

# The George Whitefield ROCK

George Whitefield  
UMC

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## FROM THE PASTOR

This is the message I shared with the congregation on Easter Sunday:

Just when we thought winter would never end, the snow melted and the crocus were right there ready to bloom. Just when we thought the crew of the military aircraft might be detained in China for a long time, the powers that be reached an agreement and now they're home safe for Easter. Just when we thought Walter and Evelyn would not pull through after their accident last June, God restored them to life and they're here with us today. Walter even played the organ a few weeks ago! Talk about a resurrection story!

Just think of all the stories of hope and healing the people right here in this church could tell. Successful surgery for cancer. Recovery from major illness. Rekindled hope after the divorce of loved ones. A new job after unemployment. Reconciliation between a father and daughter after years of alienation. So many others. Resurrection hope is everywhere!

Just when the disciples thought they'd never see their beloved teacher Jesus again, along comes Mary Magdalene shouting "I've seen him! I've seen the Lord!" And sure enough – soon after that Jesus appeared to the rest of the disciples. The very ones who had watched him hang on the cross, who had seen him buried and the tomb sealed by a huge stone, now saw him very much alive. Just when they had given up hope, God gave them reason to hope again.

That's what our Christian faith is all about. Hope and healing and new life. Resurrection. And that's why Easter is the supreme celebration of who and whose we are. As Easter people we follow the One who defeated even death, who died and rose again so that you and I could die to sin and rise to new and abundant life.

There's a story of a Muslim who became a Christian in Africa. Some of his friends asked him, "Why have you become a Christian?" He answered, "Well, it's like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go, and there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive. Which one would you ask which way to go?"

As Easter people, we follow a risen Savior, a living Lord. As Easter people, we KNOW that death is not the last word. George Warriner expressed his Easter faith on the day before going to the hospital for major surgery. He said, "I'm not afraid. If I don't make it, I know where I'm going – to be with the Lord. So what's there to worry about?" That's Easter faith.

Facing painful or risky medical tests, people have told me they know everything will be O.K. NO MATTER WHAT. That's Easter faith. Walking with a spouse through the terminal stages of cancer, one person said, "It's sometimes hard to see where God is present in the midst of all this, but I HAVE TO BELIEVE GOD IS THERE." That's Easter faith.

Easter faith isn't always soft or easy. It takes great courage – and sometimes a vivid imagination! – to proclaim resurrection hope in the face of tragedy and despair. When a little child is terminally ill, like little C.J. who we've been praying for – or when disaster strikes, like the horrendous earthquakes in El Salvador and India – or when a lively and beautiful teenager like Molly Bish disappears without a trace – it sometimes takes great effort to hang onto hope. When what seemed like a good marriage begins to fall apart, when the company you've worked for all your life lays you off, when your son or daughter takes a path in life that you know is dangerous, when your best friend betrays your trust, it may not be possible to hope, at least for a while. That's when we have to depend on our Christian family to hold the hope for us, to lift us up in prayer and surround us with love, until we can claim Easter faith once again for ourselves. Easter faith is not a lone ranger faith. It's lived out in community with one another.

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied." If we believe that this life is all there is, sooner or later we're going to run out of hope. Probably about when we run out of time. The last time I checked, the death rate was still 100%. Things don't always turn out the way we want them to. Illness isn't always cured. Little children die under tragic circumstances. Natural disasters snuff out lives by the hundreds and sometimes thousands. What does our Easter faith say to this?

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## The Church and You

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It says, "CHRIST IS RISEN!" It says, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died." Death is not the last word. Death has been swallowed up in victory. Death has no power over those of us who believe in Jesus Christ. Perhaps the thing people fear the most is death. Even Jesus himself begged God to take the cup of suffering and death away from him. But the empty tomb shouts to the world the awesome fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and in so doing, opened the way to eternal life for you and me. So what's there to worry about?

Some of us come here today with grateful hearts for Jesus who showed us the way out of the tomb of despair, grief, and hopelessness. Some of us have been freed by Jesus from the tombs of addiction or depression or physical illness. Some of us have had the stone rolled away from our hardened hearts and deadened emotions and dead-end relationships. Some of us may have come here today like Mary Magdalene to the garden tomb looking for a Savior. The bad news is – we won't find him in the tomb. The good news is – HE'S ALIVE! And because he lives, you and I can live too. Fully and abundantly now, and joyfully into eternity. That's Easter faith! Thanks be to God!

