

Sierra Christian Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

An Easter Pitch in 3 Parts



I

*First they came for the Communists--and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists—and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists—And I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews—and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak out for me.*

The above confession was not scrawled on a stone wall in blood as I was once told but written by Martin Niemöller probably around 1946, when he was encouraging Germans to accept personal responsibility for their role and complicity in the Nazi regime. Niemöller was a prominent Lutheran pastor and theologian who became a leading figure in the Protestant resistance against the Nazi regime, but not until after he initially welcomed Hitler's rise to power in 1933 touting German na-

tionism. It was not until the Nazis goose stepped on church autonomy by imposing Aryan racial laws on the clergy, that Niemöller started to see that Hitler's form of rule came at a price no Christian could pay.

In 1937 he was arrested and spent the next 8 years in Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps. He was known as Hitler's "personal prisoner." It was during this time he experienced his own revivification, and following his liberation in 1945 Niemöller became a leading voice for German collective guilt and spent his later years as a global advocate for peace, nuclear disarmament, and human rights, eventually serving as a president of the World Council of Churches headquartered in Switzerland.

I don't know if Martin Niemöller grew up believing that Jesus rose, as the Gospels describe, from his tomb in living, breathing form, the Son of God risen from the dead, scars and all, but it's likely that he did. He was of conservative Lutheran^{1e}

PITCH

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stock, and his theological drive was to impose on what he saw as a disordered society meaning and order through the Gospels, which he viewed as the literal and inspired word of God, intended to be authoritative for all ages.

But eight years in a Nazi Concentration Camp can change a man. Niemöller experienced the kind of personal resurrection I think is the moral of the Easter story. I am not a Niemöller scholar, but I suspect what happened to him in those camps is consistent with how my faith and love view Easter. The Divine in Easter is not necessarily found in the literal physical resuscitation of Jesus but in how it is a symbolic, transformative event that focuses on the enduring power of his life, his challenge to us, and what His spiritual presence in our lives means. Easter is a call for us to "practice resurrection" in the present world through love and justice. Easter is a metaphor for the triumph of love, life, and hope over hatred and death.

II

The notion that the resurrection story might be more metaphorical than literal is not new. It was first given legs back in the 19th century and

suggests the idea of Jesus emerging from the tomb, scars and all, is about the wounds we carry from our losses and isolation, and how we can emerge with new beauty and wisdom to discover who we are.

*When people feed the hungry,
march for the persecuted, care for the
sick, welcome the excluded, work for
justice, something powerful happens.*

Jesus's resurrection becomes ours.

*Maybe, just maybe, that is the Easter
miracle, noticing where love and good-
ness can be found every day.*

stone that God cannot roll away. That is the resurrection message I choose to embrace this Easter. Jesus' life and message cannot be erased by violence, power, or even death.

Easter is a golden reminder for us to practice resurrection in our lives. What a gift to be able to open your whole self — heart, soul, mind, and strength — to God's inspiring call to new life and renewed love. May you feel God luring you, prompting you, and encouraging you — each day and in each new present moment.

It's an everyday thing, practicing resurrection, because Jesus emerging from the tomb means He remains present in our lives in ways that change people every day. How he lived—forgiving enemies, caring for outsiders and the marginalized, challenging unfair systems, and loving without limits—is a pretty high bar, but one worth reaching for. When people feed the hungry, march for the persecuted, care for the sick, welcome the excluded, work for justice, something powerful happens. Jesus's resurrection becomes ours. Maybe, just maybe, that is the Easter miracle, noticing where love and goodness can be found every day.

III

It's not easy, but Jesus was never one for the easy. It does not have to be accom-

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Pastor's Pitch



Sierra Christian Church's pastor is the Rev. Christine Pobanz-Hartmire. Her challenge to us is to embrace, the beautiful truth that everyone is always welcomed at Jesus' table.

PITCH

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practicing resurrection can be as beautiful and simple as taking conscious note of the good and beautiful in each day.

I think it is something I have long done unconsciously, and there are some days, like today, for instance, when I sat in what used to be our home office and is now a puppy enclosure and had a puppy fall asleep in my lap, when the good thing, the beautiful thing, is easy to find. It slaps you in the head.

