



First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Melrose

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Messenger

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No Joke

Jesus is Risen! April fools!

There is a certain irony when Easter Sunday falls on April 1st—April Fools' Day. After all, when the first disciples announced his resurrection, many people assumed that they were joking.

But it was no joke.

As the disciples persisted in their stories of Jesus' appearances after the crucifixion, the Roman and Jewish authorities began to take things a little more seriously. Their response was: "Fine. So the tomb is empty. Where did you hide his body?"

Thus began attacks on the disciples as grave robbers. These attacks were so significant in fact, that Matthew's account of the resurrection has guards placed at the tomb so as to prevent any possibility of grave robbing ever having happened.

Surprisingly, this idea that the disciples stole the body of Jesus in order to begin a new religion based on his "supposed" resurrection persists today. When you think about it, it is a very convenient way to explain what happened if you do not believe in Easter as a miracle of God.

The main problem with the idea of the disciples as grave robbers is that it assumes that they understood that Jesus was going to rise on the third day after his death. Trouble is, every gospel account has the disciples confused by Jesus' predictions, disbelieving them, or arguing with Jesus about them. Jesus also only shared these predictions with his inner circle of disciples. Consequently, taking Jesus' body wouldn't convince the wider world that the prophecies were true because no one knew about them at the time!

Despite this, the grave robbing idea itself won't die! "Okay, so maybe the disciples didn't take the body, but *somebody* did!" Here are some other "suspects":

The Jewish authorities. On the surface this makes zero sense but the argument is that the temple authorities secretly removed Jesus' body in order to prevent his grave from becoming a shrine. In fact, the "angels in white" who are at the tomb in the gospel accounts were, in fact, temple priests. That they told the disciples that they would see Jesus in Galilee is evidence that they were trying to disperse people from the area. This is an unlikely scenario simply because, prior to the resurrection, Jesus was dead and his disciples were in hiding. The Jewish authorities would have considered the whole "Jesus movement" to be dead along with him.

The Gardener. Why does Mary accuse the gardener of stealing the body in John 20? It implies that he has a motive. What could this be? The gardener is, in fact, Jesus but she does not know this when she makes the accusation. Was this included to address a story that was floating around at the time of John's writing? This possibility makes no sense either because the gardener would have no motive.

Nameless Robbers. If not Jesus' disciples nor the gardener, then it was nameless grave robbers who took the body. Grave robbing was a significant problem at the time—given widespread poverty. However, stealing valuables from tombs is one thing. Taking a body is quite another and would serve no purpose.

Outside of a faith-belief in the resurrection, the best evidence that the body of Jesus was not stolen but resurrected (no joke!) is twofold:

1. The conflicting eye witness accounts suggest that something extraordinary did actually happen. A resurrection would be cause for confusion along with excitement and the fact that there isn't one agreed upon version of events points to an actual resurrection.

2. Most importantly, the disciples would have been safer remaining underground. There was no good reason for them to come forward in the way that they did unless the story was true. The fact that the disciples were so transformed by what happened, proclaimed the story so forcefully and, in the end, sacrificed their lives for the truth of the resurrection is the best evidence that it actually occurred.

See you in church,

--Rev. Dominic



Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018

6:15 AM – Sunrise Service at Mt. Hood
9:00 AM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal
10:00 AM – Worship
11:15 AM – Coffee Hour

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

*Easter Sunday, April 1, will be a Family Worship, and Sunday School classes will not be held. Nursery care is always available.

*This past week in Sunday School, we read the Easter story and talked about bringing the true meaning of Easter into our minds and hearts as we enjoy the day (and the treats!). We hope you will continue with this message at home!

*We will be having a Teacher Breakfast on May 6 before worship. Teachers, and anyone interested in our Sunday School program, please mark your calendars!

