

A Message of Renewal at Easter 20th April 2025 Rev. Dr. Edgar Mihas

Opening Music: J.S. Bach - Aria "Mein Gott, ich liebe dich von Herzen" Cantata BWV 77
[J.S. Bach - Aria "Mein Gott, ich liebe dich von Herzen" from Cantata BWV 77](#)

Welcome

Chalice Lighting

May this light remind us of the warmth of community, the wisdom of our hearts, and the power of love. As we gather together on Easter Sunday in this sacred space, may we be inspired to live with compassion, seek justice, and walk in peace. We light this chalice in the spirit of hope and unity.

Prayer

Spirit of Life, Source of All,
 We come to you seeking renewal.
 In the quiet of this moment, we pause,
 Opening our hearts to the possibility of transformation.

Renew our spirits, that we may face each day with courage.
 Renew our minds, that we may see the world with clarity.
 Renew our hearts, that we may love and be loved more deeply.

May we find strength in our community,
 wisdom in our shared experiences,
 and peace in the knowledge that we are never alone.

Grant us the grace to let go of what no longer serves us,
 and the courage to embrace what is yet to come.
 With hope, we step forward, ready for the journey of renewal.
 Amen. So be it.

HYMN: 158 (Purple Book)'The Flame of Truth is Kindled'

The flame of truth is kindled,
 our chalice burning bright;
 amongst us moves the Spirit
 in whom we take delight.
 We worship here in freedom
 With conscience unconstrained,
 A pilgrim people thankful
 Of what great souls have gained.

The flame of thought is kindled.
 we celebrate the mind,
 its search for deepest meaning
 that time bound creeds can't bind.
 We celebrate its oneness
 with body and with soul,
 with universal process,
 with God who makes us whole.

The flame of love is kindled,
 we open wide our hearts,
 that it may burn within us,
 fuel us to do our parts.
 Community needs building,
 A Commonwealth of Earth,
 we ask for strength to build it —
 a new world come to birth.

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Music: 'Morning Light' George James Webb, 1803 - 1887

CANDLES OF JOY AND/OR CONCERN everyone was invited to contribute.

GUIDED MEDITATION: I invite you to close your eyes, and to choose something - a place, a concept, an object, a person - that you regard as sacred. What is the quality in it that evokes the sacred for you? What values or virtues does it represent? Are they values or virtues that find an echo within you? Is the sacredness an inherent quality of it? Or does it shine through it, as if its source is elsewhere? Just focus for a while on your sacred place, concept, thing or person. Allow its virtue to shine for you; hear its inner music, smell its perfume. **[2-minute pause]** Now let the place, concept, thing or person fade from your mind and just focus on the virtue itself and recognise its reflection in your own heart.

Story: The Right Moment

Rabiya, a great Sufi mystic, was passing. It was the street she used to pass every day on her way to the marketplace, because in the marketplace she would go every day and shout the truth that she had attained; and for many days she had been watching a mystic, a well-known mystic, Hassan, sitting before the door of the mosque and praying to God, "God, open the door! Please open the door! Let me in!"

Rabiya could not tolerate it that day. Hassan was crying, tears were rolling down, and he was shouting again and again, "Open the door! Let me in! Why don't you listen? Why don't you hear my prayers?"

Every day she had laughed, whenever she had heard Hassan, she had laughed, but it was too much today. Tears ... and Hassan was really crying, weeping, crying his heart out. She went, she shook Hassan, and said, "Stop all this nonsense! The door is open — in fact you are already in!"

Hassan looked at Rabiya, and that moment became a moment of revelation. Looking into the eyes of Rabiya, he bowed down, touched her feet, and said, "You came in time; otherwise, I would have called my whole life! For years I have been doing this — where have you been before? And I know you pass this street every day. You must have seen me crying, praying."

Rabiya said, "Yes, but truth can only be said at a certain moment, in a certain space, in a certain context. I was waiting for the right, ripe moment. Today it has arrived; hence, I came close to you. Yesterday, if I had told you, you would have felt irritated; you may have even become angry. You may have reacted antagonistically; you may have told me, 'You have disturbed my prayer!' — and it is not right to disturb anybody's prayer."

Even the king is not allowed to disturb the prayer of a beggar. Even if a criminal, a murderer, is praying in Mohammedan countries, the police have to wait till he finishes his prayer, only then can he be caught. Prayer should not be disturbed.

Rabiya said, “I had wanted to tell you this, that ‘Hassan, don’t be a fool, the door is open — in fact, you are already in!’ But I had to wait for the right moment. So, may the moment of renewal come at the right time for us, too!

