

## All Church Worship Brainstorming

### Gifts of the Dark Wood

Monday, January 22, 2018

David and Karen Booth's house

6:00 pm Potluck Dinner

7:00-9:00 pm Brainstorming for Worship

Join us for dinner. Karen is making cheese stuffed shells. Bring a dish to pass and maybe a sweater as we will gather in the basement to take advantage of the larger space and big screen. RSVP's and carpooling are helpful but not mandatory:

- Karen at 798-8431 or [kwbooth@comcast.net](mailto:kwbooth@comcast.net).
- Our church secretary Myke Bos at 231-798-2181 or [lakeharbor@aol.com](mailto:lakeharbor@aol.com)
- Or sign up at church.

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*"The worship we hope to develop will be rooted in Scripture, centered on Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It will be relevant to local and emerging culture, while addressing the needs of believers and unbelievers alike. Above all, it will intentionally engage people physically, emotionally, intellectually, and soulfully."*

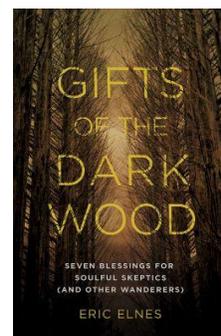
Felt needs: What physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual need are we addressing in this service so that worship is engaging and a means of making disciples? What question needs to be posed/answered so that we are making disciples? Note from Karen: Each service's felt need is in the message synopsis in bold print.

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*Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, "Master, save me!" Jesus didn't hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand.*

Matthew 14: 22-33 (The Message)

Marcia McFee: This series, based on the book by the same name by Eric Elnes, is about "seeing life through new eyes, recognizing that experiences of failure, emptiness, and uncertainty are as critical for finding our way through life as they are unavoidable." We will see how experiences of life through the "dark wood" are actually clues to our "calling" or "life path." How can the struggles of life be the seedbed of spiritual awakening to the fullness of life?



#### Ideas for the series:

- Could this be an example of modern Beatitudes? *If you're feeling empty, you're blessed...*
- Jesus' own experience reflects our experience. He goes from the spiritual high of baptism to the wilderness where he is tempted. This isn't to say that every bad experience is "good." But God can weave good, bad, and ugly experiences together. We can look back

and see how we're formed and transformed. McFee says, "Struggle is a part of the fabric of life."

- Pastor Mary will use ideas from Children's Moments, which centers around a backpack and written message each week. This readiness prayer can also be used:  
Our ears are ready to hear your call. [*Cup hands behind ears*]  
Our eyes are ready to see your face. [*Curl hands like binoculars in front of eyes*]  
Our feet are ready to walk your path. [*Walk in place*]  
Our hands are ready to share your grace. [*Reach out hands in front of you, palms up*]  
Our hearts are ready to feel your love. [*Rub hand in circles over chest*]  
Our minds are ready to know your grace. [*Rub hands on temples*]  
Amen. [*Praying hands*]
- We'll use a Prayer of Confession and Words of Assurance each week.

### Resources:

- Our shared Dropbox folder: <https://www.dropbox.com/home/LHUMC/Gifts%20of%20the%20Dark%20Wood%20-%20Lent%202018>
- Gifts of the Dark Wood on Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/worshipstudio/gifts-of-the-dark-wood/>
- Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics (and Other Wanderers) by Eric Elnes  
Uncertain? Empty? Lost? Join the crowd and find companions who are willing to wander the unseen road ahead. It's okay to feel awkward in your search for God. You're not alone amid your holy mess. In fact, author Dr. Eric Elnes believes that uncertainty about your spiritual life can be one of your greatest assets because it is while we are unsure that we probe, question, and discover. You don't need to be a saint or spiritual master to experience profound awakening and live with God's presence and guidance. You need only to wander. This book is for both the insider who has left the traditional church and the outsider who is curious about faith but mistrustful of religious systems and authority.
- Webinars by Marcia McFee: Part 1 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2puBP7xe3bY>) and Part 2 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcKXwGKcgT8>)

**Music:** "Come and Rest Prayer Song" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xDtng4Qnb0>) with the full congregation; "Theme Song for Gifts of the Dark Wood" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwN9Nx894cl>) sung by the choir each week?