DURING THE WEEK

Tuesday, April 3

4:00 PM – Circle 4 will meet at the Long Horn Steakhouse, Reading
 6:00 & 7:00 PM – RIM Meetings, Library
 7:15 to 8:15 PM – Morning Star Voices Rehearsal

Wednesday, April 4

7:15 PM – Bells rehearsal

Sunday, April 8

10:00 AM – Worship and Sunday School

The following groups meet here regularly:

- Boy Scouts** – Tuesdays at 7:00 PM in the basement
- Girl Scouts** – Sundays, 3:00 to 5:00 PM
- Makam Music Group** – Sundays 4:45-6:30 PM – Lounge
- Al-Anon** – weekdays at 12 noon, Sunday at 1 & 7 PM – Rm. 8
- Blue of a Kind** – Mondays at 7:00 PM in the Music Room
- S.A.R.P.** – Sundays 5:30 PM, Library, Mondays 6:30 PM, Lounge
- Tai Chi for Arthritis** – Wednesdays at 10:00 AM, Room 8
- A.A.** – Mondays at 4:30 PM, & 7:00 PM (men), Tuesdays at 4:30 PM, Wednesdays at 4:30 PM & 7:30 PM, Thursdays at 4:30 PM and 7:00 PM, Fridays at 8:00 PM and Saturdays at 9:00 AM (men) and 3:00 PM – Rm. 8



Ryan Chisholm, Marilyn McComas, Bill Albright, Anne Wing, Bob Hughes, Mary Sakata and Becky Faro (Trish Faro's daughters), Merle Copeland, Bob Pierce.



Circle 4 will meet on Tuesday, April 3rd, at 4:00 PM at the Long Horn Steakhouse in Reading for our annual Out-To-Dinner Meeting.



YARD SALE – Save the Date!

All-Church Yard Sale
 May 5, 9am – 1pm
 Mark your calendars!!!



-- Save the date! – ALL-CHURCH PASTA PARTY! – Save the date!

Set aside APRIL 29th for the All-Church Pasta Party, to take place right after the church service! A signpost board will appear in April!

Easter Flowers



In Memory of:	Given by:
Madelyn & James Baker & Mary, Issac & Robert Faro	The Faro family
Tina Martinez & Uncle Joe Lynch	Sam, Jim, & Jake Lynch
Loved ones	Hans & Sallie Klemm
Our Papa, George Jackson	Jordan & Taylor Jackson
James Freitas	Virginia Altmann & family of Jimbo
Our parents & Claire Griffin	The Toney family
Our parents, our brother, sisters, & niece	Helen & Bob Chisholm
Our parents	Steve & Debbie Anderson
Our Circle sisters	Circle 12
Marjorie E. Thayer, Helen L. Thayer & Harry & Eula Gilbert	The Thayer family
Loved ones who have gone home	Bill & Joan Chetwynd
Those who live in our hearts forever	The Ahlin/Krueger families
My parents, Annie G. & Leonard W. Stevens	Nancy A. Mader
Nanna Boyington	Nancy A. Mader
David R. Wing & Mickala Taylor	Anne Wing
Doug & Connie Robinson	Andrew Robinson & Susan LeFave & family
Loved ones	Jim & Penny Muschett
Bruce & Elsa Jay	Carol Bergeron
Loved ones	Nancy Schurian
Loved ones	Emelie & Bud Burnham
Loved ones	Circle 4
Loved ones	Barbara Dannbauer
"Jimbo" Freitas	Angela Ortiz
Loved ones	John Curtis
Rick & Becky Mockler	Sarah Mockler
Cecil R. Albright, Forbe Albright, Royce Friedman	Bill Albright
Loved ones	Joan Potter
Sandra Dillon	Stephen Taylor
Sean & Amara Drennon, Baby Caleb	Drafts-Johnson family

Melrose Recycling Committee Sponsors

“BYOBag” Poster Contest

As part of an effort to help the City of Melrose implement a new ordinance restricting the use of thin-film plastic bags, the Melrose Recycling Committee is inviting high school-age students to submit designs for a “Bring Your Own” Bag poster contest.

The Recycling Committee needs a poster to remind residents to “BYO” Bag when they shop. Melrose has a new law, effective July 1, that is designed to encourage residents to switch to reusable shopping bags by limiting the availability of plastic checkout bags. While most residents have reusable bags already, they need to develop the habit of bringing their own bags when they shop.

Entries will be judged on:

1. How effectively the design reminds/persuades people to bring reusable shopping bags.
2. How well the design reflects the local community

Prize: First prize will receive \$100.

Eligibility: Students in Grades 9-12 who either reside in Melrose or are enrolled in Melrose High School.

Timeline: The deadline to submit entries is April 1, 2018. The winner will be announced April 15, 2018.

To learn more, visit:

<https://melrecyclingcommittee.wordpress.com/2018/02/27/melrose-recycling-committee-sponsors-byobag-poster-contest/>