



## Secular and Religious Holidays in April

By Rev. Dale Whitney

**A**pril is here, and it's the first full month of Spring. A large number of traditional holidays – indoor and outdoor, secular and religious – take place during this time. That there are many outdoor celebrations during April reflects the desire to get outdoors and enjoy not only the fresh spring air but also the warmer temperatures in parts of the world beyond sunny Southern California. Here, I will list and briefly explain some of these holidays – along with some suggestions on how to enjoy them right here in our own neighborhood.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 1:** This is the old-but-still-fun American tradition known as “April Fools’ Day.” I really can’t say anything more because you might think I am spoofing you, which I am not doing because this is an article to be taken seriously in its truthfulness!



**FRIDAY, APRIL 1 THROUGH SUNDAY, MAY 1:** This period of time is what the Islamic community (Muslims) celebrate as Ramadan. It is a holy month of fasting, introspection, and prayer for the followers of Islam all around the world. The founder of this religion, Mohammed, received his initial revelations of the Koran (their holy scripture) during this season in the year 610 CE in what is now Saudi Arabia. There are two prominent mosques (houses of Muslim worship) in our area: Masjid al Shareef (562-591-5320) and the Long Beach Islamic Center (562-754-1670).



**FRIDAY, APRIL 15** (beginning at sunset): Passover is a Jewish holiday celebrating the Exodus of the Hebrew slaves laboring in Egypt under the Pharaoh. The word refers to the Angel of Death passing over the doorposts of the Hebrew houses during the so-called “Tenth Plague” when Moses informed the Pharaoh that all the first-born sons of the land – from the king’s own eldest son right down to the oldest male descendants of barnyard animals – would die ... except in the homes where the Hebrews had marked their lintels (horizontal doorposts) with the blood of sacrificed sheep or goats (see Exodus Chapter 12 in the Old Testament). When Pharaoh finally allowed the Jewish slaves to leave Egypt, Moses told

his people that they had leave quickly so there was no time to allow the bread to rise. The tradition of eating the unleavened flatbread, known as matzo and retelling the story of the Exodus continues every year. Matzo symbolizes both freedom and humility to the Jewish people who eventually fled to the land of Israel. For more information, including specific events, call Temple Israel at 562-434-0996; they are located at 269 Loma Avenue.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 15:** Good Friday is when Christians commemorate the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. The word “good” may seem counterintuitive, since the day is typically viewed as a solemn one, often observed with fasting and somber processions. Why, then, is it called “Good Friday”? Probably because “good” used to mean “holy,” rather than the modern sense of the word as something positive. The troubles of Good Friday (to the Christian believer) are soon overcome by the Resurrection of Jesus just two days later. To the best of this writer’s

knowledge, there are no Good Friday services in the Bluff Heights area, but Easter services will be held at most of the churches in the next listing.



**SUNDAY, APRIL 17:** Easter Sunday is when Christians celebrate the Resurrection (raising from the dead) of Jesus Christ, who was crucified two days before the “First Easter” by the Roman occupiers of the biblical land of Palestine, whose capital was Jerusalem, where the Jews worshipped at the temple there until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE. Sunrise services are common in the Christian community, and Easter Sunday services are among the most-attended events of the Christian year. Here is a list of Christian churches along Third Street in Long Beach, from west to east:

First Congregational Church, 241 Cedar Ave at Third, 562-436-2256  
Covenant Presbyterian Church, 607 E. Third at Atlantic, 562-437-0958  
Seventh Day Adventist Church, 1001 E. Third at Bonito, 562-437-2805  
Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, 370 Junipero Avenue, 562-434-7400  
Grace United Methodist Church, 2625 E. Third at Junipero, 562-433-7401  
Arabic Bible Christian Church, 3000 E. Third at Orizaba Ave., 562-438-5328  
Belmont Heights Methodist Church, 317 Termino Ave. at Third, 562-439-6804



**FRIDAY, APRIL 22:** The first Earth Day took place on April 22, 1970, and was established as an answer to the disastrous Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969. It is an annual event to demonstrate support for the protection of the environment. It now includes a wide range of community events coordinated globally by [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org), which includes over a billion participants in at least 193 countries. The city of Long Beach is not having one central event this year because of COVID concerns, but there will be city-sponsored events at city libraries on April 19 (Main Library), April 22 (Burnett Library), and April 23 (Michelle Obama Library). Contact the specific library for information on these events, or [go here](#).

**FRIDAY, APRIL 29:** Arbor Day is a holiday that celebrates nature and encourages people to plant trees, which many communities do, often along with organized collection and disposal of litter. At 9:00 am on the 29th there will be a gathering at the Sievers home at 3020 E. Vista to plant at least 50 trees, including a very special one honoring the memory of Dottie Frazier, who passed away recently at the age of 99 ½ and was featured in the last BHNA newsletter.

If you celebrate any of these holidays, enjoy them and let us know if we missed any! Let’s hope we have the opportunity to celebrate some April showers -- not just for May flowers, but because Southern California could really use the rain.

*Rev. Dale Whitney was born in Nebraska during WWII and came to California with his father, who was an osteopathic physician, and the rest of their family in 1943. He attended elementary school in the LA area, then junior high and high school in Santa Barbara. He attended Pomona College and San Francisco Theological Seminary and was ordained in 1970 as a Presbyterian minister. He was pastor of Geneva Presbyterian Church in Long Beach from 1971 to 1989 and then was manager of the Harbor Area Farmers’ Markets, a project of the South Coast Interfaith Council, from 1989 to 2016.*