

FAITH MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
753 N. CALUMET AVE.  
VALPARAISO, IN 46383

(219) 462-7684

WWW.FAITHMEMORIAL.NET



## Darkness before the Dawn

**Matthew 27:45-54** <sup>45</sup>Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup>And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

<sup>47</sup>And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." <sup>48</sup>And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. <sup>49</sup>But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." <sup>50</sup>And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. <sup>51</sup>And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup>The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup>and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup>When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Things got real dark before that first Easter Sunday. Strange darkness covered the land in the peak of the day. The disciples watched as the Jesus they loved was beaten, mocked, tortured, and executed by their own leaders, the powerful occupying forces of Rome, and the will of an angry mob. Unnatural natural disasters took place. Finally, Jesus was sealed up in the tomb, dark and dead, and the disciples were sealed up in an upper room of a building, dark and terrified to go out.

I wonder what must have been going through the disciples' heads, at that point? Many of them had left everything to follow Jesus. Now after 3 years of difficult effort and wonder, things appeared to have ended in disaster. The one they had trusted most, their friend and God had not lived up to their apparent expectations of him. What now? Could they really go back to their old lives, especially when at any moment some of the same people who had killed Jesus might come looking for them? Hope seemed thin. The future seemed uncertain. Life seemed bleak. For them it was the darkness before the dawn.

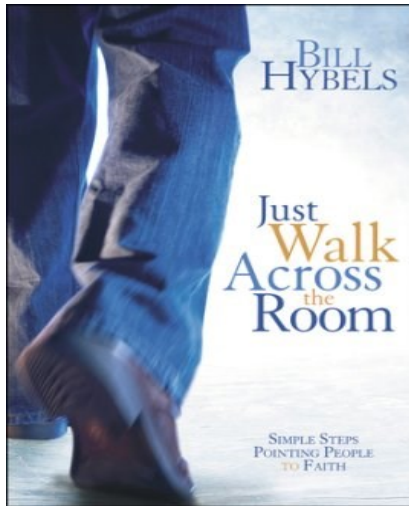
Then came the dawn. Light shone into Jesus' open and empty tomb revealing that the Lord was not there, the Son of God had risen. It wasn't just Jesus' tomb, or his victory over His own death. Many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and appeared to many. This was only a sampling of all the saints whose eyes had been closed by the darkness of death, but who will rise to see the dawn of eternal life, because of the death and resurrection of Christ.

As for the disciples, facing their own darkness in the upper room, even though a locked door, the light broke through, as the Lord came and stood among them saying, "Peace be with you." Old expectations, fears, and disappointments shattered, as a new day dawned in their relationship with their Lord. The dawn had come.

I'd imagine all of us could think of some dark spots in our own lives that leave us a bit uncertain. For some it is that effort that you really want to pay off in a certain way, but you are not sure it ever will. It might be that job that for whatever reason is about to end. It could be that your expectations in life are not playing out as you expected or that a trusted friend has let you down. Maybe it is a child, family member, friend, or neighbor that you know is far from the Lord, and you don't see much hope of change on the horizon.

I believe that for all of us struggling in these moments, it is important to remember that dawn is often preceded by a moment of darkness. Conversely, each dark aspect in our lives is just one dawn away from being washed away with light. Since Father is capable of raising Christ from the dead, not to mention all the incredible things that proceeded and followed, does this not show that he is able to provide in every way that matters? The unbeliever for whom we have little hope may be just one dawning moment away from faith. A broken relationship may be just one dawning moment away from forgiveness and the next step on a path toward healing. A sick or struggling believer, may be one dawning moment away from healing in this life, or certainly from a far greater healing when they join the rising saints in the life to come. So whatever darkness we face. Let us not give up hope. Instead, let us commit it to the Lord, trusting that He will provide the light and the answer we need. Then as the disciples did, let us follow the Lord forward in faith and action, proclaiming and giving thanks that a new day has both dawned and is also on the horizon. May God bless your Easter season and celebration.

In Christ, *Pastor Eric Schoeck*



## COMING SOON TO A SMALL GROUP NEAR YOU

The Natural Church Development team will be launching another small group discussion after Easter. The book is called ***Just Walk Across the Room***. When we surveyed the congregation, you determined that evangelism was something we could and should work on. This book will help us all learn to work together to spread God's love and word in our neighborhoods, at work and in our everyday lives. We will explore and follow how Jesus did this. Maybe we will even step out of our comfort zone to help people who long for someone to care, and want to experience God's love. In the coming weeks, we will share times and dates of the existing small groups. We want you to be able to be a part of a group. If these groups do not work for you we will work with you!

Books are \$5 and will be available in the Narthex.



### ONE NIGHT ONLY MOVIE EVENT!

On Monday, April 24, 7:30 pm at Cinemark, Valparaiso, our local Lutheran churches are hosting a screening of the new movie, **"Martin Luther: The Idea that Changed the World."** This special screening is the perfect outreach opportunity... a chance to invite friends and neighbors to an event in a community setting. This entertaining new film follows the great adventure story of Luther's life, packed with political intrigue, kidnappings, and life-or-death showdowns. At the same time, it's a story about the most important questions of life, including "Who am I?" "What is my purpose" and "How do I get right with God?" Local Reformation expert, Professor Ron Rittgers, of Valparaiso University will be there for a brief question and answer session afterward. Unlike a traditional movie showing, this screening requires that 85 tickets be reserved before April 17th in order for the screening to occur. To view the trailer and to reserve your tickets, please visit : <http://porter.NewLutherMovie.com>. If you don't like to make online purchases, we will be taking orders for tickets at church on weekends beginning March 19. Tickets are \$10.

