



**We are an Easter people:  
An Easter message from  
Bishop Bruce R. Ough  
to the people of the  
Dakotas Conference  
of the  
United Methodist Church**

I am Bishop Bruce Ough. I greet you in the name and spirit of our Risen Lord.

During the past 40 days we have been on a journey with Jesus to the cross. We have explored this journey through the lens of our Wesleyan means of grace. Now, we are about to celebrate the great festival of Easter. The ashes of repentance are washed away as we exclaim with joy: Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Easter defines Christianity. The empty tomb is the geographic and spiritual center of the universe.

- Easter is the central tenet of our faith – Jesus is victorious over sin and death.
- Easter clearly demonstrates the faithfulness of a gracious God who, as the Psalmist wrote, did not give us over to death.” (Psalm 118)
- Easter changes our perspective on everything – we no longer have to look for the Living One in a cemetery. (Luke 24)
- Easter means we will all be changed. As Paul reminded the Corinthians: “Anyone united with Christ gets a fresh start; is created new; the old life is gone; a new life burgeons.” (2 Corinthians 5)
- Easter gives us the eyes and faith to see what new and joyful thing God, in Christ, is doing in our midst.
- Easter establishes, once and for all time, that God can bring to life that which has died or is dying.

Easter is God’s great “Yes!”

- Can a person who indulges in evil and self-deceit live again? God says yes!
- Can a heart destroyed by pornography or materialism or selfishness or vanity or resentment come to live again? God says yes!
- Can emotions destroyed by adultery or godless pleasures or rage or exploitation or abuse come to life again? God says yes!
- Can a ruined life be restored? God says yes!

- Can a broken body be healed? God says yes!
- Can a tortured soul be restored? God says yes!
- Can sinners be forgiven? God says yes!
- Can a world ravaged by war and poverty know peace and prosperity? God says yes!
- Can a creation burdened by human demands and exploitation be renewed? God says yes!
- Can those mired in despair and doubt and cynicism know hope again? God says yes!

And so, I pray:

***Almighty and Gracious God, Jesus’ wondrous birth means nothing,  
unless we are born again.***

***Jesus’ death and sacrifice mean nothing, unless we die to sin.***

***Jesus’ resurrection means nothing, if only Christ is risen.***

***So, raise your people, O God.***

***Raise your people to new life in Christ.***

***Raise your people from the death of sin  
to the life of righteousness.***

***Raise your people from their demons,  
their doubts, their deaths.***

***Raise your people to embrace a new creation,  
new possibilities, a new future.***

***Throughout the fifty days of our Easter festival, help us, O God, to  
proclaim the marvelous mystery of***

***Christ’s death and resurrection, and to raise the dead to new life.***

***For all praise is yours, O God, now and throughout eternity.***

***Amen.***

As you celebrate the joyous victory of Easter, I urge you to embrace God’s “yes” made known to us in Christ’s resurrection. Allow God’s grace to flood your life, and the life of your congregation, with new possibilities, new love, new hope, new life. Invite God to heal your brokenness. Permit God to resurrect your heart and mind and soul. Allow God to wipe away any deadness and darkness in your life. The dark night is over. We are an Easter People. God has said, “Yes!” May it be so! Happy Easter!

**Yes!**