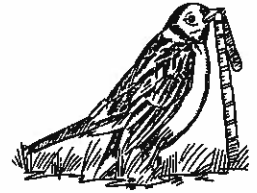


The Beacon



WEST CHARLTON UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 882-9874 www.westcharltonupc.org

APRIL

Gospel Burial and Resurrection Story "Jeopardy"

The popular television game show Jeopardy requires contestants to state their answer in the form of a question. In order to get a taste of the differences among the burial and empty tomb stories of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, try this sample "Jeopardy"-like challenge (without financial rewards!). The category is Gospel Burial and Empty Tomb Discovery Stories.

(Write the letter of the correct question below to the left of each of the ten answers, the answers are hidden further on in the beacon, and no cheating)

Possible correct questions are

a. What is Matthew? b. What is Mark? c. What is Luke? d. What is John? e. What are two of the four Gospel accounts? f. What are three of the four Gospel accounts? g. What are four of the four Gospel accounts?

1. Identifies Joseph of Arimathea as a primary participant in burying Jesus.
2. Identifies Nicodemus as a partner in Jesus' burial.
3. Tells that one woman (or more) witnessed men placing Jesus' body in the garden tomb.
4. Identifies Mary Magdalene as an early morning visitor to Jesus' burial place.
5. Identifies at least two persons named Mary as early-morning visitors to Jesus' burial place.
6. Says that a woman (or women) brought spices to anoint the body.
7. Reveals that an angel rolled away the stone and sat on it while waiting to make the resurrection announcement.
8. Says that "a young man dressed in white" (and in the tomb) announced Jesus' resurrection.
9. Says that "two men in dazzling clothes" (inside the tomb) announced Jesus' resurrection.
10. Explains that the first three visitors to Jesus' tomb initially encountered no messenger making an announcement, but the first of the three visitors saw and encountered two angels sitting where Jesus' body had been placed on Friday evening.

Pastoral Reflection,

In 2005 a Web site for sports fans of a particular American university included a posting from someone who was remembering an unusual football game from the school's 1978 season. From what the person wrote, some Web site readers who had attended that game drew the conclusion that the writer may not actually have been present at the game. They wondered about this because a few details in the person's story did not match their own memories from an autumn afternoon twenty-seven football seasons earlier. (It does not matter that the writer may not personally have been present.

In the posting, he or she did not claim to have been present that day, and, of course, he or she had every right to post questions and observations with respect to a past event, whether in attendance years ago or not!) The writer noted correctly the final score, noted correctly the coaches' names, and noted correctly the name of the substitute quarterback who was the surprise hero for the underdog team. The writer did not remember whether the surprise hero started and played the entire game as quarterback or alternated with another quarterback early in the game before playing the remainder of the first quarter and all of the second, third, and fourth quarters. Those certainly are minor details. Most interesting, however, to those readers who had attended the game was a detail the

writer never mentioned. The writer never referred to a most unusual pregame speech by the underdog team's head coach, in which the coach attempted to motivate his players in the locker room by telling them a story. The writer of the Web site entry may well have attended that game. Years later, though, some wondered why he did not mention the coach's unique pregame speech.

When an event occurs, we can observe certain differences between the respective personal memories of various persons. Occasionally, we can also note differences between the accounts of those actually present at the event and those who heard about the event from someone else. Even those who have been witnesses to the same event may remember the event differently, especially given the passing of several years. This also occurs in the recounting of an event such as Jesus' burial and resurrection centuries ago by those who were remembering and writing.

The account of Jesus' burial and resurrection is found in all four Gospels and mentioned by Paul. While all accounts affirm his resurrection, they differ to various degrees. What do Christians believe about these differences and what do we mean when we affirm that Jesus was raised from the dead?

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the names of the four Gospel accounts. The four are similar but not identical. Twenty centuries after these accounts were originally written, we readers cannot know with absolute accuracy which of the four writers (if any) were actually present to witness every detail noted from Jesus' burial on Friday evening to the Sunday morning resurrection discovery. Perhaps only one of the four writers (Mark) was personally present at the empty tomb. If the writers' sources and/or memories vary, it's natural that the details of one will not be identical to those of even one of the other three writers. Remember the old analogy of four witnesses on four corners of an intersection witnessing the same auto accident? The Gospel writers are diverse in a way different from four reporters telling details differently of an event all four witnessed simultaneously. Each Gospel writer tells the story at least somewhat differently from the others. In contrast to reporters at a common event, at least three of the four Gospel writers likely heard the details somewhat differently from diverse sources. If four reporters for four different newspapers covering the same event include details and perspectives different from one another, how much easier it is to understand that differences will exist in stories of events wherein likely no more than one of the four who reported was actually a first-hand witness. Yet the primary message is communicated: something happened from Jesus' burial on Friday evening to the discovery of his tomb being opened with his body missing. More than this: the four Gospel accounts, testify that Jesus' missing body is, in fact, a witness to God's work in the world that mysteriously transcends death in order for life to be experienced and known as redeemed and transformed.

