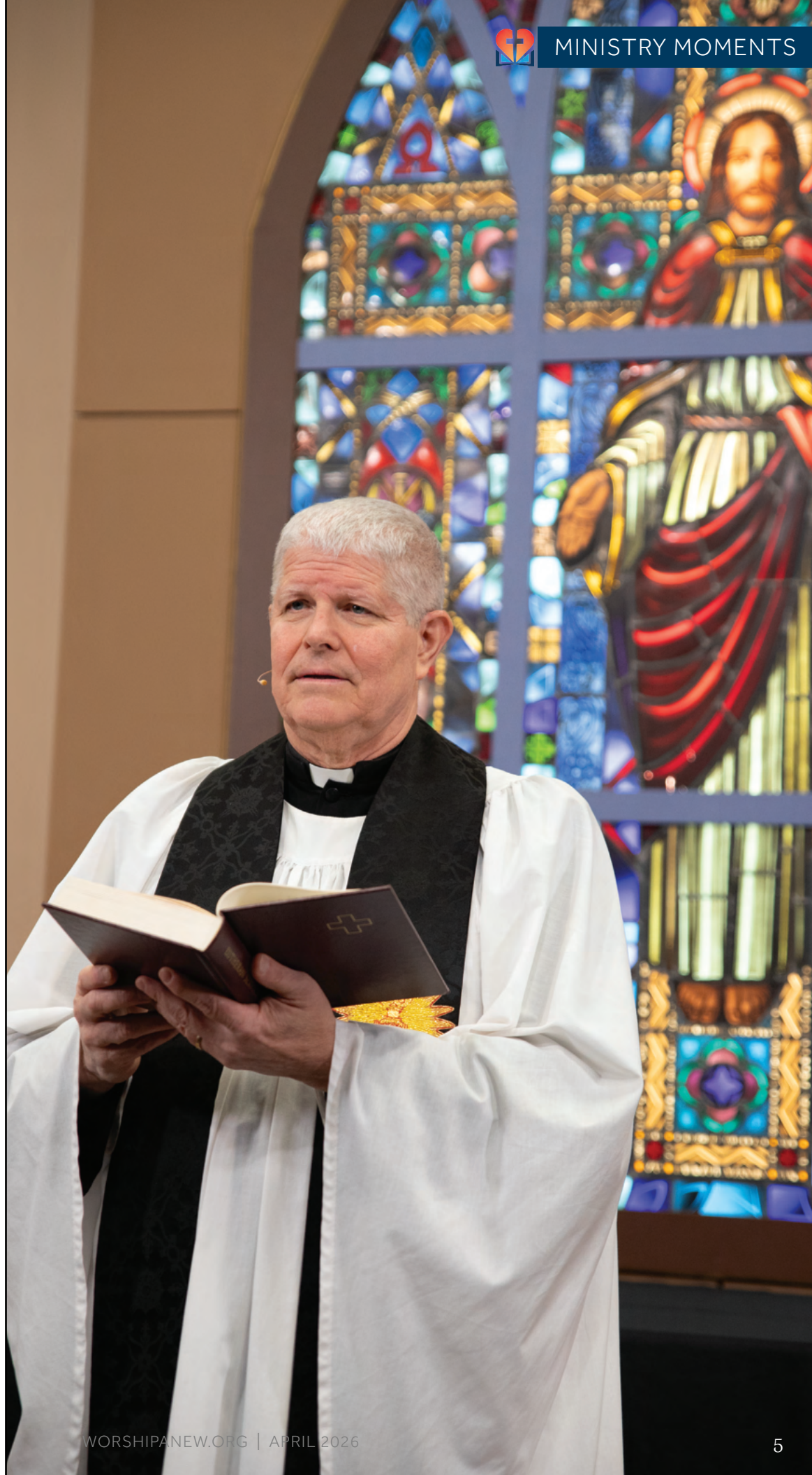


of those feelings are justified. Christ suffered unimaginable cruelty. More than that, He suffered because of the sins of mankind. But don't stay away on that account, for Christ's suffering was for you. By His wounds we are healed; we are saved. That's what makes this somber Friday good. Come and rejoice in our salvation."

The program will be available on Worship Anew's streaming services, including YouTube, Roku, Amazon Firestick, Apple TV, Google TV, Facebook, and on Worship Anew's website at worshipanew.org.

For more Lenten and Easter resources from Worship Anew, please visit worshipanew.org/lent.

The Rev. Douglas Punke leads the Good Friday program as a guest pastor on "Worship Anew."



50 Days of Blessings

From Easter Sunday to Pentecost, we invite you to join us for our **50 Days of Blessings**, a season to rejoice together in the countless ways God is using this ministry to bring His Word of comfort, hope, and life to aging adults.

A pastor's voice through the television. A devotion that arrives on the hardest of mornings. A care package that whispers, "You are cared for. You are loved." These are not small things. These are the blessings of this ministry, made possible by the mercy and grace of our risen Savior.

