



## EASTER MESSAGE

APRIL 1, 2018

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**The Rev. Canon**

**Kevin D. Nichols**

I bring this message of Easter hope to you from Church of the Woods here in Canterbury, New Hampshire. It is a 106 acres of rough terrain and wilderness. In calling these woods a church, we discover a glimpse of what it means to be with God in the wilderness. These woods are a place for people to explore God's creation and for us to come to know and discover each other and our gifts.

Easter blessings from my wife, Patti, and from our entire family to you during this holy season. I pray that your Lenten journey has been both enriching and even a bit disruptive. The biblical stories and traditions that guide us during this season remind us of our need to enter with Jesus into the wilderness, and there we discover God in profound ways.

Belden Lane in his book, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, states "in desert and mountain wilderness, people discover liminal places. Whether they physically travel through wild, disorienting terrain or enter it metaphorically through an experience of profound crisis, such sites mark important points of transition in their lives." As Saint Jerome insisted, the desert loves to strip bare, out on the edge, in the desert waste or suspended between Earth and sky, we are stripped bare.

At the Easter Vigil we emerge from our wilderness journeys. On the edge of our personal deserts, we see a distant city. Our exhaustion is palpable. Our emotions raw. Our entire being cries out, "Thank you Lord". We have finally arrived to a new place. An unimaginable place and all that we held to be true is now tested. We've awakened to new truths. The Wise Ones were right. We couldn't have taken the simpler route, we had to go through it. What has your Lenten journey taught you?

These wilderness treks that we venture into. Some of them take us into places of loss and betrayal and brokenness, and some of us may be coming to the edge, the edge of a new horizon. Others of us may be just now entering a new unimaginable trek. Something that we never expected. Something difficult and painful. And yet no matter where we go, we do not walk alone. For God walks with us into that wilderness and on that journey.

Jesus too walk to the unimaginable. We hear it at all how he was rejected and scorned, stripped bare, humiliated. Death. Death on a cross. And yet on Easter morn, we celebrate that every death has a rising. A rising to new hope, and for you and for me on our wilderness journeys, we are reminded that that is not the end. That there is hope in a risen Christ.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia! Know that my thoughts and prayers are with you wherever you gather during this Easter season and know that I look forward to seeing you soon.

Easter Blessings.

### **Walkabouts**

**Tuesday, April 17, 2018**

**St Stephen's Episcopal Church**

**Wednesday, April 18, 2018**

**St Alban's Episcopal Church**

**Thursday, April 19, 2018**

**St Paul's Episcopal Church  
(Livestreamed)**

**Friday, April 20, 2018**

**St Stephen's Pro-Cathedral**



**The Rev. Canon Ruth  
Woodliff-Stanley**

Easter Greetings Everyone!

I grew up in the 70s listening to the likes of Captain and Tennille, Olivia Newton John and Linda Ronstadt on the radio. I had a chance a few years back to go to a concert featuring the music of my youth.

There was one performance that evening in a class by itself. A young woman named Elyse came on the stage. She began her first riff quietly, head bowed, but with unmistakable confidence, "Time on my hands since you've been away; boy, I ain't got no plans, No, no no no."

As she sang, "I'm going down", every ounce of energy in that room was streaming up to that stage toward Elyse, and she was giving it right back.

"I'm going down. I'm going down 'Cause you ain't around, baby. My whole world's turned upside down."

The crowd went crazy. People exploded into a standing ovation. And I couldn't stop myself from exploding to my feet with them.

It was not the standing ovation of applauding effort or affirming the courage of a performer. These are valid reasons to give an ovation. But this one had not an ounce of ought in it. It was the kind where your body is up before your brain knows what's happening. Suddenly, you become aware that you've exploded to your feet. Everything in you simply must respond with everything you've got.

That is the moment of Easter morning. Peter and John run to the tomb. John outruns Peter. Breathless, they arrive.

And they see—the linens Jesus had been wrapped in, just lying there. And the head cloth that had cradled his head, rolled neatly beside them. They have no words. No way to comprehend what they see.

And Mary Magdalene bent over, weeping—arises, turns, and speaks to a the gardener. Or so she believes. Until she hears him call her name. "Mary." "Rabbouni!"

He is not in the tomb. He is standing with her. Calling her name. The whole world is turned upside down.

I don't care how much a skeptic you are. Read the text. Something extraordinary happened that day.

Easter is a cultural convention; a day of welcoming Spring, a day of eggs and bunnies and brunches and joy. I love it all. Just like I enjoyed the whole 70s concert, even Captain and Tennille.

But make no mistake. One moment claims this day. He is not there, dead in the tomb. He rose. Death could not keep him. He is alive.

And you and I bear witness. Like Elyse's audience. And Like John and Peter and Mary Magdalene.

Death does not win.

That changes our reality.

If Christ lives, then torture does not win. Disease does not win. Poverty nor oppression nor violence wins.

Disaster, tragedy, despair do not win. Deception, greed, hatred do not win.

This is the moment of our exploding ovation. Hope in the face of despair.

Love has won. Jesus lives. And so, therefore, must we. We must live beyond every fear, every horror, every evil, every loss, every estrangement.

The tomb is empty. Our whole world's turned upside down.

Joyous Easter to you. I'll see you soon.

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