



The Olive Branch

Loving Christ in Worship, Fellowship, Education and Service

April 2024

THE EASTER EGG & THE EMPTY TOMB

Although Christianity is essentially a form of Judaism, over the centuries the Christian Faith has incorporated and inculcated itself into the various cultures of Pagan societies. So Christianity's spiritual inheritance is a blend of ancient Hebrew faith mixed with some Christianized archaic Pagan practices. And while this fact is often greatly overstated these days by those who wish to discredit and malign Christianity, the reality is that Christian observances (such as the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ) include some formerly Pagan elements as well. Consequently, things like colored eggs, bunny rabbits, and so on, have been given new and eternal significance by the grace and truth of God revealed in Christ our Savior. For **"God has placed all things under Christ's feet and has made him the head over all things for the church..."** (Ephesians 1:22).

Moreover, while the name of the annual celebration of the resurrection of Jesus maintains its Hebrew roots in many non-English languages (*Pascha* in Greek, *Pascua* in Spanish, etc.), in English the name of this most holy of all Christian holy days is taken from an Anglo-Saxon spring festival centered on the goddess *Eostre*, a Germanic goddess of the sunrise whose symbol was a rabbit or hare. So this is only the case in English (*Easter*) and German (*Ostern*), not in other languages. In most languages, the paschal connection between the celebrations of Passover and Holy Week is maintained, stemming from the Hebrew root word of *Pesach*.

Now that all this has been said, how are we Christians to regard symbols like colored Easter eggs?

The egg is an obvious candidate for a resurrection symbol of renewal and regeneration. The egg has been honored during many spring rites throughout the ages: Egyptians, Jews, Persians, Romans, Celts, and even the Chinese, have all understood the egg as representing new beginnings. Whether it was the commencement of building a bridge across a river, sowing a field of wheat, or launching a new fishing boat, the egg was used as an emblem of renewal.

So Christians naturally adopted the egg symbol to specifically and preeminently represent the new life received through the cross and empty tomb of Jesus. For, again, "God has placed all things under Christ's feet and has made him the head over all things for the church..."

The good news is that God enacts, establishes and extends his absolute love for all nations and peoples through the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ the Son of God, offering the free gift of forgiveness of sins and eternal life to everyone by God's grace through faith. Therefore, according to the biblical gospel, Christianity ascribes the ancient Hebrew symbolism of the Passover lamb and the archaic Pagan symbolism of the decorated egg to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus the Universal Messiah.

So for us Christians, a colored Easter egg (and its emptied shell after eating it) represents the empty tomb, and it calls us to be empty tombs as well. For the truth is that we can sometimes be overwhelmed by our unrealized expectations, disappointments, losses and grief; we can sometimes be overcome by despair, frustration and an apocalyptic mood. We can become so spiritually and emotionally severe that we become tombs filled with the deadly stench of judgment and condemnation, directed at ourselves and others. However, we must realize that we cannot force the Kingdom of God to be perfectly manifest in others any more than we can force God's Kingdom to be perfectly manifest in ourselves. So we must love and forgive ourselves and others, just as God loves us and forgives us in Christ.

In other words, by the grace of God, let us become empty tombs in our lives — empty of our desire to control and our attachment to specific outcomes. By God's grace, we must LET GO and LET GOD! By God's sovereign grace and will, let us TRUST IN THE LORD and be at peace. God is the Lord of human history (including you and me) and God's steadfast love endures forever.

"O give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever." (Psalm 136:2)

Blessed & Happy Easter!!!
Pastor Tim

Pam's Pearls of Prayer

Scripture of the Month: Romans 12:12

¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Thought for the Month

This is such a powerful verse. It says it all. Jesus is our guide to all these feelings. Our hope is in the knowledge that God is always there for us. We can find patience in times of trial because Jesus was patient even though He knew what would happen to His earthly body. But He knew that He would soon be with His Father. And prayer is what keeps us on an even keel through it all.

Prayer for the Month

Dear Lord, give us the strength to realize that our hope is in You and no matter how dark it seems to us, You are at the end of the tunnel to carry us through. We lift up our prayers to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Mt. Olive Preschool Update

Happy Easter!

