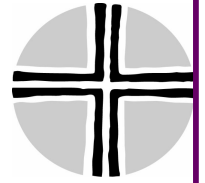


GOOD NEWS



"Witnessing the Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit in our Lives"

March/April 2007

Lent-Easter

www.uuchristian.org

ASH WEDNESDAY

From *The Strangeness of this Business* by Clarke Dewey Wells
A Lenten Meditation Manual, 1975

In a culture where the plastic smile is mandatory and cheap grace abounds, the sober subject of ashes comes almost as refreshment. At least we know we start without illusions. All our minor triumphal entries end, like Lear, a ruined piece of nature upon the rack of this tough world.

The ashes of Ash Wednesday are mixed in a common bowl of grief. They are made from palm fronds used in celebration the year before at the brief hour of triumph, Palm Sunday. In the Catholic tradition the ashes are made into a paste and daubed on foreheads of the faithful, a grey sign of execution that must preface any Easter.

John Bunyan said that the woman of Canaan, who would not be daunted, though called dog by Christ (Mat 15.22) and the man who went to borrow bread at midnight (Lk 11.5-8) were, ultimately, great encouragements to him. They hung in there during dark days.

For religious liberals ashes can symbolize, too, the dying of the seed that it may be born, the place of the phoenix, and yes, the dissolution of integrity so that deeper integrities may emerge. The divine creativity leaves ashes in its wake so that new worlds may rise up and adore. In the strangeness of this business Ash Wednesday is the opening to Easter.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which slings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. *Hebrews 12.1*



AN EASTER FAITH

From the writings of Carl Scovel

Christ of our loneliness,	I thank you, Lord, for my anxiety;
Christ of our longing,	because it teaches me what it's like
Christ of the desert	to live without faith,
Around and about;	And what I share with all my kind.
Christ, keep us faithful	Teach me, my Lord, to live my becoming nothing
To longing and loneliness	as a gift from you,
True to the desert	and not as a blow
Within and without.	from an indifferent fate.

From the Unitarian Universalist Christian, vol. 57-2002

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Good News

"Witnessing to the Transforming
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Lent—Easter

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From Your President

Anita Farber-Robertson

A LENTEN MEDITATION

"What did you give up for Lent?," she hollers incongruously in her sweat soaked leotard.

The question echoes, booming out of speakers strategically positioned in four corners of the room, almost like God had interrupted our regularly scheduled program.

The hard work of the aerobics class is done and she is easing us into cool down.

"I gave up lima beans," she said, and giggled, like a little girl, although she's over forty.

"I gave up wine," a voice in back calls out.

"But do you like wine?"

"I love wine."

"Oh," she ponders briefly. "I don't love lima beans."

And then she brightens. "How many days are left?" she asked.

"Easter is on Sunday," someone offers.

"And then we can have it back?" she checks.

The class laughs affectionately. "Oh, yes," we all assure her.

"Then I can give up *Mudslides*," she says, and nods her head.

"Those rich and thick creamy things they make at Jack's Place.. It's only four more days."

Together we all take one long stretch, unroll the mats and lower our wet warm bodies to the floor.

"What did you give up for Lent?" No longer idle patter, the question turns upon me now, insistent.

"My job," I thought.

"My life as I've known it."

"Security," I thought.

"A way of being in the world."

"What have you given up for Lent?" "The question hangs within the air, demanding the truthful answer.

"My persona."

"My persona." That simple and that scary.

Simple because by naming it, I know it is not me. Scary, because I may not pick it up when Easter comes. I gave it up in ways too public and too permanent, for now. It may not be 'til Easter next that I can take it back...and by then, I may not want it.

Isn't that the deeper lesson of Lent? That what we gave up proves to be unnecessary; we need not take it back, and we are now left leaner, lighter, and exposed to newer choices we had not understood before.

I always said that physical fitness cultivates spiritual fitness, but when the Holy Spirit visits the gym and commandeers the microphone I still am shocked. Is nothing sacred?

