
COUNTRYSIDE NEWS

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Calvary, Barnum; Faith, Harcourt; Fulton, Roelyn; Trinity, Boxholm; UCC/Congregational, Moorland; Zion, Gowrie

Easter Is a Season

This is a (mostly) true story. For the forty days of Lent, one congregation focused on preparing for the central event of the Christian year at Easter. Members took up new spiritual disciplines, they fasted, and they prayed. When Easter morning arrived, the church was resplendent in white lilies; the choir sang better than it ever had before; and everyone shouted, "Alleluia! He is risen!"

The next Sunday, the church was back to normal. No more lilies, no more white paraments, no more Alleluias. At the

announcements time, the pastor stood up and said, "Well, now that Easter is over . . ."

The good news is that Easter isn't over the week after Easter Sunday! In fact, Easter is not just one day; it is a season that lasts fifty whole days – until Pentecost. In the ancient church, the Great Fifty Days was a time set aside for learning about and celebrating what it means to live as a baptized Christian. The fancy name for this teaching was mystagogy. Preachers like Augustine and Ambrose took this

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AGREEMENT STABILIZES CHURCHES

The following article appeared in "Contact." "Contact" is the newsletter of the North Central Iowa Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church USA.

Six churches look to their future and plan to pursue their goal of a Cooperative Ministry Agreement that began officially February 1, 2002.

The purpose of the agreement is to provide a framework for a Cooperative Ministry among, but not limited to these congregations: Calvary,

Barnum; Faith, Harcourt; Fulton, Roelyn; Trinity, Boxholm United Church of Christ Congregational, Moorland and Zion, Gowrie.

The Rev. James Davis, pastor at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Rev. Marlin Snyder, who serves the United Church of Christ congregation and Fulton church, met with the Presbytery at its January 19 meeting for the Presbytery's approval of the Agreement.

The mission statement "is to

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Countryside Cooperative Ministry Council

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Loretta Daisy, Secretary
Steve Lane, Treasurer
Rev. Jim Davis, Administrative Pastor

To keep a lamp burning, we have to put oil in it.

– Mother Teresa

Since the early bird catches the worm, it's a good idea to begin your day as soon as you can – unless, of course, you happen to be a worm

– Edwin Bliss

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proclaim the good news of God's love in word and deed as individual congregations and as a Cooperative Ministry."

Representatives from the six churches will be the governing body, Cooperative Council, with responsibilities to call a pastor through a detailed process outlined in the Agreement.

The number of worshippers in the six churches averages 400 total on Sunday among the six congregations. Zion church with the largest number of worshippers will serve as the administrative center. Rev. Davis will provide the administrative leadership.

The churches are within 35 miles of each sister church which will promise cooperative benefits.

Historically five of the churches had been meeting over a five-year period to find answers

to the question of "what will be the future of the churches in the coming years?"

Their major question centered on "What can we do?"

Rev. Snyder served as catalyst for the meetings as he wondered what would happen to the smaller congregations, if no plans were developed to maintain ministry to the congregations in the future.

"We should look forward to the geographical ministry since the churches have similar, yet different goals," said Rev. Snyder. "We want to make sure the churches remain when we are gone from the churches."

Factors affecting the decisions to create the Agreement stemmed from unique challenges to a rural ministry, similar purposes, stagnate economic growth, and declining population.

"Together we can be more effective in our ministry," said

Rev. Davis.

"We recognize this Agreement is clearly not the end of the process for rural ministry, but does offer encouragement to anticipate change and prepare for it.

"This Agreement is a transitional 27 period from assisting sister churches, but also to aid in serving more people better. Now the pastors can find relief rather than wondering how they can accomplish everything for their congregation. Help is available from other pastors and eventually lay pastors."

The opportunity to share staff requires the congregations to be willing to accept proposals in the transitional period.

"One major benefit of the Agreement is watching three denominations working together in the Kingdom of the Lord, rather than squabbling over minor details and interpretations. This is encouraging," said Rev. Davis.

"The exchange of ideas from the congregations will further serve all churches in the Agreement. That does not mean all six churches will remain in the Cooperative Agreement, but the initial steps encourage greater service potential," he said.

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time to preach on the Christian life, now that there was a new group of folks who had been baptized on Easter morning.

Today, the Easter season may still provide a good opportunity to focus on what it means to walk the Christian Way in the world. For those who preach from the lectionary, it also offers the chance to explore the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus and wrestle with the question of what resurrection really means for our faith. In either case, the Great Fifty Days focuses our attention on our identity as those who have died and been raised with Christ in our baptism.

This article is reprinted from "Ideas for Church Leaders"

The author is Martha L. Moore-Keish, Associate for Worship, Office of Theology and Worship in the Presbyterian Church USA.

