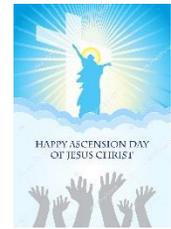




# ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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## *From the Pastor's Desk*

*"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." John 20:30-31*



I like the month of May. Of course I am partial to the month of May because my birthday is in May. But there are many other reasons I like May. For instance, the month of May has many signs of new life, beginning with the change from winter to spring. Soon, hopefully very soon, the sun will shine with power to warm the earth and warm the air. Then the aroma of freshly turned earth will fill the air as we drive through the countryside and see the tractors in the field, preparing the earth and planting the new seeds in the field. The beginning of May usually is also the time of Confirmation, when confirmation students take the next step in their faith as they affirm their baptismal vows, confessing their faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and promising to live out their faith in the midst of the communion of saints. As the month continues, we get excited by the seeing the different shades of green. The grass in yards turn a vibrant green. The trees become filled with new leaves that have their own shades of green. In the middle of the month, we begin to look for rows of green corn and beans. We get excited to see this new life all around us. Then there is high school and college graduations. Students have achieved a milestone in their life as one adventure ends, and new adventures begin. So as you can see, there is a lot of newness of life celebrated in the month of May.

As John tells the story of Easter, he adds that Jesus did many other signs, but these were written that you may have life in his name. Right before this, John relates the story of Easter morning and the night of Easter. Early in the morning, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb, but discovers it is empty. She runs and tells Peter and John. They check out the tomb and discover it is empty. Then Mary hangs back, crying as she misses Jesus and Jesus appears to her. Mary goes running to the disciples and tells them, *"I have seen the Lord."* The disciples are not so sure this is true. That evening, behind locked doors, the disciples are gathered in the Upper Room, Jesus suddenly appears in their midst. Jesus declares, *"Peace be with you."* The disciples are still filled with fear, thinking perhaps they are seeing a ghost. But then Jesus shows them his hands marked with the wounds of the nails. Then he pulls back his robe and shows them the wound in his side. Then Jesus gives them his peace once again, *"Peace be with you."* Then the disciples are glad to see the Lord.

After Jesus has assured his disciples that it is indeed him that they are seeing, and giving them his peace, Jesus gives the disciples the Holy Spirit by breathing on them. Then Jesus gives the instructions, *"If you forgive the sins of any, they will be forgiven them. If you bind the sins of any, they will be bound."* As we think about Jesus' instructions and

when he says them, it gives us pause. Jesus has been betrayed by Judas Iscariot. Peter denied knowing him three times. The rest of them abandoned Jesus as he was arrested. The first words Jesus gives to his disciples his, *"Peace be with you."* Jesus isn't holding their sin against them. Jesus didn't say, *"Why did you guys abandon me?"* Jesus offers his peace, peace of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Plus, Jesus had been rejected, mocked, beaten, spit upon, whipped, scorned, jeered, crucified and died. Now the first instructions after suffering all this is forgiveness of sins, declaring people forgiven with the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus journeyed through all that suffering, all that pain, all that hate and sin could throw at him, including death, and his first words to his disciples as he stands in their midst demonstrating his victory over sin and death are instructions to forgive sins. To be forgiven of your sins is to be set free from the guilt and the hurt your sin created. To be forgiven is to be set free to have a new beginning, a chance to be reconciled, to begin the relationship anew. To be forgiven is to have newness of life and peace and joy.

Before the disciples can ask Jesus about his suffering and death, asking why did Jesus have to suffer all that, Jesus talks about forgiveness of sins. Before they can face Jesus to ask his forgiveness for their actions to him, Jesus offers his peace, the peace of forgiveness. Our resurrected Lord gives his disciples a mission. As the Father sent me, so I send you. Forgive the sins of people and they will be forgiven. In the forgiveness Jesus offers, there is the newness of life.

Jesus offers the newness of a new relationship with God, whom we now can call Father. Jesus creates newness in our relationship with the Father, as he removes all our sin, all our unrighteousness and gives us his righteousness. Then Jesus calls us children of God. Jesus gives us a new family, as we are called into a family of brothers and sisters in Christ, a communion of saints of all time and places including the communion of saints we gather with to worship on Sunday mornings. Jesus gives us newness of life with the power of the Holy Spirit to forgive as we are forgiven, so we can make our broken relationships new.

May is the season of new life. We witness the newness of life as spring wakes the earth from its winter slumber. We see new life all around us in the plants and new baby animals being born. These are all a witness to the newness of life we have in our Lord Jesus, through his death and resurrection. We have life and newness of life in his name.

*Pastor Randy*



# WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



## KEEP YOUR FORK, THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

In light of the Easter season – the hope and promise of the resurrection, I going to share with you a light-hearted story.

There was a Christian lady who was diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. So as she was getting her things "in order," she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. The woman also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible. Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the woman suddenly remembered something very important to her.

"There's one more thing," she said excitedly.

"What's that?" came the pastor's reply.

"This is very important," the woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking at the woman, not knowing quite what to say. "That surprises you, doesn't it?", the woman asked.

"Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor.

The woman explained, "In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main courses were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, "Keep your fork." It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming...like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance! So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder, "What's with the fork?" Then I want you to tell them: "Keep your



fork. The best is yet to come."

The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the woman good-bye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see



her before her death. But he also knew that the woman had a better grasp of Heaven than most Christians did.

She KNEW that something better was coming.

At her funeral people were walking by the woman's casket and they saw the pretty dress she was wearing, her favorite Bible, and the fork placed in her right hand.

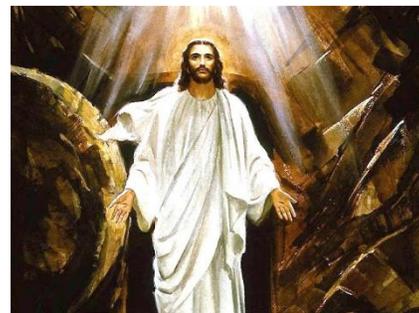
Over and over, the pastor heard the question "What's with the fork?"

And over and over he smiled.

During his message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. The pastor told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either. He was right.

So the next time you reach down for your fork, let it remind you ever so gently, that the best is yet to come.

And keep your fork, because for all Christians, we need not fear death. It is only a shadow we go through from this life into eternal life. Nothing scary. Nothing unknown. Jesus



Christ is right there with us all the way.

Wanderings and Wonderings,  
Pastor Bill Peters