

# Chapel Bell

April 21, 2020

The way we just celebrated Easter, or, perhaps, the way in which Easter happened to us this year, might have been jarring. But it certainly was not unprecedented. Consider Matthew's Easter account (28:1-10). There were two Marys, one angel, a few guards, and the risen Christ. That's it. No brass quintet, no lilies, no choir singing the Hallelujah Chorus. Instead, we get an earthquake, frightened people all around, and Jesus ending the Marys ahead to Galilee to tell his disciples that he was alive.



During our live-stream on Easter morning, we had about the same number of participants as the first Easter account. There was Susan preaching, David playing the organ, Austin on trumpet and Jacob singing. And the risen Christ was in their midst (I know, there wasn't an earthquake nor did we see an angel, but close enough). Perhaps this Easter experience was as authentic to the first Easter morning as we will experience in our lifetime.

Like the disciples, we, too, might have huddled in our homes, anxious and fearful about what the future might hold. Like the guards, we, too, might have been too stunned to celebrate Jesus's resurrection in the spirit we usually do. Or, like the two Marys, we, too, might have fallen to the ground in fear and joy and have tried to hold on to Jesus and worship him.

Our current situation is also not unlike anything that God's people have lived through before. The Israelites dealt with hunger, pestilence and plagues. The world in the first three centuries after Christ's resurrection was often ravaged by infectious diseases. The plague, or black death, lingering for centuries in Europe, claimed the lives of millions and forced the shut-down of churches in the interest of public health and safety. The cholera brought London to its knees in the mid-19th century. And now it's COVID-19.

But while God's people have been exposed to and have been at the mercy of infectious diseases for a long time, they have never been defeated. As a matter of fact, during these trying times, membership in the Christian church always increased because Christians did not run from but toward danger, caring for the sick and the dying, just as our brave healthcare workers now do day after day after day.

One of our hymns says, "They will know we are Christians by our love," and Jesus reminds us that "no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends (Jn. 15:13)." This is our Easter challenge this year, as we fall to the ground to worship the risen Christ, who calls us to go on ahead and share the good news with all.

Easter blessings,  
Dieter

In the Gathering Place you may have passed the vitrine without realizing it. The vitrine is a lectern-sized stand that houses the Book of Remembrance containing the names of each Ladue Chapel member interred in our Memorial Garden.

The Garden grew from a meeting between former pastor, Don Howland, and myself in 1991. It was approved by the Session in the fall of 1994 and dedicated on Easter Sunday 1998. When it was first proposed that Ladue Chapel move forward with a Memorial Garden and Columbarium, only 23% of the nation opted for cremation. Today that number is over 50%.



It was recognized that there was a need for continuity and closeness with respect to our church and our family. In life we gather at the church, so it is fitting that in death we gather at the church as well. In so doing we give our loved ones and future generations the opportunity to feel a continued closeness to their faith, to their church, and to their deceased loved ones. Those attending church may visit the resting place of family and friends who have passed on. Some members even choose to sit on the east or west sides of the church during services because they feel closer to their loved one's remains.

The theme of the Garden is spiritual healing. In this Garden are plaques with only the deceased's name and years of birth and death honoring the person independent of rank, title or accomplishments.

Thoughtful planning went into the design of the Memorial Garden and Columbarium. The original task force and committee visited the few columbariums existing at the time. Gay Goessling, Landscape Architect, provided her expertise, and as a result we have plantings that symbolize many aspects of Christian life. Some of these are dogwoods which speak to us of death and resurrection as the delicate flowers display the cross every spring. There are hydrangeas which represent endurance even though the cold and trials of winter. There are the evergreens: holly representing the crown of thorns and magnolias symbolizing eternal life. There are iris for renewal and ivy for eternal life.

In the fountain there is an old stone and a new stone symbolizing the balance of life, as well as the water of life which flows continually. The rising to eternal life is represented by the soaring crane.

There is no limit to the number of church members who might find a resting place. Some wish to have their ashes buried in the ground. There is a sacred rectangle in the middle of the East Garden for them. The names of these loved ones are memorialized in stone on the plaques above the pool.

Those who wish to be remembered but are interred elsewhere may have their names inscribed on the gate columns of the East Garden.

The opportunity for comingling ashes is also offered.

It is hoped that you will find the Memorial Garden to be a place of quiet reflection, remembering, and renewal of spirit.

Hank Schreimann