



CASCADIAN WEEKLY

A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Cascade Christian Church,

It is the Monday after Easter, and I write to you in awe of what God has done at the church the last eight days. Holy Week 2023 was very significant. We saw the blessings of God in so many ways as we celebrated the amazing grace we have in Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord.

Palm Sunday was lovely – The palm décor, the children’s palm procession, and the special music made it a day of worship and celebration. We had a surprise visit from Reverend Chris Dorsey, the President and CEO of Disciples Home Missions in Indianapolis. Chris has been member and friend of Cascade Christian since he taught at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, and it was wonderful to get an update on his work. Disciples Home Missions covers search and call, Green Chalice, women and men’s ministries, Disciples Peace Fellowship, intergenerational ministries, faith formation and Christian Education, and much more. Reverend Chris lovingly remembers this congregation, and praised the church for the work we are doing.



On Monday, the church brought 1000 bags of Easter candy, scripture, and cards to Kent County Jail for the chaplains to distribute. God alone knows the impact of these little bags. Thank you for sharing God’s grace where it is much needed.

Maundy Thursday was a deeply meaningful evening as readers shared the scriptures of Jesus’s Last Supper, then the betrayal, arrest, and denial that Jesus experienced. Elders Chuck and Barb Dykhuizen led us in foot and hand washing, and Elders Kathy and Mark Bird DeYoung led us in communion and individual prayer. It was a night to remember God’s grace when we are faithful, and when we are the betrayers.

Good Friday’s ecumenical worship service was hosted this year by Cascade Christian, and we welcomed four local congregations to our sanctuary. Our focus was on grace for the guilty, and the story of the Penitent Thief who died at the side of Jesus. It was a very holy hour as together we watched SuZie Zoerman created a chalk drawing of the thief and listened to Liisa Erskine sing. Our area clergy group has hosted this service for many decades, and it was good to be together as one church on Good Friday.

Easter Sunday was a glorious day with the church transformed from the darkness of Good Friday to the light of Easter. Our choir sang and we celebrated the Risen Lord and grace for all people. The Sunday School children had their Easter store and celebration, and it was a wonderful day of life, love, and grace.

There are so many people to thank for the events of this last week:

- Chairperson Diane Phelps and our Social Action and Mission Outreach Committee for organizing the Jail Ministry. Thank you to all who prepared the materials to go in the bags, and all who packed the bags and delivered them.
- Chairperson Audrey Partak, the Worship Committee, and our Décor volunteers – for incredible worship services and for the beautiful décor that made worship from Palm Sunday through Easter so meaningful. Thank you to all who prepared communion for the four services, to our tech teams who made things run smoothly, and to Liisa Erskine, Nancy Gaskell, our choir, the praise band, and all of the musicians who enhanced worship with such incredible music.
- Our Christian Education team under the leadership of Adam Homan and Ron Cole, and Christian Education staff Michael Dirksen and Adam Carlson for the wonderful events for our children and youth.
- And thank you to those who cleaned the church, tended the flower pots, washed the windows, made the bulletins, got the mailings out, and to those who greeted, deaconed, and welcomed our visitors.

Christ the Lord is Risen, He is risen indeed! May the joys of Lenten and Easter 2023 continue to remind you of the amazing grace of our Lord and God.

Happy Easter and keep the faith,

Jill



GENERAL NEWS

DAY CAMP AT CRYSTAL FOR PARENTS & CHILDREN, GRANDPARENTS & GRANDCHILDREN

For the last few years Crystal Conference Center has offered a short session of church camp for those who would like to bring their children or grandchildren to camp and stay with them. Day Camp is June 27-29, and provides 3 mornings and early afternoons of fun camp lessons, activities, crafts, sports, games for everyone, including local children who come just for the day. Late afternoon and evenings are open for families to enjoy swimming, shopping, going to Lake Michigan, and enjoying time together. For those who stay overnight at camp, meals and housing are provided.

This is a wonderful camp for those who can't take a full week for family camp or are not ready for a sleepaway camp just yet. Please contact Jill Forton for more information and how to register. Late registrations fees begin May 1.

