

INTERACT

Quarterly

Endeavour Hills Uniting Church Mission Statement

The Endeavour Hills Uniting Church...
a worshipping, nurturing, learning community...
an open door, reaching out to show Christ's face to all.
'Together We Grow.'

Lent & Easter

Issue



Autumn 2017 Vol.19:No 1

ENDEAVOUR HILLS UNITING CHURCH

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The Endeavour Hills Uniting Church web site maintenance is overseen by Church Council. Please send all correspondence etc. to the Secretary, Judy Hopkins.

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Please note:

The views in the articles included in this publication are not necessarily those held by the Endeavour Hills Uniting Church.

FROM THE MINISTER

As they went out, they came upon a man of Cyre'ne, Simon by name; this man they compelled to carry his cross. Matthew 27:32

Thank you for taking the time to read the revamped Interact, a magazine publication of Endeavour Hills Uniting Church. It is our hope that you will be blessed and encouraged by the articles contained within.

This edition focuses on Lent and Easter, the time when we remember the death and resurrection of Christ. What is Lent exactly? The word 'Lent' comes from the Old English word 'lengten,' which simply means 'spring'—when the days lengthen and new life springs forth. It is a time in which we anticipate the victory of the light and life of Christ over the darkness of sin and death. It is, to borrow a phrase from C.S. Lewis, a season of a kind of 'happiness and wonder that makes you serious.'

The overarching theme of Lent is sacrifice. This is not a concept or idea that generally sits well with us. Sacrifice makes us feel uncomfortable, and is costly and painful. Anyone who has given up anything of great significance can testify to the challenge of sacrifice. Whilst we can find ourselves focusing on the sacrifice we endure, Lent calls us to turn our eyes to the sacrifice of the cross. It is there where Jesus, the sinless Son of God, suffered the indignity and shame of dying for our sins—and it is there where God's wrath was satisfied by His Beloved Son's supreme sacrifice, winning salvation for all who call Him their Saviour. As we begin this Lenten season, may God open our minds and humble our hearts to the Lenten journey before us. Let us remember that we walk with the hope and assurance that whilst we journey to Good Friday, Sunday is just around the corner.

God bless you all.

Robin Yang



LENT: WHAT TO DO, WHAT NOT TO DO...

In times gone by, people would ask the question, “What are you giving up for Lent?” The practice - and thus the question - is not so commonplace any more.

The idea of giving something up for Lent had to do with Christians sharing in the suffering of Christ during this season, as we prepared for Good Friday and Easter. In some ways the Season of Lent replicates Jesus’ journey into the desert where he fasted for 40 days, and so going

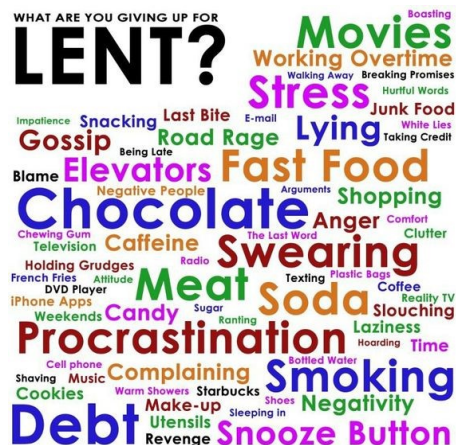
without in this season was a sort of parallel activity. However, as character Rev. Clare Fergusson points out in the novel *Out of the Deep I Cry*, “When you have an abundance of something, giving up a little bit of it isn’t meaningful.”

Some people go without sweets or eat simpler meals and, in so doing, experience an important spiritual discipline. But many Christians have looked to the roots of the ancient practice of fasting - which was to bring one closer to God - and sought out other ways to try to achieve this in this holy season.

How might you “step out of the ordinary” and journey a little more closely with God during Lent? Perhaps by taking a little more time in prayer and meditation each day. Maybe by reaching out in service to others, by volunteering some time on a regular basis, or reading to children at the local library, serving meals at a shelter, or cleaning up the roadside.

Perhaps someone who lives a stressful life might choose to take on a fun activity each day of Lent. This is hardly a traditional way to experience the season, but it is something that could help them to grow spiritually.

