



The First United Methodist Church of Oakhurst

103 Monmouth Road

Oakhurst, NJ 07755

Phone (732) 531-1150

Email: OakhurstUMC@optonline.net • Web: www.Oakhurst.umchurches.org

Facebook: First United Methodist Church of Oakhurst

HOLY WEEK OPPORTUNITIES:

April 1, Maundy Thursday

7:00 pm: Online Service

April 2, Good Friday:

12 noon – 3:00 pm: Visit the outdoor prayer stations.

There will be a series of prayer stations positioned along the edge of the parking lot.

Come and spend some time in reflection, responding to the prompts offered.

(In the event of rain, the prayer stations will be positioned in the Fellowship Hall, and safety protocols will be initiated).

7:00 pm: Online service

April 4, Easter:

9:30 am: Online Service: Alleluia!

4:00 pm: Parking Lot Communion!

TO OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Next week is Holy Week. How do you feel about all that it holds?

I will tell you: Palm Sunday frustrates me.

There, I've said it.

At the risk of sounding heretical as a pastor, it is true:

Palm Sunday frustrates me.

The day is an incredible prelude:

an introduction, an entry: not only into Jerusalem but more importantly

an entry into the most important week in the Christian story.

But that's where my frustration lies.

We are so prone to treat it *not* as a doorway to a rich and diverse story,

rather we tend to simplify it into something of a mini-Easter:

a dress rehearsal for the grand celebration we know is just 7 days away.

Palms waving, energy and hope and joy swirl in the air like balloons—
it's so easy to forget what lies ahead. How frustrating.

Maundy Thursday, on the other hand, overwhelms me:
so rich in story and symbol, so many avenues to explore:

 foot washing... bread breaking... "Is it I, Lord?" ... Jesus prays... The disciples nap...
It's all so human and so messy.

Maundy Thursday seems to work overtime with details that are fairly bursting with meaning.
Overwhelming!

Good Friday....ah, I love Good Friday.

(Does that sound even odder than the fact that Palm Sunday frustrates me?)

I love Good Friday because we cannot paint a pretty picture of it.

There is no way to soften its stark, harsh message.

 Nails. Cries. Sighs. Silence.

There is no way to package this in a fashion that makes it more palatable.

Good Friday is wonderfully, terribly, *impolite*. I love it.

And then... Easter!

Easter challenges me— because—for all the marvelous images of the prior week:

 palms, crowds, loaf, cup, basin, towel, coins, nails, lonely hill...

and for all the wonderful words of this week:

 "Crucify him!" "I do not know the man." "It is finished."

...for all that, Easter, this new life, this Resurrection, *eludes language!*

It defies images! The tomb? Empty. The cloths? Left behind.

It comes across as a declaration of just how impossible it is to pin it down.

I cannot ever adequately describe this gift, this greatest expression of God's love.

 There is no picture or phrase that will do.

We cannot describe it. We can only respond.

And for that, only one word will do:

Alleluia!

Shawn Callender Hogan, Pastor