

This afternoon we welcomed a large contingent of guests from St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. These special guests are poised to introduce a Rejoicing Spirits affiliate in their congregation, and wanted to experience a service with us before they do. The temperature was cold outside for a spring day, yet the bright sun matched the inside warmth of new and old friendships.

We were honored, too, that the founders of the national Rejoicing Spirits movement were also our guests. The spirit of the risen Lord was present among us all as we gathered in worship to give glory to God and to share Christ’s love.



As we **sang** -

- As we sang of our faith and raised our voices in praise, Mariann’s piano playing, the soft sound of Jim’s guitar, and all the rejoicers’ accompanying rhythm instruments provided a lively beat for our voices.
- Joan, our outstanding song leader, led us as we sang of our faith and raised our voices in praise.
- Our drum player, Kevin, returned this month to lend a rhythmic foundation to Mariann’s piano, Jim’s guitar, and all the rejoicers’ accompanying rhythm instruments.
- We were reminded that our faith heritage was founded through “Father Abraham” and that we are among his many sons. What fun to praise the Lord with our arms, feet, heads and whole bodies!
- As we sang “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High,” it was most appropriate on this third Sunday of Easter to hear that Jesus went “from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky.”
- Through the song “Higher Than the Mountains” we were reminded that the Lord is “right here beside me and ev’rywhere I go.”
- After the Bible message, we responded with meaningful words from “Amazing Grace” and heard once again that “the Lord has promised good to me.”
- Our closing song’s comforting message is that we are “Together in One Spirit.”

As we **heard God’s word** –

- Samantha read the lesson from [Acts 9:3-6](#) that told us of the event that led Saul, the persecutor of Christians, to become a follower of Jesus. Saul was blinded by a light and heard the voice of Jesus; thereafter, he began his missionary travels and was known as Paul.
- The gospel story from [John 21:15-17, 19](#) was read in the form of a play, an idea that came from Joan. Kevin, T.J., and Carol were narrators. Fred was the voice of Jesus, and Brian the voice of Peter. Peter tells the Lord that he loves him, and Jesus asks Peter to take care of his flock.

As we heard the **message from Pastor Bill** –

- Paul and Peter had different backgrounds and personalities, but both loved Jesus and wanted to spread his story of resurrection and salvation, and his guidelines for living.
- Peter and Paul had different skills, too, just as we all do. This was good. For God’s work to be accomplished, many different skills and many hands are needed.
- God loves each of us as we are, and needs each of us to use the skills we have to do his will.

As we **prayed** –

- Rejoicers and guests who had individual prayer requests for intercession and prayers of thanksgiving came to the front to offer them to the Lord.
- “Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.”

As the **service ended** –

- The benediction was followed by Sarah’s dismissal.
- “Go in peace. Serve the Lord.”

As we **shared** –

- We sang happy birthday to three who were celebrating in April. Rejoicer Fred has turned twenty! Suah, a caregiver from Libya, and Eli, an almost one year old from St. Stephens in Mechanicsburg, also have April birthdays.
- Fifty three photographs from last month’s recognition of Judy and Dave Curry were on display, and friends and family had the opportunity to order copies, if they so desired. (Thanks to Pat and T.J. for choosing such lovely butterfly fabric to cover the display board.)
- Also displayed was a gracious thank-you note from the Currys, hand decorated with one of Judy’s “famous” butterflies.
- After the service, everyone enjoyed cookies and drinks and our traditional time of fellowship.

Thanks to Pastor Bill and to all who bake, set up, and cleanup from our social time together. Many thanks, too, for our faithful musical team. Without all of these people, Rejoicing Spirits could not exist.

Christ has risen! He has risen indeed! Alleluia!