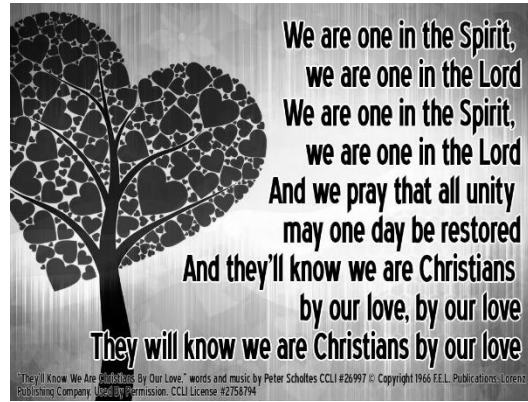


## JESUS MAKES ALL THINGS NEW!



*Scripture:*

**John 13:31-35**

<sup>31</sup>When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup>If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup>Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ <sup>34</sup>I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**Revelation 21:1-6**

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; <sup>4</sup>he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

<sup>5</sup>And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” <sup>6</sup>Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Isn't that beautiful? This verse is one of the reasons we call Jesus “living water.” (The other is where he talks to the Samaritan woman at the well.)

Faith in Christ gives us a chance for renewal and new life. As Easter people, people who live our lives grateful for the hope in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we are to share the water of life with others in need of such good hope.

## WHAT YOU NEED IS GOD

A great psychoanalyst was counseling a man who seemed unable to make progress in reintegrating his life after he retired, and his wife died. After months and months of therapy, Carl Jung finally acknowledged that he had no more to offer the man. "Friend," Jung said, "I cannot do any more for you. What you need is God." "How do I find God, Dr. Jung?" the man inquired.

"I don't know," Jung replied, "but I suspect if you find a group of people that believes in God passionately, and, if you just spend time with them, you will find God. That is what the man did, and he gradually found new purpose for his life."

## PASSION

The essential characteristic among this group the man spent time with was passion. To help him find a new purpose for his life they needed to be passionately living out the command Jesus gave all his disciples: To love one another, to serve one another, and to love God with all their hearts, minds, and strength. Love can heal all ills, but God's love is especially good for healing the illness of isolation and loneliness that often increases as we age.

Sounds so simple doesn't it? But one of the reasons church-going people live an average of seven years longer and healthier is because we all need social support. We all need buddies; we all need a place where we have a purpose and where we are needed.

## ECCLESIA

You are in the right place today for that! We need each one of you to get involved in some way to keep this wonderful community resource going for future generations. Prayer keeps us going, and money keeps us going. But you are the essential ingredient that makes a church a church.

**The church isn't the building. Church in Greek is called "Ecclesia" which literally means "community." You can have a church without a building, but you can't have a church without a community of people who intentionally gather to show love for one another and to be one in the Spirit, praising God with sincerely humble contrite hearts. That's what we are here to do together.**

## OUR PHIL

People in our own congregation have shared with me amazing testimonies that credit this church, this ecclesia, for saving their lives and helping them feel made new again. Our volunteer "energizer-bunny" custodian, shared with me that this church saved his life after his wife passed away because it gave him a sense of duty and purpose to help him heal from the loss of his beloved spouse.

We are so grateful that emptying all the trash cans daily, vacuuming, restocking toilet paper, and making sure the church is all locked up safely, mutually helps us and Phil live gratefully for the glory of God.

## WILDFIRE SURVIVORS

After the wildfires here in 2017 and in Paradise this past year, faithful Christian survivors have coped incredibly well with their losses. Rather than saying, "Why me? Why did I have to go through such tragedy and lose everything?" They often tell me: "I feel sad about some of the special keepsakes and family heirlooms that were lost, but overall, I feel liberated, cleansed, like my life hit the reset button. I feel reborn and renewed."

I'll never forget when one of them said to me, "I never thought I'd have a rebirth in my late nineties, but the fires gave me a rebirth, and it is liberating."

