



"Witnessing the Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit in our Lives"

March/April 2009

Pentecost/Lent

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THE FULFILLMENT: THE NEXT STAGE OF CHRISTIANITY MIGHT SURPRISE YOU, PART TWO" BY REV. TOM SCHADE

If Jesus was the Son of God, and had performed countless miracles, why did he not save Himself from arrest, torture and crucifixion? Surely, He had the power to do so. He chose not to.

Paul offers this description:
Let the same mind be in you that was* in Christ Jesus,
6who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
7but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
8 he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross. (Letter to the Philippians 2-5-8a.)

The ancient fathers of the church referred to this process by which Jesus emptied himself of his divinity as kenosis – a greek word meaning emptying.

Jesus did not hold his divinity (equality with God) as something to be used, but "[he] emptied himself." Paul suggests that we ought to think the same way about ourselves.

What if Paul is not only speaking to us as individuals, but as the body of Christ, the church universal? How do we, as participants in organized Christianity take on the same mind that was in Christ Jesus?

For centuries, the Christian church has declared itself to be God's sole and exclusive agent on Earth. It claimed that it alone held the keys to eternal life and has used the human fear of death to hold earthly power. For centuries the Church had hegemony over the thoughts of men and women; it amassed great wealth and allied herself with every system of oppression and

exploitation under which the world has suffered.

The Church moved through the world as though Christ had saved himself from the cross with divine violence, an army of angels called down from heaven to defeat Rome.

But those days are over. For the last few centuries, men and women have



carved out a secular sphere with some independence from the hegemony of the church. Many in North America and Europe have thought of themselves as no longer under the influence of Christianity at all. A wall has been built to keep the church away from the levers of state power; the sword of the Prince is no longer wielded by the Church. What was Caesar's was rendered unto him; and only the free human spirit was left.

I have argued that the emergence of secular society can be seen as a fulfillment or the completion of the Western religious traditions, an age when, for ordinary people, their spiritual lives are conducted without regard to duties to religious institutions, rituals, formalized creeds or ordained religious leaders. A person's spiritual life is manifested in ethical living, gratitude, compassion and reverence. Everyone who cares to be is a free-lance seeker of the truth or a plain-clothes monk.

Now the church stands chastened and humbled, rapidly becoming powerless in the larger society. Its sacred book, the Bible, is unread; its mainline Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic churches are empty, its doctrines are metaphors and archaic phrases. Its preachers use stories of daily life to prove the relevance of the Bible, in a reverse flow of meaning.

The fundamentalists and evangelicals fight back against the tide of secularism and modernism, reasserting the authority of the Bible, even if they have to claim that dinosaurs walked with humans, and the gays and lesbians we all know are abominations unto the Lord. More often that not, the authority of Christianity is being asserted to justify other long-standing oppressions and injustices. There will be an institution known as the Christian church in the future, of course, but in North America and Europe, it will survive as a backward looking instrument of survival for embattled ethnicities.

Can Christianity exist in the world without its claim to power and authority, without claiming some unique status of a special relationship to God?

Nineteenth century Unitarians, and to a lesser extent, the Universalists, started to move in this direction. The Unitarians developed an approach to doctrine that favored individual freedom of belief; the Universalists a doctrine of salvation that extended to all. Their points of departure were different, but the effect was the same. Both were imagining a Christianity that had renounced its claim of a God-given authority to coerce.

Unitarian Universalism, if you squint a little, can be seen as an unplanned experiment in kenotic Christianity, or self-emptied Christianity. It jettisons all claims to being anything other than

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Lent and Easter

PRESIDENT REV. KATHLEEN C. ROLENZ

Good News

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*"In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying "He saved others; he cannot save himself...He trusts in God, let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said "I am God's Son."--
Matthew 27: 41, 43*

It's dark and cold where I am right now. The groundhog saw his shadow and back into the hole he goes. There is a big blurry yellowish thing in the sky that some people call the sun, but I haven't seen it for weeks. We're told that underneath the layers of snow and ice there does exist, some green thing waiting for the right configuration of sun, warmth, and water to germinate seeds, but I am a faithless person in the dead of winter, at times believing that the place I live, both physically and spiritually, should be named simply "Gray." Of course for those of you who live in sunny climes, who know not the realities of snow and Lake Effect, you may have a different experience during this season of the year. It may be your rainy season, or your vacation season, or it may be the "summer" of your year. Whatever the weather, we are creatures that live in and out of time--and the season of Lent through Easter is, in a word, Extraordinary Time.

