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Easter/April 2011

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Dear Ron,

Of Stones and Hearts: Special Eastertide Issue



Our new major holy day publication for Easteride, called *Of Stones and Hearts*, has just been published and mailed out to current and active members of the UUCF. Edited by Kim Beyer-Nelson and the Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, it is a wonderful resource and excellent followup to the inaugural Good News Journal published by the UUCF this past Christmas called *Mary's Yes*. If you have not received your print version of the publication, make sure your membership has been renewed; you can do so easily [online](#); if you did not receive one and should have, let us know at executivedirector@uuchristian.org so we can check our records and get you a copy as soon as possible as we begin the 50 day celebration of Easter.

This 23 page publication highlights the following material, of new and ancient sources:

- ***Don't Cling To Me*** - an Easter message and biblical exegesis by Ron Robinson
- ***Prayers For Easter*** - by Kathy Duhon
- ***A Voice In The Crowd*** by Rev. Emily Tanis-Likkel
- ***The April Fool Has Chosen***
- ***The Gospel Of Mark 16: 1-8 Gravesongs*** by Kathleen Rolenz
- ***Easter Weekend*** by Bettye Caldwell
- ***Prayers For The Day*** by Bettye Caldwell
- ***Easter Offering*** by Victoria Weinstein

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- ***The Holy and Saving Pascha*** by St. Gregory of Nyssa
- ***Prayers*** by Vivian Pomeroy
- ***A Reflection*** by Augustine of Hippo
- ***When Stones are Rolled Away*** by Rob Hardies
- ***Book Review of Jesus of Nazareth*** by Maurice Casey and John Bunyan

For 66 years, the UUCF has been known for the depth and breadth of its publications, exploring freely the traditions, holy days and meanings of Christianity. Offering up contemporary biblical interpretation, spiritually moving and engaging messages. Through your help and contributions we are able to expand the holiday resource publications and ongoing weekly informative pieces through our website and other forms of communication so that we continue our own tradition.

A Special Easter Appeal for Our Prison Ministry

Simply put, we couldn't do anything for Easter especially, like our new *Of Stones and Hearts* publication, and not find ways to make it available for our members who are in prison. Currently we have 66 people across the country incarcerated who, through the Church of the Larger Fellowship, have expressly asked to receive our messages from the UUCF offering a progressive, liberating, grace-filled understanding of Jesus and Christianity; often it is the only such message or presence they receive where they are.



However, we receive no dues from our prison membership; and our publications with our quality expected are expensive for our small organization. This holiday season we decided to go ahead and print the issue in numbers necessary to send to those incarcerated, and then to come to each of you and ask you to help us be able to do this, even at a time we have been cutting back expenses in other ways.

To support our prison ministry make your one-time Eastertide 2011 Appeal in the amount of your own choosing, celebrating the generosity of God and of the UUCF, by clicking on this [link](#) at our website.

President's Column

Dean Drake



When the Christian Fellowship was founded in 1945, governance was fairly simple and straightforward. Most of the fellowship's members and leaders were New England ministers who saw one another regularly at minister's meetings and such. As an affiliate of the

American Unitarian Association (forerunner to the Unitarian Universalist Association), the fellowship routinely received space at General Assembly (GA) to hold their annual meeting. The ministerial leadership regularly attended GA anyway, so conducting the business of the fellowship in a democratic manner was easy. This method of governance was codified for many years in the fellowship's by-laws that stipulated officers would be elected at an annual business meeting to be held at GA.

In recent years, this simple model of governance became more and more difficult to maintain. Our membership expanded beyond both New England and the clergy. As GA space became more precious, groups like ours no longer got a free meeting room and instead had to secure other space around GA for this purpose. Fewer and fewer of our members actually attended GA, and it became increasingly difficult to meet quorum requirements at the annual meeting.

To regain the vitality that comes from a healthy democratic process, something had to be done. Several years ago, the requirement that the business meeting of the fellowship be held at GA was eliminated. Last year, we held a business meeting both at GA and Revival. This year, we intend to hold elections in June using a combination of electronic and snail mail. For the first time, all of our nearly 400 members will have the opportunity to cast a vote for members of the board. As we perfect the new voting process, the scope of issues that can be brought to the membership for a vote can also increase.

