

PLOTTING RESURRECTION
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Easter Sunday
Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church

There is no way to walk to Boylston Street today without being reminded of the spilling of precious blood, the hateful strike. But we are also reminded of the amazing capacity of the human spirit to rise. **Rev. Liz Walker** of Roxbury Presbyterian Church at the Boston Marathon bombing commemoration this past Tuesday.

Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you."

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my friends to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

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You don't have to go far to find proof of the Resurrection. Sometimes it's as close as the Fellowship Hall on the other side of this wall behind me.

Last Sunday afternoon an inter-racial group of 20 or so gathered in our Fellowship Hall to plot resurrection. They didn't say so or think so at the time. But it's what they were doing, rolling away a stone, creating an opening for new possibilities to emerge.

We had come together to discuss Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. In case you hadn't heard, in this county, grandchildren of former slaves are profiled, mistreated and excluded from equal opportunity. And so we talked of things that matter. Of chronic injustice and eternal hope.

Can we find a way to make room at the table for all?

Meet me in Galilee, said Jesus. And meet me in Jefferson County for there is still much work to be done.

A week ago Wednesday a group of eight gathered in that same room to plot resurrection. They didn't say so or think so at the time. But it's what they were doing. We talked of abject poverty and lack of economic opportunity for so many in our beloved state of West Virginia.

In this state, many watch helplessly as mountain ranges are destroyed so the rich in other states can get richer and richer. And in this world, many are oppressed, exploited and stripped bare so we (including me) can enjoy everyday low prices at Walmart.

Can we find a way to make room at the table for all?

Meet me in Galilee, said Jesus. And meet me in West Virginia. Meet me in Bangladesh for there is still much work to be done.

Yesterday a small group gathered in a room above the Fellowship Hall to plot resurrection. They didn't say so or think so at the time. But it's what they were doing while they knitted rainbow scarves to encourage the commissioners at the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly in Detroit this coming June to roll away the stone, to create an opening and permit marriage equality in our church.

In this nation, many LGBT persons are scorned, bullied and excluded from equal rights. In this world, many such persons are hunted down and killed in the name of the law.

Can we find a way to make room at the table for all?

Meet me in Galilee. And meet me in Detroit and in Uganda.

Every Monday night in the room behind me a group of 40 or so gather to plot resurrection. They don't say so or think so. But it's what they are doing. Week after week they listen with non-judgmental hearts in order to free each other of destructive addictions, to roll away the stone, to create an opening to rebuild broken lives and to make relationships whole again.

Meet me at AA. Meet me at Al-anon.

One year ago, the citizens of Boston met to plot resurrection in the wake of death and destruction. They didn't say so or think so at the time. But it's what they were doing as they discussed how to bring hope and healing to those whose world and legs had been shattered into a thousand pieces.

We should never have met this way, but we are so grateful for each other.

Those are the words of Patrick Downes, newlywed one year ago who along with his wife lost a leg below the knee in the explosion. He spoke this past Tuesday at the commemoration in Boston.

We should never have met this way, but we survivors are so grateful for each other. I would not wish the trials of such recovery on anyone, but we do wish that all of you, at some point in your lives feel as loved as we have felt over this last year.

Meet me in Boston. Meet me in Baghdad. And meet me in Nigeria.

There is no way to walk to Boylston Street without being reminded of the spilling of precious blood, that hateful strike. But we are also reminded of the amazing capacity of the human spirit to rise in heroism, compassion and sacrifice. The human spirit left to its

own devices, its divine design, will rise, despite anything, despite everything. (Rev. Liz Walker)

Over the past several years I've noticed that many Christians turn the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus into a fetish or some kind of idol. We can be so transfixed by the finger pointing to the moon that we never see the moon. We can be so transfixed by Jesus, his miracles, his crucifixion and his resurrection that we fail to see what it shows. Too much gazing at the past can blind us to a future unfolding before our eyes.

We are not called to have faith *in* Jesus. That, in fact, is a sure way of killing off Jesus.

We are not called to have faith *in* Jesus. We are called to live the faith *of* Jesus—to trust—as he did—the Spirit of God so completely that we can live and love boldly, without fear of failing, falling or defeat. We can trust the Spirit to bear us up on wings of grace time and time again.

For you see, the way of Jesus is not a way out of this world into some other world. The way of Jesus is a certain way of being in this world, of being in love, madly in love with all that God has made, madly in love with Mother Earth, madly in love with all creatures great and small, and madly in love with all people, red and yellow, black and white, of all orientations, conditions and circumstances.

The good news of the resurrection is not that Jesus has arisen and gone to heaven awaiting our arrival. The good news of the resurrection is that Jesus has arisen and is leading us along the way to his tired, hungry, sick, homeless, imprisoned and broken friends. And in love, this morning, Jesus bids us rise.

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HYMN
Spirit of God