May your Lenten season leave you lighter and open to whatever resurrection might be yours, *Blessings, Anita*"

Places where travelers go . . .

From the desk of Executive Director Rev. Ron Robinson

We hear a lot of talk from scholars about "pre-Easter" Jesus and "post-Easter" Jesus, but what attracts me about the story of resurrection is not so much a question of when, or how, but where. Where do we go to experience the risen Christ?

The answer from the biblical stories is that we go to the edges---seacoasts, crossroads, upper rooms, hills, and to the cemeteries. Places where travelers go, where seekers go, where the scared and expectant and the mournful go who are still on the edge of life and death. The travelers on the road to Emmaus were going away from Jerusalem, away from the religious places, the Temple. The disciples were out on the horizon in the boat trying to get back to normal. The women at the tomb were told to send the followers on ahead, toward Galilee. They were to meet Jesus on the dusty roads where there was hospitality to be extended, healing to be given away for free, parables to be lived.

Much of what we do in the UUCF in the 21st century is to create such edges, and corridors, the roads between cities, where Jesus can be met again. In imitation of Jesus and Paul, it is part of our mission to be in right relationship with those whom the "religious" often shun. We seek to be a part of the healing of mutual transformation that happens when people meet on journeys. It is one of the reasons why our new UUCF visual logo shows a simple path of cobblestones, just like those the Roman Empire laid down for their legions to travel upon and enforce their Imperial values, but along which Jesus and his followers walked to meet with others and spread the values of God instead.

Today these cobblestones might be most often found on the internet superhighway, or in some back room downstairs in a church where the UUCF group is allowed to meet for prayer and worship and bible study, or in the crowded aisles outside our booth at General Assembly, or the journeys that bring us each year to Revival, or to a Panera Bread or bookstore cafe where two or three UUs following Jesus gather together to share their lives, discuss a book or the Bible, and plan a way to bring random acts of compassion into the world where they live. They might be the hard floor of the prison cell or the mansion's expensive tile upon which someone kneels alone to pray for strength for one more night, one more chance to make their life worthy of the gift of life itself.

The cobblestones in the UUCF new advertising stand alone, coming out of the darkness and leading into the darkness, but there is a light from above that illuminates them. They are ready for our feet. They are marked by the imprints of so many feet before ours.

I hope this Easter season you will find a way to walk that path, to invite others to walk with you, to let us know what you have found so that we can together be "witnesses to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in our lives."

Blessings,
Ron

John Dominic Crossan is coming to Revival!

Noted Biblical Scholar and author, John Dominic Crossan, is coming to Revival 2007 in Cleveland Ohio on **Saturday, November 5th**. He has been a guest lecturer at many distinguished universities including the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. He was co-director of the Jesus Seminar from 1985-1996 and chair of the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature from 1992-1998. He has contributed articles and reviews for dozens of journals and has written 18 books over the last 30 years. *The Birth of Christianity* was a Publishers Weekly 1998 "best book of the year" while all four of his most recent - *The Historical Jesus*, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, *Who Killed Jesus* and *The Birth of Christianity* - were national bestsellers for a combined total of 22 months. In a recent book, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts*, Crossan joins a brilliant archaeologist to illuminate the life and teaching of Jesus against the background of his world. The list of his print, radio, and television interviews and reviews takes up over thirteen full pages!



The planning team of Revival 2007 is already hard at work to secure hotel reservations, caterers, entertainment options, and liturgists. We are looking forward to being your hosts, showing you a great time and a great town, as well as enjoying fellowship with other liberal Unitarian Universalist Christians. Watch for more information about Revival 2007 on the UUCF website, www.uuchristian.org.

Resources for Lent and Easter

Loutrophoros

Let me cleanse you
With my healing
Waters wrap you
In gossamer and gauze
Feather my breath
Across the length
Of you the breadth
The depth of you
As we stretch into
Each other I am
Flying even as
My offering
Touches ground
So too do
I arise.

