



For sure, Easter is looking different this year. Whatever our usual traditions might be, most of them aren't happening quite the same way as we anticipated a few weeks ago. Certainly, we can color the eggs and make baskets; certainly, we can worship; certainly, we can eat (we can always eat!) — but, it's different.

*There are people missing whom we long to see.*

*The noise level is many decibels lower than usual.*

*The traffic isn't bad!*

*And whatever remnant there is of an Easter fashion parade in our congregations, that has been traded in for sweats and a second cup of coffee — not a bad thing!*

And yes, we trust in the truth and promise of resurrection by faith, and not because of our yearly traditions. But how does that promise sound to us this year? Do we hear it differently without the *trim and fanfare* that we are used to? Do we hear it differently because of the struggle, the uncertainty that surrounds us? Is resurrection big and bold and loud, or is it missing from this COVID world? And if it's missing, why are so many people surfing the web to be part of multiple worship gatherings?

*The big, the bold, the loud:* The Easter morning scriptures all remind us of the remarkable, barely believable resurrection of Jesus. First the women who were with him, then the disciples, and then the world experience the presence of Christ risen from the tomb! Death, no longer the final word, but by grace — God's grace — life reigns and we see that gift, in Jesus. They believe! The followers claim this life-after-death for themselves and so do not fear the harsh road before them. They go forth to challenge all with Christ's gospel of love, forgiveness and grace — a free gift, and a turning point for many.

But resurrection is so much more — it is the redemption of the world! Alongside of the promise of eternity, resurrection bears in its core another promise, one that asks: if death does not trump life, then is there anything in this world or the next that can? If life — in this world or the next — is God's *final answer*, then life is always a possibility; there is always room for hope, and our call — our challenge — is to reach for that life, live for that life, risk for it and even, in some cases, die for it. "Where does hope lead us?" we ask ourselves. And we try, and fail, and pray and hope and try again, reaching for the possibilities of new life, of healing, of resurrection even here, in this world. We reach for that which we cannot quite yet grasp, trusting that it is there because Jesus showed us the truth and power

and reality of life beyond. We reach in hope, like the doctors and researchers who are even now trying to beat the clock and find a way to treat and develop a vaccine for COVID-19.

Yet still there is more, for while we are acting out of hope, we are also to be noticing, naming and opening up to others the world of resurrection hope around them so their eyes might become attuned: the flowers blooming between a rock and a hard place where they have no right to be, the creativity bursting from teachers and pastors and young and old alike who are determined to thrive



across the 'net, the communities who have rallied to celebrate an important birthday or a hospital release with a newfound kind of touch. As we see these things, say “Amen,” and show them to others, for hope is nurtured and there is renewal for the spirit.

*And that is why people are checking us out, checking out the church right now. They are looking for hope, a hope that believes in and sees the possibilities for life and future, beyond the uncertainty, beyond the death, beyond the grief and lament.*

*Whether they know it or not, they are looking for people of resurrection. And authentic resurrection living does not deny the pain, does not discount the grief. It embraces them — all the while knowing that in Christ there is life that will not and cannot be denied.*

*Peace and Grace this Easter,*

*Sue*