CALL THE DIRECTIONS – Invocation of the East

Be with us here, spirits of the East. Bless us with the gift of Air – the breath of life, the new beginnings of each dawn. Hail and welcome! May there be peace in the East! Blessed be! (Person A lights the East candle on the altar)

CALL THE DIRECTIONS – Invocation of the South

Be with us here, spirits of the South. Bless us with the gifts of Fire – the heat of passion, the light of love. Hail and welcome! May there be peace in the South! Blessed be! (Person B lights the South candle on the altar)

CALL THE DIRECTIONS – Invocation of the West

Be with us here, spirits of the West. Bless us with the gifts of Water – the fluidity of the stream, the depths of the ocean. Hail and welcome! May there be peace in the West! Blessed be! (Person C lights the West candle on the altar)

CALL THE DIRECTIONS – Invocation of the North

Be with us here, spirits of the North. Bless us with the gifts of Earth – the stability of mountains, the abundance of meadows. Hail and welcome! May there be peace in the North! Blessed be! (Person D lights the North candle on the altar)

MUSIC: J.S. Bach - Suite No. 2 – Badinerie)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyMtlvOcojU>

Reading 1: Luke 24:1-12 (NIV)

¹On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ” ⁸Then they remembered his words.

⁹When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹²Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Reading 2: Put Spring in Your Spirit, by Erin Keeley Marshall

“Sing to God a brand-new song, sing his praises all over the world! Let the sea and its fish give a round of applause, with all the far-flung islands joining in. Let the desert and its camps raise a tune, calling the Kedar nomads to join in. Let the villagers in Sela round up a choir and perform from the tops of the mountains. Make God’s glory resound; echo his praises from coast to coast.”
Isaiah 42:10 (MSG)

SPRING, SPRING, SPRING! Can you smell the fresh breeze through my open window? Ahhh!

I love the freshness of spring each year. I walk taller, feel healthier, enjoy more colour in my face and a boost in my energy. Everything about spring breathes of life and newness. I love seeing green fields with baby calves reaching up for a drink from Mama.

Reading 3: ‘Do Unitarians celebrate Easter?’ from ‘Unitarian, what’s that?’ by Rev Cliff Reed,

Most Unitarians do, but with perhaps three separate, although not mutually exclusive, perspectives.

First, there is the view that in the stories of Jesus’ Resurrection, we have a powerful myth. This celebrates the triumph of the human spirit, exemplified in Jesus, over all that would crush it, and even over death.

Second, from a more specifically Christian standpoint, is the belief that the loving spirit of Jesus triumphed over death and passed into the community of disciples who formed the early church. The body of the faithful thus became the physical resurrection, the risen body, of Christ. Inasmuch as a religious community continues to embody that loving spirit, then it continues to embody the resurrection. Most Unitarians would doubt the veracity of the Gospel resurrection accounts. Some, though, see them as based on vivid spiritual experiences undergone by several of Jesus’ followers in the aftermath of his death. These then played an important part in convincing the disciples that his spirit was still among them.

The third principal way in which Unitarians celebrate Easter is as the festival of life’s renewal in the spring. The earth’s resurrection after winter’s apparent death is something that affects us profoundly as dependent children of nature. Many Unitarians therefore feel that it is a time of deep spiritual significance in itself. They point out that the word “Easter” is derived from “Eastre”, the name of the ancient Anglo-Saxon Goddess of spring, fertility and renewal.

HYMN: 163 (Green Book) ‘Those Who Seek Wisdom’

Those who seek wisdom
Seek truth and courage,
Walk through the darkness,
Endure through the storm.
Those who meet wisdom
In youth or old age
Know that the wonder
Is always new-born

They know the vision
In words is spoken,

They live the vision
 Without words in deed.
 Touching with loving
 In healing the broken,
 Touching with dreaming,
 With vision they lead.

Rise out of weeping,
 Joy in this hour.
 Sing out our greeting
 In this new-born day.
 Now may our meeting
 Rekindle the power
 Of truth and courage
 To walk in the Way.

Words: Richard Frederick Boeke, b. 1931 Music 'Russia' Alexis Feodorovitch Lyov 1799- 1871

Scottish Blessing

May the blessing of light be on you - light without and light within.
 May the blessed sunlight shine on you like a great peat fire,
 so that stranger and friend may come and warm himself at it.
 And may light shine out of the two eyes of you,
 like a candle set in the window of a house,
 bidding the wanderer come in out of the storm.
 And may the blessing of the rain be on you,
 may it beat upon your Spirit and wash it fair and clean,
 and leave there a shining pool where the blue of Heaven shines,
 and sometimes a star.
 And may the blessing of the earth be on you,
 soft under your feet as you pass along the roads,
 soft under you as you lie out on it, tired at the end of day;
 and may it rest easy over you when, at last, you lie out under it.
 May it rest so lightly over you that your soul may be out from under it quickly; up and off and on
 its way to God.
 And now may the Lord bless you, and bless you kindly. Amen.

Reflective Address: Easter and Renewal – A Unitarian Perspective

Some call it Easter. Some call it Passover. Some trace its roots back to the Jewish tradition. Others trace its roots to Pagan traditions. Nevertheless, Easter, for many, is a deeply spiritual occasion rooted in the Christian tradition, commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, for Unitarians, the significance of Easter can be viewed through a broader lens — one that emphasises personal renewal, the power of hope, and the enduring human journey of transformation but, as we saw in the story earlier on, this can only happen at the right time for each and every one of us.

