

Anthem Of Resurrections

Rev. David E. Bumbaugh

The Unitarian Church in Summit NJ USA

April 3, 1994

< Once upon a time,
when the universe was newly hatched,
the cosmos was empty of living things.
Here and there,
in the dark reaches of space,
gasses and particles had collected
into stars--
not little stars--
twinkle, twinkle little stars,
shining in the night sky--
but gigantic stars,
hotter than any furnace,
burning with a fierce intensity
beyond anything we can imagine.

In the heart of such stars,
in the heat of their burning,
the basic stuff of existence was altered and transformed.
In those stars,
the very particles
which comprise existence
were changed,
and there were born from light and featureless energy
heavy elements,
like iron
and carbon
and all the various substances
which comprise the world we know.

As those ancient stars aged,
their fires began to cool,
and changes occurred in their make-up.
Eventually,
they used up their energy,
and began to die,
as all things must.
Some stars, however,
do not die peacefully,

do not "go gentle into that good night."
Some stars do not just blink off one night
as if someone had turned a switch.
Some stars die
in a massive explosion,
sending the energy
and matter of their beings
hurtling outward in all directions.
And so it was that some stars died
and in their dying
sent iron and carbon and oxygen and all the other elements,
cooked in the white-heat at the heart of the star,
speeding outward into empty space.

For unnumbered eons
this star-stuff
hurtled through space,
until some of it was captured
in the gravitational pull of other stars.
It circled those stars
in great clouds of dust and debris
until, after more unnumbered eons,
some of that dust and debris
began to coalesce
into planets,
small spheres
circling the star
at regular intervals.

In this way
was our solar system born--
Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars
and all the rest.
Dead stars,
dead long eons,
were resurrected
into planets and asteroids and moons.
Our home,
this earth,
is star-stuff,
resurrected into new form and new shape.
You and I and everything we see and touch
began in the heart of a star,
a star which died,
and lives again
in this planet,

in us.

The warmth of your body
is the heat of that ancient star,
tamed to the uses of life.
You and I and all those we love
are star-stuff,
are dead stars,
resurrected to shine
in this small corner of the universe.

UNISON READING:

**Out of the stars in their flight,
out of the dust of eternity,
here have we come,
Star dust and sunlight, mingling
through time and through space.
Out of the stars have we come, up from time;
Out of the stars have we come.**

**Time out of time before time
in the vastness of space,
earth spun to orbit the sun,
Earth, with the thunder of mountains newborn,
the boiling seas.**

**Earth warmed by sun,
lit by sunlight:
this is our home;
Out of the stars have we come**

READING:

There came a time,
on one little planet,
circling one little star
when a miraculous event occurred.
On that little planet,
third out from the star named sun,
the star-stuff began to cool,
and clouds began to form,
and rain fell,
and oceans gathered.

In those oceans,
lit by the light of a warm sun,

or perhaps in the clay which lined the shoreline,
large molecules of matter
coalesced and mingled
and one unnamed day
an invisible line was crossed--
the molecules became living things--
cells which could respond to stimuli,
cells which could seek out nourishment,
cells which could process energy,
cells which could reproduce themselves.
From the stuff of dead stars,
life came into being
on the third planet out
from an insignificant star.

From those first cells
all living things arose:
Trees and birds and rabbits,
snakes and spiders and elephants,
grass and flowers and rutabagas
and you and me,
all are descended from those original cells.
In our bodies,
at every moment,
the life stuff of those ancient cells
is being recreated, reborn, resurrected.
The fluid of our blood and our tears
is salty with the salt of that ancient ocean.
The basic building blocks of our bodies
are the genetic material of those ancient cells
reborn in us, renewing us, from moment to moment.
We are related to every living thing on this planet.
We and all that lives and moves and partakes of being
are those ancient cells
born in some ancient sea
and resurrected,
generation upon generation,
in one form or another,
time out of mind.
Look at your hand,
look at your neighbor,
think of your friends,
your family,
and realize that once upon a time
star-stuff learned to live,
and has been resurrecting itself ever since

in living beings
like you and me.