It doesn’t matter what we do, so much as the fact that we do something that might help us find ourselves changed, even just a little, when we arrive on the doorstep of Holy Week. Be ready to be transformed again by this most amazing story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.



DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD?



Many Christians, atheists, agnostics, and unbelievers ask the question “Did Jesus really rise from the dead?” All the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, point to the unmistakable truth of the resurrection of Christ

Jesus. They are four separate and independent accounts recorded in the Holy Scriptures, in different periods in Biblical history. Though we see glaring discrepancies in the four Gospel narratives, all the four writers are of one accord and point to the indisputable fact and ultimate truth that Christ rose from His death. The resurrection proves the evidence and the existence of an almighty, immortal sovereign Lord God.

Scientists and philosophers wrote about the cause and effect of everything. The only cause that will account for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is God of the Holy Bible. In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, our Lord spoke of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The resurrection is a supernatural phenomenon made possible by the Triune God—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—three Persons but One God. We believe Jesus Christ who took the form of a human being was crucified, died and was buried. After three days He was raised by the Triune God. Christ’s astonishing claim or prediction that He will rise from the dead was proved beyond any doubt. Resurrection is the proof of an eternal, everlasting God. Our faith built on the observation of historical facts reinforces the belief in the resurrection of Christ. “Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him, and so your faith and hope are in God.” (*1 Peter 1:21*). Christ who lived in human form received His message from God and spoke the Words of God, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from Him who sent me.” (*John 17:16*) “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The Words I say to you are not just my own. Rather it is the Father, living in me, who is doing

CHANGING EASTER DATES

Have you ever wondered why Easter's date is always different?

Easter, the day on which Christians commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is observed on the first Sunday after the "Pascal Full Moon" which is the first full moon of spring following the spring equinox (Northern Hemisphere).

That day always occurs on March 21,

according to a decree by the early Christian Church at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. and the Gregorian calendar introduced by Pope Gregory in 1582.

Therefore Easter can fall on any Sunday between March 22 and April 25. That, also, is why Easter and church holidays leading up to that day, like Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday and Good Friday, are referred to as "moveable feasts."

But the Eastern Orthodox churches did not adopt the Gregorian calendar method of determining Easter's date and instead follows the Julian calendar, a solar calendar adopted by Julius Caesar in 45 BC. The Julian calendar is 13 days ahead of the Gregorian calendar, meaning "the Orthodox Easter celebration usually occurs later than that celebrated by Protestants and Roman Catholics," according to Encyclopedia Britannica. "The Orthodox tradition prohibits Easter from being celebrated before or at the same time as Passover."

Olivia B. Waxman



(Continued from page 5)

Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?

His work. Believe me when I say I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe in the evidence of the miracles themselves." (*John 14: 10, 11*). The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead proves that He is the Son of God. "And through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ our Lord." (*Romans 1: 4*). "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact." (*Acts 2:32*)

Lakshman Pethiyagoda

ONE HOUR: WHAT'S IT WORTH?



During the seasons of Lent and Easter as we think about Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the tomb, we give thanks to God for the gift of new life that we receive through Jesus Christ. Many churches take special offerings or provide opportunities for people to “give something back” to God by sharing with others

during Lent. When we give to others it is a way of saying thank you to God.

In 1946, Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill of the Episcopal Church in the United States put out an appeal on the radio for people to raise a million dollars in one hour, and they were successful. Over the next few years this idea spread, and the result was a Lenten offering program called One Great Hour of Sharing in which several denominations participate. While the practice varies from church to church, in most cases the money goes to help in places experiencing natural disasters, both in the US and overseas.

It gives us reason to reflect—what is an hour worth? What can we do with one hour? As you prepare for the spiritual journey of Lent, think about “one hour” and explore what it can mean. Here are some suggestions; use your imagination to come up with others.

