



2024



WHITESTONE LIFE

Bearers of Easter Hope

I'm surprised by spring every year. The calendar tells me it's coming, but there's that moment when my winter-hunched mind snaps to the realization that it's warm, the wheat fields are popping green, and chlorophyll has airbrushed the branch tips with fresh, living leaves. Look at that!

Jesus' resurrection hope catches me up short like that too. The center of our faith is Jesus' resurrection from the dead. In one way, we could say that the resurrection was an event that happened in history that we celebrate on Easter Sunday and during the 50-day season of Easter.

But more than a day or a season, Easter is a way of life shaped by resurrection hope. In his first letter, Peter teaches on the hope that we have because of Jesus' resurrection. "By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1:3). The power of the resurrection means there's always something new and fresh and alive among Jesus' people. We have a "living hope" within us that radiates outward in hope for our church and that we're called to proclaim to the world.

Living hope begins within us as we come to know the risen Jesus. The living One gives us living hope. "Death no longer has dominion over him" (Romans 6:9). He is risen! The more we seek Jesus day by day in our lives, the more his hope naturally dawns on us. Hard and deadly things don't have the final word.

Living hope in Jesus' resurrection is also hope for the church. If the church were merely the sum of our efforts, we would be in trouble. There are just too many ways for us to mess up the church. We drift from the ancient truths. We step on each other's toes. We offer less than our best to God. And yet, the church continues, because it's never merely a human reality. Jesus' resurrection life animates our life together. There is a hope that comes from beyond us that unites us and keeps us moving forward as God's people.

And Christ calls us to share our living hope with the world. Peter writes: "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). He expects that when we're living with a vibrant hope of the resurrection, others will notice. They'll ask why we're hopeful, and that will be our opportunity to share the hope that lives within us.

One of the great tragedies of our age is that Christians look so much like the rest of the world. We're often just as partisan, pugilistic, and fearful as nonbelievers. But it seems to me that the even greater tragedy is that we're not more hopeful. As Christians, we believe something surprising about the world: Jesus has conquered Death. God's love transcends the broken horizons of this world, and that gives us hope. Or it *should*. Because of Jesus' resurrection, we are invited into a hope that's infectious, a hope that is greater than our doubts and worries. Are we living in that hope?

This Easter season is a great time to do a hope check. Has your conviction in the truth of the resurrection made you a more hopeful person? Has Jesus' resurrection planted you on a firm foundation of hope? Are you a bearer of Easter hope in the world?

He is risen, and that really does change everything. Look at that!

Calendar items

April 4 — Piecemakers 9am-1pm

April 7—Who Are You, Lord? (Stretch Your Imaginary) Acts 9:1-22 Baptisms/communion Brad Roth

April 10—Last Connect till fall

April 14—Turns Out He Still Does That (Stretch Your Imaginary) Acts 3:1-10 Ron Moyo

April 16—Worship meeting 3:00PM

April 21—Anyone. For Real (Stretch Your Imaginary) Acts 10:34-48 Brad Roth

April 28—Not Yet (Stretch Your Imaginary) Acts 16:6-10 Brad Roth

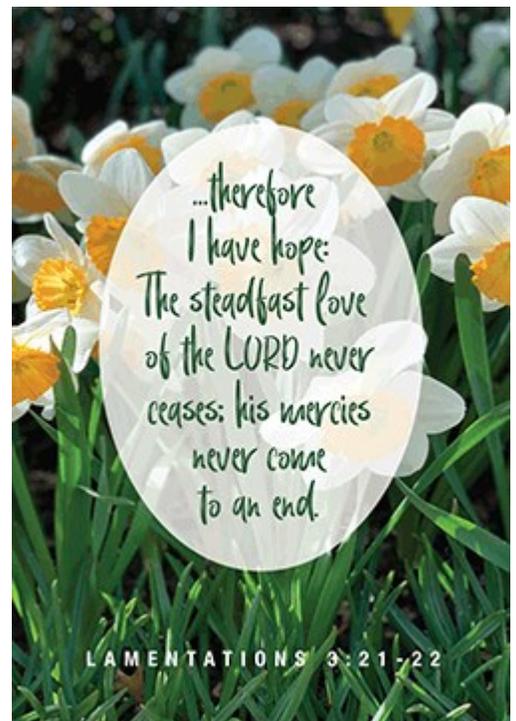
April 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



- 5 Ray & Janet Franz
- 7 Neil & Kathryn Voth McChesney
- 10 Kevin & Heather Finley
- 19 Merv & BettyAnn Bontrager
Virg & Diane White



- 1 Theo Lehman
- 2 Merv Bontrager
Matt Stucky
- 3 Aaron Billings
- 4 John Griffin
Trevor Stucky
- 6 Claire Nichols
- 7 Jasmine Stutzman
- 9 Vernon Blosser
- 10 Terry Leinbach
Holden Stauffer
- 11 Gordon Peters
Robin Slabach
Joshua Koehn
Melissa Landis
- 13 Kent Nichols
- 14 Holly Peters
Kerry Krehbiel
- 19 Betty Hartzler
- 20 Rosalie Flickinger
- 23 Landon Unruh
- 24 Hannah Finley
- 27 Sienna Belshe
Destry Belshe
- 28 Rachel McMaster
- 29 DaLonna Schroeder



Congregational Life Corner!

Keep a gratitude journal where each evening you record something you were thankful for that day. A thankful heart becomes a happy heart.