

# St. Paul's News

475 State Street Albany, New York 12203

On Easter, the liturgical proclamation is: "Christ is risen!" "He is risen indeed!" the congregation responds.

There it is – the Christian story in three words — Christ is risen. And that by his resurrection he vanquished sin, death, and all the powers of hell. When Christians celebrate Easter, says Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, "we are really standing in the middle of a second 'Big Bang,' a tumultuous surge of divine energy as fiery and intense as the very beginning of the universe."

Even after being plainly warned of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection on the third day, his closest companions "did not understand any of this". So, when Jesus did rise from the dead, they not only didn't un-

derstand him, they didn't even believe in him. Sure, there are alternate explanations -- the disciples stole the body and created the fiction of Christ's resurrection. Others suggest that the spirit of Jesus lives on in us as a powerful memory and presence, like a favorite uncle who deeply influenced us when he was alive.

These alternate explanations have a common theme: the resurrection is more myth and metaphor than history, something to be taken figuratively but not literally. But that's not what those first doubters came to believe, not by a long shot. To them, Jesus was truly and literally raised from the dead. Even if they couldn't fully understand, or explain it they freely ad-

mitted that their "gospel" was a sham and that they were liars if Jesus was not raised from the dead. If Jesus is not raised, the Christian faith is a cruel hoax and a silly fiction. The women who were the last at the cross were the first to believe. For myself, I believe those original disbelievers, and stand with other Christians across time and space, who have believed, taught and confessed that God raised Jesus from the dead. And so with thousands of others who have similarly believed, I join the chorus,

**"Christ is risen!**

**He is risen indeed**



**LOOKING TOWARD TCN**

Christianity does have a mission to the world, and that mission is the most basic reason for the existence of the church. There are religions that do not have a missionary impulse in them; but Christianity has been pushed out into the world from the beginning, like a little fledging bird nudged out of its cozy nest by its parents. That is in fact a good simile, because what drives Christianity (as distinct from Christendom) towards the world is not personal eagerness for exposure to the public sphere, nor a desire to become big and powerful, nor a sense of its superiority over every other faith. No, it is "sent out" (that is what the word apostle means). . . often against its will, by the God who has called it into being because of love for ... the world.

That is a very important thing to remember when it comes to asking about "the others" The object of God's love, according to biblical faith, is not first of all the church; it is the world: "God so loved the cosmos ..." (John 3:16 – interestingly, probably the single best known verse of the New Testament). The church is only a means to the end, not the end as such. The end -- the goal that this faith envisages -- is the "salvation" of the world, that is, God wants to make the world whole, to fulfill its promise, to "mend" its torn and tattered life. If "God so loved the world" is about me, it's about me in relationship to a world that is loved. How will I as a child of this God, relate to the world, its people, its resources, etc.?

Below are a few questions for you to reflect on some of the ways we relate to this world that God so loved?

What would most of the members say is the purpose and/or mission of this congregation? Does this portray an inward or an outward focus?

How do most of the members view the use of time for God's purposes in the home, occupation, community and congregation?

What percentage of the membership is regular (you define regular) in their weekly worship attendance?

What percentage of the membership is regular (you define regular) in attending Sunday School, Bible Class or in study of God's Word?

Considering your answers, what do they suggest about our congregation? That's not a rhetorical question – we need to hear from you!

**"Taxes, Tips, and Tithes"**

Many people dread April 15<sup>th</sup> because it is the deadline for filing 2008 tax returns. Others may not be all that concerned because they had so much withholding tax that they will actually get a refund.

Most Americans would be thrilled if they had to pay only 10% of their income for taxes. But we know better. In many places the state sales tax alone is 8%. Social Security tax is another 7.65% (15.3% if you are a pastor, professional church worker, or others who are considered self-employed for tax purposes). State and federal income taxes are in addition to these other taxes. It doesn't take long to figure out that we are paying "double and triple tithes" for state and federal taxes.

And how about tips when we go out to eat at a nice restaurant? 10% used to be the standard tip, but in most people's minds it has moved up to 15-20%. We may grumble a little about this extra charge, but we pay it.

What happens when our pastor preaches and teaches about a tithe (10% of income) for the support of the Lord's work through the local congregation? Some people view that as an impossible expectation. Others may view that as a good starting point and rejoice that they are able to move beyond the tithe because they want to respond generously from what God has graciously bestowed upon them.