We will never know the full story of every life being touched. The lonely widow who finds comfort in a "Worship Anew" broadcast. The caregiver who opens Hope-Full Living before the sun rises, desperate for a word of grace. The grieving husband who receives a care package, reminding him he is not walking through his grief alone. These stories happen every day, in living rooms, in care facilities, and in grocery store aisles because people like you make this work possible.

Worship Anew is a crucial ministry in our church, touching countless lives with the Gospel of Jesus Christ every single day. The impact is profound, and it is your faithful prayers and support that make it all possible.

During these **50 Days of Blessings**, we invite you to reflect on the ways God has blessed you through this ministry and to consider a special gift, over and above your regular support, to help us continue carrying His Word to those who need it most.

Fifty days. Fifty opportunities to witness God's hand at work. Fifty reasons to lift grateful hearts and say, "Thank You, Lord, for the blessing of Worship Anew."

Thank you for joining us in these **50 Days of Blessings**, rejoicing together in the many ways this ministry touches lives every day with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is your prayers and faithful support that make the work of Worship Anew possible.

During our 50 Days of Blessings, we invite you to share your prayers and support with our ministry. Visit our website to learn more.

WorshipAnew.org/50Blessings

From Easter to Pentecost, we are sharing the blessings through our *50 Days of Blessings* campaign. Join us as we celebrate the many blessings that aging adults and their caregivers experience through Worship Anew. If you would like a copy of our 50 Blessings calendar so that you can follow along, please contact us at info@worshipanew.org or call (888) 286-8002.

How can you be a blessing today?

Be a blessing to others through Worship Anew by giving of your time, talents, treasures, and testimony.

TIME - Pray each day for the blessings shared. Follow us on social media to learn about each one and share how they impact your life or someone you love.

TALENTS - Share your skills with Worship Anew or other aging adults in your community who are in need of help.

TREASURES - Donate today in support of our campaign. Your gift makes a difference in the lives of aging adults across the nation. Help us raise \$50,000 in 50 days to continue to share the Gospel with aging adults in need.

TESTIMONY - Share with your church, your friends, and your community how Worship Anew has made a difference in your life.

APRIL				
<i>Sharing the Blessings</i>				
5 <i>50 Days of Blessings Begins</i> The promise of life on Easter.	6 When grief resources are a "bright spot" during my time of loss.	7 Watching <i>Worship Anew</i> on my local TV station.	8 Reading an Easter story with my grandchild from the Broadcaster magazine.	9 Feeling connected because Hope-Full Living devotions are written by seniors like me.
10 Affirming my faith through the Apostle's Creed each week on <i>Worship Anew</i> .	11 Watching <i>Worship Anew</i> anytime, anywhere on YouTube.	12 Finding "A Living Hope" in the blood-stained cross and empty tomb through Pastor Ahlersmeyer's message.	13 As my eyesight fails, still being able to hear a Hope-Full Living devotion read to me.	14 Finding articles to support my mental health in the Broadcaster magazine.
15 The ability to call on my telephone and listen to a <i>Worship Anew</i> message and hymns.	16 Watching my home church being featured on <i>Worship Anew</i> .	17 Reading the Broadcaster and finding peace in knowing that reconciliation is possible through Jesus Christ.	18 Feeling God's love through the weekly <i>Worship Anew</i> program.	19 Knowing that Jesus walks and talks with us in the Scriptures as shared in Pastor Jonker's message.
20 The larger print of the Hope-Full Living devotional makes it possible for me to read it.	21 Feeling loved by receiving a care package during a time of hurt.	22 Seeing resources made just for me from <i>Worship Anew</i> at my home church.	23 Hearing my favorite hymns from talented choirs each week on <i>Worship Anew</i> .	24 "Reading Hope-Full Living, and it's like the devotion was meant for just me."
25 Celebrating the 100 years of pastors from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and their gifts through <i>Worship Anew</i> .	26 Knowing the "Good Shepherd" is guiding me each day as shared in Pastor Shoemaker's message.	27 Easily watching <i>Worship Anew</i> on my Roku streaming device in my home.	28 Hearing the praises and laments of the Psalms each week on <i>Worship Anew</i> .	29 Visiting with my pastor as he shares resources from <i>Worship Anew</i> .
30 Reading practical articles in the Broadcaster magazine that support my wellbeing.				