There are, of course, other days, hard days, when it is not so obvious, when the stone has not rolled away, and even though I know the good and beautiful things are all around, not unlike the air we breathe, it is hard to feel the joy. So then comes the question, what is the payoff for not noticing a single good or beautiful thing on those hard bad days where all we feel is doom and all we hear is crackling static?

Some possible payoffs for choosing not to acknowledge the good and beautiful around us:

- “ Do I get to keep feeling sorry for myself, or better yet, do I get to stay mad at someone else?
- “ Maybe I get to keep telling a story in which I

plished in leaps and bounds, with major miracles or world quaking accomplishments.

Our personal, daily act of

am aggrieved?

- “ Maybe I get to excuse myself from being of service to anyone else because, well, my day sucked?
- “ Maybe by continuing to feel bad about the news of the world, I get to feel like I’m doing something, when in fact, I’m not doing anything other than refusing to pay attention to what is beautiful and good.

Anyhow, on the days when the good and beautiful is obvious, paying attention to it is a joy. On the days when there’s nothing especially lovely or enjoyable, paying attention to how beautiful our dogs are—or noticing that the sunset is, in fact, worth looking at, with its layers of color punctuating the night sky—that in itself is prayer of resurrection

This practice of taking notice of what is good and beautiful, even on bad days, helps remove one thin layer between me and what is true: that even the sunset, and the dog, and the utterly ordinary day sing the glory of God. That is resurrection. That is Jesus emerging with all his scars intact.

A life of daily practiced resurrection does not demand that we pretend the world is any better than it is; only that we do not miss how the world is often much better than we might think it is.

That is Easter! And Happy Easter to you!

***The world is moved along,
not only by the mighty
shoves of its heroes, but
also by the aggregate of
tiny pushes of each honest
worker.***

SAVE THE DATES FOR SUMMER CHURCH CAMP FUN

Back to Camp 2026

30303 Chicken Hawk Road, Foresthill, CA

Adult Camp	June 4-7 ages 18 and older
Junior Camp	June 21-25 Graduates of 3 rd , 4 th , and 5 th grades
Chi Rho Camp	June 21-27 Graduates of 6 th , 7 th , and 8 th grades
CYF Camp	June 21-27 Graduates of 9 th , 10, 11, 12 th grades
JOY Camp	June 27-29 - Graduates of K, 1 st , and 2 nd grades with an adult companion

The Region is offering 50% scholarships for everyone again he year!

Registration and details coming later to CNNCN.org

See you at camp!



Spring Labyrinth Walk



Diane Wilson (right) facilitated the church's Spring Solstice/ Vernal Equinox labyrinth walk, March 22. It marks the sun's crossing above Earth's equator, ending Winter in the Northern Hemisphere and welcoming Spring, which we enjoyed for a few days before summer-like conditions hit Sacramento.



Some Notes Worth Noting

1. Books That Bind meets Thursday, April 16, at 6:30 pm on Zoom. We are reading "You Were There Too," by Colleen Oakley. Mia is happily married to Harrison. After the couple relocates to a small town in Pennsylvania she meets a man named Oliver. Oliver is no stranger to Mia, because he has been making an appearance in her dreams for years. When Oliver reveals to Mia that he has been dreaming of her as well she is convinced there is a profound reason for this. What follows is an intense story full of what ifs and hard choices and the wonderment of dreams.
2. June 4-7 is the date for the Disciples' Adult Camp held at the Community of the Great Commission. Key noter is Dr. Sharon Jacob, the John Wesley Associate Professor of New Testament and Postcolonial Studies at Claremont School of Theology. Registration information to come.
3. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Northern California-Nevada will gather in person April 24-26 at the First Christian Church of Concord to reflect on what it means to be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.
4. Save the Date—The Women's Tri-Regional Retreat will be held May 15-17 at Christ the King Passionist Retreat Center in Citrus Heights. Registration information to come.
5. Men's Fellowship meets Saturday, April 4 at 9 am on Zoom. Have your jelly beans and chocolate footballs on hand.
6. Work on updating the Sierra Christian Church directory has begun. Don't think you have to wait for an invitation—feel free to send any changes you may have to your listing to jhartmire1@mac.com. Here is the link to the most recent version: [Sierra Christian Church Directory](#). Please confirm that the information contained in the most recent version of the directory is correct.
7. Cliff Cole has a birthday on April 24!
8. April 12 is Gabby Hines' birthday!
9. April 26 is Liz Throne's birthday!
10. This is the link to register for the: [Women's Tri-Regional Gathering, May 15-17](#)