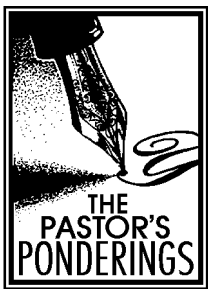
Postscript:

We do not only celebrate Easter during the season of Easter, but we celebrate Easter each time we gather for worship. Christians worship on Sunday because Sunday is the day on which our Lord was resurrected. Our worship is a celebration of the many ways in which our resurrected Lord continues to be present among us.



EASTER SUNRISE

TIC (Boxholm Youth Group) invites everyone to join them for an Easter Sunrise Service at Don Williams park in the Good Shelterhouse. Service is @ 6:30, doughnuts and egg casserole will be served afterwards. Free will offering will be taken to help with the TIC missions and to defray the cost of the service.



Christ is risen!
He is risen,
indeed!
This
proclamation
marks the
beginning of our
celebration of

the season of Easter. The season of Easter begins with the resurrection of our Lord and ends the day before Pentecost. Although the season of Easter is only 50 days long, each time we gather to worship we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the faith, hope and love with which he blesses us.

I often wonder what the first Easter was really like. The earliest versions of the Gospel of Mark, the first gospel to be written, do not include a resurrection account. Mark ends with terrified women leaving an empty tomb. The Easter stories in Matthew, Luke and John are quite different. It leaves me wondering what really happened. However, whatever happened, it transformed disciples who were filled with fear and doubt into disciples filled with faith, hope and love.

While I would really like to know what happened that first Easter, I am thankful that I have been blessed with many experiences of the risen Christ. Christ continues to come to me in word and sacrament to remind me of God's promises and renew my vision of God's kingdom. Christ comes to me through the community that gathers in his name and strives to reach out and share the love of Christ with others. And, Christ comes to me each day as I am blessed with an awareness of God's remarkable grace.

I understand the fear and doubt that filled the disciples, but I also understand the faith, hope and love that came from their experience of the risen Christ.

I think most of us understand the fears and doubts that filled the disciples' hearts. All of us struggle through difficult times. However, we have also experienced the faith, hope and love with which Christ blesses us. Thanks be to God!

May each of you be blessed with the faith, hope and love of the risen Christ.

HOLY WEEK WORSHIP

Holy Week is the most important week of the year for Christians. Holy Week provides us with an opportunity to relive the drama of the last week of Jesus' life.

We join the crowds in shouting "Hosanna!" as Jesus rides triumphantly in to Jerusalem. We lift our voices and our hopes as we herald our long awaited deliverer.

However, by Maundy Thursday the mood has changed dramatically. We are present as Jesus shares his last meal with his disciples and offers them a lasting reminder of his love for them. We struggle with his disciples to listen to Jesus pray in Gethsemane. We are filled with sadness as a kiss leads to Jesus' arrest.

We gather in silence on Good Friday as we join the crowds in shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" We join the women at the foot of the cross as they pour out their grief as Jesus dies. We leave filled with the silence of death and despair.

Our spirits are lifted and hope renewed on Easter morning as we join in that joyous proclamation "Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!"

Please join us as we participate in the drama of our Lord's death and resurrection. Check your bulletins for worship times and locations.

**HE IS NOT HERE;
HE IS RISEN!**

A protestant minister, a priest, and a rabbi were on a workshop panel at an ecumenical conference. Somebody in the audience asked them, "If you were to suddenly fall over dead on the street, how would you want to be remembered?"

The minister replied, "I would

want people to say that 'he was truly born again and lived out the social Gospel.'"

The priest replied, "I would want people to say that 'he faithfully administered the sacraments and reached out to the poor.'"

The rabbi pondered the question and replied, "I would want people to say, 'Wait - he's moving.'"

NEED A VISIT?

If you or anyone you know of could use a pastoral visit, please contact the Cooperative office at 352-3645 so a visit can be scheduled.

Gowrie, IA 50543
Box 63
CountrySide Cooperative Ministry

Cooperative Phone Numbers:

Cooperative Office		352-3645
Rev. Jim Davis	Office	352-3932
	Home	352-5261
Rod Meyer	Office	846-6277
	Home	354-5224
Rev. Wahlgren	Office	352-3645
	Home	352-5245

Cooperative Email Addresses:

Cooperative Office: ziongowr@wccta.net
Rev. Jim Davis: elca506@wccta.net
Rod Meyer: rodmeyer@mail.lvcta.com

Cooperative Worship Times

Calvary, Barnum	10:30 a.m.
Faith, Harcourt	10:30 a.m.
Fulton, Roelyn	9:15 a.m.
Trinity, Boxholm	9:00 a.m.
UCC/Cong., Moorland	8:00 a.m.
Zion, Gowrie	10:30 a.m.
1st and 3rd Saturdays	5:00 p.m.



**See your Sunday bulletin or contact
the Cooperative office for information
regarding mid-week and Holy Week
services.**