



Empower

Encourage

Engage

Equip

Experiment

April 16, 2025

Dear Flint River Saints,

It may seem like a strange time to send a presbytery packet as we run the gamut of preparations this week!

As we cover crosses and prepare bread and cup,
as we order lilies and polish the brass,

perhaps it's actually the perfect time to remember the many holy rhythms we share as individuals, as congregants, and as members of this presbytery.

After all, we – *each and every one of us* -- follow a suffering Savior, whose ongoing ministry is revealed in the presbytery materials accompanying this letter.

So, as we walk with Jesus this Holy Week,
as we move from a bustling temple to a quiet upper room,
as we move to garden of Gethsemane where tears fall among blossoms
to a hillside where groans fell among rocks,

we keep moving, ever hopeful, *to an empty tomb*.

I wonder if we, as disciples in 2025, would be better served to have an empty tomb as the pivotal symbol of our faith rather than an empty cross?

In a world where so much is violent, divisive, and agonizing (like Jesus' death), what would it be like for us to hold the image of the empty tomb ever before us? This image – *the image of the tomb* -- is one which points to unspeakable mystery, the encouragement of angels, and the courage of several heart-broken women. We need all of this in the living of our days, don't we?

The empty tomb reminds us of these spiritual practices:

- the need to **practice trust** in our Creator, the Holiest of Holies, when there is so much around us and within us that exceeds our comprehension
- the need to **practice spirit-filled attention**, that we may notice the messengers in our midst who bring hope and healing in the most unexpected of ways in the strangest of places
- the need to **practice courage**, that we may be true to who we believe God has called us to be while, at the same time, practicing tenderness to those who see the world through different eyes
- the need to **practice love** in specific ways that gives flesh – *and flight!* -- to words



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We are disciples today because of Mary Magdalene and others who went to the quiet tomb to care for Jesus's body.

We are disciples today because these women allowed love to outweigh fatigue and commitment to overshadow fear.

We are disciples today because these courageous souls obeyed the risen Jesus' call to "Go and tell their brothers that he would meet them soon!"

A handful tired women were the first witnesses to the resurrection.

Let that sink in.

A mere handful, who were likely not at their best. And yet, the movement to follow Jesus began!

May this coming Easter be one that reminds each and every one of us, that it doesn't require great means, brilliant minds, and splashy ads to be the body of Jesus. **All that the body of Jesus -- the church -- requires is you and me, just as we are right now.**

As we follow Jesus, may we become such an expansive and spacious community that we will lead one another into being more than we could've ever imagined.

May we become all that God has dreamed for us.

Christ *has* risen, beloved.

He has risen indeed.