

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Well, it seems logical to suggest this was a surprisingly early **SPRING!!!** (Of course, spring was not technically early, but spring was early psychologically.)

Well, it seems logical to suggest that **ICE OUT** was surprisingly early this year; after all, we are talking about an ice out which occurred roughly in **MID-APRIL!!!**

Well, it seems logical to suggest **65 YEARS** came surprisingly early!!! (Of course, 65 years was not technically early, but 65 years was psychologically early, early, early. What happened to those High School years?)

Well, now with snow scheduled for this coming week and with colder temperatures scheduled for this coming week, we might not see flowers **BLOOMING** surprisingly early this year even with the expectation of “May Flowers”!!!

Ah yes, surprising and early are at times a challenging and interesting combination. One example of surprising and early combining to create interesting and challenging could be the experience of Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Jesus early in the morning on what we today now call **EASTER SUNDAY!!!**

Yes, from this one encounter of surprising and early by Mary Magdalene and her proclamation “I have seen the Lord” we have discovered a new awareness of the **HOPE** sparked by the **EMPTY TOMB** and the wonder of the **RESURRECTION!!!**

Indeed, today as we celebrate what it means to be the Church, today as we celebrate what it means to be children in the Family of God we can also do so with a depth of **APPRECIATION** for **GOD’S** gracious **LOVE** for us!!!

After all, early on **GOD** begin to prepare humanity for a big **SURPRISE**, a surprise grounded in **LOVE!!!**

Early on **GOD** spoke through the prophets about the gift of the **MESSIAH!!!** The **MESSIAH** was the surprise!!!

GOD’S gift of the **MESSIAH** was rooted and grounded in **LOVE** for us as children in the Family of God!!! The big surprise was found in crucifixion and death on a cross that led to an empty tomb, and the **RESURRECTION** of the **MESSIAH!!!**

Hear these words from the gospel of John the twentieth chapter verses 30 and 31:

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

Yes, beginning with Mary Magdalene’s proclamation, “I have seen the Lord” a precious spark of **HOPE** for us as children in the Family of God!!!

Love in Christ,

Pastor Dana