All of these changes are aimed at getting our membership more involved in the life of the fellowship. We want everyone who supports a vital Unitarian and Universalist Christian voice in the world to become personally involved in moving our mission forward. When you participate in our first fellowship-wide vote, you will not only be voting for board members, you will also be supporting our future.

Virtual Monastery

Reflections for the Season



Be sure each week to read and reflect on the weekly biblical passages from the revised common lectionary that are a part of the UUCF Virtual Monastery site. Here are a few samples from this special UUCF resource for this special season:

From the Rev Marguerite Sheehan:

"...We have encouraging models

around the world this spring as we walk through the season of Lent and into the hope of Easter. First in Egypt and now across the Arabian Peninsula we have models of people standing out against tyranny, foolishly facing the Empires and demanding that the people be heard. Hosanna! Perhaps they are not standing in full accord and of one mind, but they are standing brave and tall against all obstacles so that freedom might reign.

Today in our Gospel we hear an echo of a more ancient Scripture, calling forth blessings for those who of us who come, waving our palms in the name of the LORD. And in that word "blessed" I am reminded of one of the most central teachings of Jesus, in which he showed his mind and asks us to come inside. Jesus is on the road to death and in his resurrection we will be left with his mind and his spirit. Listen to his teaching about who will be blessed and find there a clue as to how we, those left behind, may find encouragement, consolation, and love.

Blessed be the poor in spirit, blessed be those who mourn and those who are meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who are merciful, pure in heart, those who are peacemakers and those who are persecuted.

The Greek word *makarios* is often used in the Beatitudes to mean "blessed." *Makarios* is a passive and yet hopeful teaching that someday the disinherited will see God. The Aramaic words for blessed have an entirely different meaning and today, on Palm and Passion Sunday, they speak volumes. *Ashrie* and *to vahoun* mean "awake" or "get up." Awake you poor in spirit. Get up you who mourn. Awake you who hunger and thirst for all things righteousness. Awake you who are meek. Get up you who are persecuted. May the merciful get up and make peace....."

From the Rev. Anita Farber-Robertson:

"...Cynicism protects us from being duped, from being hoodwinked, from being somehow fooled into believing that life is wonderful, that people are good, that peace is possible, that God is love. Cynicism may be a protection against an imagined shame...but it is also a protection against a spiritual life. It is not by accident that the language of a spiritual life, is of faith. The life of the spirit requires an opening of the heart and mind, a presumption of trust, the disarming of the layers of protection and a willingness to risk disappointment as well as joy.

That is what we need today, this Easter ...open heart, open mind, and a willingness to risk disappointment, so that we might also chance experiencing true joy.

Tom Owen-Towle, minister emeritus of the First Unitarian Church in San Diego has said that " *Cynicism is spiritual treason.*"

"Cynicism is spiritual treason." Remember that - not only for Easter, but for the days that spread before you.

Do not be afraid. Open your hearts to wonder. Be the Easter people- the people who know that with love, anything can happen and dreams can come true.

Focusing Questions:

- What beliefs do you long to embrace, and resist nonetheless?
- What about these beliefs are compelling?
- What would you have if you let them become a part of you?
- What would you lose?
- What are the fears, the barriers that hold you back? Have a conversation with them.
- What will open your heart and mind this Easter to the possibility that hope does not always need to be explained, love does not always need to make sense, and the movement of the Holy Spirit is free and unencumbered?
- What do you need to be an Easter person?

Prayer:

Gracious God, Worker of Wonders, Healer of Hearts, Solace in Sorrow and Lover of All, we thank you for your presence. We are glad that you do not give up on us; that your love is not contingent on our response, that your watchful companioning is not thwarted by our days of doubt or confusion. Help us to honor the Risen Christ wherever we meet him. Help us to welcome him into our lives, our minds, our hearts, our stories. May this Easter day be for us a day of resurrection, when all that held us back and held us down is lifted and we are free to rise and stretch and meet the day with gladness. May the renewal of the earth kindle a renewal of our spirits. And may our joy be a blessing that helps heal the world. Amen."

