

WHAT IS WAITING TO BE BORN? EASTER SUNDAY  
THE UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP OF PETERBOROUGH  
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**OPENING WORDS**      *If We Do Not Venture Out ~ Marni Harmony*

If, on a starlit night,  
with the moon brightly shimmering,  
We stay inside and do not venture out,  
the evening universe remains a part of life we shall not know.

If, on a cloudy day,  
with grayness infusing all  
and rain dancing rivers in the grass,  
We stay inside and do not venture out,  
the stormy, threatening energy of  
the universe remains  
a part of life we shall not know.

If, on a frosty morning,  
dreading the chilling air before the sunrise,  
We stay inside and do not venture out,  
the awesome cold, quiet, and stillness of  
the dawn universe remains  
a part of life we shall not know.

If, throughout these grace-given days of ours,  
surrounded as we are by green life and  
brown death, hot pink joy and cold gray  
pain and miracles – always miracles –

If we stay inside ourselves and do not venture out  
then the Fullness of the universe  
shall be unknown to us

And our locked hearts shall never feel the rush of worship.

Come – let us feel that rush together!

**A STORY FOR ALL**      *the dot*      - Peter H. Reynolds

*(Yashti thinks she can't draw, but her teacher encourages her to make a dot and then sign it. That leads to Yashti becoming an artist who paints every colour and size of dot.)*

**READING**      *Being the Resurrection Meditation*      ~Victoria Weinstein

The stone has got to be rolled back from the tomb again and again every year.  
Roll up your sleeves.

He is not coming back, you know.

He is not coming back unless it is we who rise for him

We who lay healing hands on the reviled and rejected like he did  
on his behalf --  
We who rage for righteousness in his insistent voice  
We who love the sinner, even knowing that "the sinner" is no farther off than our own  
heartbeat

He will not be back to join us at the table  
To share God's extravagant banquet  
God's love feast, all are invited, come as you are  
And so it is you and I who must feast for him  
Must say the grace and break the bread and pass it to the left  
and dish up the broiled fish (or pour the wine) and pass it to the right.  
And treat each one so tenderly  
as though just this morning she or he made the personal effort  
to make it back from heaven, or from hell  
but certainly from death  
to be by our side.

Because if by some miracle (and why not a miracle?)  
He did come back  
Wouldn't he want to see us like this?  
Wouldn't it be a miracle to live for just one day  
So that if he did, by some amazing feat  
come riding into town  
He could take a look around and say  
"This is what I meant!"

And we could say  
it took us a long time...  
but we finally figured it out.

Oh, let us live to make it so.

You [we?] are the resurrection and the life.

**MESSAGE**            *What is Waiting to Be Born?*

Today, celebrates the culmination of a 40-day story that began on Ash Wednesday, continued through Lent and Palm Sunday, and this past week, traveled through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Now, here we are on Easter morning, and I wager that most of us have paid little attention to the journey that Christians have been on in these days.

And yet, like any good story or myth, it contains much for us to reflect on. It tells of one man's struggle to live into what he was called to do in the world, and his ensuing commitment to his ministry. As I said last week, that ministry compelled Jesus to protest the Roman persecution of the Jewish people as well as the occupation of Jerusalem and its temple; it was his involvement in that protest which led to his arrest and death. Jesus is perhaps the ultimate archetype of the hero's journey... the person who goes out and takes risks, even risks their life,

in service of some greater cause.

I know that many of you are currently on personal journeys that resonate with the Easter story. You are in the midst of a struggle that just doesn't seem worth it. You are deep in the darkness of a tomb, and feel that new life is impossible. Maybe you are in the throes of something new and wonderful that seems like a phoenix arising from the ashes. Or, perhaps you have recently experienced a resurrection of sorts, but are wondering, now what? The Easter story is one that happens over and over, again and again...in nature, in systems, and in our own lives. We enter the cycle of birth and death and re-birth with each breath we take.

Last week I shared very personally of a journey that I've been on...a journey has led me to the realization that I am no longer willing to put off, or shove aside, those ways of being that might offer me the full potentialities of being alive. I shared with you that one commitment I am making is to use my voice to speak my own truths...to be as authentic and clear as I can be...hoping that in that practice, I will come to more fully know, and to love, myself. (That sermon is posted on our website if you want to read it.)

