

Rev. Larry B. Bell

Sunrise, Westminster Presbyterian, 4/16/17

On Easter Sunrise, it's always an effort to roll out of bed when it is so early and so dark and lots of times, so very cold. But once I am here, I am always glad I made the effort. There's always a blessing.

Sunrise is a unique service because it places us in the middle of a grand Easter drama. Mary Magdalene, all those centuries ago, came to the tomb while it was still dark and found the stone rolled away; an empty tomb.

And so here we are also at daybreak on Easter morning, cognizant of an empty tomb and crying out *He is risen!* We are among the first to say those words. While many sleep, we are here at sunrise with words of resurrection on our lips.

As we gather to celebrate the empty tomb and the risen Lord, we also observe another resurrection, a resurrection that comes every morning when the sun rises as the earth makes another rotation on its axis.

Everyday the sun rises and most of the time we don't think much about it. On this Easter morning, we wait

and watch for it. When the sun rises, a dramatic transformation takes place. The grey world is transformed into a world of light and color. The sun rises, giving life to every living thing. Plants cannot live without light.

As the day begins to dawn we see other signs of resurrection. A few short weeks ago a 3 day blizzard covered everything with a thick blanket of snow. Since then, seasons have changed. Grass is getting greener, flowers are poking out of the ground, buds are swelling. Spring is upon us. We are face to face with resurrection.

Many years, I have led Sunrise services in cemeteries, surrounded by both living and departed saints. This year we are here at the church, but this historic church reminds many of us of generations who have walked through these doors, served the Lord, and have passed on to resurrection life. Some of you have been here for many years and remember parents, grandparents, teachers and friends. Others may have been forgotten, but God knows their names. They are here. They surround us, that great cloud of witnesses to the resurrection.

But the resurrection is not just flowers. It's more than the rotation of the planet. It's more than the turning of the seasons. And the resurrection is not just for the dead. It is also for us, the living. He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today, just as surely as the sun rises and flowers spring out of the cold ground.

On that first Easter Sunday, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Just when it looked like everything Jesus stood for was just pious talk, there he was back on the scene.

He remains on the scene today. We are a resurrection people, born of the spirit, given the gift of new life, set loose in the world. Glory to God! Amen.