

Easter Sunday - April 20

"He is not here; He has risen, just as He said." Matthew 28:6

The sun rose early that first Easter morning, but the light had not yet dawned in the hearts of Jesus' followers. They came to the tomb carrying grief, uncertainty, and fear—wondering how to move forward after all they had lost. But then, everything changed. The stone was rolled away. The grave was empty. And with a single name—Mary—spoken by the risen Christ, despair turned to hope.

For 200 years, Powell United Methodist Church has carried this same hope. This community of faith has seen times of abundance and times of struggle. But through it all, God has remained faithful.

In October of 1971, a church newsletter contained a sobering message: "The Powell Church needs immediate help. Unless assistance is given immediately, the church may close its doors before the end of this current year. . . We can barely pay the preacher, and he works cheap."

These words could have been a eulogy. They could have been the final chapter in a small church's history. But resurrection is real—not only in the empty tomb, but in the life of this very congregation. God was not finished with Powell UMC then, and God is not finished with us now. Because of the faithful response of those who refused to give up hope, the doors remained open, the gospel continued to be preached, and the church grew into the thriving community it is today.

When Powell UMC moved into its current location in 1990, the first Easter sermon by Rev. Ed Lewis proclaimed, "He is not here... Or is He?" That question, posed over 30 years ago, still resonates today. We know the tomb was empty, but we also know that Christ is alive, present, and at work in the world and in our church. He is here—in every act of love, in every moment of worship, in every life transformed by grace.

That Easter Sunday in 1990, the call to worship declared: "From the cold and dark of winter, we emerge to discover the sunlight of promise. Spring is bursting all around us; new life is ours to seek. Death has been replaced by life; we have the chance to begin anew. Because of the victory of Jesus Christ, we have nothing to fear. Let us celebrate the burst of new life! Let us celebrate the resurrection of our Lord!"

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These words are as true today as they were then. The resurrection story is not just about what happened then—it is about what happens now. It is about the hope that carries us through seasons of uncertainty, the faith that strengthens us when the future is unclear, and the assurance that in Christ, the story is never over.

Easter is not just a promise of life after death; it is a call to live—to trust in the God who brings life from death, hope from despair, joy from sorrow, and new beginnings from what seems to be an ending.

As we celebrate the risen Christ today, let us do so with deep gratitude for those who came before us, with renewed commitment to the ministry we are called to, and with unwavering trust in the God who leads us into the future. The same power that raised Jesus from the grave is still at work among us, writing the next chapter of Powell UMC's story.

Because He lives, we too shall live. Because He lives, we have bright hope for tomorrow. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Pastor Justin Williams

Prayer:

God of resurrection and new beginnings,

We give thanks for Your faithfulness through every season of our lives and our church's history.

As Christ walked from the tomb, may we walk forward in hope.

Where there is fear, bring courage.

Where there is doubt, bring faith.

Where there is sorrow, bring joy.

May the story of Easter not only be something we remember, but something we live—

trusting that because Christ lives, we too shall live.

Fill us with bright hope for tomorrow,

that we may proclaim Your love with boldness and joy.

Amen.