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# THE GOOD NEWS

May 2025

PASTOR KC

Even though the Easter season is behind us, we have so much classic Scripture to savor in the coming weeks! Since we won't be honoring Christ's ascension until the end of the month, we have this opportunity to walk alongside the Disciples as they too learn to understand what the Lord's *resurrection means*. **What does it mean to you?**



Not all believers are searching for meaning per se, however as Christians, so much of our understanding and belief hinges on this miraculous event. I hope each of you haven't given up on your Lenten discipline in whatever form it takes. Just as discipline offers the foundation in which we strengthen our faith, spiritual discipline nurtures the growth which has sprouted over the past season of Lent. The Disciples had our Risen Lord to process what had transpired with his crucifixion, we have the blessed Holy Spirit to guide, inform, and teach us.

I'd love to hear your thoughts about the themes I've preached over Lent which included a focus on Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd"), "Mining" vs. "Sifting," going inward and asking yourself the tough questions, and finally assessing our behavior as believers in Christ. Our spiritual journey has the highs and lows of any journey worth taking, and it needs to be nurtured, nourished, and absolutely treasured. Our glorious God will light our path!

*"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."*  
 Psalm 119:105

*Mother's Day Prayer*

Dear Lord,

We thank You for the gift of mothers, for their love, guidance, and care. Please bless them with Your grace, strength, and wisdom as they continue to nurture and support their families. Surround them with Your love and peace, and let them know how deeply they are appreciated and cherished. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Consistory****SHIRENE**

Consistory had its monthly meeting in April and several action items were discussed.

First, we received information about a service that UCC provides to its member churches regarding their websites. The cost is reasonable, and it provides templates that will allow us to revamp our website. The consistory has approved that we move forward with this and more information is to come including asking members to help with managing the site. Thank you to Mike and Gail who researched this.

Second, Trudy and Joy are planning to place flowers in the hanging baskets again this year. They will be artificial but very lifelike and easy to care for. No watering required! Speaking of watering, Beth will be ordering a new lightweight hose to replace our old one and make watering our flowers easier.

Third, we will be starting to order the bereavement angels that we used to give to families of congregates that passed away. Thank you to Gail for initiating this.

Fourth, the front door of the church needs some work and Audrey and her husband Mike have volunteered to sand and stain the door. This will likely take several days, and they are anticipating starting the week of May 12<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to Audrey and Mike!

That same week, we are planning to have our spring clean-up on Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. If you have time, please join us to spruce up the front of the church and any other areas that need it. Any and all help will be greatly appreciated.

And a big thank you to Joy and Trudy for a wonderful and fun spring basket raffle. Congratulations to all the winners!

Finally, as most of you know, KC has been traveling from Florida every week to serve our congregation. The flights are costly and the church, ladies fellowship and generous congregates have assisted with these expenses. Thank you also to those that have offered housing, a vehicle and transportation to and from the airport. If you would like to contribute to KC's travel expenses, please see Steve or place an envelope in the collection basket clearly marked for KC.

**Rummage**

The rummage room is filling up and most of the clothes have been moved to the stage. If anyone wants to start sorting, fill free to begin. I have put the signs on the tables that tell you what goes where, although that could change if we get more of one thing. In May, I will begin to come in on Saturday mornings to sort and I will announce when and what time in church. Happy sorting!

*May Wedding Anniversaries*

- 7—Mike & Laurie Gebert
- 22—Brent & Carla Grawburg
- 25—Mike & Stacey DeMarco
- 26—Jim & Linda Pratt



“Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.” A UCC minister recently wrote a piece likening New York City to a prison. She wrote of how New Yorkers had “lost the sky,” the high-rise buildings blocking the view of the sky and being the equivalent of a physical prison. She then went on to write about how the environment of the city reinforces this feeling of imprisonment. Among what she described was how personal space has been redefined for residents in a way unknown in other cities, a reference to the notoriously tight living spaces in NYC. Cleanliness has fled from the air, being replaced by the “breath” of ambition, read pollution. And residents have to step over piles of “other things,” a reference to the chronic garbage collection strikes in the city. Her summary is this “We start to accept the things we really should not, growing accustomed to being so enclosed that we risk forgetting what it means to be free - if we ever knew it.”



