

hands & feet



A monthly newsletter of the Webster United Church of Christ, Federated

Mark Your Calendar

Tuesdays 6pm Small Group
"Bible 101"

Easter Sunday, April 5
Sunrise Service, 7am, at
Point Breeze
Easter Service, 10am

Monday, April 13, 6pm
Council Meeting

4/12 to 5/10
Community Baby Shower Drive for
Mother's Day

April 18, 12:30pm
Daffodil Tea

Monday, April 20, 6pm
Outreach Meeting

Sunday, April 26, after worship
Monthly Brunch and
Birthday Celebration



EDITORIAL

Dear friends in Christ,

As I write this, the big day is coming quickly. It's almost Easter Sunday and all over the world pastors are working hard to show up on this Super Bowl of Sundays, preaching with their best. I have to say though that I am in no hurry because Holy Week is my favorite week, starting with Palm Sunday, the celebration leading into the darkness, to the emotion of the Passover Seder, to the intense Good Friday service where we feel the suffering, sacrifice, and death of Jesus in the deepest places of our souls, to the loneliness and feelings of abandonment of Holy Saturday, to the glory of the Easter Sunrise. I want, no, I need to feel each of these moments in my body and my soul to renew my faith and my understanding of what Jesus did for me, making me into a person of the Resurrection and a forgiven daughter of the Lord.

There's a story told of two children playing together while a movie about Jesus' life was on television in the background. One of the children was Christian; the other was not. As the film reached the point of Jesus' crucifixion, the second child became more and more interested in what was happening on the television and began to neglect their play. Frustrated, the first child said, "Never mind about that! He gets out of it in the end!"

I wonder sometimes if this is our attitude toward Easter in the church too. It's tempting to fast-forward through Jesus' suffering and death to the Easter lilies and the happy ending. In a broken world, we long for happy endings.

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APRIL 2026 EDITION

"According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

1 Peter 1:3



EDITORIAL (conclusion)

A happy ending is the last thing Jesus' disciples expected. We read in the Gospels that Jesus told the disciples three times that he must suffer and die and that he would be raised again on the third day, but they didn't understand him. They just couldn't believe it. Humans know something about death, and in our experience, death is final.

Perhaps that's why the first time Jesus referred to his upcoming death and resurrection, Peter actually talked back to him, rejecting his words. When Jesus was arrested, the disciples ran away. After Jesus' death and burial, John reports that the disciples hid away together in fear. Mark reports that the women who found Jesus' tomb empty on Easter morning didn't tell anyone because they were afraid. Luke reports that when the women did tell the other disciples, they didn't believe them.

The disciples had experienced Jesus' crucifixion—a real, slow, painful and shameful death—and were convinced that was the end of the story. They couldn't imagine a reality in which death didn't have the last word.

And then everything changed.

On the church's liturgical calendar, Easter is called "The Resurrection of Our Lord." That name reminds us of the deep power of God at work to save. The God who created the world out of nothing creates new life on the other side of death. Easter isn't the celebration that Jesus "got out of it in the end." On Easter, we celebrate the fact that Jesus saw things through to the end, to the cross, to death, to the grave, and that God raised him up to new life!



Our creeds and confessions of faith insist on this: Jesus was crucified, died and was buried. They confess just as clearly that Jesus rose from the dead. There is no narrow escape, no getting out of it. Without death, there can be no resurrection. Jesus' resurrection shows God breaking into our death-dealing world to give new and eternal life. When we gather for worship, we say in the words of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds that we believe this! We really believe it! And then, even more boldly, we say we believe in this promise of resurrection for ourselves too!

The good news of Easter keeps getting better. Easter is not just one day but a liturgical season lasting for seven weeks. In the Scriptures, the number seven conveys a sense of completeness. Because there are seven days in a week and seven weeks in the season of Easter, Easter is sometimes referred to as "a week of weeks," a fulfillment of fulfillment. The good news is so good that we keep on celebrating and witnessing to God's gift of new life long after the rest of society has moved on to thinking about the next holiday.

So, this Easter, I am declaring "Let the Lion Roar!", because Jesus didn't stay silent in the face of fear, shame, or defeat, and He doesn't stay silent over your life either. His resurrection means hope is louder than anxiety, purpose is stronger than pressure, and victory is possible no matter what you're walking through. If you've ever wondered whether faith could actually make a difference in your real, everyday life, Easter is for you. So hear the roar! And come celebrate Easter like never before!

