

## **With Christ, We Rise**

If there was ever a time in which the church and the world needed a people to stand up and prayerfully, courageously proclaim that resurrection will come, it's now. We are those people, Grace Church, a people of faith and of hope. Even in the midst of fear and loss, this is our call, maybe especially so. The stories and rituals of faith will feed us, strengthen us, and help us as we go about this work we've been given to do.

The stories and rituals of Holy Week and Easter reveal the paschal mystery, the death and resurrection of Christ. We hear of Christ's mandate to love one another, the invitation to be present at the foot of the cross, and the opportunity to prayerfully, stubbornly insist that light will enter this darkness. This is the week in which we proclaim God's holy presence with us in the most profound human experiences of all, serving, loving, dying and we celebrate that God then added to that list, the most amazing gift of all...resurrection.

Over the course of this next week we'll shout Hosanna! We will engage in acts of love and wonder at God's solidarity on the cross. We will proclaim The light of Christ perhaps through tears, as we hear the story of God saving acts. Together, we will hold on to and celebrate the good news that with Christ, we rise.

We've thought and prayed through this year's approach to the rituals and stories of Holy Week a little more than usual. Not surprising, I'm sure. When we learned that we would not be back in the church building, I thought that would be our biggest challenge. I've come to realize that it's not.

The biggest challenge is that we are already collectively and globally living through the guts of what Holy Week is all about. We don't get to "prepare" to enter this season this year. We're already here. The story is more ours than ever. We are already immersed. And in fact, we've already adopted some of the ritual actions that are held up for us in the mystery that is death and resurrection.

We are washing hands (and feet) trying so very hard to love and serve our neighbors. We are deeply grieving and longing for mercy in the face of human suffering and death. We are hoping from the depths of our own hearts for joy to take hold of us and this world again, even as we pray with all we've got for new life. And while it is so very challenging, it means that even without the ability to gather like we're used to, we are absolutely present to the profoundly holy moments of which the gospel speaks. Perhaps more than we have ever collectively been before.

And this might be at least part of what God was up to in the first place, not initiating human suffering but being present in the guts of human life, in order to heal and redeem and inviting us to be in those places too. It was God who chose "present to" and "present with" as the divine way, entering fully into human life and human hurt in order to redeem, to save, to resurrect. Part of the holiness of this year's Holy Week and Easter is that while scattered, we are in the guts of the human struggle in ways that God has been all along. So, even though scattered from each other, we're in pretty good company.

We'll walk these days in separate spaces as Grace, but we'll also walk it together, because we are Grace. We will be those people who will prayerfully, courageously proclaim that resurrection will come, ironically, this year our reach is wider, broader than it usually is as we allow Holy Week and Easter to happen not only in the church building, but in our homes, and lives, and world. We won't be at church this week but we will be church in ways which we might never previously imagined we could be.

And if the world ever needed good news, it's now. We, Grace Church, have been given it to share in abundant, and life-giving ways.

See below the schedule and ways in which we will worship for Holy Week and Easter. Make your lives and your homes ready receive the gifts we will be given as we experience the heart of our faith as never before.

In peace and with love,

Rev. Jen