**Visuals:** Bare sticks. Meandering path.

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**February 14, 2018:** "Where We Find Ourselves"

Ash Wednesday

**Scripture:** Matthew 14: 22-33 (The Message)

<sup>22</sup>As soon as the meal was finished, he insisted that the disciples get in the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the people.

<sup>23</sup>With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night.

<sup>24</sup>Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves. <sup>25</sup>At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. <sup>26</sup>They were scared out of their wits. "A ghost!" they said, crying out in terror.

<sup>27</sup>But Jesus was quick to comfort them. “Courage, it’s me. Don’t be afraid.”

<sup>28</sup>Peter, suddenly bold, said, “Master, if it’s really you, call me to come to you on the water.”

<sup>29</sup>He said, “Come ahead.”

Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. <sup>30</sup>But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, “Master, save me!”

<sup>31</sup>Jesus didn’t hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, “Faint-heart, what got into you?”

<sup>32</sup>The two of them climbed into the boat, and the wind died down. <sup>33</sup>The disciples in the boat, having watched the whole thing, worshiped Jesus, saying, “This is it! You are God’s Son for sure!”

**Synopsis:** “Sometimes... you need to step away from the security of your boat onto the stormy sea of your own awakening to discover that a sinking stone is a far firmer foundation than you ever have imagined.” We embark on a series of worship that will invite us to explore all the places where we find ourselves—not just the seemingly stable and blessed places, but the ones that feel like utter failure, or the most tenuous at the least. These are the places where Jesus says “Do not be afraid, it’s me calling you out here to find the depths of your very soul.”

**Note from Pastor Mary:** We’ll gather at Central UMC and this theme may not be used. However, we could use this as a starting point for an all-church E-mail devotion and Facebook post for Ash Wednesday. I also hope that we’ll use the book for a small group opportunity during Lent.

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**February 18, 2018: “The Gift of Uncertainty”**

Lent 1

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 13: 11-12 (NRSV) Might want to add earlier verses about love

<sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. <sup>12</sup>For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

**Additional reference:** John 5 - story of man healed after many years who struggles to live in a new way

**Synopsis:** When we allow ourselves to accept the journey within the Dark Wood, the Holy Spirit Guide tends to shake things up a bit as we begin to awaken to nudgings toward a fuller life. But life is messy. Life is uncertain. Rather than a problem to be solved, what if we saw uncertainty as a gift helping us let go of all we cannot know so that we can live more wholeheartedly?

**Felt need:** To move from uncertainty to deeper trust (not clarity)

**Visuals:** Stones

**Children’s time:** Stones. Paper with “I don’t know” written on it in the backpack.

**Media:**

**Activity/Hands-on item:** dissolving paper to write down something that brings uncertainty or worry (32 8.5” x 5.5” sheets \$14.99 <https://www.amazon.com/Disappearing-Notebook-Dissolving-Message-Journal/dp/B00H2S80PA>)

**Music:** Take My Life (UMH 399); Bidden, Unbidden (WS 3019); You Are Mine (FWS 2218)

**(Loosely) related article:** “How to Get Lost on Purpose” by National Geographic travel writer, Heather Greenwood Davis (<http://intelligenttravel.nationalgeographic.com/2015/11/29/how-to-get-lost-on-purpose/>)

**Discussion points:**

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**February 25, 2018: “The Gift of Emptiness”**

Lent 2

**Scripture:** Luke 17:33 (Common English Bible)

<sup>33</sup>Whoever tries to preserve their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life will preserve it.

**Scripture:** Proverbs 9:10

<sup>10</sup>“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Respect and obey the Lord! This is the beginning of wisdom. To have understanding, you must know the Holy God. (CEV)

**Additional reference:** Jesus’ words from the cross/Psalm 22 (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”)

**Synopsis:** Many of us sometimes feel empty inside and we fear that there is nothing there of worth. But what if we let go of our obsession with worthiness and released into the idea that if we want to be filled—to find God—getting empty is the best way. God will find us! In our journey this Lent toward the Cross, we know even Jesus felt empty despair... and it was at this moment that God’s possibility of life beyond that pain was revealed.

