

The Olive Branch

Loving Christ in Worship, Fellowship, Education and Service

May 2024

JESUS & MATZAH BREAD

During the festival of *Pesach* (Passover), our Jewish brothers and sisters around the world connect themselves to one of the greatest stories ever told by celebrating the *Seder*, which is an interactive dinner where the events of the Exodus from Egypt are retold. And for Christians, this annual liturgical meal also points to *Mashiach Yeshua* (Christ Jesus), and this is perhaps in no place more clearly illustrated than in the tradition of hiding the broken *afikoman matzah* bread (also spelled *afikomen*).

For the uninitiated, one of the traditions of the Passover Seder Meal is a special bag called a *matzah tash* that has three compartments, each containing a whole *matzah* (unleavened bread). The tradition is to take the middle *matzah* out and break it in half. Half of the *matzah* is placed back in the *matzah tash*, but the other half is wrapped in a linen napkin. This piece is called the *afikoman* (from the Greek *epikomon*), meaning “that which comes after,” and it’s considered a substitute for the ancient Passover sacrifice which was the last thing eaten at the Passover Seder during the historical eras of the First and Second Jerusalem Temples. The *afikoman* is then hidden by an adult for the duration of the first part of the Seder, and after dinner the children search for it and bring it back to their parents to be redeemed for a prize. Traditionally, the Seder cannot end until the *afikoman* is found.

The searching and finding of the *afikoman* is a beloved Passover tradition, but Judaism has no authoritative explanation as to the origin or the meaning of the *afikoman*. A number of diverse and often conflicting theories have emerged over the centuries. One tradition holds that the three pieces of *matzah* represent the three casts of Judaism: the Israelites, the Levites, and the *Kohanim* (the Priests). Another theory is that the three *matzah* breads represent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But these are later innovations; they are not mentioned in either the *Mishnah* or the *Talmud* (the authoritative writings of Rabbinic Judaism).

Moreover, why is the middle *matzah* broken? What would breaking the Priests or Isaac accomplish? Some rabbis believe that breaking the *matzah* represents the splitting of

the Red Sea, but if that’s the case why is a half piece of the ocean hidden away? Lastly, one tradition even says that the *afikoman* is hidden so that it doesn’t get eaten by accident before the meal is over.

Of course, none of these theories are truly authoritative or satisfying. However, there is one other explanation that makes perfect sense, and it ties all of the symbolism together and tells a cohesive story.

First presented by Austrian-Jewish scholar Robert Eisler in 1925, the most coherent explanation of the tradition of the *afikoman* was likely conceived by the First Century Jewish followers of *Mashiach Yeshua* (Christ Jesus) and that the *afikoman* is a symbol of Jesus himself. In fact, the very texture of the *matzah* bread and the way it’s prepared is indicative of Jesus. *Matzah* has stripes burned into it from the oven rack and it must be pierced with holes to prevent it from rising. In the same way, our Lord *Yeshua* was literally striped by the lashes of a whip, and he was pierced by nails and a spear.

In addition, the three compartments of the one *matzah* bag represent the three ways we experience the One Almighty God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. And the middle *matzah* (representing the Son of God) is broken, just as *Yeshua* our Savior was broken for us (see Isaiah 53). And after his death on the cross, *Yeshua*’s body was wrapped in a linen shroud and buried away for three days until his resurrection. So too, the *afikoman* is wrapped in a linen cloth and hidden until the end of the Passover Seder Meal.

When the meal ends, the children search for the *afikoman* to gain the prize that comes from finding it. In this act, the salvation and redemption that comes through the sacrificial offering of the Divine Messiah is illustrated. And how fitting it is that it’s the children who seek the *afikoman*, for Jesus taught that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these (Matt 19:14) and that we all must become like little children to enter the Kingdom (Matt 18:3). And just as the Seder cannot end until the *afikoman* is found, the Kingdom of God will not be established in its fullness until the great return of The Universal *Afikoman* (Jesus the Messiah).

Now it’s true that the word “*afikoman*” is often translated as “that which comes after,” but according to Prof. David

Daube (a preeminent Twentieth Century scholar of Biblical law) a better origin and definition of afikoman is the Greek word *aphikomenos* which means “the one who has arrived.” And of course, if nothing else, we know that our Lord Yeshua himself has identified the matzah bread of the Passover with his very own body. For at his Last Supper (his Passover Seder that he ate before he suffered) Jesus took the matzah, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to all of them, saying, “This is my body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me” (First Corinthians 11:24).

Together in Christ,
Pastor Tim

Poems for Mother’s Day

God's Masterpiece is Mother

God took the fragrance of a flower...
The majesty of a tree...
The gentleness of morning dew...
The calm of a quiet sea...
The beauty of the twilight hour...
The soul of a starry night...
The laughter of a rippling brook...
The grace of a bird in flight...
Then God fashioned from these things
A creation like no other,
And when his masterpiece was through
He called it simply – Mother.