The period of Lent and Easter has become my favorite season of the year, because I see it as the greatest opportunity, more so than Christmas, Epiphany, Advent or Pentecost, for spiritual deepening. After the solemn reminder of our mortality on Ash Wednesday, we trek the forty days journey through the wilderness of our souls--sometimes wandering, other times being nourished by Scripture or Fellowship. We may give up a habit, let go of a grudge once and for all, embrace a new, healthier or saner practice--and all of this culminating in Holy Week--the Greatest Time out of Time. We may deepen our relationship with Christ, as we seek to understand what he meant when he was believed to claim simply "I am God's Son."

When I look up at the ever present cloudy skies of Cleveland, I think about Jesus's claim--that I am God's Son--and if I simply substitute a "u" for "o" I can become God's Sun too. Jesus's light shown on all those whom he encountered, breaking through centuries of bitter divides, indifference to the outcast, injustice to women, disregard for children. I can see the Sun breaking through layers of Gray--of what seemed impermeable--to what is now becoming clearer, lighter, more radiant.

I hope that that is your experience this Easter season--of finding a way to let your love of Unitarian Universalist Christianity shape you, illumine you, and find the radiance that exists both within and without. May God's Peace, and Christ's wisdom, be yours, this Season of Extraordinary Time.

Love and Blessings,

Kathleen

Good News Issues

First, an apology for the lateness of the Nov./Dec. Advent and Christmas issue of Good News. The ice storm in New England affected both our printer and our mailing house schedule. And the issue is mailed out from there, east to west coast, so that affects delivery dates. We are moving up our deadlines in order to prevent this in the future.

Second, a reminder that the Jan./Feb. Epiphany issue of Good News is online at the www.uuchristian.org website, and in a format where it can be printed off for reading. It was also emailed to all those who requested receiving it that way. This will also be the format for the July/August Summer/Pentecost issue. If you would like to receive it by email for all issues, as well as the special online issues, please contact the Editor at erikanollwebb@gmail.com. If you did not receive the Jan./Feb. 2009 issue, and are not able to read it online or by email, please let the UUCF Office know and we will be glad to print and mail a copy to you; the same for the Summer issue. We are doing this for our prisons ministry.

Third, please send book reviews, movie reviews, music reviews, prayers, sermons, religious commentary, poems, and more for sharing both with the Good News readers as well as on our website, to RevRonRobinson@aol.com or the UUCF office by mail. Thank you.

"Reconciling Ourselves"

By Gil Guerrero, UUCF Board member,

Preached at Horizon UU Church, Carrollton, TX where he is Congregational Administrator and in a UUCF Group.

Readings:

From Hymns of the Spirit with
Services - Beacon Press, ©1937
Prayer of Confession from the Twelfth Order of
Service

O thou unseen source of peace and holiness, we come into thy secret place to be filled with thy pure and solemn light. As we come to thee, we remember that we have been drawn aside from the straight and narrow way; that we have not walked lovingly with each other and humbly with thee; that we have feared what is not terrible and wished for what is not holy. In our weakness be thou the quickening power of life. Arise within our hearts as healing, strength and joy. Day by day may we grow in faith, in charity, in the purity by which we may see thee, and in the larger life of love to which thou callest us. Amen.

Von Ogden Vogt, Singing The Living Tradition:

Before the wonders of life we acknowledge our failures to see and to revere;

Before the sanctities of life we are ashamed of our disrespects and indignities;

Before the gifts of life we own that we have made choices of lesser goods, and here today seek the gifts of the spirit; Before the heroisms of life we would be enlarged to new devotion.

The easy prayer goes like this:

I confess to Almighty God, and to you my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault. In my thoughts and in my words. In what I have done and what I have failed to do. And I ask Blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord, Our God.

I call this the "easy" prayer, because this was the prayer that you got to say in a group every Sunday; the General Penitential rite was part of the Mass. We would all examine ourselves, but in the privacy of our own anonymity, thank you very much.