In the name of the Risen Christ,

Pastor Mary Jane

### THANKS!

Special thank you's to:

- ? Marie King for many extra hours of rehearsal during Holy Week, in preparation for special worship services and Easter Sunday
- ? Stewart King and the choir for the extra time and effort required for Holy Week services
- ? Everyone who arranged flowers, cleaned and cleared Fellowship Hall and did all the other behind-the-scenes things necessary to prepare for Easter Sunday
- ? All who helped with the Easter morning breakfast
- ? All who helped with the Women's Ecumenical Progressive Dinner
- ? All who helped with the pot roast supper on 4/21
- ? The Nurture Committee (and especially Dot "Bunny" Bailey) for the children's Easter Egg Hunt
- ? The cooking and serving crew who went to Christ Church in Northampton on Sunday 4/29 for their Consecration Sunday brunch
- ? Rev. Harvey Collins for preaching on 4/29 while Pastor Mary Jane preached in Northampton
- ? Melanie Merrill for her work with the Children's Choir (for their "debut" on Easter Sunday and another presentation on 4/29)

### United Methodist Women

The regular meeting of the United Methodist Women will be Wednesday evening, May 15 at 7PM. The program will be announced at a later date. The refreshment committee for that date is Dorothy Carpenter, Liz Sanford and Gloria Reid. The U.M.W. is open to all women.

## A Special Appeal

### WANTED: Summer Rental or House Swap

Robert and Heide Bents, who live near Frankfurt, Germany, are looking for a house to rent in the Worcester area for three months, beginning around June 15-22. **They will consider a HOUSE SWAP** during this time. They live in a little village called Sembach, right outside Sembach Air Force Base. Ramstein AFB is 15 miles away and the biggest town in the area is Kaiserslautern, population around 100,000. From Sembach you can make day trips to Frankfurt, Heidelberg, the Rhein River, Luxemburg, Belgium, and the Black Forest. It's a 6-7 hour drive to Switzerland, Austria, Paris, Amsterdam, and Southern Germany.

The Bents' have a daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter who live in Paxton. Bob Bents worshiped last summer at the George Whitefield UMC in West Brookfield.

If you are interested in a swap or offering a summer rental, contact Rev. Mary Jane O'Connor-Ropp at (508) 867-3667 or e-mail to mareropp@aol.com.

### CONFIRMATION AND RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

On Sunday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> (Pentecost Sunday), we will be celebrating the confirmation of Roseanna Ducharme, and also receiving into the membership of the church anyone who wishes to join. If you are interested in joining, please speak to Pastor Mary Jane to arrange for a membership class. Pentecost Sunday is an especially meaningful time in the life of the Christian church because it is the day when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit with great power into the midst of the earliest followers of Jesus Christ. Pentecost is sometimes called "the birthday of the Church." Pentecost Sunday will also be observed as Children's Sunday, with children taking a role in worship that day. Please join us for this festive celebration!

# May 2001

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June 2001						
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

**Calendar for May:**

- ? Tues. May 1 and Wed. May 2 - NO COMPANIONS IN CHRIST meetings
- ? Thur. May 3 – Holy Communion at Quaboag Nursing Home – 10:30 a.m.
- ? Thur. May 3 – National Day of Prayer service on East Brookfield Common – 12 noon
- ? Sat. May 5 – Men of Bethel in Concert at Church – 7:30 p.m.
- ? Sun. May 6 – Golden Cross Sunday - special offering
- ? Sun. May 6 – Pre-conference District Meeting and Briefing at Wesley UMC in Worcester – 3:00-6:00 p.m.
- ? Mon. May 7 – West Brookfield Ecumenical Council at Church – 7 pm
- ? Sun. May 13 – Mother’s Day/Festival of the Christian Home
- ? Sun. May 13-Sun. May 20 – Pastor on vacation
- ? Wed. May 16 – NO PRAYER GROUP
- ? Thur. May 17 – NO BIBLE STUDY
- ? Sun. May 20 – Lay Leader Paul Chicoine preaching at 9:30 worship service
- ? Mon. May 21 – Elders and Spirituality workshop at Spencer Congregational Church
- ? Mon. May 21 – Worship Committee at parsonage – 7 p.m.
- ? Thur. May 24 – Administrative Council at church – 7 p.m.

**CALENDAR – REGULARLY SCHEDULED**

- Tuesday at 7 pm – Companions in Christ (at parsonage)
- Wednesday at 9 am – Companions in Christ (at church)
- Wednesday at 2:15 pm – Prayer Group (at parsonage)
- Wednesday at 7 pm – Choir Rehearsal (at church)
- Thursday at 3 pm – Lectionary Bible Study (at parsonage)
- Friday – Pastor’s day off
  
- Last Sunday of the month – Hymn Sing at 9:15
- First Sunday of the month – Holy Communion
  
- Last Monday of the month – Wings and Hands Craft Group at 7 pm (at church)
- First Thursday of the month – Holy Communion at Quaboag Nursing Home with Pastor O’Connor-Ropp, 10:30 am

## Our Church & Our Community

### MEN OF BETHEL IN CONCERT

A couple of years ago we enjoyed a concert by the Men of Bethel from Bethel Lutheran Church in Auburn, MA, who sang along with our own Marion Hunt. On Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m., the Men of Bethel will return for a concert. Also singing will be the Rev. Edward Voosen, pastor of the church, and Mrs. Voosen. A free will offering will be received and refreshments will be served. Proceeds from the concert will go toward a cross and flame emblem for the outside of the church. Bring a friend!

### NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Paul Dixon of East Brookfield Baptist Church writes:

“As you may know, Thursday May 3<sup>rd</sup> is set aside as the National Day of Prayer. It is also the NDP’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This year’s theme is ‘One Nation Under God.’ Our church has held a community prayer service for the last six years, and this year, once again, we would like your congregation to join us. We hold our prayer service on the town common in East Brookfield, at noon, and it ends around 1:00 P.M. (In the event of foul weather we gather in the senior center across the street) It is a moving time of prayer, music, worship, and community all put together to honor God, and ask His blessings on our country and its leaders. It is our sincere wish that you will join us, as we humble our hearts before God as a united body of believers. As you are aware, our country is in great need of prayer and God’s intervention. This day gives us a chance to unite, and lift our voices as one, and to ask for His help and guidance.”

### National Day of Prayer



MAY 3, 2001

### GOLDEN CROSS SUNDAY

May 6<sup>th</sup> is Golden Cross Sunday in the New England Conference. On this day we receive a special offering in support of the three United Methodist Retirement and Health Care Centers affiliated with the Conference. The special offering will directly benefit residents by helping to create a nurturing environment where they will be able to maintain a life of purpose and self-fulfillment. The Methodist Conference Home in Maine, the New England Deaconess Association in Massachusetts, and United Methodist Elder Care in Rhode Island provide care for nearly 800 older residents. Yearly gifts from Golden Cross are a tremendous help in covering costs for basic services and those little extras that make the difference between an institution and a home. Please support these centers with a generous gift.

### The 23rd Psalm revisited ...

*An interpretation of the 23rd Psalm by the  
High School Class of the  
North Brookfield Congregational Church*

1. The Lord watches over me,  
I'm in need of nothing.
2. He brings me to safe happy places  
and makes me rest in peacefulness.
3. I follow him on the right road  
because he is my savior.
4. Even when I walk through the hallways  
of my school  
I will not be afraid -  
For God is with me.  
His power and strength protect me.
5. He shows his love for me  
when I'm in situations I can't handle alone.  
He opens the doors to his kingdom  
and gives me more than I could ever need.
6. I know goodness and love will come  
to me every day of my life -  
And I will live in God's kingdom forever.



**Scripture Readings: Notice**

Each month I will publish the readers for each weeks scripture lessons. It is requested that you read from the Lectern Bible. If you can not be in church on the week that you are scheduled to read, please arrange for someone else to read in your place or contact Paul Chicoine or Rev. Mary Jane. Pastor Mary Jane is willing to give tips/lessons to anyone desiring them. Also if you are interesting in being included in the readers list please notify Paul Chicoine at 436-7744.



## Bible Readings for the Month

**May Scripture Readings:**

- 6<sup>th</sup> - Acts 9:36-43  
 Paul Psalm 23 (UMH 754 Or 137)  
 Chicoine Revelation 7:9-17  
 John 10:22-30
- 13<sup>th</sup> - Acts 11:1-18  
 Allen Psalm 148 (UMH 861)  
 Reid Revelations 21:1-6  
 Mother's Day John 13:31-35
- 20<sup>th</sup> - Acts 16:9-15  
 Barbara Psalm 67 (UMH 791)  
 Smith Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5  
 John 14:23-29
- 27<sup>th</sup> - Acts 16:16-34  
 Liz Psalm 97 (UMH 816)  
 Sanford Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21  
 John 17:20-26

**Need a ride to Church???**

If anyone in the local area needs a ride to church on Sundays or to any church function or meeting, please call Judith Bartlett at 867-3002 or the church office at 867-3667 for help in making arrangements.

Also, if you are willing to give anyone a ride, please have your name put on the driver's list in the church office.

THANKS !!!

**Happy May Birthdays**

Jason Wall	5/1	David McKeon	5/14
Arvid Silverberg	5/17	Marie King	5/23
Tom McKeon	5/25	Charles Wall	5/27
Erin Farrell	5/27	Alan Varnum	5/30
Dorothy Carpenter	5/31		

**Celebrating Anniversaries in May**

George & Dorothy Carpenter	5/24
George & Phyllis Warriner	5/24

**The Grief and Loss Support Group**

**"YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE ALONE IN YOUR BE-REAVEMENT"**

The last Wednesday of each month at 1:00 P.M. Sponsored by the **WEST BROOKFIELD COUNCIL on AGING** at the Senior Center, 27 Front St. Everyone is welcome. For more information call Frank Halloran 867-2497.

**AN OPEN INVITATION**

The George Whitefield Rock welcomes any and all submissions. We reserve the right to edit or reject any material. This is your newsletter, please feel free to make any suggestions to the pastor or the editors. Also if you would like to share your loved ones birthdays and anniversaries please send them for submission to the editor.

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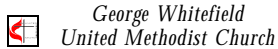
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The George Whitefield ROCK



See us on the Internet  
<http://www.gbgm-umc.org/whitefield/>

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