Special Tenebrae Services

Especially if you are unable to attend a Good Friday worship service this year, you can find samples of services for your own reflection or to share with others on our [website](#); six tenebrae services provided by the Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, past president of the UUCF.



Give a Special Easter Gift to Another
Recent Journal, Vol 62 - Hear, Pray Affirm - \$20

There is no better time than Easter to introduce someone new to progressive Christianity especially in its radical form of UU Christianity, and there is no better way to do that than purchasing for them our most recent UU Christian Journal, Hear, Pray, Affirm, collection of sermons by the Rev. Thomas D. Wintle of First Parish, Weston, MA exploring a liberal Christian understanding of the 10 Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostle's Creed.



To help you help us through you to spread this excellent publication to more and more people, we have reduced the purchase price from \$25 to \$20. It needs to be in the hands of newcomers to our faith, to church libraries, to seminaries, to ministers, and to those clergy and laity in other Christian communities and other faith traditions. Buy several to give as graduation gifts or as gifts to ministers in transitions, or to anyone who might be interested in a unique glimpse into the way we approach the classics of the our wider communion.

You can order copies through our online [bookstore](#).

Easter - A Four Act Liturgy

Rev. Rob Robinson



Easter weekend is like a four-act narrative. The celebration of the God of Love even in the midst of danger and betrayal, passing on the commandment of love, in Maundy Thursday. The abruptness of injustice erupting, tragedy happening, suffering and abandonment and the apparent victory of forces of oppression and dominance in the events of Good Friday. Then on Holy Saturday the moment of pause, of emptiness, where tradition says even Hell itself was emptied by Christ never to be filled again, a kind of foreshadowing of the world to come universally for all. Finally, in a sudden breaking out of the stillness, the surprise, the wonder, the lifting of the heart, the movement of life toward life risen again, shared in Easter.

In that spirit, here is the liturgy we used for our worship last year at my small church in Turley, OK we now call, in our newly purchased building, The Welcome Table Church, a free universalist Christian missional community. It is a form of Lessons and Hymns for Easter in the liturgical vein used at Christmas Eve.

Easter Worship Invocation

Today is the day which God has made: **Let us rejoice and be glad therein.**

What does the Eternal require of us? **To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.**

This is our covenant: **In the light of truth, and the loving and liberating spirit of Jesus, we gather in freedom, to worship God, and serve all.**

First Reading: Later Jesus and his disciples were at home having supper with a collection of disreputable guests. Unlikely as it seems, more than a few of them had become followers. The religion scholars and Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company and lit into his disciples: "What kind of example is this, acting cozy with the riffraff?" Jesus, overhearing, shot back, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? I'm here inviting the sin-sick, not the spiritually-fit."...Mark 2 (The Message)

"Leaning on the Everlasting Arms"

**What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms;
what a blessedness, what a peace is mine, leaning on the everlasting arms.**

**Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.**

**O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
leaning on the everlasting arms;**

O how bright the path grows from day to day, leaning on the everlasting arms.

(Refrain)

What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms?

I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms.

(Refrain)

I. At The Welcome Table Celebrating The Last Supper

Second Reading: When it was time, he sat down, all the apostles with him, and said, "You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this Passover meal with you before I enter my time of suffering. It's the last one I'll eat until we all eat it together in the kingdom of God." Taking the cup, he blessed it, then said, "Take this and pass it among you. As for me, I'll not drink wine again until the kingdom of God arrives." Taking bread, he blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Eat it in my memory."

One: I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited

me. I was in prison and you came to me. And they said, Lord, when did we do that? And he said, When you did it for the least of these, you did it to me. Here is the bread of life, food for the spirit. Let all who hunger come and eat. Here is the fruit of the vine, pressed and poured out for us. Let all who thirst now come and drink.

All: We come to break bread. We come to drink of the fruit of the vine. We come to make peace. May we never praise God with our mouths while denying in our hearts or by our acts the love that is our common speech. We come to be restored in the love of God where All are welcome and All are worthy.