March has been such a fun month! We kicked off March with a celebration of Dr. Seuss. We read a lot of his books and had fun dress up days each day of the week. The next week we became jolly wee elves and had some fun st. Patricks day crafts. We spent two weeks learning about community helpers and had parent volunteers come speak to us, we got to learn from doctors, and physical therapists, we learned about architecture of buildings as well as environmental compliances, we heard from Justin tagawa who laser engraved dog tags for us and we heard from a firefighter and got to see a real fire truck! We took a small break for spring break and we are ready to come learn about Jesus love for us and why we celebrate Easter!

Wishing you all a Happy Easter and a beautiful Spring!

Blessings

Mrs. Ashley, Mrs. Amanda, Mrs. Robyn, and Ms. Hannah

VdC Weekend

Are you looking for a closer relationship with the Lord? Via de Cristo (VdC) is a Christian retreat with just that in mind. The next VdC weekend is April 18th-21st. If you are interested, talk to Angela Zelaya or Pam Holden or Kenny and Louanna Kurtz.



Congratulations Matthew!



Congratulations go out to Matthew on his Eagle Scout achievement! Matthew has been a member of Mt. Olive since before he was born. We are all so proud of you!

Hall of Crucifixion & Resurrection

Join us after worship for a fellowship event to the "Hall of Crucifixion & Resurrection" at the Glendale Forest Lawn Museum on Sunday, April 7th. It's an all new presentation that began last fall. Free admission and free parking. We are also going to offer carpooling. What a wonderful way to continue to celebrate the Easter Season!



Women's Silent Auction & Luncheon

Save the Date: May 11, 2024

It's time for spring cleaning! Our Silent Auction and Luncheon is our way of giving back to the community by donating our gently used items for the auction. All of the proceeds go to a local charity. Please bring your donation to the church. Just a reminder, we don't take clothing.



**FROM: MT. OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH
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LA CRESCENTA, CA 91214**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:

DATED MATERIAL – DO NOT HOLD

BIRTHDAYS IN APRIL

1 – Chuck Neal	16 – Nicholas Singleton
2 – Key Kurtz	26 – Matthew Kubela
4 – Rita Kubela	27 – Pam Holden
6 – Oliver Puttler	27 – Wilfried Geck
9 – Evan Plummer	29 – Larry Vogelsang

ANNIVERSARIES IN APRIL

Cheryl & Andy Turner	No. 18
Jim & Yuki Tagawa	No. 46

Upcoming Meetings & Events for April

6 – VdC Team Meeting	8:30 am
7 – “Hall of Crucifixion & Resurrection”	10:45 am
8 – Threads of Hope	9:00 am
9 – Church Council	7:00 pm
10 – Community Luncheon	12:00 pm
18-21 – VdC Weekend Retreat	
20 – Breakfast Bible Study at Panera	8:30 am
23 – Spring Foothill Conference Assembly	6:00 pm
30 – Greece 2025 Interest Meeting at LCIF	7:00 pm

Life Lessons to Ponder

Here are the last of the life lessons written by Regina Brett, 90 years old, writer for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio:

1. The best is yet to come.
2. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
3. Yield.
4. Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift.

Greece 2025 Tour Interest Meeting

You are welcome to attend an interest meeting for our May 2025 church tour of Greece called "In the Footsteps of St. Paul" that Mt. Olive Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church in the Foothills are teaming up to make possible. It's an all inclusive 12-day trip for one price (\$4500 double occupancy) which includes the following: round-trip airfare, lodging, breakfast and dinner at hotels, admission to historical sites, a 4-day cruise of the Greek Islands with meals, 2 shore excursions (Patmos and Ephesus), as well as 2 pastors (Pr. Tim and Pr. Rick), 1 very knowledgeable guide and deluxe bus transportation throughout the trip. This interest meeting is for all who are curious about our joint MOLC/LCIF pilgrimage to Greece, and this meeting is at Lutheran Church in the Foothills on Tuesday, April 30th, at 7pm. Come and see for yourself about this amazing opportunity!