MAY				
<i>Providing for Blessings</i>				
1 Knowing for 60 years, <i>Worship Anew</i> has been providing the Gospel for aging adults.	2 Rejoicing in the pastors from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, who preach on <i>Worship Anew</i> .	3 Knowing that I have a purpose in Christ as shared in Pastor Mueller's sermon.	4 "Clinging to the cross of Jesus" through the clutching cross in my care package.	5 Passing on my faith by sharing my time, talents, treasures, & testimony with <i>Worship Anew</i> .
6 Using the <i>Worship Anew</i> app on my phone to easily watch the weekly program.	7 Seeing that my church was prayed for by the <i>Worship Anew</i> staff this month.	8 Recording hymns with my choir for <i>Worship Anew</i> .	9 Finding comfort after a tragedy in my community after reading the Broadcaster this month.	10 The reminder to "keep on keeping" from Pastor Zeckzer's message.
11 Staff who helped me to get connected to a church in my community.	12 Opening my Hope-Full Living app on my phone each morning to read that day's devotion.	13 Sending me a resource on ambush grief so I better understand my circumstances.	14 Knowing "God's promises are sure and perfect" as shared in today's Hope-Full Living devotion on my app.	15 Comfort in knowing someone prayed over the care package that was sent to me.
16 Finding a way to process my own grief by volunteering with the Grief Ministry.	17 That Jesus is preparing a place for me as shared in Dr. Maier's message today.	18 The consistent voices of the <i>Worship Anew</i> Choir who sing my favorite hymns each week.	19 Using my talents to craft care items which will bring comfort to someone who is hurting.	20 Listening to the Gospel message through <i>Worship Anew</i> on KFUO Radio.
21 The staff member who took time to pray with me over the phone.	22 Seeing the words on the screen so that I can sing along with the hymns on <i>Worship Anew</i> .	23 Knowing soldiers abroad can hear the Gospel on <i>Worship Anew</i> through the American Forces Network.	24 Hearing about "Living Water" this Pentecost from Pastor Eggold.	25
26	27	28	29	30/31

WORSHIPANEW.ORG/50BLESSINGS

50 Days of Blessings Ends

Give today at WorshipAnew.org/50Blessings



Easter is about life!

By Thomas Moll
Director of Content

They didn't need the sun to tell them it was morning. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were already awake. Grief has a way of stealing sleep. They made their way to the tomb in the early morning darkness, carrying the weight of loss that only those who have stood at a graveside truly know. Death had seemed to have the final word. And for a moment, walking toward that sealed stone, it still did.

Then the earth shook.

What happened at that tomb on the first Easter morning was not simply a remarkable event in ancient history; it was a hinge point. It was the moment when everything the grave had ever claimed was called into question. An angel, his appearance like lightning, rolled back the stone and sat on it as if to say: "This door will not be closing again." The guards, hardened soldiers, fell like dead men, and the women who came expecting to mourn were instead told to go and tell:

"He is not here, for he has risen, as he said" (Matthew 28:6a).

Death is the reality confronting all of us. Scripture doesn't soften this truth, and neither should we. We are sinners, and the wages of sin is death. Every funeral we attend, every diagnosis that steals our breath, and every quiet moment when we sense our own fragility — these are not just interruptions to life; they are reminders of what we are separated from God. The tomb the women visited was real. The burial wrappings were real. The grief was real.

But Easter is about life.

King David, writing centuries before that first Easter morning, trusted in something he could not yet fully see: "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption" (Psalm 16:10). He had a confidence rooted not in his own goodness but in the faithfulness of God. And in Jesus, that confidence was vindicated completely.

The apostle Paul draws the direct line for us. Because Christ was raised, our lives are now hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). This is not poetic language; it is our present reality. The resurrection is not only something that happened to Jesus. It is something that changes us, right now, today. We are people whose lives are bound up in a living Lord. And because He lives, we shall also live.

For those of us who know what it is to be tired — tired in body, tired in spirit, tired from carrying the weight of years or illness or loss — Easter speaks directly to our weariness. The women came to the tomb exhausted by grief and left running with joy. That is the pattern of the resurrection life. It does not ignore the darkness. It rolls the stone away from it.

Jesus met the women on the road. He will meet you, too.

He is risen. He is risen indeed. And because He lives, so shall you — now and into eternity. That is the whole of Easter, and it is more than enough.

If you are experiencing grief, we invite you to learn about our Grief Ministry and the available resources. Please visit WorshipAnew.org/grief to learn more.



Worship Anew in April

Year 2026 | Series A



Jesus' Death – Good News

April 3, 2026 – Good Friday ~ Guest Pastor, Rev. Douglas Punke

It's Good Friday, but do you feel good about it? Or on Good Friday, do you feel bad for what Jesus suffered and why that was necessary? Jesus suffered and died for you — for your salvation, but He died and rose again for your everlasting good.

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 15:3; Isaiah 53:5

Readings: Psalm 51; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; John 19:17-30

Featured Choir: Concordia Lutheran High School, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Zion Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.



Easter Is About Life!

April 5, 2026 – Easter: The Resurrection of Our Lord ~ Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

Death is the reality confronting all of us because we are sinners. But Easter is about life! Because Jesus lives, we shall also live!

Sermon Text: Matthew 28:1-10

Readings: Psalm 16; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10

Featured Choirs: St. Michael Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.; LWML Indiana District Choir

Featured Art and Architecture: St. Peter Lutheran Church, Dahlonega, Ga.



A Living Hope

April 12, 2026 – Second Sunday of Easter ~ Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

Wishful thinking or rock-solid certainty? The Christian understanding of “hope” differs radically from that of the unbeliever. A blood-stained cross and an empty tomb create an eternity-changing hope, “A Living Hope.”

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Readings: Psalm 148; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

Featured Choirs: St. John Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, Ind; Indiana District LWML Choir

Featured Art and Architecture: Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Church, Alpharetta, Ga.