Have you ever examined the diversity and the common ground of the four Gospel accounts of Jesus' burial and the discovery of the empty tomb, with the premise that the diversity of these accounts is rich and wondrous, contributing to the common witness of Jesus as Lord?

I want to offer another way to look at these accounts and their meaning...

First Corinthians 15:3–8. Paul writes to the church at Corinth and describes a set of events different at multiple points from the four Gospel accounts. His recounting includes that Christ (a) was crucified until dead, (b) was raised on the third day, and (c) appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve, then to more than five hundred disciples, then to James, then to all the apostles, and then "to me" (Paul). Note that Paul mentions no women visitors to the tomb or any men. He mentions neither burial-place messengers nor reactions of disciples to the word that Jesus was resurrected. He further places Peter first among those to whom Jesus revealed himself. Paul also notes that he, himself, is one who, certainly more recently than others, has experienced the resurrected Jesus revealed to him. Also, in Acts 13:29 which appears as part of a sermon that Paul preached at Antioch of Pisidia and indicates that Jesus was taken from the cross and buried not by Joseph of Arimathea but by persons unnamed who prosecuted Jesus and carried out (or at least witnessed) his crucifixion. In twenty-first-century American legal terms, these would be considered hostile witnesses.

Another thing to note is that in Hosea 6:1–2 a reference from the Hebrew prophet likely lies at the heart of the tradition that Jesus was raised "on the third day." Mathematically, of course, the Friday-evening-to-Sunday-morning time frame to which these four Gospel accounts refer is not seventy-two hours. From Friday dusk to Sunday dawn would be closer to thirty-six hours, yet comprising parts of three days.

Bible scholars often conclude that certain Bible stories were told and repeated for a number of years before particular persons wrote down those stories. Here is an approximate timeline of the New Testament Scriptures we've considered and when they are thought to have been written: 1 Corinthians 15 55 AD; Mark 15; 16 65–75 AD; Luke 23; 24 75–85 AD; Matthew 27; 28 80–90 AD; Acts 13:29 85–88 AD; John 19; 20 90 AD.

If Jesus was crucified around 30 AD, then 1 Corinthians was written twenty-five years after Jesus' death and resurrection; Mark, thirty-five to forty-five years after; Luke, forty-five to fifty-five years after; Matthew, fifty to sixty years after; Acts, fifty-five to fifty-eight years after; and John, sixty years after.

In addition, each of these four Gospel accounts, as well as the related passages from 1 Corinthians 15 and Acts 13, originated in written form in different communities and geographic locations, for example, 1 Corinthians from Ephesus in Asia Minor; Mark in Syria; Matthew in Lebanon or Syria; Luke and Acts somewhere between Palestine and Greece; John in Syria. While each Gospel writer, and Paul as well, wrote what was written in the way it was written with some purpose (personal style or building and maintaining a theme throughout the story or letter), their differences have created varied interpretations in given time periods and across generations.

Some Christian interpreters ignore, rationalize, or synthesize the differences others also go beyond the four Gospel descriptions. For example, certain Christians have expressed their conviction in affirming Jesus Christ's "descent into hell" between the time of his death and resurrection (a somewhat metaphorical reference from 1 Pet. 3:18–19). While this is not directly related to Jesus' resurrection, it is at least a metaphorical affirmation that God's redeeming life in Jesus Christ extends to the farthest parts of the universe, even to hell!

Refocusing on the resurrection event and subject specifically, if we, by faith, want to insist that Jesus was "physically, bodily resurrected," we may or may not want to argue and explain exactly what we understand "physically, bodily resurrected" to mean. We may not want to consider, or we may insist on a clear yes to a question like "Were there skin, bones, body temperature, and chemical activity in Jesus' resurrected body?"

Taking a clue from Paul's "statement of faith" in 1 Corinthians 15:3–8, several church "statements of faith" in the centuries following mention neither the "how" nor the physiological composition of Jesus through and beyond his resurrection. We can observe, as years pass, "statements of faith" may increase slightly in both the length and the detail of their respective descriptions of Jesus' resurrection body. Consider the commonality and the diversity in these examples:

1. The Creed of Caesarea (325), "Jesus Christ . . . suffered, and rose the third day . . ."
2. The Creed of Nicaea (325), "He suffered and the third day he rose . . ."
3. The Constantinopolitan Creed (381), "He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures . . ."
4. The Fourth Lateran Council (Roman Catholic, 1215), "He suffered and died for the salvation of the human race on the wood of the cross, descended into hell, rose from the dead . . ."
5. The Augsburg Confession (Lutheran, 1530), ". . . truly born, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried, ... descended into hell, truly rose from the dead on the third day . . ."
6. John Wesley's "Twenty-five Articles of Religion" (Methodist, 1784), "Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature . . ."
7. The "Baptist Faith and Message" (Southern Baptist Convention, 1925), "The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus rose from the dead. His grave was emptied of its contents. He appeared to his disciples after his resurrection in many convincing manifestations . . ."
8. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1910 voted to affirm ". . . he arose from the dead, with the same body in which he suffered . . ." Yet in 1927, this same church voted not to declare any such statement a national, essential (literal) standard of belief for ordination to (clergy) ministry.

