



# The Steeple

April 2023

A Weekly Newsletter from First United Presbyterian Church

*In this Palm Sunday lectionary reflection, editor Teri McDowell Ott draws on Richard Horsley's scholarship to highlight the dangerous, religious and political tension of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.*



My favorite Palm Sunday procession was led by my son. He was about 8 years old, shy and sporty. Maybe he was embarrassed to be leading the procession as the oldest kid in our small church. Or maybe he mistook the procession for a foot race. (He's always been competitive.) But he set such a fast pace that the poor kids behind him and the grandmothers who'd volunteered to walk alongside him had a hard time keeping up. This particular Palm Sunday procession lasted all four verses of "All Glory, Laud, and Honor," and my son lapped the sanctuary multiple times, his face set with the determination of an Olympic athlete. Everyone was exhausted and giggling by the end.

Churches this Sunday will celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem with their own processions — a great way to actively engage kids in worship and add some child-like levity to our liturgy. But churchgoers should not mistake this moment for an innocent parade. The air around Jesus riding into Jerusalem was electric with religious and political tension.



Jesus entered Jerusalem with an agenda — a dangerous one. He and his disciples chose to confront the Roman Empire during the festival of Passover. In his book *Jesus and the Powers: Conflict, Covenant, and the Hope of the Poor*,

Richard Horsley highlights how the potential for the Passover celebration to turn into an uprising was not lost on the Roman authorities. Throngs of oppressed and

indignant people, gathering for a festival commemorating the Israelites' liberation from the bondage of foreign oppressors, could quickly spark and spread an angry protest. Extra troops were stationed in Jerusalem during Passover, posted atop the porticoes of the Temple, they demonstrated a show of power meant to control and intimidate.

Horsely adds that this tension in the Palm Sunday narrative is often downplayed; Jesus is portrayed as heading to Jerusalem as a Passover pilgrim. But it would have been rare for a Galilean like Jesus to embark on the multiple-day journey to Jerusalem for the Passover. He only would have gone for a special reason, Horsely writes — to fulfill the traditional role of a prophet called to confront the rulers and the ruling institutions.



For his procession into Jerusalem, Jesus enacted the well-known prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 where the king arrives to vanquish the people's enemies. Jesus was not an imperial king, riding a war horse, but an anointed leader from and

for the people, "humble and riding on a donkey." People spread cloaks and branches along the road, a welcoming ritual for a king who would save his people. (In 2 Kings 9:13, the people spread their cloaks before Jehu, newly anointed the people's king by Elisha.)

Horsely points out that Jesus of Nazareth was not the only prophet from the countryside called to confront Jerusalem Temple and Roman authorities. But Jesus posed the greatest threat. "More than a lone prophet," Horsely writes, "he was a leader of a movement in the tradition of Moses and Elijah .... Speaking the truth of the people's intense indignation at their prolonged oppression directly to the face of power not only drew down violent repression, the arrest and execution of Jesus. It also was the beginning of the breakthrough to open and active resistance by his followers, leading to the rapid expansion of the movement [Jesus] had started."



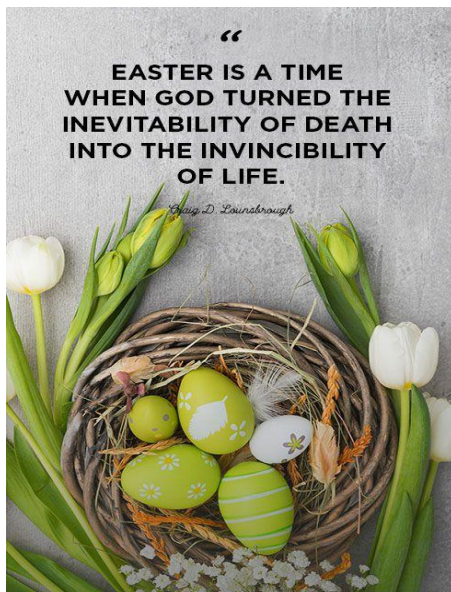
This Sunday, as our children circle the sanctuary and we wave our celebratory palm branches, let us not regard this parade as merely a celebration for a humble king, safely separate from its prophetic and political

ramifications. Knowing what he was walking into, some may call Jesus' actions on this Palm Sunday suicidal. Others — life- and soul-saving. As we follow Jesus through this holiest of weeks, let us set our faces with determination for the path ahead, and draw strength from Christ's gathered disciples, singing, "All glory, laud, and honor to Thee, Redeemer, King!"