Matutinus

Come sip the sacred
Wine of me and
Share a morning song
Joined by swaying choirs
Of restless leaves
Now
Sudden
Still
And everything
Is quiet
Everything is
Deafening
Except your sweet
Soft underbrush that
Soaks into the
Chalice of my soul
Like bread crumbs
In Communion.

eremos

all have turned
their backs to me
I am too intense
too intent to be
borne and so
I am unborn
I am still
born even as
they turn their
backs to me

WHAT WE KNOW

Is there anything more important than God?

Bigger ideas—yes,

We know relativity, quantum physics, wild neutrinos, black holes.

We know about evolutions backward glance

And how the three-toed lemur became five.

We know there are over 300,000 species of beetles—God only knows why

We know that moss grows north

that fish scales glint in sun

that the amoeba can split in two

as does the common worm.

We know that God cannot prevent chaos

nor hurricanes nor broken men trolling for children,

We know that God's wounds open

when the tanker spills millions of black bile into pristine bays

We know that God's mourning brings tears—and sometimes—deluge

and

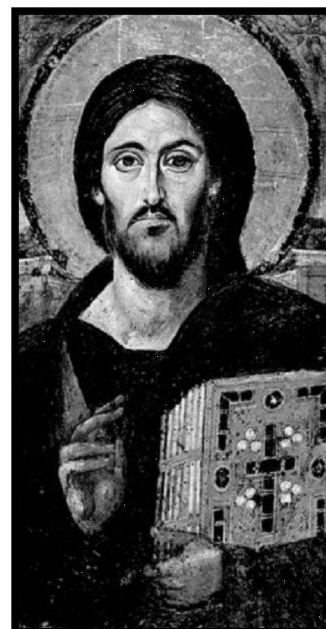
We know that God's laughter heals fissures

spans across canyons of loneliness

and turns bitter salt into sweet tasting figs

"Oh Taste and See..."

Kathleen Rolenz, 2007



Martha Kirby Capo

www.xanga.com/marthakirbycapo

"Non-Christocentric, reverent language for use in contemporary worship."

Remember You Are Dust

the following Ash

Lenten meditations in the weeks leading up to Holy Week. Excerpts from Robbins' work can be found on the UUCF website at www.uuchristian.org. This is a sample from his larger work.

During this time from Ash Wednesday, through Lent, to Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter, we will be publishing excerpts from the Walter Robbins meditation manual. The first is

Wednesday meditation, and next to come will be thirteen

ASH WEDNESDAY

"Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, comes upon this week, and the entire Western Church enters into a time of abstinence and meditation as contemporary Christians retrace the road of Jesus from the Mount of Transfiguration to the hill of execution.

"In an earlier time this vigil was for forty hours but it was finally extended to forty days. As the Sundays were excluded, they being always days of joyful worship, the beginning of Lent was set back to Wednesday to allow for the full forty days.

"It is noticeable that although changes have taken place in the rules governing the intensity of fasting and meditation and in the length of time from hours to days, the one consistency is in the number forty. Forty hours or forty days; it appears of lasting significance that it be forty. Probably this number was agreed upon to correspond with the number of days Jesus spent in the wilderness before he took up his destiny as the serving King. But these forty days had their prefiguration also: the days of the flood, the years of wandering in the wilderness, the days of Elijah's fast.

"Forty is a biblical symbol for temptation, a word considerably devalued in present currency to mean the allure of evil. We have come to think of that part of the Lord's Prayer as simply a plea that we be kept out of those situations which are occasions of sin. Typically, modern usage makes the situation of temptation an outward matter. Help man to be clear of outward conditions and you will have cleared his soul of inner turmoil.

"Prohibition dealt with alcoholic abuse in this outward fashion, but, because of the inner compulsions of the addicted and of those rebellious against all authority, the situation became worse.

