

**Draft**

**EASTER EGGS AND THE TRAIL OF ENLIGHTENMENT  
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Clemson  
April 24, 2011**

Many years ago I was intern minister in Reading Massachusetts. I had the great fortune to have Rev. Jane Rzepka as my supervisor. Jane was later the senior minister of the UUA Church of the Larger Fellowship serving tens of thousands of folks who had no UU church in their area.

She gave a sermon at our annual General Assembly in 1989 in Milwaukie, Wisconsin. This is one portion from it:

**A few years back, in the Himalayas, our family trekked for days among people who had never seen a road or a car or a bicycle or a wheelbarrow. These were people who knew, however, precisely how to live simply in the high country. There I was, nearing the end of a day's climb, wearing the customary long trekking skirt, and huge hiking boots, and a down jacket, a back-pack, a wide-brimmed hat, mountaineering glasses, a camera around my neck, and globs of sunscreen. It was Easter, so for my kids I had brought along a garish little Easter basket and in it a small stash of jelly beans that I carried importantly. Periodically, when I couldn't resist the temptation to further mortify the family, I'd burst into song about Peter Cottontail and how much he liked to hop up up up that trekking trail. In fact I was singing Peter Cottontail when I looked up, and in a sobering flash, discovered that we had reached the Buddhist monastery, and that the venerable reincarnate high lama himself was standing in his simple robe, staring at me. He spoke then in Tibetan to our Sherpa guide, and later I learned what he said. As I stood before him in my full regalia with my basket of jelly beans, he said: "I will never understand these Christians, their songs, or their gods. But invite them in for yak milk tea, and I will bless them." It was a happy Easter.**

Easter is many things to people. For the Tibetan Buddhist, it was an opportunity to encounter a religion that he didn't understand but was willing to bless no matter how strange it seemed.

For most Christians, Easter is truly the resurrection and promise of Jesus as Christ, the Anointed One, and the One Son of God. For most children, Easter is a time of Easter eggs, treats second only to Halloween and funny songs. Thomas Jefferson had his own views of Easter as we heard in

the opening words. He probably didn't pass out Easter eggs or tell the resurrection story to his family.

Then there are Unitarian Universalists. Many of us come from traditions that literally believe the truth of the Easter and resurrection story. Others of us probably smile and nod our heads when our friends or family ask us about coming to the Easter service. Many of our congregations use this Sunday as an opportunity for Flower Celebration or communion. We particularly find it appealing to speak about spring and the renewal of life.

All those alternatives are good ones.

However, the religious faith expressed in the Resurrection story continues to influence our culture. I have little doubt that this very Sunday many of your friends and relatives worship at traditional Christian churches and might be politely and gently worried about your salvation.

What are we to do about Easter resurrection and its promise?

I have mentioned theologian Karen Armstrong several times this year. I hope to be able to attend her lecture at our General Assembly this coming June in Charlotte, North Carolina. Her books such as "The Great Transformation" and "The Case for God" have evoked much interfaith conversation around the world. In "The Case for God" she attempts to recast Western theology as Mythos driven by symbol, metaphor, ritual and initiation rite rather than Logos as reason, rationality, discourse and debate on how many angels one can place on the head of a pin.

So let's imagine the Easter Resurrection story as a metaphor rather than a true and literal account of a terrible death, mourning followers and then a miraculous rising from the dead. After all, Lazarus was raised from the dead and we hardly have a holiday for him.

Unitarian Universalist minister Sarah Moores Campbell wrote of this metaphor some years ago: **"...in a world where spirits rose up on a regular basis, there had to be something more special going on than just another corpse walking about. This was a resurrection of many souls, not from death, but from deadness. What do I mean by deadness? I mean the things inside that kept the disciples away from Jesus' funeral - - fear, cowardice, lack of conviction and purpose. And I mean those same things in our own lives that prevent us from feeling alive -- things like fear, cowardice, lack of conviction and purpose. And things like the loneliness, grief, and boredom that numb us to life. It's as if we let parts of ourselves die and stuff them away in a tomb of the soul. Sometimes it is not such a bad place. It is like a womb -- safe and secure, comfortable and predictable. Our tomb-life may be nothing more than the safety and comfort of a nice predictable routine. Or it may be a shelter from the**

**world and its problems -- a place to hide from the Jesus who called for a world where people care for one another. Whether it is escape or comfort, the time comes for us to roll away the stone and come out.”**

But really the metaphor of the tomb doesn't end there. We cannot most times roll the stone aside ourselves and emerge back into the world of light and life lived well. We need the help of others.

We really cannot push that stone aside without others and sometimes it can seem like a miracle of unexpected happiness.

I will end here with a short example of such an event.

Many of you know that this week I was outside Houston, Texas at an advanced interim ministry training course. It was a great event other than poor cell phone reception and a slightly ornery Xoom tablet.

Friday morning we all got ready to leave and return to the Houston airport. I was scheduled for a 1:30 flight back to Charlotte and as usual was 2 hours early. Security line went quickly and I ambled toward my gate. I decided to go directly there rather than hit the nearest book shop.

As I reached the gate, a counter agent was calling out “anyone heading out on the 1:30 flight?” I spoke up and said “yes” wondering what was going to be wrong. Was the flight now at the Z terminal yet to be built rather than the A terminal? Had I been unceremoniously bumped and the next flight to Charlotte sometime on Tuesday?

I got to the counter and the woman said, “The 1:30 flight is 45 minutes late. I want to get you on this flight about ready to leave to Charlotte.” I was dumbfounded. But, I said, that means I'd get to Charlotte 2 hours early.” She nodded. Is there a window seat, I asked? She looked and said “yes, there's a window seat near the front and the seat beside you is empty.” I said “this is a miracle.” Yes, she said, miracles sometimes do happen.

As miracles go, it was a small thing. But consider the miracles that can happen when we don't expect them as we walk the path of life. Imagine how we suffer through pain or hurt and then heal thanks to those who help us roll the stone of isolation aside.

Miracles happen. Easter happens. Perhaps the resurrection comes every moment and not just 2000 some years ago. Look and listen and be prepared for it to come into your life. You might need to help roll a stone aside to help someone on their way to a better life.

And sometime, it may be your turn to hear others say **“I want to help you on your way”**...and you discover you are not forsaken at all.”

After all, it's our holiday, too.