He is Risen!

Pastor Sabina



Worship News

Date	Scripture	Sermon
04/05 EASTER	7am Sunrise Service Point Breeze	10am Easter Service
04/12	John 20:19-31	"We are All Thomases"
04/19	Luke 24:13-35	"Just a Closer Walk with Thee"
04/26	John 10:1-10	"The Gatekeeper"



Draw us forth, God of all creation.
 Draw us forward and away from limited certainty
 into the immense world of your love.
 Give us the capacity to even for a moment
 taste the richness of the feast you give us.
 Give us the peace to live with uncertainty,
 with questions,
 with doubts.
 Help us to experience the resurrection anew
 with open wonder and an increasing ability
 to see you in the people of Easter.

Author Unknown

Verse of the Month

"O death, where is your victory?
 O death, where is your sting?"
 The sting of death is sin, and the
 power of sin is the law. But
 thanks be to God, who gives us
 the victory through our Lord
 Jesus Christ.
 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

DISCIPLESHIP

BIBLE 101

After a break during Lent for a Lenten small group called "Have a Beautiful, Terrible Lent" (very successful!), Bible 101 will be back on Tuesday, April 14!! We will be focusing on the Book of Isaiah!! Join us for great discussion and fellowship. No previous knowledge needed, no question is a dumb question!

Ministries News

Webster United Church of Christ



April 12 to May 10

Mother's Day Community Baby Shower Donation Drive

To support women
with unplanned pregnancies

Wish list (all new please):

Crib sheets (all colors), diapers (all sizes), clothes (newborn to 12 months) including sets, baby bassinets, baby security blankets, unscented baby wipes, baby grooming kits, Dreft detergent, feeding (formula: unopened, non-expired, bottles, nipples, bibs, and burp cloths), Hygiene (diaper rash cream, baby wash, lotion, and shampoo), Mom Care Packages (nursing pads, nipple cream, toiletries [shampoo, conditioner, lip balm], and body lotion).

**Drop off at the church office between April 12 and May 10,
Tuesdays to Fridays, 9:30am to 1pm
4 Church street, Webster, MA - 508-943-0061 - uccfedwebster.org**

EVENTS

Daffodil Tea

**Saturday, April 18, 2026
12:30pm**

*Join us for a wonderful
experience including:*

A variety of finger foods
assorted sandwiches, homemade
pastries, scones with clotted cream...
and, of course, teas and beverages!

Gift basket raffle

Spring hat contest with prizes
adults and children are all invited
to participate!

Tickets are \$20 and
available at the church office
or by contacting Gayle at 774-200-8988 -
gaylebannister@yahoo.com
- raffle tickets not included -

All proceeds will benefit our
Feed my Sheep
free meal ministry
on Thursdays at 5pm!

Bring a non-perishable item and
receive a free raffle ticket
for each item donated!

MINISTRIES

**WARMING
CENTER
OPEN**



New Ministry Soft-Launch!

During these cold February nights, we were able to discreetly start our warming center ministry, thanks to a few dedicated volunteers! A warming center is a temporary facility that is made available during extreme temperature conditions for people who do not have shelter or lose heating capabilities. Warming centers are not overnight shelters or homeless shelters. They are open for a limited number of hours for a limited number of days and provide limited accommodations (no sleeping). We were able to offer coffee, food, and activities in the fellowship hall but, thanks to a generous grant from the Malser Humanities Trust, will be renovating our gym to welcome the center, as well as a space for the youth to gather and have fun!! More news in the future!!

SOME EASTER STUFF



From Pastor Sabina - Easter in France

I would be remiss if I did not bring up how we celebrate Easter in France! The main surprise: there is no Easter Bunny in France (we eat bunnies, though, tasty...). But fear not, the French have a great method to distribute those Easter eggs to our children!

Easter in France does not involve the Easter Bunny (except in the East where they keep a German tradition). A French Easter goes something like this:

On the Thursday night before Easter, all the church bells go silent and they won't be heard from again until Easter Sunday. Why? Well, this is the strange part. They sprout wings, pack up their suitcases and fly off to Rome. They go to Rome to visit the Pope, I guess to spend the rest of Holy Week there.

After the Vatican visit, they must go to the market where they load up their suitcases with chocolate. Chocolate eggs, chocolate chicks, chocolate chickens,

chocolate fish (symbol of Christianity, yes?), and chocolate bells, of course.