We don't live in New York, but are we really free? The writer referenced above is eloquent, but does her description apply to other cities? Probably not. The reality is that we define our own prisons and they have little or nothing to do with physical structures like cities. The minister was correct in a question she implicitly posed: what is your prison? Most of us have one. We each set limitations on ourselves that may shut us off from God. We wall ourselves away behind extra hours on the job, or the responsibilities of caregiving. We limit our contact with God, restricting it to one time and place, such as Sunday worship in a sanctuary. We lose our focus on God by zeroing in on worldly ambitions or desires. We limit God's ability to help us, either by thinking we are not worthy of God's love, or that our problems are too trivial for God to address, or even that they are too complicated for God to resolve. None of these are true. In short, while we not have built a physical city to limit us, we build our own prison away from God in other ways.

Jesus sets us free. Scripture states, “you will know the truth and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32 NRSV). Christ's truth sets us free from whatever prisons we have built for ourselves, but freeing ourselves is a process. First, identify what imprisons you and acknowledge those prison walls to yourself and God. How can you identify what imprisons you? It's challenging. We generally accept our prisons so automatically that they seem unavoidable. Where do you start? Examine how you spend your time. The time you spend is a good indicator of your focus, and if you focus on something too much it can imprison you. Do you have a great deal of overtime or new duties as a caregiver? Are you taking on the care of someone new or becoming engrossed in a new hobby? Do you check your phone multiple times an hour, spending a great deal of time on social media, much of it spent idly scrolling rather than on productive activity? These all can be “time thieves,” which focus your attention on something other than God. Next, review how you spend your money. Do you collect something and does this border on obsession? Do you regularly overspend on one category of purchase, such as gifts, collectibles or clothing? Do you focus so much on food that you regularly overeat, especially in restaurants? These situations, which focus on things of this world, and others like them, could be symptoms of imprisonment in earthly matters. Where is your treasure? Jesus tells us that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. Determine if your heart has been imprisoned by things of the flesh.

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Once you have identified your prison walls, you must acknowledge them to God. You must be intentional in wanting to eliminate what imprisons you. Specific prayers about behavior you want to change will help. Identifying what is unavoidable and what you have control over is also a good step. Then, making the changes in your behavior that you control will help you turn to God. Spend less time on your job, if possible. Refocus your caregiving activities so they are more efficient and take less time, or get help. Spend only as much time on social media as you need to, to accomplish necessities. Open yourself to God at times and places other than worship. Spend less money on things, especially those that serve no useful purpose. Avoid environments in which you overspend, overeat or otherwise engage in behaviors you want to change.

Once you have admitted you are imprisoned and have placed your concerns before God to change your behavior, open yourself to the Spirit. Your behavior will change and you will begin to breathe free in the living presence of Jesus. You will feel the walls of your prison start to disintegrate and set your sights on freedom.

- *Trudy & Joy for putting together the Spring Raffle*
- *Beth for decorating the Lenten table*
- *Dawn & Erich for putting up the lobby artwork*



# SPRING RAFFLE WINNERS

Congratulations to everyone! Thanks to Joshua for picking winning tickets!



**1**  
Maria



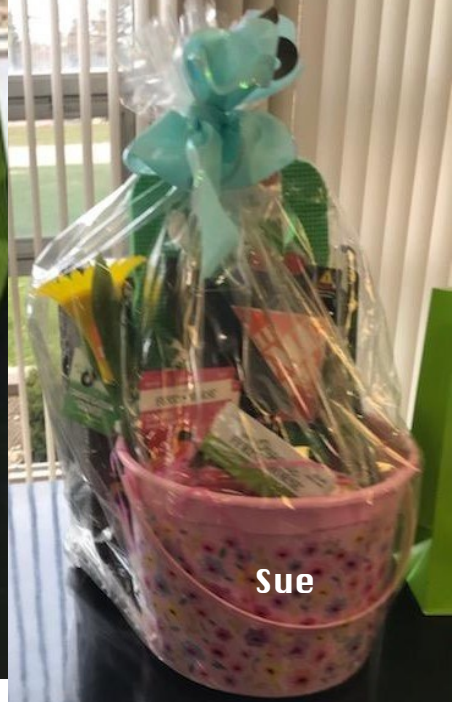
**2**  
Joy



**3**  
Diane



**4**  
Joyce



**5**  
Sue



**6**  
Erich



**7**  
Eileen



**8**  
Ellen