

## Uniting Church WA - Moderator's Easter 2025 Message

As I read the stories of Holy Week, I think of the many details that didn't make it into the Gospels. Two stand out for me this year.

Jesus entered the city on a donkey. However, we are not told whose donkey it was. We hear a very sketchy conversation about the Lord needing it. However, behind this story is an unnamed person willing to allow their donkey to be used.

Later in the week, Jesus eats the Last Supper, a Passover meal, in an upper room. It was a profound time, a time when Jesus gave new meaning to the Passover bread and wine and an example through the washing of the disciples' feet.

However, we don't know who owned the room or how the arrangements were made. Who provided the food?

Someone voluntarily allowed Jesus and the disciples to share that supper.

Throughout his ministry, we are occasionally told about people gave Jesus support, including money, so that he could continue to travel around Galilee and preach and teach and heal. Many of us remember the story of the boy with the loaves and fishes.

Jesus needed volunteers and they are often given little credit.

It was ever thus. The work of volunteers is often quiet and in the background.

That remains true of contributions large and small, which people make in the church, in order that all sorts of activities can continue, worship and preaching, learning and Study, hymns and songs, or children be cared for. They give themselves so that fellowship may happen, food and drink be offered, and care shown.

So it has always been in the history of the church.

One decision of the Synod is to acknowledge volunteers. By doing so, even when unnamed, we are affirming that God works through them, even though what they do may be out of the sight and awareness of many others.

As these individuals offer themselves, their time and gifts and their talents, for the sake of the church, they serve God.

And just as the names of those volunteers who supported Jesus are unknown to us, many of those who have given of themselves over the years have been forgotten, including many whose actions and gifts and contributions have helped us.

At the beginning of Holy Week, on Passion or Palm Sunday, the reading from Philippians 2 reminds us that Jesus freely chose to take the form of a servant, emptying himself - emptying himself of "all but love" we might say or sing - following Charles Wesley in the hymn, 'And can it be ...?'.

Being one who serves voluntarily, even without thanks or acknowledgement, bears witness to the one who gave Himself for us.

Just as the story of Jesus included many details that were never written down, many names never recorded, many people never acknowledged, so the story of the Church has always included the contribution of countless people, and so the story of our lives.

So today and this week, I invite you to think of those people whose giving of themselves and their resources have opened the doors for you to come to faith or be sustained.

Perhaps you may give some time for the donkey lender, or the person who owned the upper room, or those who kept Jesus and the disciples on the road so that they could serve God.

As we remember the suffering, we might also remember a couple of individuals, including Simon of Cyrene, one of the few volunteers named, who lent himself and his physical energy to help Jesus make his way to Calvary.

And as we remember the death of Jesus on the cross, which fulfilled the work of God to do all that was necessary to reconcile us to God, we might also remember Joseph of Arimathea, who gave his tomb for Jesus.

May we remember the volunteers we know, may we acknowledge them, and may we remember and give thanks for the work of volunteers unknown to us, which however has benefited us.

During this Holy Week and in this season, as we follow the way of Jesus and give ourselves in voluntary service, may we and all the followers of the servant Jesus Christ, remember that he gave himself for us. May we remember all that it meant to him to go through the days of that first Holy Week, and especially his suffering and passion and his death on the cross and the mysterious events of the Sunday morning.

May we, like the women who voluntarily went to the tomb to make a memorial offering to the one they had followed, discover that he is not there.

May we find that Christ is a living presence.

And as the story of Jesus is told over and over, and as the story of the followers of Jesus is still to be lived, and as the ministry of Jesus is still continued through the followers, may we be a means of revealing the love of Christ.

May our remembering, in its solemnity, in its acknowledgement of costly service by Jesus, who emptied himself of all but love, lead us to hearing of and knowing the Jesus Christ, who gives us eternal life, who always goes with us and always leads us on. That in the end, we may share in His eternal embrace.

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