SOUP & SANDWICH LUNCH WITH ADA CHRISTIAN BAND

THURSDAY, APRIL 20 | 12:00pm

Please join us in Centennial Hall for a delicious soup, sandwich, and dessert lunch on Thursday, April 20 at 12:00 noon. Our guest entertainment will be the Ada Christian Middle school band. This group has been with us before, and always brings us great music and testimony from incredible middle school students. We welcome the school back, and hope you'll be able to join us for this very special concert.

WEEKLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FRIDAY | 4/14

Church Office Closed
Jesus Laughing Talk Group | 7:30am
Middle School Madness | 7:00-9:00pm
DeColores Holy Hour | 6:30pm (Sanctuary)

SATURDAY | 4/15

Young Families Zoo Outing | 9:00am-12:00pm (John Ball Zoo)
Diversity & Inclusion | 9:00am (Coffee House)
Days for Girls | 1:00-4:00pm (Centennial Hall)

SUNDAY | 4/16

Contemporary Worship & Pre-K–5th Grade Sunday School | 9:30am
Traditional Worship & Middle/High School Sunday School | 11:00am
Alcoholics Anonymous | 7:00 pm

MONDAY | 4/17

Alcoholics Anonymous | 8:00pm

TUESDAY | 4/18

Women's Bible Study | 9:00am (Rm. 112)
Senior Exercise Class | 1:00pm

WEDNESDAY | 4/19

Men's Bible Study | 6:30am (Coffee House)
Wednesday Jubilee | 4:30-6:00pm
Green Chalice Meeting | 5:30pm
Wednesday Night Bible Study | 6:30pm
Youth Group | 6:30pm
Boy Scouts | 7:00pm
Alcoholics Anonymous | 8:00pm

THURSDAY | 4/20

Grief Share | 10:00am (Coffee House)
Gospel of John Study | 10:30am (Rm. 112)
Soup & Sandwich Lunch | 12:00pm (Centennial Hall)
Senior Exercise Class | 1:00pm (Narthex)
Board Meeting | 6:00pm (High School Room)
Youth Membership Class | 6:30pm
Cub Scouts Pinewood Derby & Webelos Crossover | 6:00pm
Al-Anon | 8:00pm

FRIDAY | 4/21

Church Office Closed
Jesus Laughing Talk Group | 7:30am
Parents Night Out | 5:00-8:00pm

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ATTENDANCE:

In-Person: 250

Website: 43 Households

FINANCIAL GIVING for the week ending

on 4/9/2023:

Budgeted: \$10,652

Given: \$11,320.89

COFFEE HOUR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you would like to help host a coffee hour, please call the church office. We would love to provide these times of fellowship, and the food, plates, cups, and coffee will be provided. We need people to set up, host, and clean up, preferably from either 10:30-11:00am or 12:00-12:30pm. Coffee hour is the first Sunday of each month.

NEW CHURCH DIRECTORY

Thank you to Margaret Sharp and Kathy Hurd for working on our new church directory. If you didn't get your photo taken here at church, be sure to send in a photo and any corrected contact information to the church office (office@cascadechristian.com). The new directories will be available later this spring or early summer.

NEW WEDNESDAY NIGHT STUDY: JESUS' FAREWELL MESSAGE

WEDNESDAYS STARTING APRIL 12 | 6:30pm

Our Wednesday Night Bible Study has just begun a new study on Jesus' Farewell Message, using videos and a study guide written by Francis Chan. This will be a five or six week study looking at Jesus' instructions to the disciples and to us in John 13-17. We will also study Jesus' Ascension and Pentecost Day. All are welcomed to this study, and there are no materials to buy. Join us on Wednesdays from 6:30-8:00pm in the adult classroom on the second floor of the education building.

QUARTERLY IN-PERSON BOARD MEETING

THURSDAY, APRIL 20 | 6:00pm

This month is our next quarterly in-person board meeting. All are invited to come and be a part of this meeting in the High School Room (second floor of the education building).