Feel free to join us in person Easter morning as we worship from Folsom Lake's Beal Point campground

Sierra Christian Church Monthly Calendar

April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	31	1	2	3	4 9 am Men's Fellowship Breakfast
5 Easter	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 10:30 am Worship	13	14	15	16 Books That Bind 6:30 pm on Zoom	17	18
19 10:30 am Worship	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 10:30 am Worship	27	28	29	30	1	2

List & Links of Regional Events

April 23, 2026: Clergy Gathering

April 24-25, 2026: Annual Gathering at FCC Concord

May 15-17, 2026: Women's Tri-Regional Gathering (Save the Date)

June 4-7, 2026: Adult Camp, Community of the Great Commission

Winston Churchill's Wit and Humor On Display

Winston Churchill loved paraprosdokian, figures of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected.

1. Where there's a will, I want to be in it.
2. The last thing I want to do is hurt you, but it's still on my list.
3. Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
4. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
5. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
6. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
7. They begin the evening news with 'Good Evening,' then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
8. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
9. I thought I wanted a career. Turns out, I just wanted pay checks.
10. In filling out an application, where it says, 'In case of emergency, notify:' I put "DOCTOR."
11. I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.
12. Women will never be equal to men until they can walk down the street...with a bald head and a beer gut, and still think they are sexy.
13. Behind every successful man is his woman. Behind the fall of a successful man is usually another woman.
14. A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.
15. You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.
16. Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with
17. There's a fine line between cuddling and...holding someone down so they can't get away.
18. I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.
19. You're never too old to learn something stupid.
20. To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.
21. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.
22. Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
23. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
24. I'm supposed to respect my elders, but now it's getting harder and harder for me to find one.

Some “Different” Dates in April’s History

April is primarily believed to be named after the Latin word *aperire*, meaning "to open," symbolizing the blooming of flowers and trees in spring. Since some of the Roman months were named in honor of divinities, and as April was sacred to the goddess Venus, her *Veneralia* (festival) being held on the first day, it has been suggested that Aprilis was originally her month. Aphrilis, being her equivalent Greek goddess name Aphrodite (*Aphros*), or the Etruscan (ancient Italy) name *Apru*.

April Fools' Day—Celebrated annually on April 1, its history is steeped in mystery, with its precise origins remaining a subject of debate among historians. While widely celebrated across Europe and North America with pranks and hoaxes, it is not an official holiday, but rather a long-standing tradition dating back to at least the 16th century.

April 1, 1850—Sacramento’s population was estimated to be 150.

April 1, 1976—Apple Inc. of Cupertino was formed by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne. They incorporated on January 3, 1977. Wonder what happened to them?

April 1, 2002—A San Francisco Court of Appeals ordered the U.S. government to pay millions of dollars in disability benefits to Vietnam veterans with prostate cancer, who were exposed to Agent Orange.

April 2, 1902—Tally’s Electric Theatre, the first full-time movie theater in the U.S, opened in Los Angeles.

April 2, 1993—Ellie Nesler shot and killed Daniel Driver in a Jamestown, courtroom. Driver had been accused of molesting her son and three other boys. Nesler was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

April 2, 1994—Preston Tate was shot and killed by guards during an allegedly staged fight at the Corcoran State Prison. The fights, organized by the prison staff for gambling and entertainment purposes, pitted inmates against each other in gladiator-style events.

April 3, 1860—The famed Pony Express began service, transporting letters 2,000 miles to California in ten days.

April 3, 1981—Osborne 1, the first successful portable computer, was unveiled at the West Coast Computer Faire in San Francisco.

April 4, 1968—Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated by a sniper in Memphis Tennessee while standing on the balcony of his 2nd floor hotel room.

April 5, 1880—Stockton authorized a tax to establish a public library. It opened in two upstairs rooms at the corner of Main and San Joaquin in 1881. In 1906 2,362 people had library cards and that May they borrowed 4969 items, including 847 children’s books.

April 5, 1941—Horse-drawn streetcars on Castro and Fillmore Streets in San Francisco were replaced by buses.

