

*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter*

*All Church Goes to Sunday School*

# Rise, Shine, Give God the Glory!



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Larry Moffet, Senior Pastor

APRIL 22, 2012

## **Rise, Shine, give God the glory, glory... children of the Lord**

Sunday School is crafts, stories, songs and so much more: Sunday School is relationships with other children, with adults who care about you, with God.

**Yes, Jesus loves me...**

The songs carry the meaning of Children's ministries. Long after those of us who went to Sunday School forget how we sat on little tiny chairs in church basement rooms we remember songs

**Where he leads me, I will follow**

Even those who did not go to Sunday school have those songs in our hearts:

**That's how it is with God's love, once you experience it,  
you spread God's love to everyone, you want to "Pass it on!"**

On this Sunday when the Easter Gospel shows us how Jesus included everyone at his table, it is good to remember how the beginnings of Sunday School did that for children in church's life. In the 1700s in England, children worked 6 or 7 days a week. Robert Raikes organized people to round up children one day a week and teach them to read, write and speak English. For exhausted parents it was a child care program. For children it was both a time to learn, and a time of hope. The Methodist Movement took hold of the idea and set up Sunday Schools for children who worked in mines and gin factories all over Britain. They also began working for child labor laws, the first step was to advocate for laws so children would have one day off a week for Sunday School.

Sunday Schools were organized to give children hope for a better life. Knowing that gives new meaning to our Sunday School songs:

**Rise, Shine, give God the glory, glory... children of the Lord**

Knowing the origins of Sunday School gives the words of this song new depth:

**Jesus loves me, this I know... little ones to him belong,  
we are weak...**

So what about us? Six years ago when the PSPRC met with your current pastors for the first time they handed us a wonderful document. It lists ways the Senior Pastor is invited and expected to help the congregation live out its purpose. It outlines profound truths: First Church seeks to embody God's love for all people. It has beautiful words on the centrality of Sacraments and worship.

It speaks of our emphasis on music. It lists justice ministries. It says, "We expect that when invited to do so our Senior Pastor will teach classes in the university."

I later found out that document was written by PSPRC (Personnel Committee) in 1991 when Ebb retired. It was revised slightly when Aaron left and Ed left.

On the way home, I re-read it while stopped at a traffic light on Cornhusker.

It was so moving that I pulled over to read it yet again. Then I called Jamie, who was driving back to Rising City and Shelby. "Did you read that document? It is amazing," I said. "Yes, it is," she agreed. About the same time we both said: "There was no mention of children."

**See what love Our Abba God has given us,  
that we should be called children of God;  
and that is what we are.**

**The world does not know us because it did not know Christ.  
<sup>2</sup>Beloved, we are God's children now;  
what we will be has not yet been revealed.**

We now have the start of a rebirth of children's ministries here at First Church. Four families connected with the church in some way have called in the last week to talk about baptism.

Our gym, Davidson Hall is full of middle school boys every Monday.

You saw 35 children leave for Children's Church on Easter, and 25-30 on Palm Sunday and on the Sunday after Easter.

Rebirth of children's ministries does not happen easily. Children's ministries won't grow without a lot more hard work, staffing, and volunteer commitment.

Hundreds of children showed up April 7 for the Uni Place Community Organization (UPCO) Easter Egg Hunt. Many First Church members helped organize the event. Several of our own families attended. It was fun.

What we saw there is what we see in the local school events (Huntington, Dawes, Riley, Hartley, Clinton) and at Lux Art Center's children's events: there are a lot of children in our immediate neighborhoods. Many of them (our schools confirm this) live in single parent households, or households where one adult is not a parent. Many families are multiracial. As we talk with caregivers and parents, we hear that many are working two or more jobs.

We now have a situation shockingly similar to the 1700s when children were trapped in coal mines and gin factories. Today our children are trapped in different ways, but they need the hope and the nurturing of people of faith.

Right around us-here and throughout this city, they need us now.

We need children in the community to thrive.

Who will care for us as we age?

**Let's be frank with each other. It is in our self-interest to commit  
to supporting, teaching, giving,  
encouraging children's ministries:  
If we don't have children around us we take ourselves  
far too seriously.**

Not wanting to miss resurrection, one born and baptized here told his mom, "I want to make a rocket ship to heaven so I can see Jesus." "Next year, I want to stay at the tomb so I can see Jesus come out."

In a video produced by Mourning Hope, the non-profit two blocks south of us who gives children ways to deal with grief, one of our young ones explains why he is making a rainbow for granddad.

Another tells us that she made pillow from her Dad's shirt.

Let our songs stay in our hearts as we commit to be Jesus' disciples by taking children in our arms, and blessing them. Your first Window, First Church, shows Jesus blessing the children. Mustn't we not follow our Lord?

**Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so,  
little ones to him belong, we are weak but he is strong.**

We are children. Being with children helps us remember our relationship with our God does not need to be earned.

Rob Bell says, "Jesus says to receive the kingdom of God—to come to him— like children, Fudgesicle stains and all. We, by the grace of God, get to be children of God, the objects of the Father's love, his glorious inconveniences. That's what Christianity's all about."

**<sup>2</sup>Beloved, we are God's children now;  
what we will be has not yet been revealed**

#### **EPISTLE SCRIPTURE – 1 JOHN 3:1-3**

See what love Our Abba God has given us,  
that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.  
The world does not know us because it did not know Christ.

<sup>2</sup>Beloved, we are God's children now;

**what we will be has not yet been revealed.**

What we do know is this: when Christ is revealed,

**we will be like Christ, for we will see him as he is.**

<sup>3</sup>All who have this hope in Christ purify themselves, **just as he is pure.**

EASTER GOSPEL LUKE 24:35-46

Larry:

*Please turn to your pew Bible to New Testament p. 90*

<sup>35</sup>Then the two disciples told what had happened on the road [to Emmaus], and how Christ had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Jamie:

<sup>36</sup>While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them,

Curtis / Sam

**'Peace be with you.'**

Jamie:

<sup>37</sup>They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

<sup>38</sup>He said to them,

Curtis / Sam

**'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?  
<sup>39</sup>Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see;  
for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.'**

Jamie:

<sup>40</sup>And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

<sup>41</sup>While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them,

'Have you anything here to eat?' <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

<sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate in their presence. <sup>44</sup>Then he said to them,

Curtis / Sam

**'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.'**

Jamie:

<sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*An Open-Spirited Community of Faith and Action*

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Worship Services - Sundays, 8:30 & 10:45 AM

# All Church Goes to



Davidson Hall was the location today where ALL Sunday School Classes and Small Groups gathered to sponsor a craft or interactive mission project table for our children during the Sunday School period.

*Sponsored by the Children's Ministry Focus Group of First Church*