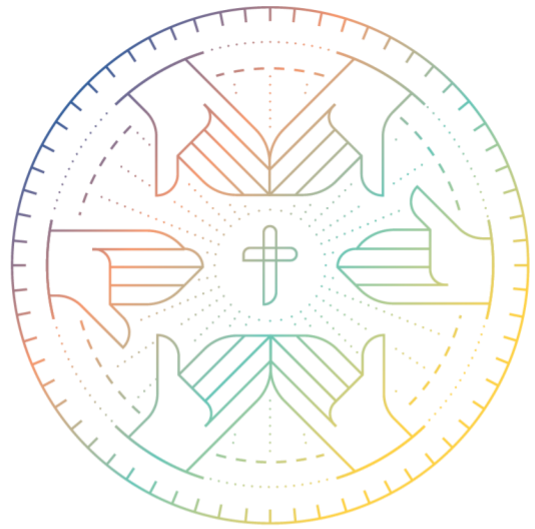


Group Life.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER



MEETING AGENDA

WELCOME (10 MINUTES)

This week we celebrated the Easter story of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection! Between Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday, we went from darkness to light, from mourning to rejoicing. In our Easter services, we talked about how God relentlessly pursues each one of us no matter what we are going through in our lives.

- Please don't forget to take attendance via the attendance reminder email. It's so important!

ICEBREAKER (10 MINUTES)

What is one fond memory of an Easter celebration either growing up or one you have celebrated recently?

OR

What was your favorite moment from either our Maundy Thursday or Easter weekend services?

INTRODUCTION (5-10 MINUTES)

What was one idea from Pastor David's Easter message that particularly stood out to you? Share that with the group.

David said that God relentlessly pursues each one of us. How does that make you feel? What emotion does that inspire within you?

INTO THE WORD (25 MINUTES)

1. Read John 20:1-8.

It appears from the passage that the disciple, John, was hesitant or afraid to go into the empty tomb. Why do you think he was hesitant? What changes for John between v.5 and v.8? What do you think caused the change?

H.O.S.T. Guidance: perhaps because the stone was rolled away and John feared there were more Roman guards inside. Perhaps he was afraid he'd become ceremonially unclean by Jewish laws by

entering into the place of a dead body. Whatever the reason, his hesitation resonates with us as we are often hesitant to come nearer to Jesus.

2. Read Daniel 12:1-2.

This passage from the Old Testament, along with many others, points to the resurrection of Jesus. The disciples were slow to understand and believe that Jesus would overcome death. Is there any aspect of the Easter story that's hard for you to understand and believe? Any aspect that seems confusing to you? Why are so many people today unbelievers?

H.O.S.T. Guidance: many people doubt the resurrection and believe there must be another explanation. Some are confused by minor differences in the different stories among the gospel accounts. Many doubt Jesus' divinity because of the compelling message he taught about sin, death, judgment and eternity. After all, if Jesus was who he said he was, my only response can be to give him my life.

3. Read Psalm 14:2, Psalm 63:1 and James 4:8.

What do these verses teach us about seeking God?

H.O.S.T. Guidance: God seeks us before we ever seek him. God is searching for us to connect us to his love and forgiveness. If we seek after God, he delights to reveal himself to us.

APPLICATION (25 MINUTES)

H.O.S.T. Guidance: Don't feel pressure to cover all the questions below. Pick the one or two questions that might lead to the best conversation, but if time allows, include the others.

Is there some way in which God went out of his way to find and pursue you? If so, share that with your group.

David said that when you are hurt, Jesus pursues you. Our response is to look for him. How do we look for Jesus?

H.O.S.T. Guidance: Hosts, allow people to offer their thoughts to the question, and then use some of the following ideas for ways to look for Jesus:

1. Scripture: the Scriptures reveal God to us, so time spent reading the Bible draws us near to God.
2. Nature/Creation: all that God has created shows his power and his presence. Look for God in creation.
3. Friends: our good spiritual friends can help us and encourage us to find Jesus.
4. Prayer: prayer connects us to God. God hears. God is with you. God cares. God responds.
5. Body of Christ: God is present among his people.

David said that when you doubt, Jesus pursues you. Our response is to step toward Him. How do we step toward Jesus?

H.O.S.T. Guidance: Hosts, allow people to offer their thoughts to the question, and then use some of the following ideas for ways to step toward Jesus:

1. Confess our sins: confession draws us closer to God.
2. Forsake our sins: turning from sin and toward God allows us to experience God in a more powerful way.
3. Ask for wisdom: God wants us to know and understand him, so ask for wisdom.
4. Seek reconciliation with any we've offended: ask God to bring healing to torn relationships.
5. Draw near to Him through prayer, Scripture: God draws near to us as we draw near to him (James 4:8).
6. Take the Lord's Supper: the reality of God and his love becomes obvious through the elements of Communion.
7. Trust His love and promises, even when you cannot see it: he has promised to never leave you and never forsake you.
8. Take a step of faith: ask God to show you what your next right step is and then follow him in that step.

David said that when you fail, Jesus pursues you. Our response is to love Him back. How do we love Jesus back?

H.O.S.T. Guidance: Hosts, allow people to offer their thoughts to the question, and then use some of the following ideas for ways to love God back:

1. Receive His mercy and forgiveness: he stands before you completely willing to forgive you of anything that might separate you from him.
2. Trust His promise: his word never fails and you can trust what he has promised to you in the Bible.
3. Give Him gratitude: thank him for his goodness and his grace.
4. Worship Him: his is above all things and worthy of praise.
5. Rest in His love: he wants us to rest in him and no longer strive for acceptance through worldly things.
6. Forgive yourself: He loves us and forgives us of all wrong, but sometimes we can't forgive ourselves.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your love for us and the reality of the risen Savior, Jesus Christ. We desire to worship him and know him, regardless of our hurts, our doubts, or our failures. Draw us near to Jesus and make his presence with us more real than ever before. May those who attended our Easter services continue to respond to the Easter invitation. Thank you for pursuing us through your relentless love. Amen.