Considering the last of these examples and if we accept the absolute value of both modern science and Christian faith we may want to decline to endorse literalistic descriptions and seek to express our understandings of Jesus' resurrection in more general and even poetic and metaphorical terms.

If we respectfully consider the story forms and the content of the varied Gospel (and other Scripture) references to Jesus' burial, the discovery of the empty tomb, and the confidence of grieving and once-fearful disciples, we can affirm (without extreme literalism) how Jesus' resurrection, by the mystery and grace of God, shapes God's people even today. A phrase from John Knox's Scots Confession (1560) states that Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection "brought life again to us who were subject to death and in bondage (to sin)." That's not literalism. Neither does it require that a literalist Christian theology hold a trump card over modern science.

The variety of the biblical witnesses to this key of the Christian faith tradition frees us to experience Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection as an invitation and challenge to live as God's people and as Jesus' disciples in all the variety God has created, redeemed, and continually transforms us, as individuals and communities.

I offer this reflection (from the work of Ted V. Foote Jr. a minister of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and writer for *The Thoughtful Christian*) not diminish our faith but to challenge and increase our understanding.

A worthy activity that you may want to try as we approach Holy Week is to write an account in your own words of what you believe happened. Considering the timeline with respect to when the particular Scripture passages were written. You may also want to consider similarities and differences among the accounts. For example: What do they have in common, and how do they differ? What differences are not very important (in your opinion), and what differences are very important? What common features relate to your faith, as faith grows, stretches, and strengthens through the years of your life?

Gospel Burial and Resurrection Story "Jeopardy" answers:

1.g 2.d 3.f 4.g 5.f 6.e 7.a 8.b 9.c 10.d

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a response you might feel comfortable in giving to people who make the following statement: The differences reported make it difficult to determine that any particular detail definitely happened in the way a certain witness said it happened?

Or better yet to allow your faith to grow by being willing to question it with the comfort that to experience Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection God continues to create, redeem, and continually transforms us, as individuals and communities.

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom

P.S. HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE: Palm Sunday Worship Service 10:30AM; Maundy Thursday Supper & Service 6:30PM; Good Friday Service 7PM; Easter Sunrise Worship Service 7AM; Easter Breakfast following early worship; Easter Traditional Worship Service 10:30AM

A few words from Bill and Mary Gallup
In Florida,

We want to thank everyone for their prayers, cards and phone calls during our health problems. It was so comforting to be remembered See You Soon!

The Easter Breakfast will be held April 24 at 8AM following Sunrise Service.

A great breakfast will be prepared by Joyce Crawford again this year. Cost will be \$6.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children 12 and under.

Reservations are REQUIRED by April 17 to:
Lolly Arnold: 843-3429 or
email: lollyarnold@gmail.com

April Flowers placed on the Chancel will be from the following:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 3 | Peggy Fee: In memory of her mother Judy Arnold's birthday |
| 17 | Palm Sunday |
| April 24
ter | Easter Sunday: Potted Azaleas, and Lillies: given by Church members and taken by them after the services, or sent to shut-ins. |

Hope to get flowers for Palm Sunday!

April

Lay Worship Leaders:

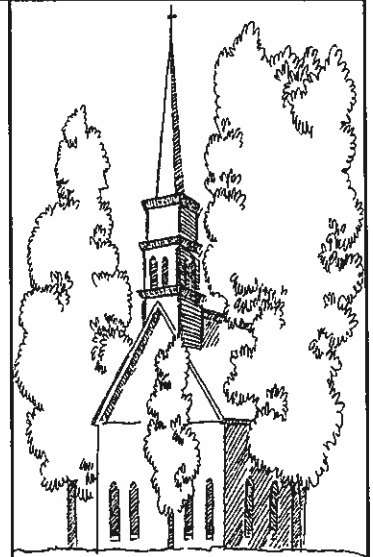
3 John M. King
10 Marcia Page
17 Susan Phemister *Palm Sunday*
22 Holly McConchie, Helen King, John King *Good Friday*
24 Helen King *Easter*