As they make their way back to France, and to their respective steeples, on Easter eve, they drop these chocolate treats at the houses of children along their flight path. After making deliveries all night long, they have to be up bright and early the next morning to ring in Easter Sunday. When the children hear the bells ringing, they run outside to hunt for the goodies that the Cloches de Pâques, or "Easter Bells" have left them.



Even though our two cultures have very different ways of dispensing their Easter eggs, does it really matter? They both cling to the most important tradition – eating lots of chocolate.

What else? France may be very much anchored on laicity and the separation of church and state, the country still maintains strong religious traditions for Easter and rarely uses pastel, commercial decorations, opting for intimate family gatherings, and, of course, the traditional leg of lamb (yes, we eat lamb on the day of resurrection of the lamb of God, don't ask), and eggs.

Alors, je vous souhaite de Joyeuses Pâques, mes amis!!

Pastor Sabina

MORE EASTER STUFF

As a small child, I enjoyed visiting Santa at a local department store at Christmastime. My parents would take me downtown to the jolly bearded man in the red suit. I felt comfortable climbing into his lap, telling him my wish list and receiving a gift along with his encouraging words. He was friendly, predictable and safe.

Imagine my excitement when one Spring I learned that the Easter Bunny would be at the same department store. Neither I nor my family had ever seen the Easter Bunny. I had seen white rabbits. Those cute, cuddly little bunnies seemed so warm and innocent. I looked forward for some time to seeing the real Easter Bunny.

Yikes!



Finally, the big day came. My father took me to the store that afternoon. When we reached the Bunny's floor, I was shocked. Before me was a human-sized hare with big eyes and large, floppy ears. The creature walked on two legs like a human. He talked.

The more clearly I saw him as I approached him, the more slowly I walked. I would not get close to the furry beast. He wanted to give me a gift, but I was not cooperating. "Just throw it to me," I suggested. He tossed his present across the room, Frisbee-style.

Much as I was confused about the Easter Bunny, many folks are confused about the meaning of Easter itself. For some, it means new clothes and a chance to show them off. Others focus on eggs, candy and special meals. Spring Break is a highlight of the season. The beach beckons and relaxing on the sand or reveling at parties defines the holiday.

Renewal

Easter is also billed as a time of renewal. It may be relatively easy to renew things outwardly – new

clothes, a hairstyle, a fancy party. Renewal on the inside can be more difficult. Problems from the past can haunt one's memory. Broken relationships undermine self-esteem. Guilt over missed opportunities, pain from rejection, loneliness and anger from past hurts can sometimes create a swirling inner vortex, a psychological suction from which escape is difficult. Where does one find inner renewal? Some look to friends or family. Counselors and self-help books provide coping skills. But maybe a look at the first Easter could also offer some clues.

Nearly two millennia ago, a young Jewish leader fell into disfavor with established authorities. He was executed, declared dead, wrapped up like a mummy and placed in a tomb. A large stone was rolled against the tomb's entrance and a crack unit of Roman soldiers guarded the tomb against grave robbers.

Risen?

Two days later, the stone was rolled away, the tomb was empty but the grave clothes were still in place. The man's closest followers, most of whom had abandoned him during his trials, reported seeing him alive again. Many later died horrible deaths for telling people that their leader had risen from the dead. They had been transformed from the inside and it affected every facet of their lives, giving them inner strength, freedom from guilt, love for their enemies and boldness to stand for what they believed was right. "Anyone who belongs to Christ," wrote one early believer, "has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

Sometimes life's challenges can seem as scary as that huge hare seemed to me when I was a child. We don't want to get near them. Yet that first Easter still offers hope. Maybe if Jesus really did come back from the dead, then people today can find inner renewal by knowing him personally.

As we enjoy eggs and rabbits this Spring, might that be a message worth pondering?

Written by Rusty Wright

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United Church of Christ, Federated

"Come as you are, we mean it!"

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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday through Friday, 9:30-1, or by appointment

WORSHIP: Sundays at 10, in person and live on Facebook

BIBLE STUDY / SMALL GROUPS: Tuesdays at 6pm

THREADS OF HOPE (free clothing, hygiene products,...): Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9-11, Thursdays 4-7

FEED MY SHEEP FREE MEAL MINISTRY: Thursdays, 5

GOLDEN BEES SLEEPING BAG MINISTRY: Mondays, 9-12

KNIT PRAY LOVE MINISTRY: Mondays, 10-12, Ladies' Parlor

OUTDOOR FOOD PANTRY: Ongoing