**Felt need:** To be confident that God meets us in times of emptiness

**Visuals:**

**Children’s Time:** Blank sheet of paper in the backpack.

**Media possibilities:**

- “Empty.” Length: 2:24. Cost: \$18.00. While empty may be perceived as a burden in our lives, empty is what gives us promise for the days ahead. For all who believe Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead, empty is redefined. <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/58941/empty>
- “Forsaken.” Length: 2:34. Cost: \$20.00. We all experience moments in life when we feel God has forsaken us. From divorce, a medical emergency, or abuse, those moments can cause us to feel very alone. <http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/44266/forsaken>

**Activities:**

**Hands-on item:** small piece of paper to be nailed to the cross

**Music:** #2058 “Shepherd Me, O God”; Be Still, My Soul (UMH 354); Open My Eyes (UMH 454)

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**March 4, 2018: “The Gift of Being Thunderstruck”**

Lent 3

**Scripture:** Job 37: 1-5 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>“At this also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place. <sup>2</sup>Listen, listen to the thunder of his voice and the rumbling that comes from his mouth. <sup>3</sup>Under the whole heaven he lets it loose, and his lightning to the corners of the earth. <sup>4</sup>After it his voice roars; he thunders with his majestic voice

and he does not restrain the lightnings when his voice is heard. <sup>5</sup>God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend.

**Additional reference:** Isaiah 6 - Isaiah's experience/call in a moment of worship

**Synopsis:** Ancient civilizations and religions all metaphorically describe the voice of the divine coming through thunder and lightning. We often describe experiences of insight as a "sudden flash," "seeing the light" or "rocked my world." Storms of life can make way for moments of insight, like the sun radiating in a clearing in the woods that can offer us direction, helping us to negotiate life's path and see our unique place in the world.

**Felt need:** To sense God's presence in experiences that overwhelm us

**Visuals:**

**Children's time:** Piece of paper with "Wow!" written on it in the backpack

**Media possibility:** "The Gift of Being Thunderstruck." Length: 2:55. Cost: Free. Eric Elnes shares his thoughts on being thunderstruck. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul4ymQ0XxWE>

**Activities:** Holy Communion

**Hands-on item:**

**Music:** #3008 "Open the Eyes of My Heart"; For the Beauty of the Earth (UMH 92); Holy, Holy, Holy (UMH 64); Beautiful Things; Thunderstruck (AC/DC); Thunder (Imagine Dragons)

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**March 11, 2018:** "The Gift of Getting Lost"

Lent 4

**Scripture:** Psalm 42 (NRSV – only verses 1-3 shown here)

<sup>1</sup>As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. <sup>2</sup>My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? <sup>3</sup>My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 3: 8-9 (NRSV) or use full passage from *The Voice* translation?

<sup>8</sup>The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup>Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

**Synopsis:** The path of life is rarely clear or straight-forward. We find ourselves lost in a Dark Wood, unclear which direction to go, perhaps having strayed from the path we thought we were on. It is at these times that the gift of getting lost is that we begin to pay more attention than we usually do. Perhaps we are looking for blatant signs when the subtle nudges of Spirit are already right there.

**Felt need:** To sense God's presence in the moments when we feel lost, when it's too quiet

**Visuals:**

**Children's time:** Piece of paper with "Help!" written on it in the backpack

**Media:** "The Gift of Getting Lost." Length: 3:00. Cost: Free. Eric Elnes shares his thoughts on the gift of getting lost. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZV\\_bGIPTfl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZV_bGIPTfl)

**Activities:**

**Hands-on item:** rocks to write a word of encouragement for someone else

**Music:** #2025 “As the Deer”; Be Still, My Soul (UMH 534); I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (UMH 521); Guide My Feet (FWS 2208)

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**March 18, 2018:** “The Gift of Temptation”

Lent 5

**Scripture:** Luke 4: 1-13 (VOICE)

**Narrator:** <sup>4:1</sup> When Jesus returned from the Jordan River, He was full of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit led Him away *from the cities and towns* and out into the desert.

<sup>2</sup> For 40 days, the Spirit led Him from place to place in the desert, and while there, the devil tempted Jesus. Jesus was fasting, eating nothing during this time, and at the end, He was terribly hungry. <sup>3</sup> At that point, the devil came to Him.

**Devil:** Since You’re the Son of God, You don’t need to be hungry. Just tell this stone to transform itself into bread.

**Jesus:** <sup>4</sup> It is written *in the Hebrew Scriptures*, “People need more than bread to live.”<sup>[a]</sup>

**Narrator:** <sup>5</sup> Then the devil gave Jesus a vision. It was as if He traveled around the world in an instant and saw all the kingdoms of the world at once.