- If you work for pay, can you donate one hour’s wages or salary to the church or another cause?
- If you do not work for pay, calculate what an hour of your time might be worth and consider donating that.
- Give an hour of your time to someone else, each day or week of Lent. Spend less time at work and more time with a loved one. Do more things as a couple or a family or with friends. Spend an hour helping a neighbour or someone who is homebound. Volunteer somewhere for an hour.
- Spend an hour in silence. Pray, meditate, wonder. Go outside, whether in the country or the city, and listen to the sounds around you. What do you hear that you have not heard before? Pray for the people and situations that come to mind as you listen.
- Turn off the television, computer, video games, or whatever your favourite pastime is. Do something different for an hour each day. Read. Sing. Play a game. Have a conversation. Exercise.
- Spend an hour a day making something, or working on a project — something that can be shared with someone else.



ASH WEDNESDAY

“Pastor,” the woman said, “isn’t it time to put the ‘I Have Suffered’ on the altar?”

The minister looked at the woman with a puzzled look, not quite sure what she was referring to.

“You know, the green cloth with the letters IHS on it — the ‘I Have Suffered’.”

A light bulb went off for the minister, who wanted immediately to correct the devoted church member, but then thought better of it, and simply nodded.

The letters IHS sometimes appear on altar cloths, stained glass windows, clergy vestments, and numerous other places associated with Christians. What do they stand for?

There are a couple of “official” answers. The most commonly accepted is that they represent the Greek letters iota, eta, and sigma, the first three letters of the name Jesus in Greek.

Another explanation, which makes sense in those instances where the letters are separated by periods, is that they are the first letters of the Latin words *Iesu Hominum Salvator*, meaning “Jesus, Saviour of Humankind.”

There are several other understandings, including “In His Service”. Most important of all, the letters are a symbol, and symbols by their very nature can have many meanings, just as God is experienced and understood in many ways.

The Season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, 46 days before Easter. (The six Sundays that fall during the 40 days of Lent stretch the season out a little.) The date of Ash Wednesday is always determined by the date of Easter.

An ancient tradition for this day is to burn palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday and to use these ashes to make the sign of the cross on the forehead or the back of the hand. This is a symbolic way of saying “I’m sorry,” a tradition that began long ago. When people had done something wrong, they would cover themselves with ashes to show that they were sorry and wanted to change.

Sometimes the ashes are mixed with oil, which is a sign of healing and blessing. This reminds us that when we ask God for forgiveness, God helps us turn our lives around and start again. There’s a saying that goes, “You can give without loving, but you can’t love without giving.”



WHILE IT WAS YET DARK

All around the world, people will gather on April 16 for Easter sunrise services. Some will gather in snow with the prospect of spring flowers still a long way off. On the other hand, those in the southern hemisphere will be clinging to the last hints of summer. Whatever the weather, we gather at dawn.

Why? Because, almost 2000 years ago, some women went to the tomb of Jesus “while it was still dark,” as John 20:1 puts it, or “as the first day of the week was dawning” according to Matthew 28:1. Exactly which women went to the tomb depends on the Gospel account and, in the final analysis, is far less important than the rest of the story.



They went, not quite sure what to expect, and they found something beyond their wildest imagining. In one way or another, they encountered the risen Christ. Perhaps that’s why we still gather on hillsides, on beaches, in churches, in the rain, in myriad places at break of day on Easter morning. Somehow, in the music, in the sunrise, in the grandeur of the setting, in the presence of a gathered few or a crowd, we also encounter the risen Christ yet again.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed.

Hallelujah!

QUOTES & COMMENTS

Let us so live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry.

Mark Twain

The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference—and the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference.

Elie Wiesel

Look at life through the windshield, not the rear view mirror.

Byrd Baggett

Easter is not a time for groping through dusty, musty tomes or tombs to disprove spontaneous generation or even to prove life eternal. It is a day to fan the ashes of dead hope, a day to banish doubts and seek the slopes where the sun is rising, to revel in the faith which transports us out of ourselves and the dead past into the vast and inviting unknown.

Author unknown

You really shouldn't say "I love you" unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.

Jessica, age 8

Wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop than when we soar.

William Wordsworth

An elderly man's wife had recently died, and the man was sitting out in his yard crying. A four-year-old boy who lived next door went into his neighbour's yard, climbed into the man's lap, and sat there. Later, when the child came home, his mother asked what he had said to the man. "Nothing," the boy answered. "I just helped him cry."

Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day.

