



April 3, 2024
A Note from Pastor April

Dear Friends,

My friend Christelle and I were having lunch at my house on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter.

“What is the deal with the Easter Bunny and all the eggs?” she asked.

Christelle is from Peru, and their Easter celebrations don’t involve egg hunts or bunnies or anything of the sort.



We talked about the ways different cultures both create and then sometimes export their beloved rituals and celebrations, until sometimes they take on a life of their own!

Easter traditions about bunnies and egg hunts are a great example of how these things evolve and adapt over time. (See this great article from *Time* magazine a few years ago! <https://time.com/3767518/easter-bunny-origins-history/>)



Borrowed traditions from different parts of the world that had little to do with religion converged and became a now national tradition, such that even the president participates every year. (In the Blaine household, I discovered Glitter Egg Making Kits this year and will continue to take my eggs to the next level in the days to come!)

Since the early days of the Christian church, we have been an active part of creating these kinds of rituals and traditions in our own faith communities. **While the sacraments of baptism and communion are things instituted by Christ himself, our annual ways of celebrating Christmas, Lent, and Easter were created and adapted slowly over time.**

In the first few centuries, the church celebrated Christmas on the same day as the winter solstice. Christians chose this day for several reasons, but one of them was certainly the connection they saw to nature itself. **What better day to celebrate the birth of the light of the world than when the world is at its darkest point, ready to return to the light?** (When the current calendar was created, it separated the actual solstice from December 25th. The church decided to keep the tradition on the 25th.)

Likewise, it made a lot of sense to celebrate Easter in the Spring. Christians saw natural connections between the rising of new life in the budding flowers and trees and the story of Christ.

What better time to tell this story than when the evidence of resurrection was all over creation?

At our best, Christian communities have always been able to pay attention to the world around us and look for the ways that we see the story of our faith being played out all around us. Celtic Spirituality used the Irish sign of the clover as a beautiful symbol of the Holy Trinity. African-American spirituals wove together the stories of scripture with their own story of liberation along the Underground Railroad.



Should it be any surprise that we would find the LIVING Christ in places that might have otherwise been deemed “secular”?

In addition to being Easter, this past Sunday was also the annual Transgender Day of Visibility. It is celebrated every year on March 31.

This day felt especially important for a group of people within the LGBTQIA+ community who have experienced so much hatred, misunderstanding, and violence.



The first Transgender Day of Visibility was celebrated on March 31, 2009, with the express intent of honoring transgender people and their contributions to society and raising awareness of discrimination faced by transgender people worldwide.

I was surprised to hear reports of people disparaging this day of celebration, feeling that it was trying to take away from the celebration of Easter. (Easter won't fall on March 31 again for another 62 years!)

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I was also confused.

It is a day to help people know that they are seen, valued, loved, and included.

A day to help people be reminded of their dignity, that they matter, and that they are not forgotten.

A day to honor people who have let go of their culturally-given gender identity to find new life in an identity that feels truest to who they are and allows them to love themselves more fully.

That sounds like it has an awful lot of connections to the message we share on Easter Sunday.

We forget sometimes that the early church was among the most marginalized groups in the region. They weren't powerful. They didn't have all the resources or influence or respect.

What they did have was the power of the Holy Spirit alive in them. With eyes open, they found that together they could see the story of the resurrection all around them.

In the breaking of bread around a table, in the sharing of resources so all would have enough, and in the cultures and religious rituals that some of them had been practicing before they were followers of Jesus, they saw what life could look like as **RESURRECTION PEOPLE**.

As our scripture on Sunday will point out, they started seeing a God who was all... in all.

That perhaps the lines between what was holy and unholy and religious and secular started to become very, very blurry.

Their job was to NAME it. Make it clear. So others could see it to.

In a time when the transgender community has been the subject of so much misinformation in the media, as well as when numerous statewide policies restrict their rights to healthcare, perhaps the church — the resurrection people — could be the ones standing in the gap offering words of dignity, love, and community.

I want to close with a portion of a beautiful prayer written by Christian writer M. Barclay and posted on the website enfleshed (<https://enfleshed.com/>), in honor of the Transgender Day of Visibility.

“Though you may feel invisible, you are not invisible. Nor are your struggles. The Holy One knows you, sees you, speaks your name with love and tenderness. The Holy One delights in you and accompanies you in struggle, an ever-present source of strength and wisdom. May you sense Love’s affirmation of your being and becoming. May you sense the Divine power in you. May you sense your

connection to your trans kin — those who came before, those who live today, those who are yet to come. There is so much Sacredness among us. May you be assured, above all, that you and your life are precious, deserving of safety, respect, material resources, and love. We keep reminding each other and working together to make it so.”

Be on the lookout, friends! Resurrection is all around us — let’s name it and celebrate it.

April



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