Ushers

Ruth Mathias
Holly McConchie
Rebecca Wood
Elizabeth Wood Pustolka

Greeters

Ruth Mathias
Darlene Muzzy



Worship With Us

Happy Birthday to all those who have a Birthday in April including the following:

David Lewis, 3rd
Evan Hohlenkamp, 6th
Lolly Arnold, 14th
Linda McConchie, 16th
David Arnold, 17th
Kathy Kindl, 20th
Will Quandt, 27th
Bill Quandt, 27th



Treasurer's Report

Balance	1-1-11	-1673.08
Receipts	10,706.00	
Expenses	11,200.85	
Balance	2-1-11	-2167.93
Receipts	8,375.00	
Expenses	12,809.37	
Balance	3-1-11	-6602.30

Note: The Community Basket Project donated \$350.00 for the use of our facilities during the Christmas season. We thank them for this gift.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

MARCH 1, 2011

- Discussed Tom's return with Committee on Ministry and Cass Shaw.
- Albany Presbytery Task Force to meet with Session in April for triennial visit.
- Three new Deacons: Hannah Goldstein, Darlene Muzzy, and Kevin Straut.
- Linda McConchie resigned from Deacons.
- Two new Elders: Linda & Earl McConchie.
- John King & Fred Lachtrupp will be delegates attending Presbytery meeting April 12th in Greenwich.
- Discussion of East breakfast, catered by Joyce Crawford.
- Adult Bible study changed to one class at 11:45 AM after worship.
- Proposal to hire one person for nursery each Sunday and second person to be a volunteer from congregation. Will get feedback from congregation before anything is determined. Suggestion is to try this on a trial basis until end of June.
- Approval of baptism on April 3, 2011.
- Will be doing a Lenten Soup Supper Bible study.
- Session meetings will be changed from the first Tuesday of each month to the first of each month beginning in April.
- Session approved a fundraiser for theme baskets.
- Session approved Board of Pensions Conference for Tom May 3rd – 5th.
- Session approved Con-Ed for Tom May 8th – 13th.
- Session approved vacation for Tom May 14th – 24th.
- A repairman looked at elevator. He called the company and they will fix it at no cost.
- Working with DOT about the visibility problem leaving the church parking lot.
- Meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Greater Galway Community Services Association, Inc.

Post Office Box 31
2167 Galway Road
Galway, NY 12074
Phone (518) 882-1316

March 15, 2011

West Charlton United Presbyterian Church
1331 Sacandaga Road
Amsterdam, NY 12010

Dear West Charlton United Presbyterian Church members,

As we plan the 2011 Community Easter Project, our goal this year is to deliver approximately 70 plus "baskets" on Saturday, April 23, 2011. In 2010, we delivered to sixty-five families.

We have experienced a large increase in families visiting the Food Pantry in Galway, and realize that we will have to increase the "Basket" numbers in order to adequately address this need.

As usual, we plan to include fixings for an Easter dinner, and, about a week's supply of groceries. Easter Candy is always a popular addition for the children. We would appreciate any help your organization can give in the form of money and, of course, manpower to assemble and deliver the baskets to each family.

Please send your contributions to Mrs. Holly McConchie, 2491 Northline Road, Galway NY 12074. Checks should be made out to the Community Basket Project.

A schedule is enclosed giving dates and times for the assembly and delivery of the baskets. Please contact anyone on the committee if you need more information.

We are truly grateful for your business's support of this very worthwhile endeavor.

The Community Easter Project Committee:

Kathy Rivers
Holly McConchie

Marilyn Miller
Connie Wood

EASTER BASKET SCHEDULE

April 22nd & April 23rd, 2011

Approximately seventy-two baskets will be made up at the Scotch Church dining room on the following days:

- Friday, April 22nd 8:00 AM Assemble and label boxes
- Friday, April 22nd 12:00 PM Non Perishable items packed into boxes
- Saturday, April 23rd 8:00 AM Perishable items packed
- Saturday, April 23rd 9:45 AM DELIVERY

EASTER BASKET SCHEDULE

April 22nd & April 23rd, 2011

Approximately seventy-two baskets will be made up at the Scotch Church dining room on the following days:

- Friday, April 22nd 8:00 AM Assemble and label boxes
- Friday, April 22nd 12:00 PM Non Perishable items packed into boxes
- Saturday, April 23rd 8:00 AM Perishable items packed
- Saturday, April 23rd 9:45 AM DELIVERY

Rummage Sale

Fri. April 29, 9-5

Sat. April 30, 9-2

Household items, clothes, books,
toys, treasures and MUCH more...

Chicken BBQ

-Takeout Only-

Fri. April 29, 3-6:30

Half chicken, salt potatoes, cole slaw
roll, beverage & dessert **\$9.50**

**West Charlton United
Presbyterian Church**

Corner of Routes 67 & 147