### Questions for reflection:

1. What thoughts, feelings, ideas, images, memories surface as you read this Palm Sunday passage?
2. How does understanding the political and religious tension of this Palm Sunday text change how you read or feel about it?
3. What might you do this Holy Week to honor Jesus and follow in his footsteps?

*Teri McDowell Ott is the editor and publisher of Presbyterian Outlook. Reprinted with permission from the Presbyterian Outlook.*



**April 9 – 9:00 am - Communion**

**No Sunday School**

**EASTER  
SUNDAY  
SERVICE**

A graphic for an Easter Sunday Service. It features a purple and blue background with a red circle. The text "EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Above the text, the date and time "April 9 – 9:00 am - Communion" and the note "No Sunday School" are displayed in black text.

## *Coming up...*

**Sunday, April 2 - Palm Sunday**

9:00 am - Sunday School

10:15 am - Worship, Paul Millhollin, Worship Leader

11:15 am - Fellowship

**Monday, April 3 - 7:00 pm - Madonna Circle**

**Wednesday, April 5 - 4:00 pm - Evening Guild**

**Thursday, April 6 - 6:00 pm -**

**All-Church Choir Rehearsal at First Christian Church**

**Thursday, April 6 - 6:30 pm -**

**Maundy Thursday Service at First Christian Church**

**Friday, April 7 - 7:00 pm - Good Friday Service at 1UPC**

**Saturday, April 8 - 8:00 am-6:00 pm - Easter Prayer Vigil at 1UPC**

**Sunday, April 9 - Easter Sunday**

9:00 am - Worship with Communion, Paul Millhollin

No Sunday School

**Monday, April 10 - Easter Monday - Church Office Closed**



There will be a PW meeting following worship on April 16.

All women of the church are encouraged to attend.



We pray for...

Nolan Collins

Hal Jackson

Sally Leeper

Tish McKee

Maize Thompson

Those suffering losses in the Mississippi & Alabama tornadoes

Those affected by the Nashville shootings

Those known only to God

### **APRIL BIRTHDAYS**

Ruth Reed April 7

Sheryl Puderbaugh April 9

Wendy Sawyer April 13

Ethel Lee Osborn Tucker April 14

Lori Ryner April 27

### **APRIL ANNIVERSARIES**

Nolan & JoAnn Collins April 30

One Great Hour of Sharing...will be received on Easter Sunday, April 9. Your gift supports efforts to relieve hunger through the Presbyterian Hunger Program, promote development through the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, and assist in areas of disaster through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Please give as you are able. Envelopes are available for this offering.

# APRIL 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 <b>PALM SUNDAY</b> 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:15 a.m. Worship 11:15 a.m. Fellowship Easter lily orders due 	3  7:00 p.m. Madonna Circle  HOLY WEEK	4	5 4:00 p.m. Evening Guild 	6 6:00 pm All-Church Choir Rehearsal 6:30 pm Maundy Thursday Service at First Christian Church	7 7:00 pm Good Friday Service at 1UPC  GOOD FRIDAY	8 8:00 am – 6:00 pm Easter Prayer Vigil at 1UPC 
9 <b>EASTER</b> No Sunday School 9:00 a.m. Worship with Communion 	10  Church Office Closed	11	12	13 7:00 pm Property & Finance	14	15
16 <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of EASTER</b> 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:15 a.m. Worship 11:15 a.m. Fellowship	17	18	19	20 <b>STEEPLE DEADLINE</b>  Items for May due	21	22
23 <b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of EASTER</b> 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:15 a.m. Worship 11:15 a.m. Fellowship	24	25 7:00 p.m. Session Meeting 	26	27	28	29

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of EASTER** 30  
9:00 a.m. Sunday School  
10:15 a.m. Worship  
11:15 a.m. Fellowship

ORDER FORM FOR  
EASTER LILIES



(Please print clearly)

You are invited to purchase an Easter lily in honor or in memory of a loved one for Easter.

Please fill out the information and submit with payment of \$10.00 to the church office (or Administrative Assistant's mailbox). **Deadline to order: April 2.** (Make check payable to First United Presbyterian Church with "lily" noted in the memo.)

NAME OF HONORED PERSON(S):

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IN MEMORY: \_\_\_\_\_ IN HONOR: \_\_\_\_\_

(CHECK ONE)

YOUR NAME:

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(Please use more than one order form for more than one lily.)