

Eastertide

It is Eastertide and the season of spring continues. There are many surprises but none more important or startling than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We may talk about eternal life and sing hymns of faith reflecting that concept. We may hope that our departed loved ones enjoy eternal life and sing hymns of faith reflecting that concept. We may pray in our devotional life for what may come our way but there is nothing to compare to our own encounter or experience with the risen Christ among us right now, upfront and personal.

You may wonder how that happens. Has it ever happened to you? Let's go to some fundamentals: the Bible and divine revelation.

The Bible is literature that embodies a metaphorical use of language. It reflects experience of the past and the relationships between God and God's kin. This is never truer than in the metaphor of the Body of Christ first coined by Paul, the evangelist and missionary disciple.

The church comes alive with Eastertide and spring when we embody that metaphor. The risen Christ is among us as we "act out" our faith with three ministries of grace. These ministries include worship, teaching and learning and service to others. We know what we do and why we do it! We "act out" freely with love and even sacrifice.

The confirmation class with the support of mentor, Bobbie Randall, has studied the church as the Body of Christ and what it means to follow Jesus as a disciple. I was heartened to listen to our young people express their understandings of faith. They have much to learn, as we all do, about the nature of God, church and faith but they are on the move with energy and good questions. Bible is the tool and revelation is present.

Is it no wonder that the resurrection of Jesus and his appearances among his disciples captures our attention? Do we long for our own encounter? I invite you to claim this metaphor for your own with an earnest attempt to stimulate your faith and growth as a spiritual being. What role, membership or "body part" have you chosen to play within the whole church? Or have you sat out like a spectator not a participant in the church as the Body of Christ? The time and talent sheet you hopefully completed for your stewardship campaign was one way you claimed participation and your commitment to something larger than yourself. Yes, we have seen the risen Christ right here at our church!

Another fundamental besides the Bible is the experience of divine revelation. It is also about relationships and the past but most relevant for us in our daily walk with God in Christ. This basic experience of the risen Christ may be manifest in personal devotion. In the United Church of Christ, our identity as people who experience divine revelation can be understood by using the phrase, "God is still speaking."

As Eastertide and spring continue, I invite you to enjoy simple pleasures and solitude. When was the last time you gazed out the window and watched the wind move the trees? Isn't that what God does with us, moving us naturally to the breath of the Divine? Moving us to love others as Christ loved us? Keep your life less anxious and calmer. Let God do the stirring up rather than a TV program or spouting off your opinion. Shouldn't God's opinion be more important to us than our own? "Wait patiently for the Lord," comes to

mind. I can hardly wait for a somewhat slower pace in church life, so I have more time to simply be with the God who has given me my whole life. Open your locked doors and your fears. Allow your humanity to receive God's message for your day, week, month, year and life. You will never be the same and you will live better with more beauty, less hurt and more healing, more positive energy and less spiritual exhaustion.

We have some tough decisions ahead as a church. I have them as well. We need to be united in mission and vision. Can we do that? We need to be the Body of Christ here at First Congregational Church United Church of Christ and we need divine revelation now more than ever. The resurrection is not a one time experience. It happens all the time!

May it be so for each of us? Peace, Pastor Christine