"The biblical "forty" stands for a different understanding of temptation. It is the tension which one feels in his heart when he sees that victory lies ahead and that safety means turning back. He may wish that the conditions which have brought him to this trial of soul had never come to pass, but since they have, the testing is not in his ability to resolve the conflict but to endure it and, ever in fear, to press forward. The real victory is not to be measured by the success of the action, but by the inner success even in the face of outer defeat.

Nomadic Israel in the wilderness for forty years was not victorious in any achievement except that of survival as a loyal people. Neither by outer attack or by inner dissension could the ultimate integrity of Israel be broken and that inner strength was all and sufficient.

"Jesus emerged from his personal journey in the wilderness confirmed in his Jewish vision of what constitutes passing the test, the cleared vision of man as built from the inside out and not made by the laws of state, the rituals of religion, the allurements of pomp and circumstance. To reflect upon this inner meaning of nations and of men is the business of Lent."

Born in New Bedford, Mass., in 1910, and educated for the ministry at Tufts and Meadville, Wallace Woodsome Robbins served our movement in Alton, Illinois, Unity Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, as president of Meadville Theological School and as a professor in the Federated Theological Faculty at the University of Chicago, and as the long-time minister of the First Unitarian Church in Worcester, Mass. His mission, he often said, was "to make Christians more liberal and liberals more Christian."

A Lenten Journey with Kathleen Norris

Kathleen Norris's General Assembly Lecture will be titled the same as one of her best selling books--"Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith." (Riverhead Books, 1998). Below is an excerpt from that work particularly apt for the Lenten period:

"When I first stumbled upon the Benedictine abbey where I am now an oblate, I was surprised to find the monks so unconcerned with my weighty doubts and intellectual frustrations over Christianity. What interested them more was my desire to come to their worship, the liturgy of the hours. I was a bit disappointed--I had thought that my doubts were spectacular obstacles to my faith and was confused but intrigued when an old monk blithely stated that doubt is merely the seed of faith, a sign that faith is alive and ready to grow. I am grateful now for his wisdom and grateful to the community for teaching me about the power of liturgy. They seemed to believe that if I just kept coming back to worship, kept coming home, things would eventually fall into place....

Praise of God is the entire reason for worship. It is the opposite of self-consciousness. But when a person is struggling mightily with conversion, anguishing over issues of belief and doubt, worship can become impossible. When I first began going to church, I was enormously self-conscious and for a long time could not escape the feeling that I did not belong there. My alienation was such that for weeks at a time, my attempt to worship with others on Sunday mornings would trigger a depression lasting for days. More than once, the pastor suggested I give it a rest for a while.

Gradually over several years of fits and starts, I was finally able to feel that I was part of a worshipping congregation. But I still had a tenuous hold on belief, and any number of the powerful words I might encounter during church--commandments, creeds, resurrection--could send me reeling.

Remembering helped; it helped enormously. Believing in God, listening to Bible stories, and especially singing in church on Sunday mornings had been among the greatest joys of my childhood. and when I would remember that, a modicum of faith would enter my heart, a conviction that God who had given me all of that would be likely to do so again. But if I had to find one word to describe how belief came to take hold in me, it would be "repetition." Repetition as Kierkegaard understood it, as "the daily bread of life that satisfies with benediction." Repetition as in a hymn such as Amazing Grace, or the ballade form, in poetry, where although the refrain is the same from stanza to stanza, it conveys something different each time it is repeated because of what is in the lines that have come in between. Over time, it was the ordinary events of life itself, coming "in between" the refrain of the church service, with its familiar creeds, hymns, psalms, and scripture stories, that most developed my religious faith....

Above all, I waited. And most often, not much happened. With some words, I failed utterly. But gradually, others came to life. Fortunately, believing, like writing, is more process than product, and is not, strictly speaking, a goal-oriented activity. There is no time limit. And if some words remain "theirs," words or concepts that I recognize as part of my Christian heritage but which I may never comprehend in any meaningful way, I can live with it. And even call them "ours," without fully understanding the how or why.