Opened Eyes

April 19, 2026 – Third Sunday of Easter ~ Rev. Shayne Jonker

Two disciples walked with Jesus and their hearts burned. The Emmaus road teaches us that Jesus walks with us and talks with us in the Scriptures. Take a stroll through the Scriptures searching for Jesus' death and resurrection, and your slow, sad hearts will burn, too.

Sermon Text: Luke 24:35

Readings: Psalm 116:1-14; Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Luke 24:13-35

Featured Choir: St. Paul Lutheran School, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: All Saints Lutheran Church, Blairsville, Ga.



The Perfect Shepherd

April 26, 2026 – Fourth Sunday of Easter ~ Rev. Paul Shoemaker

One of our favorite images of Jesus is that of the Good Shepherd. This Good Shepherd guides us, His sheep, to the glory and majesty of heaven. It cost Him dearly to do so. That is because He loves us so.

Sermon Text: John 10:1-10

Readings: Psalm 23; Acts 2:42-47; John 10:1-10

Featured Choirs: LWML Indiana District Choir; Concordia Lutheran High School, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Shepherd of the City Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.



Spring into being social

FIND HEALTH BENEFITS WITH THESE TIPS

*By Sheila Banks
Communication Specialist*

For many of us, the winter months are a time to slow down, rest, and isolate a bit. Maybe we long to avoid the colder temperatures, messy road conditions, or seasonal illnesses that make the rounds in the winter months.

There are also seasons in our lives that call for isolation: recovering from illness or injury, needing space to grieve the loss of a loved one, or changes in life that require time to process, for instance.

While taking a step back and isolating for a while is sometimes necessary, we also need social connection. God created us to connect with Him and with our fellow mankind. From the beginning of creation, God acknowledged

the human need for connection.

Genesis 2:18 says, “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”

In the New Testament, when Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees about the greatest commandment, He emphasized our connection with God and our connection with others.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39).



Throughout Scripture, we are told to love one another, encourage one another, and build one another up. This requires us to interact with others.

Research supports what the Bible tells us. Experts agree that we are social creatures by nature, and that social isolation and loneliness can increase a person's risk for:

- ▶ Heart disease and stroke
- ▶ Type 2 diabetes
- ▶ Depression and anxiety
- ▶ Suicidality and self-harm
- ▶ Dementia
- ▶ Earlier death

On the flip side, healthy social connections decrease the risk of these illnesses, improve physical and mental wellbeing, and can lead to longer life.

People with supportive relationships tend to be more physically active, make healthier eating choices, have better quality of sleep, and have support for their physical needs, such as rides to doctor appointments, the grocery store, and the like. This support improves their ability to cope with the highs and lows of life, making a positive impact on their mental health, as well.

With longer days and milder temperatures, spring is a great time to get outside and get social. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers the following tips for making connections:

ESTABLISH AND NURTURE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONNECTIONS WITH PEOPLE

- ▶ Make time in your routine to contact others who care about you.
- ▶ Reach out to different people to create a broad network of support.
- ▶ Join a group with shared interests to create a sense of belonging.

GIVE AND TAKE

- ▶ Reach out for help, even when it's hard to ask for it.
- ▶ Provide support to others in need of help.
- ▶ Find ways to be responsive and grateful to others. Gratitude works!

STRENGTHEN THE QUALITY OF SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

- ▶ Focus on building high-quality, strong, meaningful social connections.
- ▶ Find ways to be responsive, supportive, and grateful to others.
- ▶ Take steps to address conflict or negative feelings when they arise.

ADDRESS BARRIERS

- ▶ Take care of your health so you can readily connect socially and have fun.
- ▶ Don't let screen time distract you from connecting with people in person.
- ▶ Find ways to share the things you're already doing, such as exercising or cooking, with others.

SEEK HELP IF FEELING DISCONNECTED, LONELY, OR STRESSED

Health issues, divorce, or the death of a loved one can be very challenging. Talk with a professional who can identify ways to help you.

If you're in a season of life that requires physical isolation, don't let that deter you from staying connected with others. Make a phone call, send a text, video chat, or send a letter.

Information collected from the Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/social-connectedness/improving/index.html

LEAVE IT AT THE ALTAR

Finding God's help in reconciliation

By Rev. Michael Wakeland



So if you are offering *your gift* at the altar and there remember that *your brother* has something against you, *leave your gift* there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to *your brother*, and then come and offer *your gift*.

Matthew 5:23-24

One of the most challenging problems that we deal with in our life as Christians is when we have a conflict with someone in our congregation or church.

One morning, as I was working in my office, I heard a loud argument taking place in our sanctuary. I found two of our dear ladies in a heated argument, which was growing in its intensity each minute. When I entered into the situation, they both stopped and walked away in opposite directions. I later found out that this argument was over who was going to water the plants in the church.

But as I spoke with each of them more, I found that this was only the latest of many disagreements that had brought them into conflict with each other. Unfortunately, it seemed to be getting worse. When I suggested that the three of us sit down and talk about it, they were both very hesitant to take this step and told me that they really didn't want to talk about it.