Mary Ann age 4

At a vacation Bible school in Sacramento, California, the leaders were talking about the lives of various people in the early church. In telling the story of Stephen (*Acts 7:54-60*), one of the leaders did not want to shock or upset the young children by saying that Stephen was martyred, and so she simply said, "Sometimes, being a follower of Jesus is risky. One of the people in the Bible, Stephen, got hurt because of his faith." A young child interrupted and said, "He didn't get hurt. He got dead."

John 14:14, The Message

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EASTER

The name Easter comes from the Anglo-Saxon name for April, Eostermunath. It means the month of beginnings. In the early years of Christianity there was a dispute over the date of Easter. In 325 the Nicean Council decided it should be on the first Sunday after the full moon after the Northern Hemisphere Spring Equinox. That is why the date of Easter changes each year.



Friday is the day of the week when Jesus was crucified. It is called Good Friday because 'good' meant holy. On that day we eat hot cross buns. The origins of hot cross buns are obscure but in pagan times people baked buns and offered them to the gods. Cross buns with the cross representing the cross of Jesus were first mentioned in the 18th century. In the early 19th century people sold hot cross buns in the street from stalls and so they became known as 'hot' cross buns.

The Easter bunny was originally a hare because hares were fertility symbols in the pagan religion and they continued to be associated with Easter after people were converted to Christianity. Because people in the USA were unfamiliar with hares the Easter hare became a rabbit.

In the Middle Ages Christians were forbidden to eat eggs during Lent (the forty days before Easter). Not surprisingly people were keen to eat eggs when Easter arrived! Some people also said that the egg represented the tomb of Jesus (although, long before Christianity eggs were a pagan symbol of fertility).

In the Middle Ages people painted Easter eggs red but by the 18th century people bought artificial eggs made of various materials to give as gifts at Easter. (Sometimes the artificial eggs contained gifts). Chocolate Easter eggs were first made in the 19th century.

Tim Lambert

From the Internet

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT EASTER?



Life can be pretty unfair for most of us. We all know people, good people, who are suffering through illness, marriage breakdown or economic uncertainty—and what about our world? We dread switching on the news sometimes as all we hear about is war, violence, cruelty and murder. To call our world chaotic is an understatement. Surely if God did make the world and all living things, as Christians believe, he would do something about it!

Well he did; that's where Easter comes in. God certainly didn't intend the world to be like this, but having made Mankind he

allowed him the luxury of free will, the ability to choose between right and wrong...and guess what we chose?

That's right, we chose the wrong path and as a result this sin caused us to be separated from God. You see, by sinning we turned away from God and so he too was forced to turn away from us—and the result is stalemate. But luckily God had a rescue plan in place. He sent his son Jesus Christ to be born as a human and this is the true celebration of Christmas. But at Easter we celebrate him being put to death on a wooden cross on Good Friday and then rising to life on Easter Sunday.

But what does this actually mean for you and me? Because Jesus died and came to life again (was resurrected) we too can have eternal life with him if we believe and trust in him. That means that when we die and leave our earthly bodies behind there is something more, that part of us does go on living and we will spend eternity with the God who loved us and gave himself for us. This is the Christian hope. If we have that hope then life now is bearable; without it the trials of this life can easily overwhelm us.

Caroline Oldroyd

DIFFERENT DETAILS, ONE STORY

Have you ever had the experience of being in a room when someone rushes in to tell you some exciting news? They're overflowing with excitement — so much so that the story just bursts out of them and some of the details jumble together.



Then, a moment later, someone else rushes in to tell the same story with the same level of enthusiasm, only their version is a little bit different. Then another person comes in, and later still another — all of them excited, all of them eager to share their version of the same story.

In the telling, the details vary a little. One person says things happened this way; another that way, but the basic story is the same. Perhaps one person wants to emphasize one aspect, and so they leave something out. Another person has a different “take” and so they come at things from a different angle.

That’s kind of what the Easter stories in the Bible are like. The story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the highlight of the Gospel, and each of the Gospel writers wants to tell it with great joy and excitement. That they differ in a few details (the number and names of the women, for example, or the number of angels) is not really surprising. Nor is it surprising that they want to emphasize different things, and each writer has a unique style and approach.

