

Ian Hicks, April 12, 2026

Acts 2:14a, 22-32 1 Peter 1:3-9 John 20:19-31 Psalm 16

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love.

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast!”¹ Wonderfully aided and supported through the deep love for all of us through our risen Christ!

Peter reminds all that God, through his great mercy has given us a new birth into a living *hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have amazing opportunities to build better bridges as we strive towards resolution of issues simply because our faith gives us hope. We are blessed in that no matter what difficulties we face. Somehow, our faith helps us to face them all with optimism. Peter reminds us that we may well suffer though various trials so that the genuineness of our faith is tested by fire.

In our human condition there can be no doubt we have, do and will continue to face challenges. We are called to face them with faith, no matter how rough the journey!

I recently read to story about Lena Bargo and her family’s journey.² Lena was born prematurely. Not only did she face all the risks accompanying premature birth; she also required a shunt in her brain to redirect cerebrospinal fluid to relieve pressure. Through all she was going through, can we imagine the anguish, despair, tears, prayers and hope her parents were enduring?

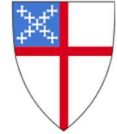
Eventually the day arrived when Lena was discharged from hospital. Finally going home. Despite the family’s hope and joy, she still faced many medical appointments

1. Alexander Pope 1732

2. USA Today Nov. 28, 2023; Updated Nov. 29, 2023

3. Pastor Andrew Geib: April 7, 2024; Faith in the Face of Doubt,

4. Living toward a vision by Walter Brueggemann, 1982, United Church Press edition, in English - 2nd ed.



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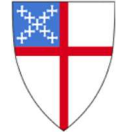
in her young life. She appeared to be making progress. Could her parents overcome any doubts and be optimistic for a normal life for her and to build on that hope?

A few months later they were unable to awaken her from sleep. They rushed her to the hospital. The local hospital staff immediately realized she needed far more intensive care and had Lena airlifted to the University of Kentucky Hospital. The doctors discovered the shunt placed in her brain at birth had ruptured. Sadly, there was nothing that could be done for her.

One of the worst possible decisions any parents might have to make is to pull life support from their toddler. Can we even begin to imagine their grief? Then, amidst their anguish, her older brother Cody requested they make Lena an organ donor. Through all their sadness, his parents agreed and her little body was rushed to surgery for organ harvesting. By her death, **she literally gave everything that she had for those in need**. Lena gave *hope* to a 44-year-old man who received her kidneys. She gave *hope* to an 8-month-old baby girl who received her liver, and her heart gave *hope* to a 15-month-old boy named Mark. *Hope*. She gave them a chance at life. Additionally, Lena also saved her mother's life. Her mom, Denise experienced chest pains while at the hospital facing Lena's end of life. She underwent a thorough medical exam and tests and was diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML), which responds well to treatment.

Less than a year after Lena's death, Denise was able to meet the little boy, Mark. She was able to hold him in her arms and put her ear to his chest and hear Lena's

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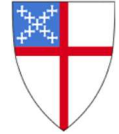
heart doing just what it was meant to do, robustly pumping rhythmically, giving Mark life.

As with the Bargo's, we are called by faith in hope to give our lives for others, even as we struggle with our own frailties.

The reality of life we all face is that everyone is fighting a battle we cannot see. Never mind the brave faces we show, our smiles and the way others see us, behind closed doors we all have our struggles, our hurts, our fears, our doubts. We are all in need of experiencing the *hope* of new life; of experiencing real peace.³

The risen Jesus revealed himself to the disciples who were ensconced behind locked doors for fear of the Jews who might harm them. Remember the chief priests and others were calling for Jesus to be crucified, claiming there was no king other than Caesar. Did they genuinely support Caesar, or was it their way of surviving under their Roman occupiers? They probably were afraid, even though Caesar likely had nothing to do with the status quo. They were not going to rock the boat. However, Jesus was leading a counter cultural passive rebellion. A different way of thinking and living. Treating people with respect. Seeking to look at life differently. A life in which we believe in God the Father and His love for us. Avoid corruption (remember his overturning the tables of the money changers in the synagogue?) If this Jesus movement really were to blossom, what would that do to their safety? Might this have been one of their motivations to demand Jesus' death? After all Jesus and his disciples were a stumbling block to the rule and order Caesar had established.

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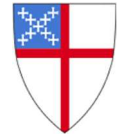
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Judas approached the chief priests asking what they would offer if he betrayed Jesus. They paid him 30 pieces of silver. When Jesus was betrayed, Judas experienced serious remorse and tried to return the 30 pieces of silver. He had lost his way. He had no hope and he hanged himself. The chief priests wouldn't return the pieces of silver to the treasury as it was now blood money. Instead, they used it to purchase the Potter's Field (Field of Blood) as a burial ground for foreigners, criminals and the poor. It is near to Jerusalem in the Hinnom Valley and the "Gate of the Potsherds", where potters collected clay for their livelihood. They put the silver to positive use, fulfilling prophecy as a burial site for those forbidden in normal cemeteries. It is no longer an active municipal cemetery and is currently an archaeological site containing ancient burial caves.

John writes that blessed are those who believe without seeing. We as Christians are called to do this. Believe without seeing. Live the apparent contradiction of "seeing is believing" and "believing is seeing"! Despite all the challenges of the world around us, are we up to this challenge of believing without seeing?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer gives us insight into faith in his writings from prison. He expresses *hope*. Faith leads to "I *hope* that as we continue to live through these challenging days, we can all live in the light of the resurrection until that new and cleansing wind can blow through our present world. Let this be our place to stand on the solid ground of the resurrection of our Lord, and we will be able to move the earth, with the help of our risen and ever-present Lord."

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Bonhoeffer lived with grace, purpose, right and wrong. His faith led him to active resistance to the Nazi government and a plot to kill Hitler. He was executed as a threat to the order of the state.

Jesus offered passive resistance to the status quo and was executed.

Walter Brueggeman reminds us that as God's faithful we are to understand ourselves as "members of a single tribe, heirs of a single *hope*, and bearers of a single destiny, namely, the care and management of all God's creation." His work centers on God's vision for a just, interconnected world in contrast to dominant, often oppressive, cultural narratives. ⁴

The psalmist concurs and declares: We live in hope. We take refuge in our Lord, who is our portion and our cup, who gives us counsel and our spirits joyful that our bodies may rest in *hope*.

Here we are. We, each of us frail, imperfect members of the body of Christ. Do we get it? Despite whatever concerns or challenges we have; we are called in Christ's name to give our lives for those in need and to bring peace and hope of new life. Each of us in our own shared way. In giving ourselves we are nurtured by the word and sacraments, by prayer and worship, bible studies and discussion.

Remember our baptismal covenant, remember the creed we confess. Remember the crowd of witnesses who have gone before us.

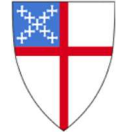
May we go out from this place, reenergized and reinvigorated in our Risen Christ and be his body in this time and place with *hope* and optimism.

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Second Sunday of Easter

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Let our risen Lord lead us! Alleluia! Amen

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