Some of you expressed concern for me after I spoke, sensing that I was in some dark or sad place. Truthfully, this doesn't feel like a dark place to me. Scary, yes, but what I feel like is that I am coming to life, that I've picked away at my shroud, and that I've stumbled to the door of my tomb. Right now, I'm just trying to figure out if I dare to, and if so, how to, roll away that stone. Last week I asked for your help because it's heavy and it's been in place a long time. Still, I have faith that it's possible, or at the very least, worth the effort.

I fear that my may words seem self-serving and ego-centric. And they are. Except. Except that there is nothing that is not connected to all that is. I am part of the system that is this congregation, and when I change, everything changes. We know that loving others is part and parcel to loving ourselves. We know that we cannot truly give if we are not able to also receive. My intention in this journey is two-fold...that I will be able to experience life in new ways AND that my ongoing awakening will better serve you and our ministry together. As Marianne Williamson penned, "as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

I promised to speak to you today of my vision, my desires, for my ministry with you. I have no Jesus-complex...no desire to die for my beliefs...no illusions that my vision is as compelling or world-changing as his was. It's really too contrived to continue to try to link what I have to say with the Easter story, and so I'm going to quit trying, except to say that Jesus' death, and the resurrection of hope and possibility, came about because of his commitment to a vision...his vision for heaven on earth and for a new and abundant life for all.

And I have a vision. I believe that a strong social fabric will be our salvation as a culture. I believe that values of love and justice are best forged and taught in the container of community. I have a vision of a congregation that is made vital by the committed and enthusiastic presence of engaged people... people who see the incredible value and potential in a being a welcoming, questing community... people who show up with energy and ideas and compassion for one another and a willingness to be changed... people who have given up

other things in their lives in favour of being a part of THIS community... people who offer their gifts generously and who provide hospitality for all others... folks who understand that the well-being of all is contingent on the quality of the relationships we have built one with another... a community who sees opportunities for contributing and who then step into those opportunities... people who are willing to go into hard places and examine themselves and hang in there because they are ready for transformation...people who understand that beloved community, while incredibly magical, doesn't happen by magic.

Just about exactly ten years ago I came to Peterborough to candidate for being your minister. In my 'ministerial record', my CV if you will, I said this of the ministry I was searching for: "To minister collaboratively, using my creativity and strengths...in a place where the vision of the congregation intersects with my own longings and talents... The new ministry I hope for is one that will be shared by all the members of the congregation in an ongoing effort to create a beloved community."

In the sermons I delivered during that candidating week, and in materials in my ministerial pact, I spoke of more of those longings. I spoke of the salient aspects of my personal theology...connection, journey and daily life. I mentioned the importance and centrality of community repeatedly. And during that week, as we got to know one another and considered whether we could be in ministry together, the questions we asked one another were all questions of vision... "How do you see...?" and "How would you envision...?" and "Looking forward to next year, what would you...?" Together, we screwed up our faces and our imaginations as we tried to picture who we might be together.

Last night I poured over your congregational record, the one that was prepared then to show potential ministers who you were. I found there very little mention of a vision for the future...for who you wanted to become... for where you wanted a minister to help lead you. I didn't notice this then, but I am now aware that the absence of commitment to a shared vision remains the blank page from which I dream.

And yet, over these years, as we've journeyed together, we've continued to ask those questions...we developed a long-range plan, we crafted a new purpose statement, and we've engaged in all kinds of projects and workshops that have deepened our connections, strengthened our leadership, and steeled our commitment to justice.

AND, greedy thing that I am, I want more.

You see, this ministry and this faith is what I choose to give my life to. It is the greater cause and purpose that I want to serve. And, speaking with my new-found voice... the one that I refuse to swallow... what I most desire is to no longer perpetuate a community in which I am in it alone.

Strong words? Yes. And not completely true. I know that. I am not alone in this ministry. Not all the time. You are here right now. Throughout each week, many are practicing music, and coming to youth group, and meeting in teams, and gathering for covenant groups, and doing the work of governance. Some do this ministry from home...making calls and sending out minutes and drafting policy and visiting those who need support. But...still, sometimes I feel

alone.

And I know that some of that is on me....that I do things alone rather than bother you by asking for help or support. I know that I step forward too often in team meetings, which doesn't leave room for each of you to speak. I know that I over-function which doesn't allow you to fully own this ministry. And I'm working on these things.

But, do you ever feel that way? I mean, you're here now, with others. But, do you ever feel like you're the one who always does the dishes, or you look around and wonder where the friends are that you made here last week, or you send out an email to a team you're leading and you get no response, or have you had a great idea for something that you believe will benefit all of us, but you can't get any traction with it? Do you ever feel alone in this?