**Devil:** <sup>6</sup> All these kingdoms, all their glory, I’ll give to You. They’re mine to give because this whole world has been handed over to me. <sup>7</sup> If You just worship me, then everything You see will all be Yours. All Yours!

**Jesus:** <sup>8</sup> [Get out of My face, Satan!]\* The Hebrew Scriptures say, “Worship and serve the Eternal One your God—only Him—and nobody else.”

**Narrator:** <sup>9</sup> Then the devil led Jesus to Jerusalem, and he transported Jesus to stand upon the pinnacle of the temple.

**Devil:** Since You’re the Son of God, just jump. Just throw Yourself into the air. <sup>10</sup> *You keep quoting the Hebrew Scriptures.* They themselves say, He will put His heavenly messengers in charge of You to keep You safe in every way. <sup>11</sup> And, They will hold You up in their hands so that You do not smash Your foot against a stone.

**Jesus:** <sup>12</sup> *Yes, but the Hebrew Scriptures also say, “You will not presume on God; you will not test the Lord, the one True God.”*

**Narrator:** <sup>13</sup> The devil had no more temptations to offer *that day*, so he left Jesus, preparing to return at some other opportune time.

\*Many early manuscripts omit this portion.

**Note from Pastor Mary:** Jesus is tempted by the adversary. The temptations aren’t necessarily negative things (turning stone to bread, ruling the world, performing impressive miracles), but they’re not a part of his calling.

**Synopsis:** The gift of temptation may bring images of resisting evil—sometimes in seriously dangerous form or as seemingly benign as the pastry in front of you. But instead, the temptation for this week is following the “shoulds” dictated only by logic, outside expectation or shiny “rewards,” instead of following the path our intuition and imagination suggest is right for us—the path that helps us bring the best of our energy and joy to the world.

**Felt need:** To face the temptation to do the “wrong good” and seek God’s help to follow our call

**Visuals:**

**Children's time:** Sheet of paper with "Who am I?" written on it and short pencils in the backpack. Leaves for the path.

**Media:** "The Gift of Temptation." Length: 1:54. Cost: Free. Eric Elnes shares his thoughts on the gift of temptation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7DwXe-OADQ>.

**Activities:**

**Hands-on item:** finger labyrinth, shown right

**Music:** O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee (UMH 430); His Eye Is On the Sparrow (FWS 2146); Breathe on Me, Breath of God (UMH 420); Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness (FWS 2120)



**March 25, 2018:** "The Gift of Misfits"

Palm/Passion Sunday

**Scripture:** Luke 19: 29-42a (Voice)

**Narrator:** <sup>29</sup> He approached the towns of Bethphage and Bethany, which are near Mount Olivet. He sent two of the disciples ahead.

**Jesus:** <sup>30</sup> Go to the next village. When you enter, you will find a colt tied—a colt that has never been ridden before. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you why you're untying it, just say, "The Lord needs it."

**Narrator:** <sup>32</sup> So the two disciples found things just as He had told them. <sup>33</sup> When its owners did indeed ask why they were untying the colt, <sup>34</sup> the disciples answered *as they had been instructed*.

**Disciples:** The Lord needs it.

**Narrator:** <sup>35</sup> They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their coats on the colt's back, and then sat Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As Jesus rode along, some people began to spread their garments on the road *as a carpet*. <sup>37</sup> When they passed the crest of Mount Olivet and began descending toward Jerusalem, a huge crowd of disciples began to celebrate and praise God with loud shouts, glorifying God for the mighty works they had witnessed.

**Crowd of Disciples:** <sup>38</sup> The King who comes in the name of the Eternal One is blessed! Peace in heaven! Glory in the highest!

**Pharisees (who were in the crowd):** <sup>39</sup> Teacher, tell these people to stop making these wild claims and acting this way!

**Jesus:** <sup>40</sup> Listen—if they were silent, the very rocks would start to shout!

**Narrator:** <sup>41</sup> When Jerusalem came into view, He looked intently at the city and began to weep.

**Jesus:** <sup>42</sup> How I wish you knew today what would bring peace!

Mark 1: 14-15 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

**Synopsis:** We do not travel alone in the Dark Wood, but are blessed with the presence of others who help us see, reflect with us, and discover together with us the riches of a life lived with intention. As Jesus comes into Jerusalem at the beginning of that fateful week, he is surrounded by those who will live the uncertainty, temptation and emptiness right alongside.