So many of our fire survivors have responded in such incredibly positive ways. I can't help but credit their faith and their ability to lean on their faith community to boost their resilience and promote a positive attitude.

### **SOME FAMILIES WITHOUT A FAITH COMMUNITY**

I personally know of two other families who were not connected to a supportive ecclesia (faith community) and they did not have healthy responses to the fires destroying their homes. One responded by breaking up with her boyfriend and running away after the fire took her home up on Riebli Road. She got in her car and took off across the country with no sense of direction or purpose.

It seemed almost suicidal. A forty-something woman just driving and driving alone, stopping along the way and talking to strangers about her experience of losing everything in the fires. Her Facebook messages would often be filled with photos of the various places she went as she mapped out her meandering journey using Facebook replies for her support system.

After a few months she returned to deal with the insurance and the rebuilding option. Soon she became exasperated with the process, threw in the towel again and gave up. Now she lives in Oregon.

Another woman I know was still in crisis mode after losing the family's home and then her husband initiated a divorce while they were trying to decide if they would rebuild on Fountaingrove. Not only did she have to deal with the loss of her home, but she and her two boys had to cope with the loss of her marriage.

### **CHRIST'S LOVE AND A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY**

Having a sense of Christ's love and the support of community in your life enhances coping greatly. All things are made new when you lean on your faith and your faith community to get you through the struggles and the woes.

Today the Scripture in Revelation promises God will be with us; God will wipe every tear

from our eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more. And the one who was seated on the throne (who we understand as Jesus) said, "See, I am making all things new."

**God is with us in the outreach  
from our friends.  
God is with us when we remember  
to turn to God in prayer.  
God is with us when we  
don't feel God is with us.  
God was with us in the beginning  
and will be with us in the end.**

### **REVELATION**

How many here have read the book of Revelation? No judgment. Just curious. Part of it can seem very confusing so I'm not surprised. Like all books of the Bible, Revelation was written in a particular time and place to a particular people. But it's also saturated with symbolism and prophecy, which has led to a variety of interpretations that can be applied to today's living as well.

The BBC has an informative blog on the book of Revelation. They say: The Book of Revelation, has fascinated and puzzled Christians for centuries. Some say it predicts global warming, AIDS and even the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Bible scholars believe that the John who wrote Revelation was a significant figure in the early church in a region which is now modern-day Turkey.

Scholars conclude that John was a Jew from Palestine who wrote this book from the island of Patmos. He was there, "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." Overall, John was telling first century Christians to galvanize themselves against Roman persecution, and that their faithfulness would be rewarded. So, the passage we read today would have been very reassuring to the Christians who were being fed

to the lions or crucified like Christ. And these words are also very reassuring to us when we go through trials and tribulations today.

### **THE ALPHA AND OMEGA**

John was speaking on behalf of Jesus to the persecuted Christians then and to all of us now when he said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

As you all know, there have been nine deaths among our church family since January: (Lillian Pierce, John Post, Gladys Bates, Norm Thornton, Sylvia Turner, Mickey Marshall, Marie Patchin, and Bob and Marge Snater.)

We have many reasons to sorrow. But we also trust that there will be a day when God's kingdom will come to earth as it is in heaven. And in that day all things will be made new. In the meantime, we have a purpose of helping usher in that kingdom and believing in God's promises that when it is our time to pass, we will never be separated from the love of God in this life and in the life to come.

When we trust that Jesus is our Alpha and Omega, we know he was giving us living water in the beginning of our lives and he will be with us in the end when our river of dreams merges with the eternal stream. Amen

### **Benediction:**

**When you walked into this sacred place you took steps to make all things new. In worship today we have reminded you to celebrate and thank God. We lifted up your joys and concerns; we reminded you that in Jesus Christ you are forgiven, and renewed your spirit through God's word and prayers.**

**Now we send you out into the world to try to be as much like Jesus as possible. So, go and live out the purpose you have been called to do, to love one another as God loves you, and with that love make all things new!**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen**



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