

“The Roots of Easter”©

Sermon by Rev. Duffy Peet

Shared with the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bozeman on April 1, 2018

In churches throughout Bozeman, throughout Montana, as well as across this country, congregations are gathered, like we are this morning, to celebrate Easter. In the vast majority of congregations, those who have come together share an understanding not only of the origin but also of the meaning of Easter. As I would imagine most of you are aware, the commonly held understanding in most congregations isn't that today celebrates Ostara, the goddess of springtime and the dawn. And most congregations aren't remembering or thinking about the time Ostara and spring arrived late one year, just as she appears to be late this year. In typical Unitarian Universalist style, the Story for All Ages that Marie shared earlier in our service clearly isn't the commonly understood meaning or origin of this holiday. But the story we heard is a significant part of how Easter got its name and the reason Easter is celebrated at this particular time of year.

As UU's, we seem to frequently step beyond commonly held understandings. We especially seem to step beyond commonly held understandings and perspectives when it comes to matters regarding religion. In our Fellowship, and probably within most other UU congregations, you will find a wide variety of opinions and perspectives. I am reasonably certain there is a range of opinions and perspectives about Easter here this morning. So before I say very much about this holiday, I would like to hear from you. I would invite you to take a few moments to think about this holiday. When you think of Easter, what comes to mind? Now, think of one or two words that you connect with this holiday. When you are ready, I would ask those of you who would like to share your one or two words to raise your hand. I can then invite you, one at a time, to share with the congregation.

(Possible words or phrases that may be mentioned)

- Easter bunny
- Easter basket
- Easter eggs
- new growth
- new life
- reanimate
- reawakening
- rebirth
- rejuvenation
- regeneration
- renewal
- resurrection
- revival
- spring

Just as I imagined, there is a diversity of opinion here on the subject of Easter. I am delighted to know that this is the case. It reconfirms for me that as a faith tradition

we really do affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning, that allows and encourages people to explore a multitude of perspectives.

And now I want to go back to where I started. As I mentioned previously, most of the congregations that are gathered this morning share a common belief. That belief is that Easter, first and foremost, celebrates the resurrection of Jesus. For most Christians, the resurrection of Jesus is what offers the possibility of eternal life for those who believe in and follow him.

As Unitarian Universalists, we don't generally tend to focus our attention or our energy on the idea of an afterlife. We focus instead on this world and our current lifetime. And at this time of year, at least in the northern hemisphere, we focus on a very different resurrection. Our attention is on the resurrection of life from death that is transpiring, or will be transpiring soon, as spring progresses.

So now I want to invite you to think not just about Easter, but about spring, and the resurrection of life that comes with spring. Again, I would invite you to think of one or two words. I invite you to think of words that represent spring and the resurrection of life it brings. This time, instead of sharing one at a time, I would like our sharing to represent what happens in spring. Things just start popping up, unexpectedly, all over the place. So if you are ready, I invite you now to let your words spring forth, just as sprouts of new life begin to do each year at this time. (Allow time for sharing)

Thank you for sharing your word or words with us. The words you have spoken are at least some of what we celebrate today. (Possibly repeat some of the words spoken) May we respect and honor these words and what they represent. For this time of year reminds us of the importance of the cycle, the cycle of death and resurrection, that is all around us.

In closing, here is a poem I found on the internet that seems to me to be quite appropriate to share on Easter in our Unitarian Universalist community. The author's name, as I found it listed, is ultimatepanicqueen. The poem title is "Spring Is."

Spring Is

Daffodils and crocus breaking through their snowy blankets

Naked winter trees coming to life wearing deep green foliage

An early morning song from a backyard robin

Late afternoon showers with yellow umbrellas

The smell of grass from a fresh cut lawn

Pink cherry blossoms tumbling like confetti on the gentle breeze

Quaint brightly colored birdhouses on a quiet country lane

The scent of lilac wafting through an open window

A hummingbird flapping furiously while drinking from a tubular flower

Flowing hair and flowery sun dresses

Yellow pollen and runny noses

Spring is The season of hope and renewal (pause)

So It Is and Blessed Be.