Avoidance is one way of dealing with conflict. Unfortunately, especially when we are having difficulties with someone in our church, this can lead us to avoid going to worship or other activities that might bring us into contact with them. Sadly, the devil can use arguments and disagreements to sow division, which can sometimes grow, and even divide or destroy a congregation.

I think this is why Jesus gave us this guidance in Matthew 5. Jesus came as our Savior so that we can be reconciled to God. This peace with God has a powerful impact on our relationships. Receiving the forgiveness of God empowers us to be people that bring reconciliation and peace to others.

continued on page 14

continued from page 13

Our worship centers around this forgiveness of God. In the Invocation, we hear the words spoken over us in our Baptism, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” In the Absolution, our pastor speaks the words of forgiveness for the sins we have confessed. In the Offertory, we often sing, “Create in me a clean heart, O God,” trusting that He will do exactly what He has promised us. In the Lord’s Prayer, we pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” In the Lord’s Supper, we receive the very body and blood of Jesus, given and shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

Romans 5:10-11

Being reconciled to God, through the forgiveness we have through Jesus, is not just a nice thing. It is vital to us. Without it, we are lost and condemned sinners. But with this forgiveness, we are given a new life in Christ Jesus. As the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:18: “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

So, what do you do if you find yourself in conflict with someone, especially if they are a fellow Christian? If we look closely at what Jesus tells us in Matthew 5, we find some clear directions.

First, He says, don’t ignore the problem. Even though dealing with conflict is something we often try to avoid, Jesus tells us that it is vital that we take steps to deal with it. Even if that means interrupting your regular activities, it’s important to seek resolution of the conflict.

Secondly, He says, “Go.” Don’t wait for the other person to come to you. Take the initiative to reach out and seek reconciliation with them. This may be a humbling experience, especially if you feel that you are the one that has been wronged. Seeking out the person that we have wronged isn’t always easy, but it is a necessary step in the process.

Next, Jesus tells us to be reconciled with them. This reconciliation is based on what we have received from God through our Lord Jesus. We receive this wonderful gift from God through confession and the forgiveness He gives us because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Our reconciliation with





others is based on this, as well. Confessing the sin that caused the conflict and receiving and giving forgiveness as God's forgiven people is the key to reconciliation.

Finally, the last step that Jesus describes in the process is giving thanks to God, which He describes as returning and offering our gift. Being reconciled empowers us to joyfully return to worship and praise, as we thank God for the forgiveness that He gives us, and for the opportunities that we have to share this amazing mercy and forgiveness with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

I am thankful that I was able to see the power of God's gift of reconciliation in the lives of the two ladies that were fighting about who was going to water the flowers in the chapel. By remembering that they both were loved by God, and wanted to serve Him, they were able to forgive each other and work out a plan together for taking care of the chapel.

Too often the devil tempts us to underestimate the power of God's forgiveness in Christ. Satan wants us to doubt the grace of God. But thanks be to God, our Lord Jesus has overcome the power of sin. As St. Paul writes in Romans 5:10-11, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

So, rejoice in the amazing gift that God has given you. You are reconciled to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And as a result, you have the power to be reconciled to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Rev. Michael Wakeland is a retired pastor and serves on the Board of Directors for Worship Anew.



A gift that provides for you, shares Christ with generations to come

*By Jon Dize, CFRE
Director of Development*

By God's grace, your prayers and generosity help Worship Anew proclaim Christ's comfort and hope week after week to aging adults who need to hear that they are never forgotten by their Savior.

As we meet with faithful friends of the ministry like you, sometimes we hear two heartfelt desires: **"I want to keep supporting Worship Anew, but I still need reliable income."**

If those words resonate with you, I would like to introduce a way for you to accomplish both: a **Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)**.

A CGA is a simple agreement between you and our ministry. In exchange for your gift, Worship Anew provides you with fixed payments for life. When the Lord calls you home, the remaining value of your gift helps sustain Worship Anew so that the Gospel continues to fuel broadcasts, devotions, grief care, and resources that lift high the name of Jesus into the future.

With a CGA you can:

- ▶ Receive a fixed, above-average income for life. Your annuity rate is based on your age when you establish it and never changes, giving you dependable cash flow you can count on every month, quarter, or year.

- ▶ Enjoy a charitable income tax deduction in the year you set up the annuity (subject to IRS rules).
- ▶ Leave a lasting legacy!

The apostle Paul said in Acts 20:35b, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." With a CGA, the Lord allows you to do both — receive needed income while blessing countless others through the proclamation of His Gospel.

Would you like an illustration of what a CGA could look like for you? Call our ministry team at (888) 286-8002, and we will provide a free, no obligation report. You can also visit our website at WorshipAnew.org/legacy to see how a CGA might work for you or a loved one's needs.

May God bless you with His peace and joy in every season of life.

Scripture describes this kind of stewardship so beautifully: "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." (Proverbs 11:25). Please consider a CGA today, and contact us for a no-obligation illustration of how this could work for you.



Why are the elements removed from the altar on Good Friday?

