

THE
LION'S TALE

The Seasonal Magazine of St. Mark's, Mystic



EASTER 2022

FIVE EASTER ENCOUNTERS

By Pastor Adam

Mary Magdalene also knew exactly where she wanted to on that fateful day, the Sunday after Jesus' gruesome death on the cross. Mary wanted to be with Jesus – his body, she thought, but she ended up getting much more than she bargained for. After Peter and the other disciples go home, Mary remains at the tomb, the better to be close to Jesus' last known whereabouts. Jesus' body is gone, and she doesn't know why. She doesn't know who took it. She doesn't know where it could possibly be now, or why, if someone stole the body, did they fold burial garments nice and neat and stick them in the corner. She doesn't know much on that strange and mysterious morning, but she knows one thing. She came to find Jesus and she won't stop until she does.

Thankfully, the Risen Christ hasn't gone far. He comes upon her in the garden, but she doesn't recognize him at first. "Whom are you looking for?" he asks. What a question! At first glance the answer is simple. "I'm looking for Jesus." But embedded in this simple answer are a host of complications that keep us from recognizing the Risen Christ in our midst. Throughout the last two chapters of the Gospel according to John, the risen Jesus appears to his friends five times. In each encounter, a barrier could have kept the disciples from recognizing him, barriers like sorrow, fear, doubt, frustration, and shame. But in each encounter, Jesus' presence dispels those barriers.

The same barriers often stand in our way and keep us from embracing the Risen Christ in our lives. These barriers trick us with their immediacy or their heaviness. They fill up our field of vision so there's nowhere else to look. But today, on this feast of the Resurrection, Jesus gives us the opportunity to answer his question anew and bust through those barriers once again. And that question is: Whom are you looking for?

The second half of our Gospel reading this morning begins with tears. "But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb." Her sorrow could be a barrier keeping her from seeing the Risen Christ. Indeed, when she sees him, she thinks he's the gardener. She even accuses him of stealing her Lord's body. She's hurting, and not even a vision of angels staunches her pain. In moments of sorrow, the Risen Christ asks us: "Whom are you looking for?" Responding with his name won't necessarily make the sorrow go away. But it will help us notice Christ's presence in our midst, suffering with us, and offering us strong arms to carry our burdens when they become too heavy to bear alone.

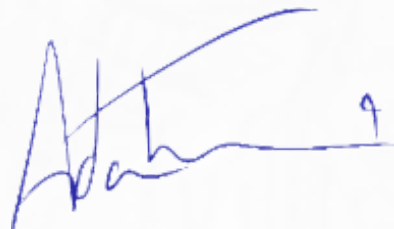
Later that evening, "The disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities" (John 20:19, CEB). The disciples have hidden themselves away because they're afraid they will be next for the cross. The fear is so palpable that it hangs in the room like fog, silencing all attempts at conversation and isolating each disciple with their own dark thoughts. But a locked door and the fog of fear cannot stop the Risen Christ from appearing in their midst. He dispels their terror with a word of peace. In moments of fear, the Risen Christ asks us: "Whom are you looking for?" As we breathe out his name, we breathe in this same peace, the peace that passes all understanding.

The next week, Thomas is with them. He wasn't in the house the last time, so he still hasn't seen the Risen Christ. "I need to see him and touch to know you are telling the truth," he says to his friends. His doubt is understandable. How could he possibly believe a story so incredible without some shred of proof? And yet when the Risen Christ stands before him, he falls to his knees and utters the most resounding declaration of faith in the whole Gospel: "My Lord and my God!" And all without ever touching Jesus. In moments of doubt, the Risen Christ asks us: "Whom are you looking for?" And in those moments, even the smallest, most doubtful voice we can muster is enough to say, "You, Lord."

Some time later, seven of Jesus' friends are out on the Sea of Tiberias fishing. Or should I say trying to fish. They're out all night and they catch nothing. You can imagine their frustration mounting as the morning sun gilds the clouds. But then someone on the beach beckons to them and tells them to cast the net one more time. And the bulging net is so full they can't haul it in. In moments of frustration, the Risen Christ asks us: "Whom are you looking for?" Saying his name helps us reorient ourselves to what matters and let go of our frustration long enough to try again, this time with Jesus' posture of abundance replacing our frustrating and shriveled posture of scarcity.