As Unitarians, we draw inspiration from many religious, ethical, philosophical and other secular traditions, and we find in Easter a rich metaphor for renewal, growth, and the triumph of life over

despair. While we may not adhere to the literal interpretation of the resurrection, we can still embrace the underlying themes of transformation and spiritual awakening which are central to the season. Easter serves as an invitation to reflect on the cycles of life, death, and rebirth, both in the natural world and within our own hearts and minds.

Spring, the season in which Easter falls in the Northern Hemisphere, is an apt symbol of renewal. Nature's rebirth, from the budding trees to the return of flowers and the longer days, offers a living reminder that life is constantly evolving. In a world which often seems fraught with challenges, this annual revival opportunity offers hope that we too can experience growth after periods of hardship, hopefully, when the time is right.

For many Unitarians, Easter is a time to reflect on personal transformation and the potential for renewal in our own lives. We can take this season as an opportunity to consider where we might seek growth — whether that means mending broken relationships, healing from past traumas, or recommitting ourselves to our own values and aspirations. Renewal is not simply about erasing past mistakes, but about learning from them and using those lessons to foster wisdom and compassion in ourselves and others.

In Unitarian thought, resurrection can be understood not only as a spiritual event, but as a metaphor for the resilience of the human spirit. We live in a world where suffering and loss are inevitable, as we see in all areas of conflict around the world, yet we also possess an innate ability to rise from those experiences, to find meaning in our struggles, and to begin anew. Easter, in this sense, becomes a symbol of the human capacity to reinvent our own self, to find hope and courage even in the darkest of times.

Moreover, Easter provides an opportunity for us to consider the broader human experience. As we reflect on the renewal of the earth and the revival of hope, we can also think about the need for societal renewal. Unitarianism emphasises justice, compassion, and a commitment to creating a better world here and now, not in some distant future. The message of Easter can, therefore, extend beyond personal renewal to social and collective transformation. Whether we are working for equal opportunities, racial and/or gender justice, environmental sustainability, or greater economic equality, we are participating in a collective resurrection — a movement towards a more just and compassionate world, about which many a book has been written; for example, Karen Armstrong's book entitled: "twelve steps to a compassionate life" which is a book I would strongly recommend.

At its heart, Easter calls us to remember that no matter how heavy the burden we carry, there is always the possibility for new beginnings. It invites us to live with renewed purpose, grounded in love and hope, and to carry forward the lessons of resilience and transformation. The promise of Easter is that life, in all its forms, is capable of renewal, and that we, too, can embody this renewal in the choices we make each day, both personal and collective.

For Unitarians, Easter serves as a reminder that while we may walk through seasons of suffering or loss, the potential for renewal is ever-present. It is a time to embrace the cyclical nature of existence, to find hope in the darkest moments, and to know that we are part of a larger, ongoing process of transformation — individually, collectively, and spiritually. May I wish you a peaceful, uplifting and transformational Easter Week and may the message of renewal gain greater prominence in our community, in our society and in the whole world. So be it!

MUSIC FOR MEDITATION/REFLECTION/CONTEMPLATION: peaceful Sufi music:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUpPiQs4crw> (video-clip)

CALL THE DIRECTIONS – Farewell to the North

In the name of the Great Mother and the element of Earth, we thank the spirits of the North for the gifts of stability and abundance. Hail and Farewell! (Person D to extinguish the North candle)

CALL THE DIRECTIONS – Farewell to the West

In the name of the Great Oceans and of the element of Water, we thank the spirits of the West for the gifts of fluidity and depth. Hail and Farewell! (Person C to extinguish the West candle)

CALL THE DIRECTIONS – Farewell to the South

In the name of the Great Sun and the element of Fire, we thank the spirits of the South for the gifts of light and love. Hail and Farewell! (Person B to extinguish the South candle)

CALL THE DIRECTIONS – Farewell to the East

In the name of the Great Winds and the element of Air, we thank the spirits of the East for the gifts of breath and beginnings. Hail and Farewell! (Person A to extinguish the East candle)

HYMN: 264 Spring Buds of Hope (Green Book)

In the spring time of our year
Silver buds of hope appear.
Will they blossom? Will they grow?
We who plant the seed must know.
Will they blossom? Will they grow?
We who plant the seed must know.

Tender shoots thirst for the sun,
Surging with each day begun.
Banish darkness, hate and fear:
Golden fruit will soon appear.
Banish darkness, hate and fear:
Golden fruit will soon appear.

Welcome, children, welcome here,
Silver buds of our late year.
May our harvest still increase
Joys of fellowship and peace.
May our harvest still increase
Joys of fellowship and peace

*Tune: Lucerna David Evans, 1874 – 1948 Words: William Wolff
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Closing Blessing

As we prepare to leave this sacred space,
may we carry with us the light of love, compassion and the message of renewal.
May our hearts be filled with peace,
and our actions be guided by justice and kindness.

Let us walk in the world with open and compassionate hearts,
ready to meet each moment with courage and grace.
May we find strength in community,
and may our spirits be renewed in the days ahead.

Go in peace and may the flame of love, hope and renewal burn brightly within you.
Amen. So be it.

Extinguishing the Chalice

Closing Music: (FAUN - Tanz mit mir (Duett mit Santiano))

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beXW5s3ZCB4>