(Robert Eller-Isaacs, based on Matthew 25, alt. Singing The Living Tradition hymnal)

Third Reading: "Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You'd rather eat and be served, right? But I've taken my place among you as the one who serves. "Luke 22

**"Let Us Break Bread Together" #406, SLT hymnal
Passing the Bread of Life Everlasting and the Cup of
Hope Eternal**

Fourth Reading: At the end of his last supper with his disciples, Jesus said: Let me give you a new command. Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciple-when they see the love you have for each other.

Reflection

II. At The Table of The Cross

Fifth Reading: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"..."It was not about the sixth hour and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, While the sun's light failed and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last."

Prayer of Confession: Gracious and Loving God, we acknowledge to you, to one another, and to ourselves that we are not what you have called us to be. **We have stified our gifts and wasted our time.** We have avoided opportunities to offer kindness, but have been quick to take offense. We have pretended that we could make no contribution to peace and justice in our world and have excused ourselves from risk-taking in our own community. **Have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and help us to live our lives differently.** We long for peace within and without, for harmony in our families, for the well-being of our neighbors, and love for our enemies. **Yet we have too often not made the hard choices that love requires.** Show us how to walk in your path of faithfulness, hope, and love. Amen.

Words of Assurance: One fact remains that does not

change: God loves all, and will for all time. **This is the good news that brings new life. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Hymns: "Precious Lord" #199 and "Dona Nobis Pacem" #388

Sharing Prayers of Sorrows, Cares, Concerns

The Prayer of Jesus: Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

III. Entering into a time of Silence, of Emptying, of Stillness

IV. The Table of Resurrection

Sixth Reading: When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so they could embalm him. Very early on Sunday morning, as the sun rose, they went to the tomb. They worried out loud to each other, "Who will roll back the stone from the tomb for us?" Then they looked up, saw that it had been rolled back-it was a huge stone-and walked right in. They saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed all in white. They were completely taken aback, astonished. He said, "Don't be afraid. I know you're looking for Jesus the Nazarene, the One they nailed on the cross. He's been raised up; he's here no longer. You can see for yourselves that the place is empty. Now-on your way. Tell his disciples and Peter that he is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You'll see him there, exactly as he said." They got out as fast as they could, beside themselves, their heads swimming. Stunned, they said nothing to anyone. (Gospel of Mark)

Seventh Reading: Jesus said [to Thomas], "So, you believe because you've seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing." (Gospel of John)

I Thank You God For Most This Amazing Day #504, by ee cummings

Sharing of Blessings and Thanksgivings in our Lives and Community

Easter Hymn Sing

**Jesus Christ Is Risen Today #268
Glory Glory Halleluia #201
Over My Head #30**

Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee #29

Some glad morning when this life is over, I'll fly away.
To a home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away.

I'll fly away, O Glory, I'll fly away. (In the morning)
When I die, Hallelujah, bye and bye, I'll fly away.

When the shadows of this life are gone, I'll fly away.
Like a bird from prison bars has flown

I'll fly away.

I'll fly away, O Glory, I'll fly away. (In the morning)
When I die, Hallelujah, bye and bye, I'll fly away.

Just a few more weary days and then, I'll fly away. To
a land where joy shall never end, I'll fly away.

I'll fly away, O Glory, I'll fly away. (In the morning)
When I die, Hallelujah, bye and bye, I'll fly away

Amazing Grace #205**We're Gonna Sit At The Welcome Table #407****Benediction**

Go out into the highways and byways. **Give the people something of your new vision.** You may possess a small light, but uncover it and let it shine. **Use it to bring more light and understanding to the hearts and minds of men and women.** Give them not hell but hope and courage. Give them Easter all year round. **Preach and practice the kindness and everlasting love of God.**

Closing Songs "Shalom Havyreem Shalom Havyreem" and "Go Now In Peace" #413

Easter Surprise Service Project In Community



Address: P.O. Box 6702, Turley, OK 74156-0702

Phone: (918) 794-4637

www.uuchristian.org

info@uuchristian.org

We are non-creedal followers of Jesus rooted in the history and tradition of Unitarian Universalism. All who wish to freely follow Jesus are welcome to be members of the UUCF.

Sincerely,

Ron Robinson
Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship

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