Good Friday is unlike any other day in the church year. It is the day we solemnly remember Christ's crucifixion — His suffering, death, and burial. In many Lutheran churches, the paraments (the cloths adorning the altar, pulpit, and lectern) are removed, and the altar is stripped bare. Some congregations also extinguish candles and remove flowers and other decorative elements.

This practice draws from ancient Christian tradition and reflects the profound weight of the day. The bare altar visually proclaims what the liturgy announces: The Lord has died. There is no celebration, no festivity — only grief, repentance, and awe before the cross. Just as Christ was stripped of His garments before His crucifixion, the stripping of the altar becomes a wordless sermon, helping us enter more fully into the solemnity of His suffering.

The removal of elements also heightens the joy of Easter. When the altar is adorned again on Resurrection Sunday — filled with white paraments, lilies, and light — the contrast powerfully proclaims that death has been swallowed up in victory.

Why was Jesus given a crown of thorns?

The soldiers who placed a crown of thorns on Jesus' head intended it as mockery. They dressed Him in a purple robe, pressed thorns into His brow, and called out, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (John 19:2-3). Their cruelty was meant to humiliate — to ridicule the very idea that this beaten man could be a king.

But what the soldiers meant as contempt, God ordained as truth. Jesus is the King of kings, and even in His suffering, the crown (however cruel) declared it. The thorns themselves carry deeper meaning. In Genesis 3:17-18, God cursed the ground after Adam's sin, causing it to bring forth "thorns and thistles." Thorns, in Scripture, are bound up with the curse that sin brought into the world. When Jesus wore that crown, He was bearing the curse of sin on our behalf, taking upon Himself what we deserved so that we might be freed from it. As Paul writes, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13).

In Matthew 22, where was the wedding guest supposed to get a wedding garment?

Ancient custom held that wealthy hosts, especially kings, would provide wedding garments for their guests. For those gathered hastily from the dirty and dusty roads, this provision would have been expected. The man without a garment had been offered one and refused it, choosing instead to come on his own terms.

Lutheran theology finds beautiful Gospel meaning here. Luther taught that the wedding garment represents the righteousness of Christ received through faith and Baptism (Galatians 3:27). God provides what we cannot supply ourselves. Our own righteousness, as Isaiah reminds us, is like a "polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6). The offense of the man thrown out wasn't that he lacked access to a garment; it was that he rejected the one freely given. In Christ, God clothes us in His own holiness.

A note from the Editor ...

In our letters to the editor section, we would like to answer any and all questions that you have about Scripture, aging well, and our ministry. Please send your questions to editor@worshipanew.org. Please know that we will try to answer as many questions as we can. Thank you and enjoy!

FINDING SLEEP AS WE FIND PEACE

By Katelin Moquin
Copy Editor

Working with seniors through our Hope-Full Living devotional, I have noticed a recurring theme — sleeplessness and anxiety. For example, Hope-Full Living author, Angela Gielow of Harvester, Mo., writes, “As I am falling asleep, sometimes negative thoughts begin to swirl in my head. If I permit one negative thought to progress, it seems to gain power and spiral inward. It attaches to other negative thoughts and a real ‘pity party’ can evolve.”

Sleep and mood share a bidirectional relationship: Poor sleep can affect mood, and mood disturbances can impair sleep. While insomnia’s classification can span various mental or medical illnesses, its correlation to emotional well-being is significant.

TYPES AND PREVALENCE

In the medical world, trouble falling asleep is termed “sleep-onset insomnia,” and trouble staying asleep is called “sleep-maintenance insomnia.” Some people experience both types of insomnia. “Chronic insomnia” occurs at least three nights per week for three months or longer and warrants medical evaluation.

The Sleep Foundation, which is backed by a team of researchers, writers, and sleep specialists, estimates that 10 to 30% of all adults live with insomnia. The National Library of Medicine publishes research that up to 75% of adults older than 65 experience insomnia symptoms.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IN OLDER ADULTS

“Insomnia in Older Adults,” an article published by the

National Library of Medicine, cites the following reasons for sleeplessness among older adults:

- ▶ Reduced physical activity and mobility.
- ▶ Limited social engagement.
- ▶ Irregular daily routines post-retirement.
- ▶ Age-related changes in circadian rhythms, the chemical mechanism in the brain that regulates wake/sleep cycles.

CONSEQUENCES OF SLEEPLESSNESS

For many of us, the consequences of sleeplessness are evident, but others are lying under the surface — not immediately showing the damage they are doing:

- ▶ Daytime fatigue and an increased need to nap.
- ▶ Associated risk of mood disturbances, irritability, mental fog, and psychological disorders.
- ▶ Associated risk of medical conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and chronic pain.
- ▶ Higher risk of accidents.

While sometimes insomnia is a primary diagnosis, other times, insomnia is secondary to some other condition, such as restless legs syndrome. Identifying the root cause is important and working with medical professionals is a key step.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING SLEEP QUALITY

Medical intervention may be one necessary solution, but good sleep hygiene can also provide some relief for those who suffer from sleepless nights.



