

According to Mark . . . March 2019

Easter comes late this year...is what I hear from lots of folks, both church-goers and non-church-goers. It might be a fitting commentary for how we all feel these days with the constant drumbeat of negative news, commentaries, and predictions of gloom and doom. Promises of good economic times are now pretty uncertain given a softening housing market, Brexit, etc. The implication of all these events is to conspire to keep us in fear of what's to come.

"Easter comes late." Pish-Posh. Maybe according to the calendar it's toward the end of April than the end of March, but what that statement silently implies is that we can't count on God coming to our aid at the time we expect, which last year was April 1. For those of you who were in worship that day, it was one for the ages, as we told our best Easter jokes and laughed and celebrated when Easter fell on April Fool's Day. It was a hearty merging of secular (April Fools) and holy (Easter) and gave us a rare glimpse that we live in a world full of both of these seeming opposites.

But Jesus tells us that it's quite OK to live in balance like this. As Christians, we are trained that "we are in the world, but not of the world" and seek the Kingdom of God. But as Congregationalists of a lived faith heritage, we know that the Kingdom of God is right here, right now, in this holy place, with these holy people. ALL of us, in Townsend. We are long past the days of the "frozen chosen" where church membership is the gateway to living righteously and getting a few rungs up on that ladder to heaven. As we grow in our spiritual knowledge, we know that God is bigger than that. There are no limits to love, and hence, no limits to our ability to forgive and forebear each other's stuff. We've been through a lot here in Townsend over the years, including those who would divide us and who actually enjoy doing so. But for most folks here, we need community first and foremost, and we know how and where to find that.

It was demonstrated again how much we are one soul, one heart, one holy people of Townsend in our response to the fires which destroyed one of the apartment buildings up at Pine Ridge in early-February. Within 48 hours, folks who rarely came together did just that in helping assist families who had lost everything. Families who had only a child as their translator. Others who spoke no English at all, but thanks be to God, had Rev. Kevin Patterson who speaks Arabic. Still another who had only cats to keep company through the crisis. Some who re-lived the fire that night for days afterward and needed to be heard and helped.

We came together with a dedicated community response of donations of time, gifts, food, money, and professional services that continue to pour in and demonstrate our togetherness. But just as essential to community togetherness are the institutions Townsend supports which help provide for our community response. St John's Father Mealey Hall for the fire victims and first responders. Townsend Ecumenical Outreach for the poor, under-served, and those who need a leg up when they're down on their luck. TCC as a warm place to host those who worked to remember Sgt. John Johnson and his family for what can be rightly termed as Townsend's version of a state funeral for one of its own. The folks here in

Townsend-ALL of us, and each of us-these holy people, in this holy place-make this part of the Kingdom of God something real, right now, and right here.

Townsend happens in a lot of places, but I like to think our church is a part of that community spirit that started in 1732 and is still going strong. So bring someone to church this Sunday and let them experience Townsend's heart in all of our resurrection, new beginnings, bright hope present and future. And maybe we'll all realize that Easter isn't late, after all. It's near. It's here. It's now.

Blessings,

Pastor Mark