

# ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH NEWS

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## *Easter is the Big One.*

The Rev. Megan Nickles

***It is the sacred celebration*** of Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is the oldest and holiest Christian festival, the climax and center of the liturgical year, and the holy day to which all other holy days point.

Easter gets its name from ***Eostre*** or ***Eastre***, a Teutonic goddess of the dawn whose annual festival took place on the vernal equinox, the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere. While some scholars dispute this theory, it appears that "Easter" comes from the same root as the English word "east," the direction of the rising sun. In many other languages however, the name for the festival of Christ's resurrection comes from Pascha, the Greek/Latin transliteration of the Hebrew

word Pesach (Passover).

The most commonly stated rule for determining the date of Easter is that it is the first Sunday that follows the first full moon after the vernal equinox. This means that in Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, and Protestant churches, Easter can fall as early as March 22 and as late as April 25.

***Easter is not a single day.***

It is actually a season that begins on Easter Sunday and continues for seven full weeks. This seven-week cycle is known historically as the Great Fifty Days or the Week of Weeks.

The Easter season is the most joyful and festive season of the Christian year. Worship during this time features the prominent return of the

Gloria in Excelsis ("Glory in the highest") and the Alleluia ("Praise the Lord"), expressions of joy and praise that were removed from the liturgy at the beginning of Lent. Hymns and organ music are often reinforced with trumpets, adding to the celebratory nature of the season. An old custom that is observed in some churches is that kneeling is done away with on Easter Sunday. Standing— a symbol of rising and resurrection—is the posture for the confession of sins and the reception of Holy Communion. White, symbolic of gladness and holiness, is the liturgical color for all the Sundays of Easter. Finally, the paschal candle is allowed to shine continuously throughout the Great Fifty Days.

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EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Paschal candles are always inscribed with a cross, the current year, and the Greek letters alpha and omega (**REVELATION 1:8 AND 22:13**), signifying that the Lord is present in His church now in the present year and forever in eternity. Sometimes, five grains of incense, symbolizing the five wounds of Christ, are pressed into the arms and center of the cross with pins or small nails. According to ancient liturgical tradition, it is allowed to shine continuously throughout the Great Fifty Days until it is finally extinguished on Ascension Day. After that, it is removed from its place next to the altar; it is lighted at baptisms to remind Christians that in baptism we are crucified and raised with Jesus (Romans 6:3-5). The paschal candle is also lighted at

Christian funerals as a reminder that those who die in Christ are raised up with Him.

### ***And the Easter Rabbit?***

In many ancient cultures, eggs were a common symbol of new life. In medieval times, Eggs came to represent the Lord's resurrection. Just as Christ broke out of the tomb on Easter morning, the yolk of the egg breaks out of its shell when cracked. The decoration of eggs for Easter is part of the folk traditions of many cultures, although it has little or no religious significance any more. However, activities that draws us out into Spring weather, and that delight and surprise us are part of celebrating a sacred Easter.

Each of the six sessions begins with a 10-15 minute video presentation by Walter

Brueggemann, followed by filmed interaction with a diverse small group.

Workbook for joining in the conversation is provided.

## ***Forgiven and Forgiving***

“Only the strong can forgive. God, who is strongest, forgives best,” writes Dr. L. William Countryman in this fresh look at forgiveness. Unlike most books on the subject, *Forgiven and Forgiving* is not about a step-by-step process. Rather, it is about conversion. Once we

truly understand the depths of God's love for us and know deep-down that we are forgiven, we begin to see the world anew through God's eyes. Only when we are able to accept God's forgiveness for ourselves can we offer forgiveness to others.

Biblically based with sound academic research, yet written in a conversational style, *Forgiven and Forgiving* offers valuable insights. William Countryman is an Episcopal priest, professor of New Testament at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, California.

## ***St. John's Church 101***

Introduction to the global Episcopal Church and the context it creates for our local church. Learn the ins and outs of the Book of Common Prayer, our beliefs about scripture, worship,

Baptism and ministry; ask about the peculiars of the Altar Guild, Thrift Shop, lawn mowing, the sacristy and other mysteries. Based on *My Faith, My Life* by Jenifer Gamber, and *Jesus*

*Was an Episcopalian (And You Can Be One Too!)* by Chris Yaw. A good video introduction to this book is at [jesuswasanepiscopalian.org](http://jesuswasanepiscopalian.org)

Special thanks to Laura Greathouse for the palm crosses which were worn on Palm Sunday!

Thanks to Susan McEvoy and Deb Koelling for providing home baked

bread for Communion during Lent.

Thanks to Claudia Hassler for facilitating a daytime Lenten study based on William Countryman's book *Calling on the Spirit in Troubling Times*.

## **Upcoming Studies:** ***Embracing the Prophets***

Walter Brueggemann, arguably America's leading Old Testament scholar and theologian, takes us through the poetic prophecy of the Hebrew Scripture, identifying cultural contexts, putting a framework to Israel's history, and, most significantly—

and times challengingly!—drawing connections between Israel's sociological, economic and spiritual status and that of America today.

What was the message of these remarkable poet-prophets in their own time and place? What is their

message for us today? Who are today's prophetic voices? How has the contemporary church been coopted by culture? What steps can we take to reclaim the prophetic message of distributive justice, nonviolence, loss and hope?

The community of St. John's extends our sympathy to the Seeley Family on the death of Alma (Cookie) Seeley. A memorial service for Cookie was held at St. John's on February 14. Her funeral and burial were in Green River on February 15.

**Congratulations to Coach Nate Urbach** and the Powell High School wrestling team who won the 3A State Title again this year!

For anyone interested, let's have a Thrift Shop meeting (discussion) on Sunday, April 7, in the office during coffee hour!

Thrift Shop Cleaning Days: Monday, April 29, at 1 p.m. and Wednesday, May 29, at 1 p.m.

PVCC Service: Sunday, May 12, at 2:30 p.m.

Wyoming Day at the National Cathedral is May 5!

Powell Valley Loaves and Fishes contributions are always needed and appreciated. There is a basket for Loaves and Fishes contributions in the Narthex for items that will be delivered to the Annex.

**The Rev. Megan Nickles** (754-4218) is available at any time. Please call to make an appointment or for any emergency.