- ▶ Maintain consistent sleep and wake times.
- ▶ Establish a calm routine before bed (e.g., read Scripture, pray, journal, listen to music, or stretch).
- ▶ Limit time on electronic screens in the evening (e.g., televisions, tablets, laptops, and cell phones).
- ▶ Keep the bedroom cool and dim.
- ▶ Exercise earlier in the day rather than near bedtime.
- ▶ Minimize caffeine and alcohol consumption.
- ▶ Consult a doctor for chronic insomnia.

WHEN SLEEP REMAINS ELUSIVE

Even with proper habits and treatment, sleeplessness may occur due to illness, unfamiliar environments, caregiving responsibilities, and other stressors.

During long, dark, wakeful hours, engage in restorative activities, such as breathing exercises or reading devotions which cultivate positive mental health and can prevent the spiral of anxiety. While it may be impossible to force the brain into sleeping, make wakeful time optimally beneficial. One sure way to achieve this benefit is by spending time in faithful reflection and prayer.

FAITH-BASED PERSPECTIVE

Take heart that sleeplessness is a common, though frustrating, human experience — even many Bible characters experience sleepless struggles! If wakefulness seeks to devour your peace, consider the following Scriptures. (Use a print Bible rather than an electronic device. Print is kinder to a brain that is trying to rest!):

- ▶ Safety and protection: God's presence brings safety through the night (Psalm 91, Psalm 121).
- ▶ Rest as a gift: Sleep is a blessing from God, not earned through anxiety (Psalm 127).
- ▶ Peace for the weary: Jesus offers rest from burdens (Matthew 11:25-30).
- ▶ Trust over fear: Trusting God overcomes fear, leading to restful sleep (Psalm 56, Philippians 4:10-20).

Hope-Full Living author, Jan Brunette of Holts Summit, Mo., writes, "Lying sleepless at night, we allow His Spirit to help us focus on the mercies and grace of the Lord. We imagine His goodness flowing down upon us and praise Him for who He is." Even in the darkest nights, we are never the only one awake. The Lord, watchful and strong, is at our side.



THE LIVING GRAMMAR OF EASTER

By Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Ahlersmeyer

Greeting: Christ is risen! Alleluia!
Response: He is risen, indeed!
Alleluia!

History tells us that Christians have greeted one another with these triumphant words since at least the fourth century. They remain the heartbeat of Easter morning, echoing beyond sanctuaries into narthexes, hallways, parking lots, and front steps — wherever believers gather and depart in joy.

I remember one dear parishioner, now resting in the risen Lord, who would call out the Easter greeting the moment we stepped from our cars into the cool, pre-dawn darkness for the sunrise service. Before the sun had risen, his voice proclaimed the greater Light: Christ is risen! And it felt as if creation itself was answering back.

As a self-professed grammar nerd, I have long been struck by one feature of this greeting — the present tense.

*Christ **is** risen! He **is** risen, indeed!*

Why “is” if the resurrection happened 2,000 years ago?

Because Easter is not locked in the past. It is living reality. The present tense does more than describe — it declares. It draws us in. It invites us to stand inside the event itself. Easter is history with a living heartbeat —

past event, present power, and future promise.

The present tense is a powerful tool. It does more than tell a story — it pulls you inside it. Instead of watching events unfold from a distance, you experience them as they happen. Writers will use the present tense so that they and the reader stand on the same ground, sharing the moment together. That is why movies and television can move us so deeply; they place us inside the action. We see it. We feel it. We live it.

Easter is that — and infinitely more.

Easter is not a faded scene from long ago. It is a past event with present power. The resurrection of Jesus is not merely remembered; it is lived. It is, as the hymn says, “Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow” (“Great Is Thy Faithfulness” LSB #809). Our Lord is the same “yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). The risen Christ is not confined to history. We live now in what He accomplished then, even as we await the glory still to come. As Paul declares, “I press on ... because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Philippians 3:12b). Past grace. Present strength. Future promise — all held together in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.

Easter speaks in the present tense

because the living Christ promises to be with us always (Matthew 28:20), including *now* — with power, with peace, and with unending joy.

The same living grammar shapes our Baptism. I was baptized on the Fourth of July in 1954. That moment lies in the past. Yet, I do not say merely, “I **was** baptized.” I confess with joy, “I **am** baptized.” God’s promise joins me now to Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 6:3–5). His victory animates my present and secures my future.

Marriage works similarly. God joined together Janet and me on August 11, 1979, in Redondo Beach, Calif. That day is part of history, but I do not say, “I **was** married.” I say, “I **am** married.” A promise spoken then remains alive today and continues forward — until death do us part.

So, we sing our alleluias this Easter — present, past, and forever:

*“Jesus Christ is ris’n **today**, Alleluia!
Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
Who **did once** upon the cross,
Alleluia! Suffer to redeem our loss.
Alleluia!*

*“Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!
Praise **eternal** as His love, Alleluia!
Praise Him, all ye heav’nly host,
Alleluia! Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Alleluia!” (“Jesus Christ Is Risen
Today” LSB #457)*



Easter speaks in the present tense because the risen Christ lives in the present — for us. And for this living, reigning reality, we give eternal thanks to God.