In the blessed Mother Church of my youth, the Sacrament of Reconciliation was the gateway to receive the Sacrament of Communion. They gave you plenty of training, but when that moment came, when you and all the rest of your little kiddie posse were lined up waiting to go in for that first visit to the confessional, it was gut-check time. The priest is sitting in his booth, typically between two other booths for the formalized version. There was a truly terrifying informal variant in my youth, where the priest would just set up shop in a big open room, with a simple divider in between himself and the penitent. There were a LOT of us little scamps who said there was no way they're going to get us to confess THAT WAY!

Inside each booth is a kneeler, and a screened window with a sliding door, about head high for a kneeling person. In a terrifically clever and modern way, the kneeler is typically equipped with a pressure switch that turns on a light outside your particular confessional to let folks outside know that there are "doins' a transpirin'" inside. It was pretty tense waiting for that terrifying moment when your turn came up. You've been examining your sinful life, to figure out what you need to say, and you know there must be something, and you know the priest is there to hear YOU...

Bless Me Father for I have sinned... We're both here. I know it. You know it. But we have to be official about why we're here today. You have to own your sinful self.

It has been "bluzbluza" since my last confession... Now when I was young, confession was pretty regular, so I could rattle off with good conscience that it had been a week or 3 weeks, or whatever, since I had been in for a visit. As you work your way up the age ladder, though, and have more control

over when you have to go in there, you start to think "*Wow, do I really want to tell him that it has been THAT long between visits.*" And then you list your sins.

Now I admit, I often felt pretty inadequate as a sinner: not because I didn't feel sorry for my sins, but my sins seemed pretty lame. I said a bad word. I had impure thoughts about that girl over in the third row. I took the Lord's name in vain.

Okay, so now it's time to wrap it up: *For these and all my sins, I am truly sorry.* I often wondered, about that "*all my sins*" part: was that for the stuff you forgot or was it really a *dodge* for the ones you didn't want to share? I think more than one of those guys I went to catechism with were using it as a *dodge*; what can I say - they seemed, to my naive self, a pretty rough crowd.

And then he gives you your penance. Typically a number of prayers, a few "Hail Marys", A handful of "Our Fathers", an "Act of Contrition." And he sends you on your way and tells you to sin no more.

There is nothing like the spring in your step coming out of there! You made it! *I can do those Hail Marys standing on my head! I am alive! THE WORLD IS GLORIOUS AND I AM A PART OF IT! THE WEIGHT IS LIFTED! I am reconciled with God and the World!*

Until next time!

Now I know my Protestant Brothers and Sisters, turned their back on most of this ritualized stuff centuries ago. But confession is not just a quirk of Catholics. The Buddhists have a tradition of confessing your sins to your elders, as a discipline in understanding your truth. Additionally,

("Reconciling Ourselves" Continued from page 3)

both our Buddhist and Hindu brothers and sisters have to think about running up that Karmic debt.

Yom Kippur, the Jewish High Holy Day, is the annual Day of Atonement, where the focus is on Sin and Forgiveness. The Kol Nidre is the start of that service, and goes like this:

In the tribunal of Heaven and the tribunal of earth, by the permission of God — praised be He — and by the permission of this holy congregation, we hold it lawful to pray with transgressors.

The cantor then chants the prayer beginning with the words Kol Nidrei and repeats three times the following words:

All personal vows we are likely to make, all personal oaths and pledges we are likely to take between this Yom Kippur and the next Yom Kippur, we publicly renounce. Let them all be relinquished and abandoned, null and void, neither firm nor established. Let our personal vows, pledges and oaths be considered neither vows nor pledges nor oaths.

The leader and the congregation then say together three times

May all the people of Israel be forgiven, including all the strangers who live in their midst, for all the people are in fault.

I have to admit, I really like that acknowledgment of *all* of our faultiness, and the prayer that even the *strangers* be forgiven.

In the readings you can see the confession from the 1937 Unitarian prayerbook, and a sung responsorial/confession from our modern era prayerbook. I would guess that many of you were pretty surprised to see such a thing was actually IN our prayerbook, weren't you? *That's not UU... Is it? UU makes me feel good... I don't believe in that superstitious confessional stuff...*

I can see where it would be possible to get that idea. It doesn't come up much,

does it? *Why is that?*

Some of this comes, I think, from our "attractive" penchant for thinking "we got it going on." Hey, we're a smart bunch of progressive liberal religionists. Confession has that extra little humbling twist of the knife, though. Not only do I *not own* my sinfulness? *Ouch...* And that seems to be one of the first challenges admitting that we have sinned.

Whether you believe in a universal scorekeeper, a clock maker, a process, or check the theological "none of the above" box, sitting down and looking at where we missed the mark puts us in that terrible position of being beholden. Maybe not to a galactic scorekeeper, but we have to acknowledge that we let our actions get away from us and that it spreads beyond us. We are forced to acknowledge that the stinky old "interdependent web" is all interdependent, and we've let our shortcomings spill out into someone else's life. We can be amazing forces for good and healing, but we can also terribly muck things up.

I don't think humans are sinful because we're inherently evil or anything like that. I think we're sinful because we're so woefully inherently ignorant and oblivious.

Rabbi Arthur Green says that early Rabbis believed that "'good and evil' inclinations are the forces within each person who lead us to do good and evil..." And that sometimes they are personified and depicted as quarreling with one another, each trying to get us to follow their path.

Philip Simmons, in a UU World article called "The Usefulness of Sin" thinks it is easy for us to slide into a comfortable moral and spiritual complacency, and I agree. We live in one of the most pampered times, in the one of the most pampered countries the world has ever known, and it can be

easy to lose track of what life is like for the rest of humanity. He shares the common definition of sin from our Judaic background: of an arrow missing the mark, but he also counsels that we examine what mark we were actually trying to hit.

Really, I'm not advocating going around dwelling on what sinful wretches we are, but there is a missed opportunity for growth in never examining our sins. Ask a scientist or successful businessperson: *which events were more instructive — the successes or the failures?*

One of our biggies, Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson said: *"People wish to be settled. It is only as far as they are unsettled that there is any hope for them."* And perhaps Confession is a piece of that unsettlement. There is also a vital and integral piece at the end of that Act of Reconciliation: the healing. Being willing to acknowledge our shortcomings and brokenness is the first step to that healing. There is an easy trap that we can fall into: imagining that if EVERYONE ELSE would just be better people, the world would right itself. We focus on what everyone ELSE needs to do rather than examining what WE can do be better witnesses in the world.

"It's that darn speck in my neighbor's eye, I'm worried about. Have you got a tissue? You probably have noticed my eye waters like crazy around this log..."

While our theologian James Luther Adams points out that the unexamined faith is not worth having, a more ancient source, Socrates points out the unexamined life is not worth living. Perhaps this is a bit of the examination he suggests.

May we have the courage to examine our strengths AND our frailties, and the wisdom to always reconcile our sins.

WHAT DO I SAY TO MY BURNING BUSH?

by Rev. James Grant, UU Church of San Diego

I have recently, after too many years, had an epiphany about Biblical interpretation. For too long I, and perhaps other UU Christians, have limited the interpretation of the both Christian and Jewish Scriptures to the academic possibilities of “higher and lower” criticism with a bit of expository comment thrown in.

To be sure we have, on occasion, mentioned the significance of meaning without regard to factual niceties. Our UUCF newsletter, *Good News* has frequently offered articles beginning with a Biblical text followed by meanings for twenty-first century Christians. Sometimes those Biblical references appear to be taken at face value, without interpretation.

My epiphany is that the Biblical stories are dramas which call me to the stage in a universal drama. The Bible is more than a collection of stories which have meaning across all ages and situations, and certainly was never meant to be a book of factual data I can no longer sit in the audience, rather, I am an actor in the Biblical drama.

What do you say to your burning bush? The story of Moses confrontation with a bush which burned but was not consumed may or may not be factual. The story is only real when I realize I am confronted, sometimes daily, with a “burning bush” which calls me to commitment. I am being asked to go to twenty-first century Pharaohs and say, “Let my people go!” I, not Moses, am the primary actor in the drama of the burning bush.

The story of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt may or may not be true. What is true is that I find myself enslaved by ghosts from my past, by unrequited pain long since forgotten by the perpetrator.

One ancient rabbi said the sea did not part until the first Israelite stepped into the water. Likewise, I will never be free until I dare to step out leaving behind all that enslaves me.

There are giants in the land. How many words have been preached about the faithlessness of the Children of Israel who listened to the majority rather than the minority while standing at the border of the Promised Land? I stand frightened by the prospect of what might be; of what could ruin me: Sometimes the estimation with which I am held by my friends is a giant. My retirement fund or my savings account may be huge giants keeping me from promise. How easy for me to wander another forty or more years while trying to get up my nerve to claim my promised destiny.

These are only a few of the scenes in the Biblical Drama starring Jim Grant. There are more, but the temptation I face—we all face—is to identify with the “good people” in the Biblical stories, and thereby not only miss the point, we miss the call to “places everyone;” the play really is “the thing!”

I do not know him! In his recent book, *The Religious Case Against Belief*, James P. Carse has over fifty long lines of “the number and variety of Jesuses appearing in the twentieth century,” concluding as have many before him that we cannot know the “historical Jesus.” I am too often Peter standing by the fire. I may not swear that I do not know Jesus, but in my drama I act as though I do not. I am so intent to get to that meeting at church that I probably pass by on the other side from someone in need. I am so insecure about my finances that I walk away from a call to commitment.

Make it as secure as you can. Pilate

is giving stage directions. Oh, how secure I find myself in my tomb, with the great rock guarding the entrance and the soldiers watching. I am buried in a tomb, as sure as one carved out of rock; even more, as one built of granite blocks such as: unwillingness to change; afraid I’ll make a fool of myself; insecurity born of poverty; even something as mundane as fear of a bank overdraft.

While I have doubts about the physical resurrection of Jesus; I have none about how secure I feel in my tomb, not even sure I want to be resurrected to a new kind of life.

Well the point is made. Biblical interpretation which begins, and particularly which ends with the externals—some historic characters acting on the stage while I watch--will provide a pretty thin soup. Biblical interpretation which will call me to commitment, to escape from slavery, to daring, to confession, to life, must be internal, and will nourish my sojourn. If I fail to act the Biblical drama I will be once removed, still in the audience no matter how poignant the scene.

Biblical interpretation falls victim to two kinds of hubris. The first is the pride of Biblical literalists who “know exactly what God said” as though Infinity can be captured in finite terms. The other hubris is liberal, the pride of thinking the Bible is nothing more than ancient stories best used for homiletical illustration, leaving both preacher and congregant in the audience.

The universal, timeless meanings of Scripture wait for actors who climb up on the stage in the glare of the lights and act in the Biblical drama.

Handing On Christ

Rev. Ron Robinson, Executive Director UUCF

This Resurrection Season I am contemplating how we "*hand on that which we have received*", quoting Paul in First Corinthians 15. Though he himself had a personal mystical and transforming encounter with Christ, his fuller understanding of the good news, he says, came from his time spent with others. In commitment and community, struggling to make sense of life and loss and liberation and love, Christ comes. And then Christ is handed on.

Biblical accounts of the resurrection throughout the gospels---Mary Magdalene rushing back to the male disciples, the two friends on the road to Emmaus turning back to share their news in Jerusalem where they'd just fled--all show the importance of handing on that which we have received. I believe that includes not just belief, but handing on our doubts, failures, weaknesses too as we learn to walk freely, but oh so fully, with Jesus. And it doesn't mean waiting until we have a comfortable comprehension of what Jesus means to us so that we can communicate it clearly; if we are especially growing in faith that may never come to us to our satisfaction. And it doesn't mean limiting ourselves to words and ideas.

After 2000 years it may seem hard to live in such a "ground-opening-under-our-feet, yet we-never-felt-more-rooted" experience. And yet when we are around those, for example, who are at UUCF Revival for the first time, or when we meet people in a UUCF group or online forum so thrilled to have a chance to explore and share this presence with others in an affirming way, then we can know that Easter continues and is not confined to just one holy day, one season, one time or place. And, particularly, not just coming in one way.

One of the reasons we should do all we can to hand on what we have

received from others hands is what we then receive back too. And because we are a part of a two thousand year old "hands on" movement.

For all these reasons, this season especially I highly commend or "hand on" for your own spiritual nourishment and as a good book for a UU church discussion circle, the book "take this bread: a radical conversion" (Ballantine Books, 2007) by one such "new Christian", Sara Miles. She was raised atheist, a lesbian, a left-wing journalist who had covered revolutions across the globe, a mom who was single for many years, and a lifelong cook who found food not only central to her own spirit but who, as soon as she discovered Christ at the welcome table in an Episcopal church in San Francisco, helped create through much struggle a massive church food pantry and community system to "hand on what she had received."

As a new follower of Jesus, one of her first feelings was gratitude for all those who had come before her, and all those who were now around her, even when there was disagreement. She writes: "My questions, my doubts, my failures: Everything I lived had been lived by others... But even more important, according to Christianity, it had been lived by God... This is what had made my conversion to Christianity possible and what remained true to me. It was humiliating and comforting and yet oddly freeing. It made things so much less lonely as well as less grandiose. Very close to me, right in my hands and in my mouth, as Moses said, was a force drawing me closer and closer to the presence I yearned for.

"And rather than protecting me and sealing me off in a community of shared doctrine and rules, this truth thrust me into the wildness of faith... My way was through the struggles of

the world....

"... Putting the Word into action, in ordinary life, unmediated by religious scripts, raised the stakes.. Doing the Gospel rather than just quoting it was the best way I could find out what God was up to.

"...the point of church isn't to get people to come to church...<it is> to feed them, so they can go out and, you know, be Jesus..."My only sense of "mission" now was to show others that they, too, could feed and touch and heal and love, without fear. To catch them up in the desire to see more, taste more, without caring if they got a doctrine right or became a regular at my church. To get them walking, without the safety net of ritual correctness, along the path that Jesus blazed and to share the feast of their lives with others."

There is my Easter message this year. Hand on what you have received. If you haven't felt yourself receiving much lately, hang out with others, with those discovering Jesus, truly madly deeply, for the first time, and create a space for it to happen if you need to. Do the gospel. Be Jesus. Start or serve at a food pantry or simply share your feast, your supper, with others. Show others the good news in one of a myriad of ways.

As much as we need many new members, and many more dollars from current members, what we in the UUCF really need is to inspire one another to bring the extraordinary touch of Jesus' spirit into our ordinary lives, relationships, communities, and receive it from others too, and then share these stories. May it begin, or begin again for you, this Easter. And when it does, write or call to us so we can help you hand it on to others.

Special Letter from Revival Team Leader Dean Drake

Jesus said that whenever two or three are gathered in his name, he would be there also. Whether or not Unitarian Universalist Christians reach this threshold in their home congregation, they can gather, worship together, pray and raise their voices in song at Revival.

Since the first Revival in 1999 in New Orleans, those seeking a Unitarian Universalist Christian experience have traveled around the country to cities from Washington DC to Fort Worth, Texas. **On March 26 – 29th, we will gather again in the spirit of Revival, this time at the home city of the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship, for Revival 2009—Tulsa, Oklahoma, held in All Souls Unitarian Church, one of the largest UU churches in the world.**

Perhaps there has never been a more significant time for Revival. Economic distress and global trial compels us to seek the comfort and peace provided by worshipping God and learning to live a more loving life together with other Free Christians and followers of Jesus. At a time when our UUA connection remains in flux, we make an unmistakable statement when we stand together as a faith community witnessing the love of Jesus. Uniting as part of the greater Christian tradition and looking into our future beyond our denominational affiliation turns our focus to the future and away from the conflicts of the past.

With the significance of Revival 2009 in mind, our team has put together a meaningful program grounded in our

faith and pointed toward the future of the Unitarian Universalist Christian movement.

Our keynote speaker, the Reverend Carlton Pearson, was cited by UUA President William Sinkford in his recent column in the UU World as an example of our values moving beyond our denomination. The Reverend Pearson was the force behind the New Dimensions Worship Center, a mega-church, until the truth of our Universalist doctrine was revealed to him. His message and example are examples of the future of our faith. Another program at **this year's revival intended to refocus and reinvigorate the Unitarian Universalist Christian movement** is a discussion of the emergence church movement from a variety of viewpoints. This program, chaired by the Reverend Susan Smith, promises to be as exciting as it is informative.

Throughout Revival 2009 will be several threads to engage our spirituality and deepen our relationship with God. The Small Groups will be working with a new UUA resource, Spirit of Life curriculum, adapting it to help deepen our Christian understanding of self. A program of centering prayer will provide another tool to help our relationship with God grow and deepen. A variety of workshop experiences will enlighten and motivate us and provide us resources, ideas, and new practices to take back home. **And we will once again offer that most ancient of Christian sacraments – baptism.**

Baptism is a ritual that signifies one's entrance into the Christian community. It is a sacred covenant between an individual and God where the mistakes of the past are forgiven and a commitment to live a future life based on love is made. It is a promise to the individual by the community of believers that make up the spiritual family to support, reinforce and guide the journey to live a more faith-focused life.

Within the broader sphere of Unitarian Universalism, the Fellowship is the one institution with the specific mission to support Unitarian Universalist Christians in their faith journey, and comes the closest to being the faith family for many. We encourage any who wish to be baptized in a Unitarian Universalist faith community to consider coming to Revival 2009 and participating in the baptismal process. Similarly, we hope that many of you who support the Fellowship in this cause will join us at Revival to support those who are receiving baptism.

Revival 2009 promises to be a pivotal event in the history of the Christian Fellowship. Those who have supported the Fellowship in the past and wish to guide it into our new and exciting future should consider joining us at Revival 2009. It promises to be a moving, meaningful and exciting event. If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer during Revival, please let us know.

In the Faith,

Dean Drake, for the Revival 2009 Team

(The Fullfilment: Part 2" Continued from page 1)
a human institution, it places Christian doctrine and teaching on an equal level with all other forms of human attempts at understanding, it promises neither reward nor punishment. It retains the ethical and moral teachings of the church, the organizational structure of the free church. In the beginning, it operated within the cultural milieu of Christianity, but that has broadened in recent decades.

Unitarian Universalist Christians have thought that Unitarian Universalism has "fallen away" from Christianity, "descending" into a vague new age

secularist quasi-faith. It's all regrettable and unfortunate.

But it may just be that Unitarian Universalism is Christianity self-emptied, renouncing and putting aside what is essential to its identity as a special separate thing, and retaining what is necessary to a good and faithful and ethical life.

It is like a death to empty oneself of that which makes you special.

But Easter is a time when we are reminded again by our story that death

is not the end, but a part of renewal and resurrection. "Let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus be in you."

"The hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. God is spirit and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth." *Jesus, John 4:20-24*

"Be ours a religion which, like sunshine goes everywhere; its temple, all space; its shrine, the good heart; its creed, all truth; its ritual, works of love; its profession of faith, divine living."
Theodore Parker

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2009 Revival Calling You

Besides the dynamic experience ahead with Bishop Carlton Pearson, and all our planned and diverse worship services, we will also have a special small group experience and an array of workshops at the **UUCF Revival March 26-29 at All Souls Unitarian Church, Tulsa, OK**. Go to www.uuchristian.org/revival for the latest schedule and information.

Small Group Participants will be led to go deeper on their personal Christian journeys, gaining insights from their shared reflections and interactions. Each session is designed to bring group members into deeper Christian community through understanding and personal sharing.

Session 1 -- Sharing Our Journeys.

Session 2 -- Our Relationship to and with Prayer:

Session 3 -- Affirmations and Closing:

We are seeking experienced small group leaders to lead our spiritual small groups at Revival. If interested, please contact melanie.morelensminger@gmail.com by March 1.

Revival Workshops will be:

"Gnostic Christians"

"Walking the Labyrinth"

"Saving Jesus: from the Christian Right and Secular Left"

"Kenotic Christianity"

"Meditation and Stretching" "Discerning Vocation,"

"The Book of Revelation,"

There will also be a special panel on The Emerging Church.

Registrations are available online at the UUCF website, or by mail. Full time registrations are \$150 through March 13 and \$160 full time for late registration and at the door. Early registration also covers Friday lunch, Friday dinner, and Saturday lunch all at the church. Saturday only registrations are available for \$60 through March 13 with lunch included, and \$50 late registration or at the door but without lunch option. If you have any questions please contact the UUCF office.