April 6, 1987—Al Campanis, Los Angeles Dodgers executive, said on television while being interviewed by Ted Koppel, that blacks “may not have some of the necessities” to hold managerial jobs in major-league baseball.

April 7, 1911—The San Francisco Police Board examined nine Mission saloon keepers who were cited for selling liquor to women decoys.

April 9, 1981—A last second starter, Fernando Valenzuela, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher, shut out the Houston Astros 2-0 on opening day in his rookie year. In his first 8 starts of his rookie year, he went 8-0, with 7 complete games, 5 shutouts and 4 earned runs surrendered in 72 innings, Fernandomania was born.

April 10, 1633—England got its first ever glimpse (and taste) of a new fruit – the banana – when Thomas Johnson displayed a bunch in his shop in Holborn, London.

April 11, 1976—The original Apple Computer, later known as the Apple I, was released. Designed and hand-built by Steve Wozniak, it was demonstrated in July at the Homebrew Computer Club in Palo Alto.

April 11, 1968—The Civil Rights Act of 1968 aimed to address housing discrimination and segregation. It

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HISTORY

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tics in housing. The act began to dismantle societal and institutional barriers and promote greater inclusion for minority communities. It served as a crucial step forward in the ongoing quest for equality and racial justice.

April 11, 2008—Haight Ashbury Food Program in San Francisco closed their soup kitchen due to reduced grants and donations. It served as many as 450 people a day for some 25 years.

April 13, 1796—The first elephant arrived in the U.S. by ship to the port of New York City. The 2-year-old female pachyderm, called Old Bet, was purchased in the south Asian region of Bengal and toured the U.S. as a curiosity before being bought by Hachaliah Bailey, who later helped form the Barnum & Bailey Circus.

April 13, 1360 ("Black Monday")—A freak hail-storm during the Hundred Years' War was so violent it killed hundreds of English soldiers, forcing King Edward III to seek peace

April 14, 1865—President Abraham Lincoln was shot and killed while watching a play at Ford Theater.

April 15, 1910—San Francisco Police arrested Kitty Plunket, known as Jolly Trixie, for being deformed and exhibiting her deformity in a show house.

April 15, 1912—The unsinkable Titanic sank in the North Atlantic after side swiping an iceberg.

April 18, 1906—The Great San Francisco Earthquake and Fire struck, killing some 3,000 people and destroying more than 80% of the city; one of the largest natural disasters in U.S. history.

April 20, 1914—The Ludlow Massacre occurred when Colorado National Guard members open fire on a tent colony of striking coal miners and their families in Ludlow, Colo. At least 66 men, women and chil-

prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, and other characteristics

dren were killed in the attack and in the days of rioting that followed.

April 20, 1999—Columbine High School students Eric Harris and Dyland Klebold kill 13 people at the school and wound 24 more before killing themselves.

April 21, 753 BC—According to legend, twin brothers Romulus and Remus – descendants of Aeneas, sons of goddess Aphrodite, and princes of the dommed Greek city of Troy – founded Rome. To this day, Rome celebrates its birthday every year on this date.

April 22, 1984—Ansel Adams, photographer, died in Monterey at age 82. He was famous for his photographs of Yosemite Valley. Adams redefined the artistic standards and possibilities of landscape photography.

April 23, 1969—Sirhan Sirhan was sentenced to death for the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles on June 5, 1968. He has been denied parole 13 times.

April 24, 1908—Mr. and Mrs Jacob Murdock left Los Angeles driving their Packard on the first cross-country car trip. There were no gas stations so, in most cases, the fuel was purchased at department stores or mechanical workshops where it was stored in sealed canisters. They reached New York City in 32 days, 5 hours and 25 minutes.

April 24, 1995—Gilbert Murray, 47-year-old California Forestry Association president, was killed by a mail bomb at his Sacramento headquarters. The bomb was from the Unabomber.

April 28, 1945—Twenty-three years of Fascist rule ended in Italy when Italian partisans shot former Dictator Benito Mussolini and his mistress Clara Petacci, as they attempted to flee to Switzerland. Their bodies were hung in the center of Milan.

April 30, 1948—Palestinian Jews declared their independence from British rule and established the new State of Israel – the first Jewish state in 2,000 years.