Once on the beach, with the fish grilling away on a charcoal fire, the Risen Christ takes Simon Peter aside. He knows Peter feels ashamed for the way he acted on that terrifying night when Jesus was arrested. Three times Peter denied knowing Jesus. So three times Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" With each affirmation – "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you" – Jesus replaces Peter's shame with a new sense of worth. And with this new sense of worth comes a mission: "Feed my sheep." In moments of shame, the Risen Christ asks us: "Whom are you looking for?" Shame has a way of making us feel unworthy to say his name. And so he asks again and again until we know that his concern for us makes us worthy to respond: "I'm looking for you, Lord." And for him to say, "Well, you found me, and no amount of shame will ever make you unworthy of my love."

Sorrow. Fear. Doubt. Frustration. Shame. These are just a few of the barriers that can keep us from being aware of the Risen Christ in our midst. But in each case, Jesus does not let those barriers keep him from coming near, embracing us, and never letting us go. Never letting anyone go. This is the power of the Resurrection: the barrier is temporary, but the embrace is eternal. The One we are looking for at the center of our faith outlasts and outshines all the obstacles we clutter our lives with. So when you leave this church today, go out into the world with Jesus' question to Mary on your lips: "Whom are you looking for?" Today, tomorrow, every day, and on into eternity, make this your answer: "You, Lord. I'm looking for you." And hear the Risen Christ speak in your soul, "You found me. And you have been found."



LIFE ANEW

By Teresa Johnson

This past winter we had a huge tree removed from our yard. It was diseased, and we'd fret over it falling on our house or the neighbor's. Before it came down, I hugged the tree, whispered my thanks for its beauty and shade, and apologized for having to end its life. Since it was January, in my mind at least, the tree was in a deep coma and somehow would feel less pain. Really, how could I watch it cut down just as its new life was budding?

From the side of its massive trunk, I plucked a twiggy branch that had delighted us with its fall colors. Just knowing we wouldn't see that again made me want to preserve it. I brought the little twig inside and stuck it in a small vase on my kitchen windowsill. There it had a view of where the parent tree had stood.

As Spring came, I looked more closely at the thing and saw that its tips had the slightest tinge of red. With an abundance of hope, I dipped the end in some rooting compound, planted it in a pot with fresh soil, and again placed it on the windowsill.

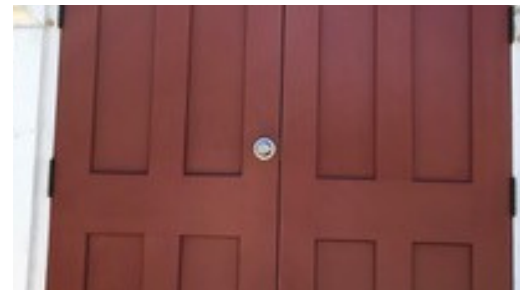
What a great ending to this story if I could report it has rooted and produced leaves! But I can't because it hasn't – not yet. Maybe it's too soon; I have to wait and see.

Wait and see. We have abundant examples of waiting for new life: Parents waiting nine long months for the birth of their child, gardeners waiting for the first crocuses to emerge after a cold winter; the list goes on and on.

Each year as Lent ends and we pass through Holy Week, we imagine the wait the disciples had after the horrendous death of Jesus. Most were afraid and either forgot or disbelieved his telling them he'd rise again. They had to wait and see.

Waiting is hard. And the hardest times are when there's no guarantee of that fresh start, blessed healing, or glorious "yes" emerging. That's when faith comes in on the wings of hope.

Will my little twig root and grow? I really don't know. But in the meantime, it sits at my kitchen window symbolizing to me the hope that it just might. After all, one way or the other, new life is guaranteed.



THE RED DOORS

By Bev Olsen

Our church doors have been replaced! Alleluia!

The original doors of the church opened over 150 years ago in December 1867. While solid, these old doors also had become cumbersome to open and difficult to lock using the old-fashioned skeleton key. In 2016, Susan Kietzman, our Junior Warden at the time, started the process of replacing these doors. At first, unwilling to replace such a historical part of our building, we looked for someone to repair and upgrade the doors and so maintain the historical integrity of the building. To that end, Susan approached Alan Schaeffer, whom she knew from working at Mystic Seaport. Mr. Schaeffer is a craftsman who has built boats in the tradition of the 19th century for many years and had the skill and the knowledge of the carpentry to rebuild our doors. After a conversation about repairing the doors, the decision was made to build new doors in the tradition of the 19th century. This required handcrafting solid mahogany doors 10 ½ feet tall and about 125 pounds each.