And, still, you are here now. You may have come here to heal, and we offer you this space with all generosity of spirit. You may have come here to be inspired, and we are glad that you find inspiration here. You may be coming here to escape the isolation in your life, and we are happy to surround you. You may be here looking for answers to questions that have been haunting you, and we are ready to give you space and support in your spiritual explorations. You may be here because you love having partners in your work in the community, and we are willing to team up with you in the cause of justice. All of this is true....AND...

I have to say this. We will not be here, cannot be here, for all of those purposes, without some accountability from each person who has the wherewithal to be accountable. We, I, also really need you to show up. Showing up means getting here whenever we gather. And sometimes choosing this over other opportunities. And being among those who respond to calls for leadership and commitment. And engaging in our visioning together.

Responding...caring...showing up. Your presence, and your voice, is a pre-requisite if we are to upbuild this community and vision the world of which we dream.

What is that dream? Well, I dream of a congregation willing to take risks. Yes, there is a time and a place for crossing our t's and dotting our i's, but might we also be willing to take risks in service of our mission? For just one example, our principles call us to inclusion and justice... why is it that we don't have all-gender washrooms yet?

I dream of a congregation that has a bold presence in Peterborough and surrounds... a community that is known for its openness, its commitment to social justice, its welcome, its generosity. We have so many gifts to offer, so much potential to be movers and shakers. And while this is a dream that in some part is already a reality, I continue to dream it bigger and bolder.

I dream of a congregation that works as a team... and visions together... a community which takes the time and makes the effort to ensure that all voices are heard... which also means that each person knows their voice is valuable and steps up to speak and be heard. I dream of a congregation that is willing to step into discomfort in order to include all. I dream of a place where everyone that knows that it takes all of us to be there for all of us.

I dream of a congregation that deeply knows how important community is... that knows that in the face of the dominant culture....one in which we are bombarded by messages of

consumerism, hatred, indifference, self-deprecation... that it is here together that we (and our children) will be reminded of what's important, and ponder how best to live, and learn to consider decisions in the light of dearly-chosen values.

You see, I truly believe in the importance of this community...this place where we strive to welcome all, where we engage in life with wonder and inquiry, where we seek personal transformation, and where we work for a just and sustainable world. I believe that Peterborough would be much poorer without our presence, and so much richer if we more fully lived into what is possible.

And, I am choosing to trust that there is joy and abundance to be realized by taking risks together. I want to minister within a community where I can name my dreams boldly, while also knowing that I have just one voice in the unfolding story of this congregation.

So, what is your vision for this congregation? Who do you believe we can be together? What are you willing to risk in order to realize those dreams? What new life awaits? Will you risk naming and sharing those dreams?

May we together envision a congregation that has a dream and gives its life to make it so.

Amen.

**READING** *What Happens When We Stop Living?* ~ Nathan C. Walker

The question is not,  
"What happens when we die?"  
Nobody really knows.  
The real question is,  
"What happens when we stop living?"

The stoicism we face on a daily basis  
is a symptom of a larger illness  
called a dually-dulled life.

Our lives can be hypnotized  
by the monotonous commutes,  
multiplied by the flickering florescent light  
that falls upon the micromanaging boss  
who thinks everything you do in your cubicle  
is an extension of his or her power.

Who here is dying a slow and numbing death?

There's no time to be lulled by monotony.  
There is no time to be blaming  
other people for our own feelings.  
If you don't like it, change it.

There's no time for crying, or complaining,  
or gossiping, or clinging to that fashionable grudge bag.

No. It is time to wake up, to rise up,  
and to carry ourselves into a day worth living.

Let us live one day – this day –  
with passion and a sense of collective synergy.

Let us live one day – this day –  
by asking questions that truly challenge us  
and make us feel alive.

For today's question is not  
"What happens when we die?" it is  
"What happens when we stop living?"

**\*CLOSING WORDS**                      *Go Boldly*                      ~ Jean M. Olson

May you be brave enough to expose  
your aching woundedness  
and reveal your vulnerability.

May you speak your deepest truths,  
knowing that they will change as you do.

May you sing the music within you,  
composing your own melody,  
playing your song with all your heart.

May you draw, paint, sculpt, and sew,  
showing the world your vision.

May you write letters, poetry, biography,  
slogans, graffiti, the great novel,  
laying bare your words to love and hate.

May you love even though your heart  
breaks again and again.

And until the end of your days,  
may your life be filled  
with possibilities and courage.

You are the resurrection and the life. GO and live! Amen.

**EXTINGUISHING THE FLAME**