

The background of the top section features three black crosses of varying sizes silhouetted against a sunset sky with rays of light. The largest cross is in the center, flanked by two smaller crosses. The sky transitions from a dark blue at the top to a warm orange and red near the horizon.

Bishop's Easter Message

2026

To the beloved of the NWSWI,

Happy Easter to you as we celebrate the most sacred day of the year when Jesus squarely looked death in the face and overcame the grave! When I think about what that says about our God, I am continually overwhelmed by feelings of gratitude because of the sheer depth of God's love. To think about what Jesus went through in those final days, it is simply the best illustration of what God's grace looks like – a gift to us as individuals and as a family of faith – all without merit.

While on a Civil Rights pilgrimage last month, I found myself quite perplexed when listening to the central message of many civil rights leaders, including many that I met in person. While visiting Birmingham, I worshiped at the 16th St. Baptist Church, which was bombed on a Sunday morning just before worship on Sept. 15, 1963. Four young women (all teens) died in the blast as they were preparing to serve in the youth led service. As our group heard about the story in the tour the day before our worship, this central message was proclaimed – love. Later that day we spent time with another black leader in the city whose ancestors were also victims of white supremacy. She too acknowledged the central message that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught over and over in his messages – a message of love, even for your enemies.

That struck me. When victims of oppression look at their oppressors and can maintain a posture of love in hopes that the hatred they've experienced would someday be extinguished, I could only think about the depths of God's love. While most of us would at minimum defend ourselves from the oppressive actions taken against them, if not fight back and seek retribution, they instead turned to love and forgiveness. It is their faith in God that could give them the strength to practice love.

We still live in a world where hatred and prejudice exist. But the story of Easter is rooted in love. Jesus went to the cross after praying in the garden of Gethsemane, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) Your will be done. This is true sacrifice rooted in love for humankind. This is love revealed to broken and sinful people. This is a love for us all – no exception.

As we celebrate the day Christ rose from the dead, offering forgiveness to all humankind, let us rejoice in acts of love. Let us respond to God's gift of grace through acts of love!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop Martin Habon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.