

## WORSHIP MATTERS

### TIME FOR A CHANGE!

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In the days of the ancient Church of the catacombs, Easter Sunday was **the** day of all days. Converts put on white garments, were baptized, and confirmed. Only then were new Christians shown the three great secrets of faith: the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacrament of Holy Communion.

These secrets weren't so much described or taught as they were experienced. It was more show than tell; they just happened, and the newly baptized took part in them as they did. (For the record, they didn't learn about tithing until much, much later.)

As we know, the season leading to Easter is called the Forty Days by much of the world. Perhaps not as well-known is that there are also **Fifty** Days from Easter to the day of Pentecost (from the Greek word πέντε, or *pénte*, which means "five.")

The early Church had another name for these 50 days. They called them the *mystagogia*, a time devoted to grasping and understanding the secrets that had been revealed to them on Easter, the "mysteries of God."

It's an idea whose time has come—again.

While we're all home sheltering in place (and watching it snow, as it is while I write this) why not set aside ten or fifteen minutes a day to dig into what you believe? It's likely been awhile since your Confirmation (more than that for me, Lord knows) and probably a refresher course couldn't hurt.

If you're stumped about where to begin, let me suggest one of my all-time favorites, *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. If you only know Lewis as the author of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, you're in for a real treat, because Lewis, an adult convert, is as clear a writer and defender of the reasons for faith as any I've read.

In a similar vein is *Your God is Too Small*, a challenging read by popular New Testament translator J.B. Phillips. I personally believe any God I can explain isn't God, or as Dr. Karl Pfeifer notes, "English isn't even adequate to describe my wife, much less God." If you agree, this is one book you won't want to miss!

Finally, why not consider writing yourself into the Bible over the next 50 days?

No, I'm not proposing anything heretical here. In fact, it's an approach to reading Holy Scripture developed by spiritual teachers known as "*discursive meditation*."

Here's how it works. For the next three Sundays, take a look at the Gospel assigned for each day. To save you the time and trouble of finding them, here they are:

- [John 20:19-31](#) (Doubting Thomas)
- [Luke 24:13-35](#) (The walk to Emmaus)
- [John 10:1-10](#) (Jesus, the Good Shepherd)

(By the way, if you click on the underlined references, you'll travel right to them by the magic of the Internet.)

Read the passage slowly. Read it two or three times if you can, but at least more than once. Don't study it like a textbook, but approach it as you might a short story, instead.

As you do, recreate the scene in your mind. What time of day is it? What are the surroundings like? Is it hot or cold, dark or bright, quiet or noisy? Who else is there? How are they standing or sitting? What do their faces show as they encounter Jesus and hear him speak?

Now, imagine **yourself** in the scene. What do you hear Jesus telling you to do? What do you want to ask him? How might your life be different if you put his words into action in your own life?

We're being called to dare to be different during these coming 50 days. I hope you take up the challenge to reflect on what you believe and follow the Risen Christ as we make our way to Pentecost Sunday together.

**WORSHIP MATTERS** comes to you each month from the Worship Ministry Team of the *Church of the Open Hands*, the First Presbyterian Church of Farmington, and Dr. Jerry Custer, Minister of Music.