

Rev. David Huber
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I had the great fortune a few weeks ago to volunteer at the State Theater for a backstage concert by two excellent local bands. Eau Claire is blessed with so many artistic offerings to feed the soul and nurture the heart. I encourage you to take more advantage of them, and to support our local artists. Artists offer essential insight into the human condition. They see things differently and express their discoveries in ways that allow us to explore the questions with them. Words tend to collapse under the burden of speaking to the human condition and to things of the divine. The language of art offers a much richer vocabulary. From the 30,000 year old cave paintings of Chauvet to the mathematics of physics, to sung response to the Haiti earthquake, human history is one of striving to communicate the ineffable.

Churches tell stories visually through stained glass windows. Religions set their sacred texts to music to embellish and add color. We have illuminated manuscripts, and architecture that leads the eye heavenward to God. The Bible is full of poetry, and the icons of the Orthodox Church remind us of our spiritual nature. Emotion is conveyed through the abstractions of Picasso's Guernica or through a 20-minute instrumental jam. Liturgical dance is language of form and motion. All these touch our emotions and thus our souls. At the concert I attended were two young boys, sons of some of the performers, who danced through the whole concert. Thousands of words could be used trying to describe joy. They did it by dancing! More difficult to describe than joy is Easter. What is Easter? Words stumble over the glory and life-giving grace of Christ's resurrection, and so Easter morning is greeted with loud trumpet fanfare, singing the "Hallelujah" Chorus from Handel's Messiah, redecorating the sanctuary, splashes of white and gold fabric and vibrantly colored flowers, symbols of fertility and abundance, family gatherings over a meal. "He is risen!" is oft proclaimed, but the visual and aural language speaks best to the depth of its meaning. Gustav Mahler took a musical poetic approach to resurrection in his second symphony, with a choir singing, "Rise again, yes, rise again, will you my dust, after a brief rest! Immortal life! Immortal life will he who called you, give you. To bloom again were you sown! ... Cease from trembling! Prepare yourself to live! O Pain, you piercer of all things, from you, I have been wrested! O Death, you masterer of all things, now, are you conquered! ... Die shall I in order to live ... That for which you suffered, to God will it lead you!" Easter is being wrested from pain, blooming again, going to God.

One of the dancing boys' t-shirt had "Awesome stops with me" written on it. There is an Easter message in there. God, our awesome God, came to live as one of us, and then to die at our hands. Awesome stopped with us. But only for a brief rest! Evil and death are powerless against God's love, and so Jesus rose from the tomb. What is Easter? It is that Awesome is willing to stop with me – and with you – to wrest us from of our pain so we may bloom again and dance the vibrant colors, trumpet fanfares, and shouted hallelujahs of new life.