OTHER UPCOMING MEETINGS

- **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION: Saturday, April 15, 9:00am** | Join us in the church Coffee House as we continue to discuss Latasha Morrison's book, "Be the Bridge."
- **DAYS FOR GIRLS: Saturday, April 15, 1:00-4:00pm** | Meet in Centennial Hall to take part in this missions work creating menstrual kits for women in need.
- **SOUL WARMERS: Monday, April 24, 2:00-4:00pm** | All women are invited for an afternoon of knitting and fellowship.
- **GAME NIGHT: Friday, April 28, 7:00pm** | Meet us in the chapel basement and bring your own drink and a snack and game to share, if you'd like. If you have any questions, email Debbie Jones at debbiejones1018@gmail.com or call 616-299-7154

REGISTER FOR CAMP

There's a camp for everyone this summer at Camp Crystal – day camp, family camps, weekend retreats, and overnight camps for Grades 2-12. Cost to register will increase by \$50 on May 1 so don't wait! To get dates, find out about scholarships, and register, contact the church office or [click here](#).

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

YOUNG FAMILIES ZOO TRIP

SATURDAY, APRIL 15 | 9:00am-12:00pm

On Saturday, April 15, families with children birth through 5th grade are invited to a morning (9:00am-12:00pm) at the John Ball Zoo! Tickets can be purchased in advance from John Ball Zoo's website. If your family would like to attend, please [click here](#) to fill out a short questionnaire. We're so excited to build up our Young Families ministry, and we hope you'll join us. If your family has not gotten an email about this event, please contact Adam Carlson (acarlson@cascadechristian.com) to be put on the Young Families mailing list.

PARENTS' NIGHT OUT

FRIDAY, APRIL 21 | 5:00-8:00pm

Our next Parents' Night Out will be Friday, April 21 from 5:00-8:00pm in Centennial Hall. This is a great opportunity for parents to have some time to themselves – or to get together with other parents! For children, we will have group games, coloring, dinner, and a movie. Please register your children at <https://tinyurl.com/CascadePNO>.

SONSHINE STORE

We had an amazing time at our Sunshine Store, celebrating the risen Christ and honoring the hard work children did during Lent! Thank you to all the parents, grandparents, and other significant adults who worked with kids to help them complete their challenges.



ATTENDANCE
for the week
ending on 04.02.23:

Sunshine Store:
21 Kids
7 Youth Helpers

Wednesday Jubilee: 0
Youth Group: 5

YOUTH MINISTRY

YOUTH BOWLING

SUNDAY, APRIL 30 | 12:00-3:00pm

Middle and High School students, get ready to strike up some fun bowling on Sunday, April 30 immediately following Sunday School. Invite your friends and bring \$10 to cover shoe rental, bowling, and food!

MEMBERSHIP CLASS

THURSDAYS, APRIL 13, 20, 27 | 6:30-8:00pm

We are having a Church Membership Class for our youth on Thursdays, April 13, 20, and 27. During the class, we'll highlight the foundations of the faith – who God is, what the Bible is, and what the Church is. At the end of the class, students can choose to be baptized during a following Sunday worship service.

04.09.23 SERMON: GRACE FOR ALL

Christ the Lord is Risen – He is Risen indeed! Today we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. We celebrate that death could not hold Him. We celebrate that the powers of darkness did not prevail, We celebrate that those who tried to end the mission of Jesus did not succeed. We celebrate that our Amazing God has graced our lives with Jesus, our Savior, and we celebrate that we are called by name to be disciples, followers of Jesus. And we are so grateful for what Jesus went through to bring us to this relationship with God.

Throughout this Lenten season we have been experiencing the grace of God in Jesus, the amazing grace that changes everything. We've looked at the words of the glorious hymn, Amazing Grace, and have seen the grace of God most especially in the cross of Jesus. That is where we pick up our story of the mercy and grace of God. We start here because after the crucifixion the disciples were still in shock, they were hiding out, they were afraid for their own lives, unsure of what to do now that Jesus was dead. The mood was somber, there was fear in the air, and the disciples were holed up, wary of the authorities. Peter had already had three close calls the night of Jesus' trial – they had to be careful, so they locked the door and stayed put.

This is hardly a story of great excitement in pre-dawn Easter, but it is a continuation of the story of God's amazing grace. The disciples were lamenting, grieving, but as the dawn approached, the Son rose on Easter day was coming, and everything changed.