--- Herbert Farnham

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Pam’s Pearls of Prayer

Scripture of the Month: Isaiah 66:13

"As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you."

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Thought for the Month

Just as mothers provide comfort and love for their children so too does God. He is the comforter and His abundant love is given to us no matter what. His love enfolds us in His arms just as we are wrapped in our mother’s arms.

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Prayer for the Month

Dear Lord, You watch over us constantly as a mother does to her children. Help us watch over others with this same love , Let us put our differences aside and see each other as You see us, Children of God. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Mt. Olive Preschool Update

Happy Spring!

This month came with a lot of rainy day play indoors, and some umbrella days, and some jump in the puddle days! But all of that rain sure has given us a lot of beauty! The grass is greener and our garden is beginning to bloom! This month we have learned all about life cycles of plants and animals. Our favorite was the Butterfly! We are currently observing our own caterpillars who have just turned into Chrysalis and we cant wait for them to become Butterflies! After we learned about the life cycles we jumped into learning about all the insects and bugs that live around us and their important jobs. Then we celebrated Earth day on April 22nd and spent the week talking about recycling and how to help our planet! We have some great celebrations coming up including Mothers day and our favorite celebration EARTH DAY!

Blessings

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

Thank God for Mother's Love

There is no love, like a mother's love,
no stronger bond on earth...
like the precious bond that comes from God,
to a mother, when she gives birth.
A mother's love is forever strong,
never changing for all time...
and when her children need her most,
a mother's love will shine.
God bless these special mothers,
God bless them every one...
for all the tears and heartache,
and for the special work they've done.
When her days on earth are over,
a mother's love lives on...
through many generations,
with God's blessings on each one.
Be thankful for our mothers,
for they love with a higher love...
from the power God has given,
and the strength from up above.

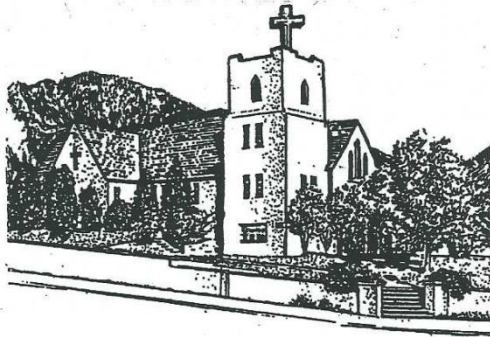
--- Anonymous

Community Luncheon

April’s community luncheon was a huge success. It was slightly different from other luncheons because our musical talent, Simone Vitucci, played the cello for us during the luncheon. It was lovely, This month marks our last community luncheon of the season. It will be held on May 8th at 12:00 noon. It will be a salad luncheon with lots of yummy salads to choose from. Please come and join us for food, fellowship and entertainment!!

FROM: MT. OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH
3561 FOOTHILL BLVD.
LA CRESCENTA, CA 91214

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:

DATED MATERIAL – DO NOT HOLD

BIRTHDAYS IN MAY

5 – Justin Tagawa 26 – Lilyana Geck
7 – Larry DeBoer 28 – Rebecca Pinchbeck
7 – Jennifer Kubela 29 – Matt Ness

ANNIVERSARIES IN MAY

15 – Pastor Tim & Hilary Singleton No. 31
24 – Wendy & Kevin Fragosa No. 11

Upcoming Meetings & Events for May

04 – VdC Ultreya 10:00 am
08 – Community Luncheon 12:00 pm
11 – Women’s Luncheon & Silent Auction 12:00 pm
13 – Threads of Hope 9:00 am
18 – Breakfast Bible Study at Panera 8:30 am
19 – Music Ministry Party 12:00 pm
21 – Church Council 7:00 pm

Women’s Silent Auction & Luncheon

Save the Date: May 11, 2024

Our Silent Auction and Luncheon is here. This 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 by May 5th. Just a reminder, we don’t take clothing.



2024 Summer Day Camp



Day 1 Daily Theme	Day 2 Daily Theme	Day 3 Daily Theme	Day 4 Daily Theme	Day 5 Daily Theme
Believe	Be You	Step by Step	Be Kind	Move Mountains
Theme Verse	Theme Verse	Theme Verse	Theme Verse	Theme Verse
John 14: 1	Psalm 139: 13-14	James 1: 12	Colossians 3: 12	Micah 6: 8

I lift my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and Earth

Come join the fun!

Date: August 5th – 9th

Time: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Cost: \$20 for the entire week for one child or \$15 each for two or more children

Space is limited. So sign up soon for your child(ren) or grandchild(ren) or neighbor or friend!