Is giving a tithe of the financial blessings that God has given to us an impossible expectation? For most of us it probably isn't if we practice discipline and good judgment in managing our financial resources. Some have learned to use the 10-10-80 plan. This plan involves giving the first 10% to the Lord, using the next 10% for saving and investing and then learning to live on the remaining 80%. It is not the perfect plan or the only plan, but it is a good one to start with if you find that you have not been disciplined in your handling of money.

Is giving a tithe a command for Christians? No, it isn't, because to make the tithe into a command would make it more like taxes and tips. The big spiritual question about Christian giving is this one: **"What percentage of the financial blessings that God has entrusted to me do I believe He is calling me to give?"** We do not give in order to meet the church budget, or do our fair share or because someone puts a guilt trip on us. 2 Corinthians 9:7 gives us this wise counsel: **"Each one**

**should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful [literally, hilarious] giver."**

The key is to talk to God in prayer, asking for His guidance regarding giving, and then moving forward empowered by His Holy Spirit to be free and joyful in our Christian giving.

**CLUSTER PROJECT**

**Albany Lutheran Cluster Outreach Project** – for March and

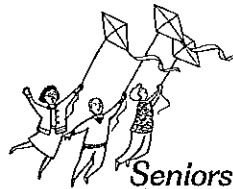


April will be to gather items for St. Paul's Women's Shelter in Rensselaer. We are asking for items needed by women when they leave the

shelter, including new or gently-used pocketbooks, pots, pans, towels, dishes and other household goods, bedding (single sheets, comforters, etc) and baby items (diapers in various sizes and wipes) Please leave the items in the basket at the rear of the sanctuary.

**WORSHIP HELPERS**

**ELDER**  
Alan Alexander



**K.I.T.S**  
Keep In Touch Seniors will have a trip on June 28<sup>th</sup> to see "Hello Dolly". The performance is at 2pm and will be followed by dinner at Winding Brook. The cost is \$40. Contact Marion Tru-land (St. John's) if interested

**SPONSORS FOR BULLETINS AND NEWSLETTERS**

**NEEDED:** Sponsors for the monthly bulletins and newsletters. Sponsoring one of these publications will help to offset the cost of paper and printing. The sponsorship for the weekly bulletin is \$10 and the newsletter is \$50. Call the church office if you would like to be a sponsor.



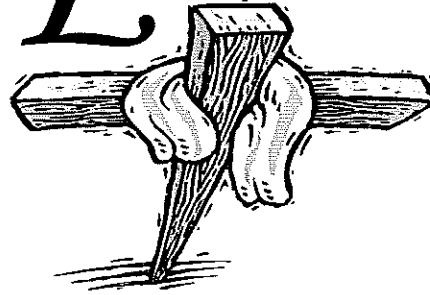
- . DIANE KINGSTON
- 6. CHARLOTTE JOHNSON
- 7. ARTHUR FRIESE  
JEFFREY HARRIS  
Solomon Gebreyes
- 8. THOMAS RAGONI
- 9. HERMANN KAHLER
- 15. ZACHARY BAUM
- 20. S. DAVID DEVAPRASAD
- 23. BETTY HARDY
- 25. NANCY SCHWARTZ
- 26. MEGAN CALAMARAS

The April Newsletter is given by Ellie and Wayne Jones in celebration of Diane King-  
 ston's "39th" Birthday.

DATE	FLOWERS	SERVICE STEWARD	COMMUNION ASSISTANT	COFFEE HOUR
4/5	Harris Family for Jeff's Birthday		Linda Calamaras	Marta Gebreyes
4/12	For Hermann Kahler's Birthday		Linda Calamaras	Joan Aldi
4/19	The Harris Family in memory of Steve Hulsey		Tina Harris	The Devaprasads
4/26	Ray Peter in memory of Esther Peter		Tina Harris	The Snays



# *Easter*



**SUNDAY April 5  
10 AM**

**PROCESSION OF THE PALMS AND READING OF THE PASSION**

**THURSDAY, April 9  
7:30 P.M**

**MAUNDY THURSDAY COMMUNION SERVICE**

**FRIDAY, April 10  
7:30 PM  
TENEBRAE SERVICE**

**SATURDAY, April 11  
7:30 PM  
EASTER VIGIL**

**EASTER SUNDAY, April 12  
6:60 AM  
59TH ANNIAL SUNRISE SERVICE  
WASHINGTON  
PARK**

**10:00 AM  
EASTER FESTIVAL WORSHIP**



# April 2009

## St. Paul's Monthly Planner

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																										
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