**Felt need:** To celebrate those who travel with us - mentors, companions, and the community of faith

**Misfit:** someone who is also being intentional about embracing the gifts of the Dark Wood

**Visuals:** Palms

**Children's time:** Signs with "bug spray," "water," and "kindling" written on them (or props), plus one black paper in the backpack

**Media possibilities:**

- "The Gift of Misfits." Length: 1:47. Cost: Free. Eric Elnes shares his thoughts on the gift of misfits. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgoIQBwSwJM>.
- "Return of the King." Length: 1:31. Cost: Free with our subscription. Jesus was not the king his people were looking for. Through the lens of the Triumphal Entry, The Cross, and the Garden, "Return of the King" is a powerful proclamation of the power of the resurrection.

**Note from Karen:** The Palm Sunday portion is available by itself. Long live the King!

<https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/return-of-the-king/>

**Activities:**

**Hands-on item:** thank you note to be written to someone who has walked with you

**Music:** Build Your Kingdom Here; Just a Closer Walk with Thee (FWS 2158); I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (UMH 521)

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**March 25, 2018:** "The Gift of Disappearing"

Holy Thursday

**Scripture:** Scripture selections for the service are dramatized by six characters from the Holy Week story: Mary, friend of Jesus; Simon Peter; Judas; a Roman soldier, Mary, mother of Jesus, and Salome. We should use these in a reader's theater style (unless we want to ask people to "act"). Preview Marcia McFee's script at

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/LHUMC/Gifts%20of%20the%20Dark%20Wood%20-%20Lent%202018/Gifts%20of%20the%20Dark%20Wood%20-%20Marcia%20McFee?preview=8+Gifts+of+the+Dark+Wood+script+Holy+Week.pdf>

**Synopsis:** Pride and shame can lead us into thinking more or less of ourselves than we ought. We begin to build false images rather than trusting that God knows deeply who we really are and wants us to live fully into our highest identity. The Gift of Disappearing comes when we "disappear" for a while into a "thin place" where the human and divine seem particularly close. We re-emerge after re-discovering who and whose we are.

**Felt need:** To come to the right self-image in light of being a child of God

**Visuals:**

**Media:**

**Activities:** Holy Communion. Prayer vigil following the Holy Thursday worship service.

**Hands-on item:**

**Music:** Jesus, We Are Here (FWS 2273); The Servant Song (FWS 2222); Come to the Table of Grace (WS 3168); Were You There (UMH 288); Taize: Stay With Me, Bless the Lord, Wait for the Lord, O Lord, Hear My Prayer, Nothing Can Trouble, Ubi Caritas/Live in Charity

**April 1, 2018: “Where We Go From Here”**

Easter Sunday

**Scripture:** Mark 16: 1-7 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>1</sup>When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

<sup>2</sup>And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” <sup>4</sup>When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. <sup>5</sup>As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup>But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. <sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”

**Synopsis:** (On Ash Wednesday, at the beginning of our trek into the Dark Woods, we heard of Peter’s sinking failure as a spiritual gift. Even towards the end, Peter fails to keep his promise to his beloved Jesus, denying any association with him three times when the going got rough. But again it is this utter failure that will guide and strengthen him for what came next. Upon this sinking rock, the church was built and expanded to include others considered “other” or “unworthy.”) The story of all those who surrounded Jesus parallels our own failures, fears and missteps. Where do we go from here? We journey into our fullness, continuing to embrace the Gifts of the Dark Wood where the Spirit beckons us into extraordinary life.

**Felt need:** To embrace the gift of new life that comes through struggle

**Note from Pastor Mary:** I may use some of the material for Sunrise Service.

**Visuals:**

**Media possibility:** “Not the End.” Length: 2:59. Cost: Free with our subscription. The three days of Easter contain the highest and lowest points of humanity. “Not The End” takes us through those 3 days and allows us to connect with the human condition and the hope of a living savior. <https://journeyboxmedia.com/product/not-the-end/>

**Activities:** Holy Communion?, Holy Baptism

**Hands-on item:**

**Music:** #2137 “Would I Have Answered When You Called?”; Halle, Halle (FWS 2026); Christ the Lord is Risen Today (UMH 302)