

Dear South Dakota Synod,

On this Easter morning, I greet you with great hope. As we reflect on Luke 24:1-12, we recall the incredible moment when the women—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the Mother of James, and others—discovered the empty tomb. This scripture reminds us that resurrection is an act of God's all-powerful grace alone. It clearly and most definitely happened without our effort, hands down. **Yet**, God chose to work through these courageous women in His boundless love, calling them His first messengers.

Just for fun, try reading the text without the women in it. I tried it. You will not have much of a storyline left. Therefore, I propose that the women's presence and witness are proof of the rich tapestry of God's kingdom needed to communicate the resurrection news. Mary Magdalene was healed and transformed by Christ. Joanna, a respected woman of influence, and the others each brought their unique witness to a community initially hesitant to believe this too good to be true news. Despite the initial disbelief and the challenges they faced, their persistent testimony ignited a movement that would forever change the world.

In their diversity, we see a reflection of our own community. The resurrection story, with its central message that God defeats death once and for all, is incomplete without each one of us. Just as those women were commissioned to proclaim the news of the resurrection, so too are we called today to do the same. Through baptism, we have been invited into the unfolding story of God's victory over death. This story embraces every person and invites them to participate in God's story of resurrection, bringing healing to the broken and light to those in darkness.

No soul is too parched, no spirit too weary, that God cannot renew it. Yet, it takes all our diverse gifts and witness accounts to proclaim that Christ brings life to even the most hostile places. Not everyone will hear the first time or even the second and third time. Still, the women's courage and continued faithfulness to the message of the resurrection power eventually bore fruit. I call that gritty resilience!

So, on Easter, I invite you to step into our world with renewed courage, determination, and gritty resilience. Embrace the baptismal call to be a part of this living narrative. The resurrection is not just a historical event but a present reality—a promise that God's love reaches every corner of our lives and community. He is risen; He is risen indeed!

Now, go forth and share this miraculous news. Let your lives echo the powerful message of Easter: that God's love is transformative, inclusive, and ever-present. Together, we carry the legacy of those first faithful witnesses and continue to spread the hope and life that only our risen Lord can offer. Be filled with gritty resilience, good Easter People, and children of the resurrection. Thanks be to God. Amen.