## VIA CRUCIS



Friday, April 14, Gloria Dei (Immanuel's Hispanic Mission) will be sharing the Easter story with Valparaiso residents once again.

For those who do not know, Via Crucis (The way of the Cross), reenacts Christ's walk to Calvary. It will begin at Heritage Lutheran Church at 4:00pm. The principal actors will lead the way, stopping for readings and songs as they move through downtown Valparaiso. The event will end at the Chapel of the Resurrection where Christ will be hung on the cross. It is a moving reenactment. The event will end at 5:30pm.. It is a way to share our faith with those along the way.

Everyone is welcome!

## EASTER BREAKFAST

Please plan to join us for this fun and tasty meal, in celebration of our risen Lord. Bring your appetite to the church basement between services (8:00 & 10:45) on Easter morning!



## THOUGHTS FROM THE DEACONESS

*"By God's great mercy, he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*

1 Peter 1:3

How does one speak of hope in the face of today's world? The air and water are polluted, tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes strike at random, refugees stream from one country to another, wars, terrorists, gang warfare, families torn apart by abuse, dear friends die from incurable diseases.

How does one use the word hope in a world where 'hopeless' seems more apt? We more often hear hope linked with adjectives like 'dead', 'shattered', and 'lost'. And yet, St. Peter uses that word 'hope', and even more than just the word. He speaks of a 'living hope'. A hope that is actually alive. This 'living hope' was now a reality because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There was and is hope for a hopeless world.

But this living hope does not come to us in the way we would expect. For this hope doesn't promise an end to all problems on this side of heaven. All of creation continues to groan to be freed from the chains of hopelessness. There are no guarantees that there will be no more nights of pain or pillows soaked with tears or thoughts of giving up. But it is in the times of greatest need and of severe pain that living hope does its best work. In the very face of Satan and evil and death, hope shines forth and gives the courage to go on. For this living hope is the very face of Jesus Christ himself. Even in the darkest hours on the cross, Christ did not give up or give in to the powers of Satan.

Living hope promises an ultimate healing of all creation, a future where love and peace will govern, a future where freedom and health and wholeness are the words that are used. All is in process toward that glorious, final resurrection when living hope is fully realized.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been born to that living hope. A living hope that gives us a glimpse of a future where love is the way of life and where the word hope will no longer be used – for all our hopes will be fulfilled in this final resurrection. To this future we have been born. To this future we work.

### NORTHWEST INDIANA LUTHERAN HISPANIC MISSION SOCIETY UPDATE

In 2016 we increased our capacity for Hispanic outreach by welcoming Rev. Juan Garcia, an ordained LCMS pastor from Texas. Working together with Pastors Garcia and Angon, we have expanded our outreach activity to Crown Point including a weekly Spanish worship service on Sundays and a Monday Bible Study and ESL class at Trinity Lutheran. The gospel outreach activity has borne its first fruits, as we celebrated the ministry's first baptism and affirmation of faith this year.

Meanwhile, Pastor Angon and the congregation of Gloria Dei in Valparaiso continue to work in partnership with other area Lutheran congregations to cultivate Christian cross-cultural understanding, good will and friendship in the communities of our region. The year included fiestas in Valparaiso, LaPorte, Crown Point and Hobart.

Compass International Family Center continues to thrive. Under the leadership of Jessica Burkman, volunteer teachers provide K-12 tutoring, ESL and citizenship classes to friends from around the world. This fall the program expanded to offer learning opportunities on M,W,F mornings in addition to evening activities on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

We are always looking for volunteers and donations for our important work. You can donate using Latin American Missions on your envelopes. Please support us with your prayers. —

Submitted by Dorothy Kehe

### A LETTER OF THANKS FROM HILLTOP NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

"We would not have been able to host a successful Soups event without your help and support. Your wonderful gift of corn muffins was enjoyed by all who attended! Thank you so much!"

..."all proceeds from this event are used to provide scholarships for children of low income families needing full-time child care." This year, we sold more than 700 tickets! Thank you for helping us achieve our goal"

### MENS' OVERNIGHT SHELTER

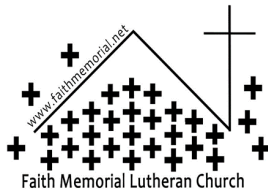
Thanks to all who assisted with the Valparaiso Mens' Overnight Shelter this winter. Whether you baked, bought, cooked or served dinner, your efforts were appreciated! Also, thanks to those who brought books and warm socks for the men!



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Lutheran Church**

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**Email:  
office@faithmemorial.net**



***HOLY WEEK  
CHURCH SERVICES***

Passion Sunday—April 9  
Holy Communion 9:00am

Maundy Thursday—April 13  
Holy Communion 7:00pm

Good Friday—April 14  
Liturgy of the Cross—3pm  
Tenebrae—7pm

The Resurrection of Our Lord—April 16  
Holy Communion 8:00 & 10:45am

**FAITH MEMORIAL WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

The Fifth Sunday in Lent, April 2, 9:00am Holy Communion  
The Fifth Wednesday in Lent, April 5, 7:00pm Evening Prayer  
The Sunday of the Passion, April 9, 9:00am, Holy Communion  
Maundy Thursday, April 13, 7:00pm Holy Communion  
Good Friday, April 14, 3:00 Liturgy of the Cross, 7:00pm Tenebrae  
The Resurrection of Our Lord, April 16, 8:00 and 10:45am Holy Communion  
The Second Sunday of Easter, April 23, 9:00 Morning Prayer  
The Third Sunday of Easter, April 30, Holy Communion  
The Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 7, 9:00am Holy Communion  
The Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 14, Morning Prayer  
The Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 21, Holy Communion  
The Seventh Sunday of Easter, May 28, Morning Prayer