UNISON READING:

**Mystery hidden in mystery, back through all time,
Mystery rising from rocks in the storm and the sea.
Out of the stars, rising from rocks and the sea,
Kindled by sunlight on earth,
Arose life.**

**Ponder this thing in your heart;
Ponder with awe:
Out of the sea to the land,
Out of the shallows came ferns.**

**Out of the sea to the land,
Up from darkness to light,
Rising to walk and to fly,
Out of the sea trembled life.**

READING:

Have you ever looked into a baby's face?
Seen the moods float across it
like a leaf on a pond?
Have you ever looked into a baby's face
and seen there some familiar, yet strange feature?
All of us have looked at a baby and said,
"He has his father's eyes."
"She has her mother's nose."
"He is the very image of great aunt Gertrude."
"There can be no question about her parentage,
she looks just like her great grandmother!"

Sometimes, of course,
we are looking for similarities
and we find them easily
in the plastic features of an infant.
At other times
the similarities are simply there,
nagging at us to remember,
like three notes of a nearly forgotten tune.
Sometimes,
looking into a mirror,
we see in our own faces

the images of women and men
from whom we received our beings
as a gift,
and we are stunned
to see our parents
or our grandparents
staring back at us
from that mirror.

The truth is, of course,
we are all of us
the reincarnation of the generations who have preceded us.
The family genes
are passed from parent to child,
features appearing now,
then disappearing,
only to reappear in a later generation.
Unnumbered generations of men and women,
most of them long dead
and no longer remembered
are resurrected in our bodies.
The shape of their noses,
the color of their eyes,
the texture of their hair,
the shape of their faces,
the structure of their bodies,
the facility of their minds
are our inheritance.
Shuffled together,
playing hide-and-seek,
they combine and recombine
and are resurrected in every generation.
Some scientists say
the entire human race
can be traced genetically
to one female who lived in ancient Africa.
If that be so,
we are all kin,
and we are all resurrected versions
of that ancient mother.

We are more than this, however.
We are also inheritors of the meanings
human beings have discovered in this world.
We learn the great accomplishments and dismal failures of the past;
they sink into our minds,

they color our expectations,
and they are reborn in our actions
and in our dreams.
The stories are told
of men and women who lived lives
of power and promise and passion,
who invested themselves in dreams
they would not abandon
who poured themselves into
visions of truth and love and hope.
Some stories cluster around familiar names,
names of mythic power;
other stories are more private,
honoring the quiet heroes of our own lives,
women and men who believed in us
who helped us be stronger, wiser, healthier.
We hear the stories,
and their deeds, their values, their dreams
are built into our own expectations;
the lives they lived
are resurrected in our own.

And in some wonderful way
our own lives are without visible limit.
Some of us are, or will be parents,
passing the genetic heritage
to a new generation,
to a future we cannot see
except through the eyes of our children
and our grandchildren
and our great grandchildren.

All of us
pass the cultural heritage of humanity
to the next generation
and on to a future beyond our imagining.
In this sense,
all children are our children.
From us they learn
the vast ancestry of the human race,
traced through ancient seas
and ancient clay-beds
on to the burning heart
of primordial stars.
From us they learn

of love and hope and trust,
the tools we have developed
to lend meaning and purpose and abundance
to this incredible journey,
begun in the heart of stars
and moving toward an unimaginable destiny.
Our values,
our dreams,
our hopes,
our meanings
all will be passed on to a future
through the children of the human race.
By way of them,
we shall be resurrected
again and yet again.

Is it not marvelous to discover
that resurrection
is not a once-upon-a-time thing?
Is it not marvelous to discover
that resurrection
is the mode of being
in this universe,
our home?

UNISON READING:

**Ponder this thing in your heart,
Life up from the sea;
Eyes to behold, throats to sing, mates to love.
Life from the sea,
Warmed by sun,
Washed by rain,
Life from within, giving birth,
Rose to love.**

**This is the wonder of time;
This is the marvel of space;
Out of the stars swung the earth;
Life on earth rose to love.**

**This is the marvel of humanity,
Rising to see and to know;
Out of your heart, cry wonder;
Sing that we live.**

--Unison readings adapted from Robert Terry Weston)

A SPRINGTIME COMMUNION

The earth has gone the round of the seasons:
from the vibrant green of the spring's new life
to the lush richness of warm summer,
to the brilliant fulfillment of riotous autumn
to the white winter, demanding endurance.
Now we stand again
ensorcelled by the promise
of new life in spring.

Here,
at this moment,
when spring is more than a hope
less than a reality,
at this moment,
when it is an act of faith
to find spring in
the rosy corona of the maple
the yellow-green whisper of the willow,
the dawn songs of unseen birds,
at this moment,
we gather as the human clan has gathered,
time out of mind,
to celebrate life
to celebrate the resurrection of life
from the hand of death.

It is fitting we should celebrate
the renewal of life and hope
using those elements which have reminded
unnumbered generations of
our rootedness in,
our reliance upon the nurturing earth
from which we spring,
to which we return.

**From the beginning of time the human tribe
has stood in reverence
before the fecundity of the good earth.
From Gaia, the Great Mother Earth,
comes all that sustains us.
From her come the fruits and grains,
the waters and grasses**

without which we die.

**Time out of mind we have watched
grain buried in the dark soil,
the seed of life returned to the Great Mother.**

**Time out of mind we have watched
sprouting seeds breaking through the soil,
reaching upward to the sun
growing,
ripening,
returning new seed for our nurturance.**

**Time out of mind we have watched
grain crushed and broken,
ground into dust-like flour,
seemingly destroyed.
Mixed with water and leavening,
it stirs,
rises,
becomes bread, the sustainer of our lives.**

**Small wonder that in the cycle of the grain,
in the making of bread,
we find a metaphor for our own existence.
Like the grain,
we spring from the earth,
produce seed--**

**living children,
worthy deeds--
and in season return
to the Great Mother of all.
Like the grain,
sometimes we are broken,
we are ground down.
We dare trust that like the grain
we may return,
in new form,
in the memories of those who loved us,
to nourish a new generation.**

**We break this bread,
and in the breaking,
evoke images from the ancient history of the human race.
In this sacrament, more ancient than we can know,**

we express our wordless adoration
of this Holy Earth,
our Mother,
our Home.
In this ancient sacrament, older than any written record,
we express our wordless awe
before the miracle of life
strong enough to overcome death,
to rise from the grave
in a new generation.
In this ancient sacrament, older than human memory,
we embrace the profound wonder
that out of seeming death
come the sources of nourishment and renewal.
We break this bread
in celebration of the great truth
that on this tiny planet,
hurtling through the blackness of space,
death is made the servant of life
and out of death
life forever renews itself.

BREAK THE BREAD

**None of us knows how many human generations
have tended the vine,
harvested its clustered fruit,
crushed its rich globes**

**'til juice flowed red as blood
into skins and pots and vats,
to be stored and fermented,
saved for festive occasions.
For longer than we can remember,
the fruit of the vine has been our companion.**

**In caves
and reed huts,
and wattled cottages
in temples,
and castles,
and shining palaces,
we have shared the fruit of the vine
in moments of joy and sorrow,
in times of high celebration,**

to mark momentous turnings.
We have savored its taste,
rich with the hint of by-gone summer afternoons
and autumn evenings,
musky with the suggestion of freshly turned soil.
We have felt it warm us
when the world has grown strangely chill,
offering us hints of other worlds,
other possibilities.
The grape seemed a special blessing given the human tribe
by Gaia, the Great Mother Earth.
For longer than any human memory,
we have tended the vine,
gathered the heavy grapes,
crushed them until the juice flows,
and thus is the blessing received,
the gift bestowed.

Small wonder that in the vine
we read a hidden message about our own lives:
that our own suffering and sorrow,
the crushing blows inflicted upon us
by mindless time and human folly
need not be pointless,
may be transformed
by faithfulness and steadfastness
and shaped into a gift for others.

**This wine which we now pour out,
this fruit of the vine
evokes wordless images
from the ancient history of the race.
In this sacrament we offer thanks
to the Great Mother of All
for the unearned gifts which enrich life,
lending it unexpected moments of peace and joy.
In this sacrament we celebrate
the fact of grace,
which decrees that things are not always as they seem,
that out of faithfulness and steadfastness
out of suffering and sorrow and fate's crushing blows
may come unsought blessings
for us and our children and our children's children.**

POUR THE WINE

In this early spring,
when the season of new life is both faith and reality,
we share the gifts of the earth,
the fruit of grain and vine,
and rejoice together
that out of death and pain
life is ever resurrected and renewed.
With loaf and cup we give thanks
for all that which dies
and is resurrected in our own lives.
Here, in the early spring, we covenant with each other
to be mindful
of the gifts which come to us,
of the lives which are expressed in us,
of the hopes and dreams which have shaped us,
and to make of our lives
a source of renewal and hope
a springtime of promise
and resurrection
for generations yet to come.