Perhaps my most important breakthrough with regard to belief came when I learned to be as consciously skeptical and questioning of my disbelief and my doubts as I was of my burgeoning faith...."



Author & poet Kathleen Norris will be the keynote speaker at this year's General Assembly 2007 in Portland, Oregon. The UUCF Board is excited to have secured such a significant speaker.

Donations are currently being solicited to off-set the cost of this event. Send your donation to UUCF, P.O. Box 6702 Turley, OK 74156-0702

Publications

Publications

A Special Issue of the UU Christian Journal

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS OF LITURGICAL MATERIALS AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

The Unitarian Universalist Christian Journal, published by UU Christian Fellowship, is soliciting liturgical materials for its upcoming 2007 issue (volume 61), which will be devoted to liturgies for the Daily Office, for the holy days and seasons of the church year, and for other services such as communion and baptism (for infant, child, adult), as well as theological reflections on the nature of these services and on liturgy itself. What is wanted is primarily original liturgies, although "re-written" material will be accepted if you indicate where you got the material so that copyright permission may be secured. Deadline for submission is April 15, 2007. Submitted material must be sent in an electronic Word document format to tomwintle@firstparishweston.org. It is also preferred that hardcopy paper versions be mailed to Rev. Tom Wintle, First Parish Church in Weston, 349 Boston Post Rd. Weston, MA 02493. For questions, please contact Editor Tom Wintle or UUCF Executive Director Rev. Ron Robinson at RevRonRobinson@aol.com.

In the Shadow of Grace: The Life and Meditations of G. Campbell Morgan

Richard Morgan, Howard Morgan, and John Morgan, eds.

In the Shadow of Grace pulls together some of G. Campbell Morgan's unpublished writings on dealing with confrontation in life, bringing comfort to readers who struggle with life's difficulties. Covering subjects from shattered dreams to the deaths of friends and family, rejection to facing the end of life, this tender and hopeful book will encourage and strengthen readers to face trials with courage and fortitude. Readers will also get a rare glimpse into the personal life and struggles of Morgan; the book is edited by his three grandsons, who tie Morgan's writings to real events in his life, showing us how the great preacher himself responded to trying times.

John Morgan is a teacher of ethics and philosophy at a community college, as well as a newspaper columnist and is a member of the **Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship**. **Richard Morgan** is an ordained Presbyterian minister and a national leader in spiritual autobiography and issues of aging. He is the author of several books in the field of aging and spirituality, his most recent being *Remembering Your Story*, *Fire in the Soul*, and *Meditations for the Grieving*. **Howard Morgan** is currently the chairman of Chicago Theological Seminary, the director of Court Theatre of Chicago, and the life director of Lincoln Park Zoo and Executive Service Corps. He served as senior vice president of Citibank for 41 years and as director for The American Bible Society and St Ignatius College Preparatory School.

Buy this book from *Amazon.com* (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/isbn=0801068177/bakerbookhouseA>), *ChristianBook.com* (<http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/product?isbn=0801068177&event=AFF&p=1011504>), *Barnes & Noble* (<http://service.bfast.com/bfast/click?bfmid=2181&sourceid=40040967&bfpid=0801068177&bfmtype=book>), or your local bookstore.

"This is a fascinating book about one of the most important preachers of the last century. G. Campbell Morgan had an amazing life and a very effective ministry. In the Shadow of Grace will inform, inspire, and powerfully encourage those who stand in the pulpits of the land on Sunday morning."

--John M. Buchanan, editor, Christian Century; senior minister, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Illinois

"I always considered G. Campbell Morgan one of the greatest Bible expositors of his generation. I shall never forget standing in his pulpit at Westminster not too long after he had been called to heaven. I felt as though I was standing on holy ground!"
--Billy Graham, evangelist

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