Christ **is** risen! Alleluia! He **is** risen, indeed! Alleluia!

The Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Ahlersmeyer is the pastor at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., and serves as a pastor on “Worship Anew.”

This month’s study text:

Straining Toward the Goal

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Philippians 3:12-21

Reflection Questions:

When we say, “Christ *is* risen,” what are we really confessing?

Why do you think Christians speak in the present tense instead of saying, “Christ was risen”? As you reflect on Hebrews 13:8 — that Jesus is the same “yesterday and today and forever” — how does that steady truth shape the way you face this season of your life?

How are you living today from what Jesus accomplished long ago?

Paul writes in Philippians 3:12 about pressing on because Christ has made him His own. As you look back over the years, where have you seen the cross and empty tomb give you strength for hard days and hope for the future?

This Bible study compares Easter to stepping inside a story rather than simply watching it unfold.

In what ways have you experienced the resurrection not just as something you believe, but as something you *live*? Where have you felt especially drawn into Christ’s risen life — in worship, in prayer, in the fellowship of other believers?

Do you ever say, “I am baptized”?

Instead of only remembering the day it happened, what does it mean to claim your Baptism as a present reality? As you read Romans 6:3-5, how does knowing you are joined to Christ’s death and resurrection steady your heart today?

Jesus promises, “I am with you always.”

At this stage of life, where does that promise matter most to you? How does knowing the risen Christ is with you now — not just in the past and not only in heaven someday — bring you peace, courage, and joy?

Prayer:

Living Lord Jesus Christ,

You are my Help in ages past, my Hope for years to come, and my living Lord today. Grant that I may walk each day in the joy and strength of Your resurrection, knowing that Your victory is not only remembered but present and powerful now. Sustain me in trial, fill me with courage and peace, and by Your Spirit make me a blessing to others; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

SHARING HIS LIGHT TOGETHER

*By Julie Beers
Donor Relations & Volunteer Engagement Coordinator*

The following story is meant to be shared with the little ones in your life. It is important that we share the message of the Gospel and the truth of Easter with those that Jesus specifically said He wanted to come to Him (Matthew 19:14). So, curl up with your grand- or great-grandchildren and share this story together. If you live far away from them, cut this out and mail it to them. (Remember how fun it was to receive an actual letter?) No matter what stage of life we're in, we're called to share and live out the Gospel message as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Emily was so excited because today she was going to her Nanny's house. Nanny lives on a farm and Emily loves helping her when she's there.

"Nanny!" Emily squealed as she jumped out of the car. "I'm wearing my boots so I can help with chores!"

Nanny rushed up and lifted Emily off the ground into a big bear hug. Her little yellow boots fell off her feet and hit the ground. Nanny giggled.

"I think those boots are a bit big, Angel Face."

"Mommy says I'll grow into them soon."

Emily grabbed her overnight bag and took her stuff to her room.

"What are we going to do, Nanny?" She said as she bounded into the living room.

"I have something I want to show you."

The two of them walked outside into the backyard. As they neared the barn, Emily saw a bird swooping down toward them and making a lot of noise.

"You like birds, don't you, Nanny?"

"Yes, sweetie, I do."

Emily's eyes glanced toward the rows of birdhouses and bird feeders that Nanny had in

her backyard.

“But you REALLY like birds, don’t you?”

Nanny smiled, “Do you remember what we’re getting ready to celebrate?”

Emily’s brow furrowed in thought and then her eyes widened in excitement. “Easter!” she exclaimed.

“You’re right! Come here.” Nanny opened her arms and lifted Emily up to a flower box under the window on the front of the barn. Emily peered into the wooden box. There was a nest with three little blue eggs in it.

“Eggs remind me of the joy of Easter,” Nanny said.

“Is that because we go hunting for them?”

“Do you remember what happened on Good Friday, Emily?”

“Jesus died on the cross for our sins,” Emily said softly.

“Yes, He did. And then they placed Him in a tomb. I bet everyone who loved Him was so sad and confused. You see, sometimes God uses situations that seem unlikely to bring about new life. See these eggs? They are just sitting here still and quiet. You would think nothing is happening, but what you can’t see is that a baby bird is growing. Soon the eggs will hatch, and new life will emerge. When they placed Jesus in the tomb, for three days all seemed still and quiet. His disciples lost hope that anything incredible was happening.”

“But He arose, Nanny! Something



AI Generated Image

amazing did happen!”

“Exactly! God was at work! After three days, Jesus rose from the dead and now He offers new life for those who follow Him!”

As Nanny finished her words, they heard a cracking noise and a tiny beak poked through the blue shell.

“Oh, it’s hatching for Jesus, Nanny!” Emily squealed with Easter joy.

“It sure is, honey,” Nanny said as she planted a kiss on Emily’s cheek. “It sure is!”

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Sharing the Blessings

From Easter to Pentecost, we
are sharing blessings with a
50 Days of Blessings campaign.

Follow along as we share about the many
blessings available to aging adults and their
caregivers through Worship Anew.

Become a Blessing at
WorshipAnew.org/50Blessings