



...Of Congregations & Churches

This last week I took on a small but significant piece of paperwork. I filled out and submitted the forms which register Church of the Savior as an official congregation of the Anglican Mission. This paperwork could have been submitted at any time, but I've held off turning it in for a couple of reasons which have to do with some themes we've been exploring since our first worship service together back in September.

The first reason is the theme that I introduced to the congregation in my first sermon – we were not yet a church. We were a worshipping congregation, but we had the hard work ahead of us to establish ministries which help us to grow in faith by prayer and study and which channel our discipleship into service in the community and the world. We made moves in those directions almost immediately, but I wanted to wait and see if those early efforts became established as continuing ministries. In the formation of our small groups and the Brotherhood of St. Joseph, and in our continuing participation with Magnolia SOS past the Christmas season I see us growing into a church, which not only comes together in worship but which nurtures the discipleship of its members and is a blessing to the community in which it meets.

The second reason is that we needed to develop the proper spirit toward those who come to join with us. There's a strong temptation in a new congregation to see newcomers primarily as statistics – "We added three more to our headcount this week!" A growing congregation is a thing to be celebrated, of course, but particularly in a new congregation it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking of newcomers primarily as numbers rather than souls precious to God. I convinced myself we were on the right track with this when members of our Synergy group showed an enthusiasm for praying for the new people we met in our hot dog giveaway early in March. The people we met are being prayed for by name and I believe that as they join us there will be a strong sense of who they are as people rather than statistics.

The factors listed above led me to believe that the time had come, as we observe our six-month anniversary together, to register our presence within the larger community of churches. It's a major milestone, but by no means should it be thought that we've somehow arrived at our destination. We still have much work to do and many other essential characteristics to develop before we can begin to consider ourselves to be the kind of community our Lord has called us to be. But that's a subject for next month's newsletter.....

In Christ,
Craig+

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Our Mission Is: We Will Know, Love, Serve, and Obey Christ and Will Make Him Known to Others!

Our Core Values:

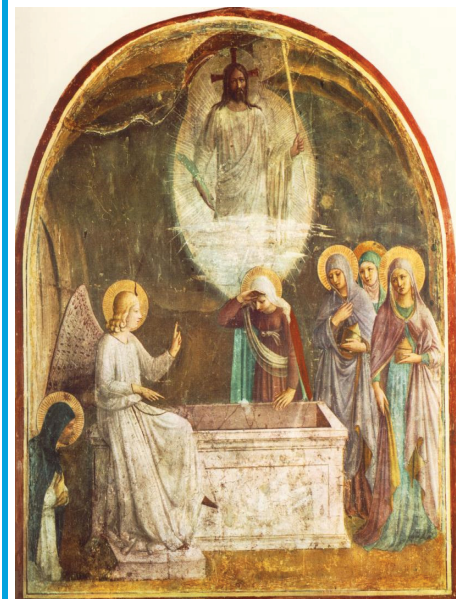
Growing and Discipling the Family of God

Reflecting the Love of God Through Hospitality, Friendship and Fellowship

Encountering the Living God Through Traditional and Contemporary Worship

Raising and Nurturing Children through the Grace of God

Sharing God's Love By Reaching Out



The Resurrection
Fra Angelico
1400's



Hot Dog Give Away



The Fez Sermon

Alleluia

Alleluia! What a powerfully, joyful word! I love the lilting way it rolls off my tongue. It's almost like a giggle preceding laughter – it starts little and then encompasses your entire being. Alleluia! The Lord is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

April first is the day traditionally set aside for the playing of practical jokes, but this year it is also one of the last days of Holy Week. Holy or "Maundy" Thursday is the day Jesus gave us His new "command", to love one another (John 13:34). This is the day He and His Apostles ate the Last Supper. Next is "Good" Friday (2), which seems a whole lot more bad and sad than good; but if Jesus had not died for us on Good Friday, He could not have risen on Easter Sunday. That's what makes this a "Good News" Friday. Holy Saturday (3) is a "vigil" day, meaning to "watch". Easter (4), also known as Pascha (Greek - Passover), is the most important religious feast of the Christian liturgical year. It celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, which we believe occurred on the third day after His death by crucifixion, and is the basis for our salvation. Easter occurs the Sunday after the first full moon that occurs on or after March 21, and can fall between March 22 and April 25. Easter is a time for remembrance, hope, and renewal. We celebrate this day by adorning the church with lilies, flowering of the children's cross, and an Easter Egg Hunt (complete with surprises).

Eggs are regarded as symbols of creation and resurrection, so converting from Pagan rites to Christian symbols of Easter was a natural one. They were considered to be "holy" gifts at Easter because Pope Paul V "blessed" eggs (that could be eaten) in thankfulness to God for the resurrection of our Lord. The story of the Easter Bunny is that the hare was once a bird (hence, the association of colored eggs) whom Eostre, the goddess of spring and dawn, changed into a four-footed creature.

What a joyful sight Easter morning was – everyone dressed in their finest spring wardrobes, joyous singing, colorful eggs spread everywhere, prizes to be claimed. The resurrection of Christ is a wake-up call for all Christians, and our Savior family sure knows what to do – worship, celebrate! Our God is an awesome God. Alleluia, Christ is risen!

On the other side, there is also a lot of uncertainty in the world. Many of us are in turmoil, about what the next days, months, years will bring. Since nothing is too hard for God, anything is possible, and I cannot wait to see what He is going to do next. Our God is an amazing God, and He will lead us to victory, if we only have faith in His Word! So, . . . keep the faith. That is an exciting thought!

In Christ's service,
Pat