

Opening words: From the Karen Armstrong initiated Charter for Compassion:

Born of our deep dependence on Mother Earth and our human interdependence, compassion is essential to relationships and to human fulfillment. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

“Jesus Calls Us To Compassion” April 4, 2010

It's Easter!! 2.1 billion people the world over are celebrating the resurrection. Jesus is risen! He is risen, they say. What can we make of this, we human beings, sometimes defined as the meaning making animal?. What meaning can we make of this today? From the Unitarian Universalist website I copied this prayer by Victoria Weinstein. The title is

“Being the Resurrection”

In part it says:

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.

Let's explore together what we can make of the resurrection story.
Where does it fit into our "free and responsible search for truth and
meaning. "

When I bought a copy of our friend Richard Wilde's book, *The Many
Faces of Jesus*, he wrote in it "May this book help you in your search for
truth and meaning."

What can be the truth and meaning of the resurrection of Jesus for us
Unitarian Universalists ?

We are part of Christendom, sharing the planet with those billion believers. I think attention must be paid. Jesus must be considered.

So from Richard's book I want to call upon only just one of the faces of Jesus, the one shown to us in the Gospel of Luke. I want to remind us of the teaching story of the Good Samaritan, Chapter 4, v. 25-37, King James translation.

And behold a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him saying, Master, what should I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus replied, What is written in the law? How do you read it?

and the lawyer answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind and thy neighbor as thyself."

Then Jesus said, "You have answered right, This do and you will live."

But the lawyer, wishing to justify himself, asked Jesus,

Who is my neighbor?

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half-dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that

way and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side . And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and he went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host and said, “Take care of him; and whatever you spend more than this, when I come again, I will repay you. Which now of these , do you think, was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?

And the lawyer said, He that showed mercy on him. Then Jesus said GO AND DO LIKEWISE.

For me it adds to the impact of the story to know a little more about the travelers in the story. Priests served in the temple services. The Levites were the temple keepers. The Samaritan was the least respected of the travelers. At that time, Samaritans were a branch of Judaism that claimed to have never been exiled and thus have possession of

the true Torah, a view decidedly out of favor with the orthodox.

And notice that the involvement of the Samaritan was limited. Many have commented on the act of mercy described in this story as it has been retold through the ages. . Did the Samaritan do enough?

When Martin Luther King retold the story in his famous sermon at the Riverside Church in New York City in 1967 he agreed we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but he called for a true revolution in values. He said we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It is more, even, than the mercy of the good Samaritan in the parable. True compassion comes to see that an edifice that produces beggars and robbers needs restructuring.

We Lubbock Unitarians are involved in the effort to restructure the edifice. For 12 years we have paid our dues to belong to congregation-based community organizing, an effort in the direction of restructuring the edifice that produces poverty and homelessness. We have paid almost as many dollars into that effort as we have paid each of those years into supporting and strengthening our own denomination. We can take comfort in that and give encouragement to each other for all we already do to answer the call to compassion.

Let's also take comfort in knowing about the Unitarian Universalist professionals who have dedicated themselves to transforming the Jericho Road. Read about them in the Spring 2010 issue of the UU World in the article The Jericho Road Project. I hope you will read it for yourselves.

Many of you have copies and I brought one along to lend.

I will briefly mention one of their responses to the call to compassion. Members of the First Parish (Unitarian) in Concord Massachusetts, inspired by King's call to a revolution in values, wanted to engage in social action that created systemic change rather than charity work that felt like flinging coins to beggars or relieving one injury while knowing other injuries increase.

Concord, an affluent and historic Boston suburb with a median household income of \$115,000 concentrated its efforts on Lowell, a once prosperous city of textile mills, whose median household income is \$40,000. The Concord Unitarian church whose members include bankers, venture capitalists and business consultants launched the Jericho Road Project in 2002 as a new model of social justice work. That church had traditionally focused on charity work, the usual focus for all religious denominations, including ours. Their Jericho Road Project

helps established non-profit organization by supplying management consultants, lawyers, bankers, and software designers because "the non-profits are the frontline" for restructuring the edifice. It is called skills-based volunteering. Just one of the success stories involves the United Teen Equality Center, Utec, a teen drop-in center in downtown Lowell aimed at curbing gang violence. "Started in 1999 in a church basement with a \$40,000 budget and three volunteer staff members, the

center has blossomed into a \$850,000 budget with nine full time paid staff, offering a culinary and catering program, a farm program, free after-school mental health counseling and much more. A Jericho Road volunteer architect helped Utec select and renovate new space. Other Jericho Road volunteers have helped the center with brand strategy, legal issues, market research, web development, computer systems and database management.

By now the Jericho Road Project has partnered with, among others, the First Baptist Church in Worcester, Massachusetts, and has inspired volunteers from the secular realm, the General Electric office in Lynn. The Jericho Road idea of transforming the road itself has spread to the Unitarian Universalist Church in Pasadena, California.

So Martin Luther King gave us additional meaning to Jesus's story of the Good Samaritan. Now when we hear the old story we know to consider the road itself. The story is worth retelling all the more.

For us as Unitarians, it is not only Jesus that calls us to compassion. Since 1995 the primary Unitarian Universalist organization has affirmed officially that it is not sub-set of Christianity although its roots are Christian. Unitarian Universalism encompasses spirituality from all the major world religions as well as primal-indigenous/tribal faiths. We also

welcome into our midst the third largest category of adherents, secular/non-religious/agnostic/atheist (1.1 billion). The second largest number is for Islam 1.5 billion and fourth is Hinduism, 900 million. Unitarian Universalists? We number in the THOUSANDS.

For the cover of today's Order Of Service I chose a symbol of our encompassing spirituality: our quilt, designed and executed by members of this church in celebration of the 50th year of Unitarian Universalism in Lubbock.

In addition to our work in congregation based community organizing to change the structure of justice we continue to offer comfort and relief in countless ways .

Just one example of compassionate action illustrates the contributions of our individual members, the more usual form of giving among us than congregation based organizing, as I said . In response to my request for stories about how our Unitarian Universalist faith inspires us individually to try to make the world a better place, member Andi Cooley replied with a list of her volunteer actions that are in addition to her profession in nursing where she is now helping in quality control at the University Medical Center, to assure the best possible patient care. A partial enumeration of Andi's volunteering includes Women's Protective Service, Ronald McDonald House, Friends of the Library, United Blood Services (working on her 27th gallon), and the Dupre Elementary School literacy program. I hope others will respond to my request, as Social Action Chair, to put your story in the UU newsletter. We need to encourage

each other and realize how much we are already doing in answering the call to compassion.

Hear again are the opening words:

From the Karen Armstrong initiated Charter for Compassion:

“Born of our deep dependence on Mother Earth and our human interdependence, compassion is essential to relationships and to human fulfillment. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.”

From all these sources we intend to seek truth and meaning in response to the wonder of being alive and the knowledge that this body dies.

Continuing with the opening prayer, Victoria Weinstein says:

“ 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

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.

“You are the resurrection and the life,” she tells us.

We are the resurrection and the life is the meaning I make of
Easter.

Closing words: the blessings of this time together are not ended
here, but go with us from this place to encourage us to serve the
good, the true and the beautiful until we meet again. (Adapted
from the Rev. Rebecca Edmiston-Lange)

Sara McLarty, member

**CARRY THE FLAME OF PEACE AND LOVE UNTIL WE
MEET AGAIN**