The facts may differ, but the truth of the story is what really matters—and the truth is consistent in all of the accounts: Jesus Christ is risen, bringing new life to all people. Thanks be to God!

EMMAUS AND BEYOND



The story of Jesus meeting two disciples on the road to Emmaus (*Luke 24:13-35*) appears in the lectionary for April 30. The story occurs on the afternoon of Easter Sunday. Jesus joins two disciples *en route* to the village of Emmaus, but they do not recognize who he is.

When the supposed stranger asks what the two are discussing, their jaws drop. “You’ve got to be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard the news! A great prophet named Jesus was crucified. Some of our friends claim to have seen him alive, which would be wonderful, but that doesn’t seem very likely.”

For the remainder of the journey, Jesus explains the scriptures to these two, assuring them that the Messiah is indeed risen, and present.

Arriving at their destination, the disciples urge their companion to stay for dinner and during the meal Jesus takes bread, blesses it, and breaks it.

“Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight” (*Luke 24:31, NRSV*).

Many people take this story literally, seeing in it one of the many appearances of the risen Christ. Others look at it differently, seeing this story as a metaphor for Christ’s presence in the church, then and now.

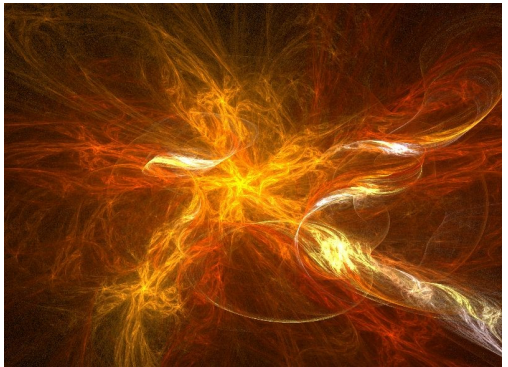
There are times when we feel helpless and hopeless, perhaps feeling abandoned by God, and unsure of our direction. At those times, in Christian community, we experience the presence of Christ with us, painstakingly helping us understand some truth that will move us beyond our present state.

In his book *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, scholar John Dominic Crossan states: “Emmaus never happened; Emmaus always happens.” Whatever our understanding, the story of Emmaus can remind us that we are not alone. Jesus Christ is with us. Always. To the end of the age.

...AND SO TO PENTECOST

Pentecost, also called Whitsunday, (Pentecost from Greek *pentecostē*, “50th day”), is a major festival in the Christian church, celebrated on the Sunday that falls on the 50th day after Easter. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, which occurred on the Jewish Pentecost, after the death, Resurrection, and

Ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2), and it marks the beginning of the Christian church’s mission to the world.



The Jewish feast was primarily a thanksgiving for the first fruits of the wheat harvest, but the rabbis associated it with remembrance of the Law given by God for the Hebrews to Moses on Mount Sinai. The church’s transformation of the Jewish feast to a Christian festival was thus related to the belief that the gift of the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus was the first fruits of a new dispensation that fulfilled and succeeded the old dispensation of the Law.

When the festival was first celebrated in the Christian church is not known, but it was mentioned in a work from the Eastern church, the *Epistola Apostolorum*, in the 2nd century. In the 3rd century it was mentioned by Origen, theologian and head of the catechetical school in Alexandria, and by Tertullian, Christian priest and writer of Carthage.

Interact Winter Issue

Available Sunday 4th June 2017

This issue will be of general interest, so please feel free to send in your contributions at any time between

March and the 21st of May 2017.

Email to: interact@ehuc.org.au or leave in the folder in the Narthex.

Contributions to Interact

Any material you may have to be included in Interact may be sent in one of two ways:

1. e-mail (preferred method) to interact@ehuc.org.au putting “Interact” in the subject line
2. leave in the green Interact folder which is located on the stand to the right of the kitchen window.

Your contributions of up to **450 words** are very welcome, **BUT please include your name, phone number &/or email address in case it is necessary to contact you.** Material should be submitted by **12 noon** on the deadline dates indicated below:

Issue	Deadline	Publication Date
Winter	21st May 2017	4th June 2017
Spring	20th August 2017	3rd September 2017
Summer	19th November 2017	3rd December 2017