

## **Pinky the Big Ugly Easter Bunny**

Christ the Redeemer Church  
April 12, 2009  
Easter Sunday Celebration

Mark 16:1-8  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

Two firsts for me on this Easter Day. First time to stand IN the San Marcos River on Easter morning and baptize 4 eager people. We had 82 there for breakfast and baptisms in the River. Great way to start Easter...with a 6 foot 2 inch tall ugly bunny hiding behind trees and giving people smackers on the lips. It is a frightening rabbit!

Also first time to have my head shaved during Children's Sermon by Tommy and all of the eager 35 youth with each taking a snip and swipe at my head. My head is bare now. No hair. I am finally paying off a lost bet on the NCAA Championship Game of last year – 2008. I bet Tommy a shaved head on the game. I lost. I don't even remember who played. But the debt has now been paid...on Easter morning during church with all of you watching in disbelief. It is over. Hair is gone.

Mike Young recently received a new heart in a heart transplant up in Oklahoma. He and his dear wife Margaret have lived out of suitcases in a temporary apartment near the hospital for over six months now while tethered to the hospital in case a heart suddenly became available. Mike was in a race with time to get a new heart before his quit.

I told him this past week that we were having a 6-foot tall Easter bunny to cook our breakfast for our church and to lead our children on an Easter Egg Hunt. Mike laughed and reminded me that the Easter Bunny stems from an ancient spring-time belief system in pre-Christian pagan fertility rituals. I told him that I had talked some fun-loving sucker into being the live Easter Bunny.

We don't need to be afraid of the Easter Bunny. It is just a rabbit.

The guy in our church who agreed to be our live Easter Bunny emailed me with a correction. He said he was 6 foot and 2 inches tall. He said that next year that I needed to remind him to get his costume earlier. The later you rent costumes in the Easter season, the uglier the costumes are. He said he was so late renting a costume this year that the first costume he was shown in the rental store scared him to death nearly. Scary rabbit! Steve could not wait to play Easter Bunny this morning for all of us. How many of you got up this eager to celebrate Easter? My best Easter memories from childhood and from parenting are hunting Easter eggs on the farm and in the yard. Thanks Steve for connecting us all again to some fun memories of Easter.

We don't need to be afraid. It is just a rabbit.

He told me this morning at 5 a.m. that his head was so big that it was covering up his polka-dotted tie. But that was okay because he had a big vest that shows up well. He and

his Kyle boys cooked us all a nice Easter Breakfast this morning by the River...eggs, bacon, sausage, pancakes, etc. All on the grille. They have been working for weeks on this Easter Breakfast, Bunny costume, and the egg hunt on Easter morning.

My grown daughter told me that today's Easter Celebration Breakfast with a live, tall and ugly Easter Bunny sounds a lot more fun than the Sunrise services she grew up with.

He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed! You do not have to be afraid. It is just an ugly rabbit.

The tomb is empty. Mary his mother and Mary Magdalene and Salome worried about how they were going to move the stone away that covered the tomb. It was taken care of by God. Then they peered into the empty tomb and only found a talking stranger. The stranger said, "Don't be afraid. Jesus has risen from the dead, he is not here, he has gone ahead of you, and you will see him as he told you."

We no longer have to be afraid of ugly talking rabbits or empty tombs or the future or past ways in the church that separated us from God. It is time we drop our conservative ways that keep us separated from God. It is time we drop our liberal ways that keep us separated from God. It is time to move past our past fears of church and embrace and accept God's love and live out that love generously.

Mike taught at the seminary when I attended many, many years ago. Mike said that one of his colleagues on faculty explained one day the difference between the Irish and the Scottish people.

He said the Irish run right by the cross and get to the empty tomb part. Right to the Easter part of the story. The Scottish, on the other hand, walk slowly by the cross and stay there, muddling around the cross, not quite making it to the Easter part of the story.

You don't have to be afraid of the Bunny. It is just a rabbit.

Mike is moving back home to Fort Worth this Wednesday. With a new heart. Someone died in order that he live. Sombering, he told me. His *rejection rate* is low enough that he can move back home and live some more. Rejection rate. Interesting term. His body is accepting the new heart.

You don't have to worry. The stone has already been moved away in life. You don't have to be afraid. He has already gone before you and blazed the trail. He died that you might live.

I hope your rejection rate is low enough that you and I embrace God's wonderful love and that we go out of here this morning and embrace life, embrace our kids, embrace our friends, embrace our spouses, embrace our church, and live out God's love. May we all walk out of here with a new heart this morning. He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! I am Irish, by the way, not Scottish. Amen!

