

*WELCOMING IN CHRIST*  
**Monthly Devotional Reflections**  
**Anticipating the St. Paul's Anniversary Campaign**

APRIL 2018

**Easter and Eastertide** with celebrations of renewal and resurrection  
*St. Paul's focus upon children and youth along with their leaders*

**TEXT: Luke 24:32-36**

*They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

**REFLECTIONS:**

The resurrection of Christ is God's surprise. Life overcomes death. The risen Christ is not expected, not recognized. Grief sees a gardener, sadness meets an uninformed stranger on the road to Emmaus. But there is joyful recognition upon hearing one's name, in the blessing of the meal. Eucharist. The astounding news requires excited gathering and sharing stories. And abruptly into their midst comes Jesus blessing them with peace. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, observed, "The resurrection is God's unequivocal 'Yes' to all the diverse bits of humanity - it is God's commitment to a reconciled world. . . It brings forth new social patterns: forgiveness, peacemaking, patience, and truth-telling."

**PRAYERS:**

In this season of resurrection joy, we accept God's invitation to be ever-mindful of the needs of others, offering our prayers on behalf of God's community in the church and the world. We give thanks for the Good News. We celebrate the children and youth of St. Paul's who surround us with wonder and laughter, excitement and potential. We thank you for their families and for church friends who teach and guide them as they grow in grace and understanding. *O God, in the evening hour, the risen Christ revealed himself to his disciples in the breaking of bread. Feed us with the bread of life and break open our hearts, that we may know him not only in the good news of the scriptures, but risen in the midst of your pilgrim people. Amen.*



Road to Emmaus, panel from the *Maesta* Altarpiece of Siena (1308-1311) by Duccio, di Buoninsegna, d. 1319. Now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, Italy

[from the Vanderbilt Divinity School Common Lectionary Resource]

#### ART:

What captures your imagination in these artistic expressions? How is the artist telling a story?

How is welcoming a part of Christian discipleship? What are the expectations of the disciples? Whom did Jesus welcome? Make a list—it will be impressive!—children, sinners, women, those suffering from poverty, mental illness, disease. Hospitality is a network: “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” Matthew 10:40 Children and youth are both the present and future of the church. What can they contribute? Likely not financial resources, but better: joy, enthusiasm, questions, renewal, hope.

#### ACTION:

During April/Eastertide consider how the vitality and promise of new generations are continuing signs of resurrection. Volunteer to assist with teaching, creative projects, or mission trips. Learn more about St. Paul’s programs with young people. Consider inviting children and families around Cary to join in fellowship with the church family. Write a note of appreciation to someone who is teaching children or working with youth programs. Hug your children, whatever their ages.