Those who had gotten up earliest that morning stayed with Jesus during the crucifixion and his burial. They were women, the women who followed Jesus and supported his ministry. Among those who witnessed the death of Jesus was Mary Magdalene. She had reason to stay with Jesus and was there for the horror of his death and the sadness of his burial. She stayed close to Jesus because she was one of the many who had experienced His amazing grace. While we don't know the details of that grace, what we do know is that she was set free of seven demons that possessed her, which might suggest she had a recurring problem that needed a grace-filled solution.

And of course, many of us struggle with our own demons in life. We speak of them only to our closest friends, and if our demons ever are revealed, we speak of them in hushed whispers, feeling that we can't let others know, even as the evils of the world are boldly before us. Every week we hear of abuse, violence, angry words, uncivil conduct, war, and actions that lead to great tragedy. Then we realize it is not just us. There is a lot of evil happening in the world, and humanity is possessed by it. Our response is often stunned silence, and if we can put words to our feelings when faced with the darkest moments in humankind, our response is to lament. Lament is always the first song in the face of tragedy.

Yet the light of God's grace breaks through even the darkest days, the deepest sorrow, and the strongest barriers that evil builds to fence us in. Even in our own lives, the light of Easter breaks through, the light of Jesus always shines in the darkness, even as the darkness has not understood it. Today the light breaks through, and in the light, we see the love and grace of God. Join me as we read the Easter story in John 20:1-18:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Early on the morning of Easter, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. She was freed of demons but she was filled with sorrow. On this morning, her lament is part of the darkness that shrouds this scene as she comes to the tomb of Jesus. Let's be clear though, she did not expect to be moved beyond her grief. She expected the tomb to be sealed, she expected that Jesus was in the strong bands of death.

Being that we know this story, it might be hard to imagine her surprise when she found the tomb open, the stone that sealed the tomb rolled back. Moving this stone was no simple thing. Opening a grave like this would be the

04.09.23 SERMON CONTINUED

work of many men, ropes, perhaps teams of oxen. But there it was, right before her, the stone removed from the entrance. An open grave. And an open grave is shocking.

So Mary ran to tell Peter and John, telling them that Jesus's body must have been taken. This was not the joyous news of Easter, not yet. As if the darkness could not get deeper, now there is this anguish that the grave of Jesus had been robbed. This is something that is hard for us to imagine, having the body of the person we love being taken. This was ominous, dark, tragic news after a tragic week. Where was Jesus' body? They didn't know. John's account continues:

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

Peter and John raced to the tomb – John is known as the disciple Jesus loved, and John ran faster and reached the tomb before Peter. Looking into the tomb, John saw the linen, the shroud and wrappings that had covered Jesus when he was buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. But there was no body. When Peter arrived he ran straight into the tomb, and he saw what John had seen, but he also noticed that the cloth that had covered Jesus's head was now rolled up, folded, as if someone had purposely done so. This wasn't the work of grave robbers, they wouldn't have taken the time to do this. The other explanation is that the body that was once in death's grip is no longer confined. Peter may not have understood this at first, but John sensed that something new was in the air. John continues the story, writing:

Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

John believed what Jesus had told them about the resurrection from the dead. But while the other disciples returned to where they were staying, Mary stayed at the tomb. She was lamenting, not understanding. She had not yet looked in the tomb, and must have been breathless from running to tell the disciples and then running back to the grave with them. So this is where we find her in John 20:11-14

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

So through her tears she finally looks inside the tomb, I can imagine her hesitating, what would she see, she has seen so much already, and it has been traumatic. What she sees are two angels, angels dressed in white, angels illuminating the tomb, angels sitting where the body of Jesus had been, angels with a question – woman, why are you crying.

Why is she crying?? The One who had totally changed her life, the One who saw the real her, the One who gave her grace, dignity, acceptance, the One who cleansed her past and gave her a future is dead and gone. Jesus, who had shown her grace, is not here. Imagine the tears and the strain in her voice- They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.

She turns away from the angels, and there, right there, in front of her, is a stranger, someone she didn't recognize. Sometimes we can't see clearly in the darkness of our lament, sometimes our tears blind us to the grace that is there for us. Her first thought was – here's the gardener, the keeper of the cemetery. And friends, sometimes we can be just like Mary at this moment. We too can be blind to the help that is there for us in the dark moments, we sometimes choose not to see the love and grace that is standing right before us.

