



April 17, 2025

*[The women] remembered [Jesus'] words, and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ... But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. – Luke 24:8-9,11*

Dear Friends,

The women who had prepared spices to anoint Jesus' body went early in the morning to the tomb, and they found it empty. Heavenly messengers reminded them of Jesus' promise—that he would be arrested and executed and rise on the third day. And yet when they shared this astounding, wonderful news with the men, they were at first dismissed and disbelieved. Like the Pharisees who accompanied Jesus on Palm Sunday, who nervously tried to shush the exultant crowd, the eleven and all the rest may have followed Jesus, but they doubted his power—the power he exhibited not by opposing violence and injustice on their own terms, but by placing himself in their hands, and dying with a prayer for forgiveness of their human agents. The male disciples were sure that strength and ruthlessness prevails, and that those whom worldly power cuts down stay down. It wasn't until Peter saw the empty tomb for himself that his sad resignation began to fall away.

No one was there at the moment when life returned to Jesus' broken body. No one witnessed him take his first breath again or rise from the place where Joseph of Arimathea had laid him. In Luke's Easter story, no one sees the stone roll away from its place. No one glimpses the risen Jesus first stepping out into the recreated world that his undone death has made. Like the mustard seed sprouting underground and becoming a tree, like the hidden yeast leavening the dough, the new creation, the realm of God, takes shape quietly and invisibly. It leaves us, like Peter, to grapple with its undeniable effects—the tomb is empty, and the risen Teacher awaits us elsewhere.

The hardest thing for me sometimes is to trust the good news that love wins, that Jesus' way of grace and humble trust leads to victory. The brash and proud voices shouting at us today would have us believe otherwise—that the triumph of Jesus and those who follow his way is an idle tale, fake news. The kind of power wielded by Caesar and Pilate seems everywhere ascendant.

Nevertheless, the tomb is empty. Jesus is not there. He has been raised. We know this because we are witnesses to resurrection—when dividing walls among us fall away, when strangers find a welcome, when wrongs are forgiven and healed, when simple gifts are multiplied far beyond hope or imagination, Christ appears alive and risen. We believe and we hope, because we have seen what the resurrection of Jesus has done.

The Book of Order calls the church—in its individual congregations and as a whole—to be and to become “a community of faith, hope, love, and witness” (G-3.0201, G-3.0301, G-3.0401, G-3.0501). May our shared witness to Jesus' resurrection power and the ringing, defiant Alleluias of Easter melt our doubts. Christ is risen, Alleluia!

Grace and Peace,

Rev. David A. Baer, Stated Clerk