

From Pastor Karen's Desk

April 2009

What do you do with Saturday?

Almost every day in Holy Week, the week leading up to Easter, has something going on, especially as we get toward the end of the week. On Palm Sunday, we have a children's parade with palm branches to remember when Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey. On Holy Thursday, we celebrate Communion, remembering the first communion which was the last supper Jesus shared with his followers. On Good Friday, we have the most bleak and painful worship service of the year, remembering the betrayal and trial and execution of Jesus on a cross.

And then comes Saturday. A day that sits there, awkwardly doing nothing between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Nothing happens. At best, one verse in the Bible is given to that day: "On the Sabbath day they rested according to the commandment." (Luke 23:56b) What do we do with this Saturday?

The church professionals – pastors, staff, committee members – tend to use it efficiently. Early on the last day of the week, before it is yet light, we arrive at the tomb carrying Easter lilies and white cloths to decorate the sanctuary for Easter. Sometimes we start even earlier, and as the Good Friday worshippers are heading out one door, the flower carts are rolling in one after another. As one who has done it for years, I tell you it's a bit jarring to make the transition so quickly. But we don't want to waste a day to get the work done. So that's what we do with Saturday.

The families of small children tend to use that Saturday for festivities. When my children were young, there were usually at least two Easter Egg Hunts on that day, one sponsored by our Neighborhood Association, one by our Sunday School program in the park across from the church – with more or less snow. In the evening, we'd dye eggs at home, and then after the kids were in bed, we'd hide them along with the Easter baskets. My memories of this Saturday taste like jelly beans and smell like vinegar.

What do we do with Saturday? This year at First UMC, we decided to approach the day differently. We have added a service we are calling "A Vigil of Preparation." Rather than rush too quickly from Good Friday's grief to Easter Sunday's joy, we want to give you – and us – a chance to pause and ask ourselves what we are expecting, what we're waiting for. It is a chance to intentionally make that turn from despair to hope, and prepare for it. We think it will be a very powerful service, and we hope you will come and join us in the wait and preparation.