



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP  
NEW JERSEY SYNOD  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
*God's work. Our hands.*  
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Dear Colleagues,

In just a few short days, after we have walked with Jesus to the cross and watched as his dead body was sealed in a borrowed tomb, we will gather once again to hear these words:

*But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen..." (Luke 24:1-5 NRSV)*

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen." This is the heart of our Christian faith. We cannot find a living Savior in the cemetery.

I was in conversation last week with a dedicated church member who worships every Easter as a visitor in a congregation not his own. He finds himself in this situation because he visits his daughter in New York City on Easter and attends church with her there. While there are parts of this arrangement he doesn't like, one thing he appreciates is the story the pastor tells every year. The pastor recounts the first Easter Sunday he served as a pastor. On that first Sunday, he received a call very early in the morning from his seminary roommate who simply said, "Jesus is on the loose", and then hung up. And that same roommate continues to do this every year. Now, several decades later, this pastor receives a very early and very short phone call saying, "Jesus is on the loose". My friend finds this simple proclamation to be a great reminder, on Easter Sunday and every day.

What does it mean for us that Jesus is not sealed in a tomb but on the loose in the world? What does it mean for our church? For our communities? For our world? How does this simple truth keep us on the lookout for Jesus' presence as we go about our daily lives?

Being reminded that "Jesus is on the loose" keeps my eyes and ears open to God's surprising grace and compels me to open my heart to people and situations I might otherwise ignore. It means the barriers I put up between myself and others has already been breached by God's reconciling love. It means the places I'd rather not go are already inhabited by God's healing presence. It means the future I can't imagine is already secure in God's hands.

As you proclaim the resurrection news this Easter, hear again the surprising promise it contains – the living Savior is not found sealed in a tomb but is on the loose, bringing life and love to all the world.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew