

I Corinthians 1:18-25

April 1, '18

Easter

“FOOLS FOR CHRIST”

**AS WE CELEBRATE THE GOOD NEWS OF EASTER
THIS MORNING, I WANT TO SHARE GOOD NEWS THAT
OUR CLERK, MELISSA MATTINGLY & I HAVE
RECEIVED.**

**WE WOULD HAVE SHARED THIS INFORMATION
WITH OUR SESSION THIS WEEK, BUT IT DIDN'T
ARRIVE UNTIL FRIDAY & IT JUST SEEMS TOO
IMPORTANT NOT TO SHARE WITH THE ENTIRE
CONGREGATION.**

News Alert

From: The Synod of Lincoln Trails

To: Pastors and Clerks of churches in the Presbytery of Ohio Valley, Whitewater Valley and Wabash Valley

Re: The Lirpa Sloof Generous Congregation Grant

At the approach of Easter, we have exciting information to share with all Presbyterian congregations in Indiana.

As many of you know, the Lilly Foundation has long been a supporter of religious endeavors throughout the United States and particularly in the state of Indiana.

Many of our Presbyterian Churches have been recipients of sizable grants through the generosity of the Lilly Foundation and its long-standing commitment to faith communities who are creatively seeking to broaden their vision and mission in their community.

The Lilly Foundation recently received a substantial bequest from the estate of Dr. Lirpa Sloof who was a colleague of Eli Lilly and a pioneer in the pharmaceutical industry.

This bequest offers up to a million dollars to any PCUSA church in the state of Indiana that is willing to transform its building into a ministry site whose sole focus will be on fulfilling the objectives Christ called for in his parable of the last judgment – *“I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me something to drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, sick and in prison and you visited me.”*

Session, congregational and presbytery concurrence are required to be considered for this Lirpa Sloof Generous Congregation Grant. Application forms are available through the Synod Office and are due by September 1, 2018.

THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A MOMENT.

THINK ABOUT WHAT ALL OF THIS MEANS.

**THINK ABOUT HOW THIS MIGHT IMPACT US &
HOW THIS MIGHT CHANGE EVERYTHING ABOUT WHO
WE ARE.**

**THINK ABOUT THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS
GRAND OPPORTUNITY – LIRPA SLOOF.**

L-I-R-P-A S-L-O-O-F.

**YOU MIGHT EVEN WANT TO WRITE IT DOWN &
LOOK AT IT MORE CLOSELY.**

**LOOK MORE CLOSELY BECAUSE TODAY IS LIRPA
SLOOF DAY – OR, IF YOU REVERSE THE LETTERS IN
THE FIRST & LAST NAME - APRIL FOOL’S DAY.**

**MASS APRIL FOOL’S DAY PRANKS ARE
LEGENDARY.**

**MANY OF THEM SHOW HOW GULLIBLE WE ALL
CAN BE, NO MATTER WHO WE ARE.**

**TEN YEARS AGO TODAY, THE BBC ANNOUNCED
THAT CAMERA CREWS FILMING NEAR THE
ANTARCTIC FOR ITS NATURAL HISTORY SERIES
MIRACLES OF EVOLUTION HAD CAPTURED FOOTAGE
OF ADÉLIE PENGUINS TAKING TO THE AIR.**

IT EVEN OFFERED A VIDEO CLIP OF THESE FLYING PENGUINS, WHICH QUICKLY BECAME ONE OF THE MOST VIEWED VIDEOS ON THE INTERNET.

THE PRESENTER EXPLAINED THAT, INSTEAD OF HUDDLING TOGETHER TO ENDURE THE ANTARCTIC WINTER, THESE PENGUINS TOOK TO THE AIR AND FLEW THOUSANDS OF MILES TO THE RAINFORESTS OF SOUTH AMERICA WHERE THEY *"SPEND THE WINTER BASKING IN THE TROPICAL SUN."*

WHO KNOWS HOW MANY PEOPLE ACTUALLY BELIEVED THE STORY?

I THINK THE BEST APRIL FOOL'S PRANK – IN FACT, THE ONE THAT WAS RATED NUMBER 1 BY THE MUSEUM OF HOAXES - WAS ALSO A BBC CREATION.

61 YEARS AGO TODAY, THE BBC SHOW ENTITLED "PANORAMA" RAN A SEGMENT ABOUT THE SWISS

SPAGHETTI HARVEST HAVING A BUMPER CROP DUE TO MILD WEATHER & THE ELIMINATION OF THE SPAGHETTI WEEVIL.

THEY EVEN SHOWED VIDEO OF WORKERS HARVESTING THE SPAGHETTI NOODLES FROM TREES.

BEING GULLIBLE AS WE ARE SO PRONE TO BE, PEOPLE BELIEVED IT!

THIS WAS EARLY IN TELEVISION AND, OF COURSE, IF IT'S ON TV, IT MUST BE TRUE.

APRIL FOOL'S JOKES HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS.

THEY CAN BE TRACED TO THE FOURTH CENTURY WHEN CONSTANTINE WAS EMPORER AND, ON A WHIM, APPOINTED A COURT JESTER NAMED KUGEL RULER FOR A DAY.

KUGEL IMMEDIATELY DECREED THAT ONLY THE ABSURD WOULD BE ALLOWED INTO THE KINGDOM ON THAT DAY.

IT HAPPENED TO BE ON APRIL 1ST THAT KUGEL WAS APPOINTED RULER FOR A DAY.

AND THAT, TOO, IS AN APRIL FOOL'S JOKE.

MORE THAN 30 YEARS AGO, AN ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER WANTED TO DO A PIECE ON THE ORIGIN OF APRIL FOOL'S DAY & SO HE ASKED BOSTON COLLEGE HISTORY PROFESSOR JOSEPH BOSKIN TO GIVE HIM SOME BACKGROUND.

BOSKIN CONCOCTED THE ENTIRE CONSTANTINE STORY & IT RAN IN NEWSPAPERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

HE SAID HE MADE IT UP BECAUSE NO ONE REALLY HAS ANY IDEA HOW THE TRADITION STARTED.

**IT DOES PROVE, THOUGH, HOW GULLIBLE WE ARE
BECAUSE – WELL, YOU SORT OF BELIEVED IT WHEN I
TOLD YOU THE ORIGIN OF APRIL FOOL’S JOKES,
DIDN’T YOU?**

**THE ALIGNING OF APRIL FOOLS DAY & EASTER
DOESN’T HAPPEN ALL THAT OFTEN, BUT WHEN IT
DOES, IT’S JUST TOO GOOD TO PASS UP.**

**AS WE CONSIDER THE EVENTS OF HOLY WEEK &
EASTER, IT SEEMS LIKE A NO-BRAINER TO FOCUS ON
“THE APRIL FOOLS.”**

WHO ARE “THE APRIL FOOLS?”

**AS WE CONSIDER EVERYTHING THAT TOOK
PLACE BETWEEN THE LORD’S SUPPER GATHERING IN
THE UPPER ROOM THAT WE OBSERVED RIGHT HERE
ON MAUNDY THURSDAY & THE CRUCIFIXION ON**

**FRIDAY, IT SEEMS, AT FIRST GLANCE THAT THE
“APRIL FOOLS” ARE RATHER OBVIOUS.**

**“THE APRIL FOOLS” ARE THE RELIGIOUS
LEADERS WHO MOCKED JESUS & SAID, “*HE SAVED
OTHERS; LET HIM SAVE HIMSELF IF HE IS THE
MESSIAH...*”**

**THEY PROVE THEMSELVES TO BE FOOLS
BECAUSE IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE HE *WOULDN’T*
SAVE HIMSELF THAT HE WAS ABLE TO SAVE OTHERS.**

**IF JESUS HAD CHOSEN TO AVOID THE
CRUCIFIXION...IF HE HAD OPTED OUT OF THE ENTIRE
PLAN...IF HE HAD DECIDED TO COME DOWN FROM
THE CROSS WHEN IT BECAME TOO PAINFUL TO
ENDURE – IF HE HAD CHOSEN TO SAVE *HIMSELF* - HE
WOULDN’T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SAVE *US*.**

“THE APRIL FOOLS” DON’T UNDERSTAND THAT.

“THE APRIL FOOLS” MOCKED HIM WITH THEIR VOICES & THE WORDS THEY WROTE ABOVE HIS HEAD – SCORNING HIM AS A “KING.”

THEY DIDN’T UNDERSTAND THAT HE WASN’T THE KING OF THE *JEWS*.

HE WAS THE KING OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

YES, “THE APRIL FOOLS” OF THE PASSION NARRATIVE ARE PRETTY EASY TO SPOT.

MAYBE - BUT MAYBE NOT.

MAYBE IT’S NOT REALLY QUITE SO SIMPLE.

MAYBE THERE’S ANOTHER GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO CAN ALSO BE CATEGORIZED AS “THE APRIL FOOLS.”

PAUL WROTE TWO LETTERS TO THE CHURCH IN THE CITY OF CORINTH.

**THOSE TWO LETTERS MAKE UP MORE OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT THAN THE LETTERS HE WROTE TO
ANY OTHER CHRISTIANS.**

**IN FACT, WHAT HE WROTE TO THE CORINTHIANS
IS MORE THAN HE WROTE TO THE CHURCHES IN
PHILIPPI, EPHESUS, GALATIA & THESSALONICA
COMBINED!**

**IN THE VERY FIRST CHAPTER OF THE VERY FIRST
LETTER HE WROTE TO THE CORINTHIANS, PAUL SAID,
*“THE MESSAGE ABOUT THE CROSS IS FOOLISHNESS TO
THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, BUT TO US WHO ARE
BEING SAVED IT IS THE POWER OF GOD.”***

**IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD, WE ARE “THE APRIL
FOOLS.”**

AND WHY NOT?

THINK OF THE ABSURDITY OF WHAT THE GOSPEL DEMANDS OF US!

ON THIS APRIL FOOLS DAY, CONSIDER THE BUILT-IN FOOLISHNESS OF OUR FAITH.

IN THE WISDOM OF GOD, FOOLISHNESS IS A PART OF WHO WE ARE AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

WHEN PAUL USES THE WORD “FOOLISH,” WHAT HE’S SAYING IS THAT GOD’S WAYS ARE OFTEN NOT OUR WAYS & AND GOD’S WAYS WILL OFTEN APPEAR FOOLISH IN THE WORLD’S EYES.

THINK OF JESUS’ MOST DISTINCTIVE TEACHINGS:

- IF SOMEONE STRIKES YOU ON THE *RIGHT* CHEEK, OFFER THEM THE *LEFT*.

- IF SOMEONE ASKS YOU TO WALK A MILE WITH THEM, GO TWO.

- IF SOMEONE ASKS YOU FOR YOUR SHIRT, GIVE HIM YOUR JACKET AS WELL.

- LOVE YOUR ENEMIES & PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU.

EVERY ONE OF THOSE TEACHINGS IS FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, AND THEY SOUNDED AS FOOLISH IN THE *FIRST* CENTURY AS THEY DO IN THE *TWENTY-FIRST*.

ONLY A FOOL WOULD BELIEVE THOSE THINGS!

AND ONLY A FOOL FOR CHRIST WOULD ACTUALLY TRY TO LIVE THEM OUT!

BUT THAT'S NOT ALL!

JESUS SAID -

- *"IF YOU LOSE YOUR LIFE FOR MY SAKE, YOU'LL FIND IT."*

-“THE GREATEST AMONG YOU IS THE SERVANT OF ALL.”

“WHEN YOU’VE DONE IT FOR THE LEAST OF THESE, MY BROTHERS & SISTER, YOU’VE DONE IT FOR ME.”

AND WHEN IT COMES TO BEING A FOOL – WHEN IT COMES TO BEING GULLIBLE – THINK OF WHAT IT TAKES TO BELIEVE THE RESURRECTION WAS REAL.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD SAY THAT WE ARE APRIL FOOLS FOR BELIEVING SUCH NONSENSE.

THERE ARE THOSE – EVEN THOSE WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY – RENOWNED BIBLICAL SCHOLARS – WHO DON’T BELIEVE IT.

THEY WANT TO EXPLAIN IT AWAY AS A “SPIRITUAL” RESURRECTION – AS THOUGH IT STILL HAS MEANING BUT NOT IN A LITERAL SENSE.

**YOU CAN CALL ME AN APRIL FOOL IF YOU LIKE,
BUT I THINK IT'S FAR MORE FAR-FETCHED &
PREPOSTEROUS TO THINK THAT A GROUP OF HIS
FOLLOWERS WOULD RISK & EVEN SACRIFICE THEIR
LIVES FOR SOME SORT OF SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION.**

**I THINK IT'S FAR MORE LUDICROUS TO BELIEVE
WE WOULD BE SITTING HERE TODAY IF THE
RESURRECTION WAS LITTLE MORE THAN AN APRIL
FOOL'S DAY HOAX.**

**WE ARE HERE TODAY BECAUSE THE
RESURRECTION IS REAL.**

**AND THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE COME TO HEAR, ISN'T
IT?**

**LET'S FACE IT – YOU DIDN'T COME HERE THIS
MORNING HOPING TO HEAR PAUL'S WORDS TO THE
CORINTHIANS.**

YOU WANT TO HEAR MATTHEW’S WORDS.

YOU WANT TO HEAR – “*AFTER THE SABBATH, AS THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK WAS DAWNING, MARY MAGDALENE AND THE OTHER MARY WENT TO SEE THE TOMB. ²AND SUDDENLY THERE WAS A GREAT EARTHQUAKE; FOR AN ANGEL OF THE LORD, DESCENDING FROM HEAVEN, CAME AND ROLLED BACK THE STONE AND SAT ON IT. ³HIS APPEARANCE WAS LIKE LIGHTNING, AND HIS CLOTHING WHITE AS SNOW. ⁴FOR FEAR OF HIM THE GUARDS SHOOK AND BECAME LIKE DEAD MEN. ⁵BUT THE ANGEL SAID TO THE WOMEN, ‘DO NOT BE AFRAID; I KNOW THAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR JESUS WHO WAS CRUCIFIED. ⁶HE IS NOT HERE; FOR HE HAS BEEN RAISED, AS HE SAID.’”*

THAT’S WHY YOU’RE HERE TODAY.

YOU WANT TO HEAR LUKE SAY, “*BUT ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, AT EARLY DAWN, THEY CAME TO THE TOMB, TAKING THE SPICES THAT THEY HAD PREPARED. ²THEY FOUND THE STONE ROLLED AWAY FROM THE TOMB, ³BUT WHEN THEY WENT IN, THEY DID NOT FIND THE BODY. ⁴WHILE THEY WERE PERPLEXED ABOUT THIS, SUDDENLY TWO MEN IN DAZZLING CLOTHES STOOD BESIDE THEM. ⁵THE WOMEN WERE TERRIFIED AND BOWED THEIR FACES TO THE GROUND, BUT THE MEN SAID TO THEM, ‘WHY DO YOU LOOK FOR THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD? HE IS NOT HERE, BUT HAS RISEN.’”*

TODAY – AND IN THE DAYS TO COME - AS WE CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION PROMISE, WHY NOT TRY TO DISCOVER WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO REALLY BE AN APRIL FOOL – A FOOL FOR CHRIST.

**WHY NOT DO SOME THINGS THE WORLD WOULD
VIEW AS REALLY FOOLISH -**

**- FORGIVE SOMEONE WHO'S WRONGED YOU
EVEN BEFORE THEY ASK FOR FORGIVENESS.**

**- BE KIND TO SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T REALLY
DESERVE IT.**

- GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO CAN'T PAY YOU BACK.

**LET'S GO BACK TO THAT APRIL FOOL'S
COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE LIRPA SLOOF
BEQUEST.**

WHAT IF IT HAD BEEN REAL?

**IF OFFERED UP TO A MILLION DOLLARS, WOULD
YOU CHOOSE TO GIVE UP OUR BUILDING?**

**WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TRANSFORM IT INTO
A CENTER DEVOTED TO FULFILLING THE**

**CHALLENGES OF CHRIST TO SERVE THE HUNGRY &
THIRSTY, THE STRANGER, THE SICK & IMPRISONED?**

**OF COURSE, YOU MIGHT CONCLUDE THAT SUCH A
DECISION WOULDN'T BE FOOLISH AT ALL.**

**A DECISION LIKE THAT MIGHT BE A PERFECTLY
LOGICAL & SHREWD FINANCIAL DECISION TO MAKE.**

**I THINK THE REAL TEST OF BEING A FOOL FOR
CHRIST WOULD BE IF WE TOOK THE FINANCIAL
COMPONENT OUT OF THE EQUATION -**

**TRANSFORMING INTO A CENTER DEVOTED TO
FULFILLING THE CHALLENGES OF CHRIST TO SERVE
THE HUNGRY & THIRSTY, THE STRANGER, THE SICK &
IMPRISONED WITH NO FINANCIAL REWARD AT ALL.**

**NOW *THAT* WOULD TRULY BE FOOLISH – ABOUT
AS FOOLISH AS BELIEVING THAT CHRIST TRULY DID –
LITERALLY – RISE FROM THE TOMB ALIVE!**

BECAUSE HE DID, HE'S ALIVE TODAY.

HE'S ALIVE IN OUR WORLD & ALIVE IN OUR LIVES.

HE'S ALIVE & HE ENABLES US TO FIND THE JOY IN

HAVING FUN BEING AN APRIL FOOL – A FOOL FOR

CHRIST. AMEN.

*The Reverend Dr. Dennis R. Davenport
Eastminster Presbyterian Church
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