



## **Easter Pastoral Letter 2008**

“This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior, all the day long.”

*-Blessed Assurance VU #337*

Do you love a good story? Perhaps it's the inevitable result of growing up in the home of a Librarian but I've always enjoyed a good story. As a pastor I have the privilege of hearing people's stories each and every day around the church. From a young couple's excitement at naming their newborn child, to the imaginative tales of our Kingdom's Kids Sunday morning on the chancel steps, to a mixture of tears and laughter as loved ones gather with me to plan the funeral of a beloved parent or friend I encounter powerful stories everyday. Easter is a season in the church year when we tell a story that was first told long ago by a group of astonished and faithful women who left an empty tomb with hearts full of love. Those first apostles gave their testimony that God had raised Jesus to new life, demonstrating God's power and grace over even death itself. Ever since those women first told their resurrection story, Christians have testified throughout the ages of God's redeeming love through the crucified Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Over the last year at St. Matthew's we've been experimenting with lay people offering their own testimony once a month in worship. As a church family we've been treated to an amazing variety of stories and examples of how God has been active in individual lives and the community of faith in general. Like the women leaving the empty tomb with a gospel story to tell, we have heard of the life changing power of God at work in our midst through our ministries of hospitality, worship, education, justice and service. God uses these opportunities for testimony to change people's lives. One recent example is Wally Mayhew's decision (our chair of Council) to enter a year of discernment with Belleville Presbytery about his sense of call to ministry. Whether lives are changed dramatically through testimony like Wally's or in more subtle ways we give thanks to God for the power and presence of the gospel message here at St. Matthew's.

During our Lenten Book Study members of our church family have been studying Diana Butler Bass' work *Christianity for the Rest of Us* that highlights Christian practices that are reviving mainline Protestant churches. One of those practices is testimony. Bass acknowledges that Testimony is risky in worship since the minister doesn't always know what people are going to say and there is always room for a surprise. Then again, the women who went to the tomb early Easter morning were not expecting a surprise either. God often works in and through our lives in alarming and unsettling ways. What testimony might God reveal in and through your life this Easter season?

As we move towards another celebration of Easter at St. Matthew's I invite you to join with us in all of the activities planned for the Church family. Our church has experienced incredible growth and vitality these past few years and it is due in large part to the prayerful and generous support of all our members and friends. On behalf of the congregation thank you for the generosity you have shown to St. Matthew's and its varied ministries. As we continue to expand our mission in the local community, our ministry to children and youth and our Hondouras mission team that is returning for a second year to work with children in the orphanage we rely on your faithful stewardship. Thank you in advance for making a special Easter offering in the envelope that is enclosed with this letter. Your support enables St. Matthew's church to continue to testify to the liberating power of the gospel and share the Easter message of those women apostles long ago as we join our voices with saints and angels through all ages proclaiming:

“This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior, all the day long.”

Wishing you and your loved ones the joy and peace of this Easter season,

*Rev. Ross*

The Rev. Ross A. Lockhart.

Lead Minister, St. Matthew's Church