Alan Schaeffer worked alone on much of this project. Selecting materials appropriate to the historical era of the church's founding, he crafted the doors on his off hours, while working at the Seaport and supporting his family and raising his five children. Mr. Schaeffer approached this work as a spiritual task, instilling the work of his hands with his faith. Meticulous in his craftsmanship, he built these doors in the same fashion as the original doors, but adding the more modern feature of an emergency crash bar. Until last spring, our Junior Wardens, Susan Kietzman and Kurt Cramer, had shepherded this project, when Craig Olsen began work with Alan to finish the project, lending his hands as a carpenter's helper to move doors and assist with finish work.

The doors were hung for Palm Sunday. Along with the safety bar, these bars were hung — in perfect alignment — on ball bearing hinges, which make these heavy doors open and close with the great ease, as the ushers discovered with great glee. The new doors lock automatically when closed — no more struggling with the skeleton key — and yet will open with a gentle push of the safety bar.

As is customary, the doors are red. The reason for this is obscure; there are many proposed explanations. The most mundane is that once upon a time painting the doors of a building red signified that the mortgage had been paid in full.

These red doors could also remind us of the Passover in which God commanded the Hebrews to mark their doors with sacrificial lamb's blood to protect them from his judgment on the firstborn in the land of Egypt. For Christians this symbolizes the blood of Jesus "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Red is liturgically significant: It represents the blood of the martyrs calling us to lives of self-sacrificial love and discipleship and faithful witness ("martyr" comes from the Greek for "witness") to the good news of Jesus Christ. Red also represents the fire of the Holy Spirit: When we enter the church we place our lives in the sphere of the gift-giving Spirit who births the church and comforts, strengthens, challenges, refines, and transforms us. The red doors of churches have traditionally indicated sanctuary refuge, safety, and hospitality. We hope you find all of these at St. Mark's.

At present the old doors lie in Room 5 of the Education Wing where you are welcome to come by for viewing. They will be mounted on the north wall of the old apartment facing the Memorial Garden, a memorial to all those who have walked through our doors.



PASSION OF THE CHRIST

By Robert F. Welt

Not long after the famous Mel Gibson film was released, one of my students at Fitch Middle School approached me and asked me if I'd seen *The Passion of the Christ*. I told him I hadn't, but I'd read the book. "Oh," he said, "I didn't know there was a book."

HOLY
BIBLE

NOMINEES FOR THE XVI BISHOP DIOCESAN

By Zachary Kohl

Greetings Fellow Parishioners,

As one of your Convention Delegates, I want to give you a brief idea of my prayerful and Spirit-led experience as a member of the Bishop Transition Committee. I was elected to the BTC by the Mission Council when this process began in spring 2021. Each stage of the process has been guided by prayer and reflection from listening to the people of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut to drafting the Profile to interviewing candidates to our discernment of who God might be calling to be our next Bishop Diocesan. I have been impressed with how seriously, competently and faithfully each member of the BTC has taken this process. I am excited by what each of the Committee Nominees will bring to ECCT and am confident that any one of them would make a great Bishop.

We will have multiple opportunities for discussion in May. Please understand that the content of my conversations with the BTC and Nominees and access to any non-public information and materials remains confidential. My role in the process as one of your delegates is to listen to where you think the Holy Spirit is leading us in this discernment and why.

In the interim, please review the information on each Nominee provided on the BTC website, ctbishopsearch.org. Pray over each Nominee. Then, try to attend a Meet & Greet event or session between May 9 and 14, especially the one at St. Mark's on May 9 at 6:30 p.m.

I look forward to discerning with you who the Holy Spirit may be leading us to elect as our next Bishop Diocesan.



The Rev. Glenna Huber
RECTOR
Church of the Epiphany
Washington, DC



The Rev. Jeffrey Mello
RECTOR
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Brookline, MA



The Very Rev. Kate Moorehead
DEAN
St. John's Episcopal Cathedral
Jacksonville, FL



The Rev. Canon Tanya Wallace
RECTOR
All Saints' Episcopal Church
South Hadley, MA

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Brae Rafferty
Katy Roberts
Jackie Stoltz
Fred Ziegler

MINISTERS

All members of the congregation
The Rev. Adam Thomas, Rector
David Tubbs, Music Director
Faithe Emerich, Communications
Bev Olsen, Senior Warden
Rob Christian, Junior Warden
Eric Bookmiller, Clerk
Dave Cruthers, Treasurer



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15 Pearl Street • Mystic, CT 06355
(860) 572-9549 • www.stmarksmystic.org