04.09.23 SERMON CONTINUED

This stranger asks the question of the angels – Woman, why are you weeping? But then the stranger adds a very significant question. John 18:15-16

He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

I wonder what Mary thought at this moment. Did she sense that this second question has something to do with Jesus, the one she is looking for? So she asks – “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

This is her first glimmer of Easter hope, she might get the body of Jesus. And you have to admire this woman, she stayed through the crucifixion, she was there for the burial, she now shows up at the tomb, ready to do whatever she could to open it and anoint Jesus’s body, she is ready to roll huge stone, break seals, face the guards at the tomb to care for her Lord and friend. She had run back to tell his disciples, then she returned, running with them, they left her, and now she is on her own again. And she seems ready to get Jesus’s body, to carry him if she must, because she knows how he carried her from darkness to light, from despair to hope.

But then the stranger speaks – and in personal terms, she hears her name. This is a voice she knows, he knows her and calls her by her name, saying, “Mary.” The Easter sun is rising higher, the Son of God, the Living Savior is speaking to her, she knows that voice, He has called her name before. He has called to her in life giving grace, life changing grace, even as He calls us, every one of us. Hear Jesus call your name, because it is for you that he suffered, and died, and rose, and lives. His voice speaks to us in our sin, our pride, our greed, our lamenting. His voices changes everything for Mary – the sun is up, she can see, that the Son of God has risen, the world is full of the light of the grace of God. The light triumphs, the darkness has been overcome. And Mary responds to Jesus calling him Teacher, rabbi, her dearest friend. And she hugged him, embraced him, Isn’t that what we do after a long time apart? We hug, we call each other by name, and in this church we hug a lot. We don’t even have to be apart for very long. So Mary hugs Jesus, and he wraps his nail scarred hands around her, and embraces her with grace. She was held close to Jesus. Just as you are.

John 18:17-18: Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!”

And she told them that he had said these things to her.

When Jesus tells Mary to not cling to him, he says this with great love. He has **not yet** ascended to the Father. Jesus tells Mary – You don’t have to hold on to me now, I haven’t left yet, I am here. Jesus is saying – I’m still here, I haven’t gone to the Father yet. Yes, Mary, it is me, I am here, so go and tell my brothers I am here. Tell them I am going to the Father, and my Father is your Father, I am going to my God, and my God is your God. I can imagine a smile between Jesus and Mary as she releases him and runs again to the disciples to share the good news.

So Jesus tells Mary to let go, and then to go to the disciples, but not to let go of the grace and the joy of Easter. Let go so the joy can be extended to others who are fearful and in sorrow, let go and go share the good news that there is grace for all. And Jesus will ascend to the Father - to a place where all can be seen, and all people can be cared for by him – where He can see the whole world, the people of every language, tribe, and nation, where he can see the struggling of his people, and be with all people in His grace. His ascension means Jesus is in a place where he can see and call out the names of all, and his voice and his good news and grace is what raises us to light to love, to life. The joy of the resurrection is a joy for everyone.

04.09.23 SERMON CONTINUED

Friends, this is grace for all. A grace that comforts us in our lament, a grace that sweetens our joys. This grace gives us the peace of God that we share with one another and with strangers. This is grace, to hear Jesus speak your name, and to know that your name is written on the palm of God's hand. This is grace – for the despairing, grace for the lost, grace for the blind, grace for the ashamed, grace for the wretched, grace for the fearful, grace for the faithful, grace for the loyal, grace for those who betray, and grace for all, all who seek, believe in, and have faith in Jesus, the Risen Lord.

We are no longer strangers, we are called by name, by our Lord who graces us with peace, a peace that is greater than any of our demons or fears. Listen for His voice- his victorious voice triumphs over death, and His grace gives us a new way to the light of heaven that blasts away any darkness. Share the way of Jesus – in words, actions, thoughts, and song – because today, this Easter day and we declare victory. Thanks be to God for Christ's amazing grace – grace for all. That amazing grace will always be with us, for all of the ages to come. We celebrate you, Jesus – for your sacrifice, your grace, your life, and your love. Happy Easter and amen.