

Valerie Kauer spoke these words in November 2016

In our tears and agony, we hold our children close and confront the truth: The future is dark.

But my faith dares me to ask:

What if this darkness is not the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness of the womb?

What if our America is not dead but a country still waiting to be born? What if the story of America is one long labor?

What if all the mothers who came before us, who survived genocide and occupation, slavery and Jim Crow, racism and xenophobia and Islamophobia, political oppression and sexual assault, are standing behind us now, whispering in our ear: You are brave? What if this is our Great Contraction before we birth a new future?

Remember the wisdom of the midwife: "Breathe," she says. Then: "Push."

Easter is the major Christian holiday. And it is essentially a day to remember that at the heart of Christianity is the belief that we all are loved that no one of us is doomed to an eternity of suffering, that each of us is promised second chances over and over again. - Easter is about new life and all of us having a second chance - and really who doesn't like the chance to have a second chance.

In our UU tradition we can shy away from Easter. Many of us are not Christian and if we are we are not rigid dogmatic Christians and so we try often to kind of underplay our historical relationship to Christianity and some of its theologies that defy science or are otherwise dogmatic. And because we value a diversity of voices and believe that there is truth in many different faiths, or traditions including humanism and atheism, we shy away from Christianity's triumphalism and attempts to colonize others.

But what if this Easter story is not about death, the tomb, what if it is not about triumphalism – that belief that Jesus rose from the dead so Christianity has the right to rule the world. What if Easter is about what emerges from the tomb. What if Easter is about the process of emergence.

In This Christian story Jesus is transformed in the tomb - but imagine an Easter story where he stayed in the tomb? Where he did not come out where he did not show his face again. In some way it would not have mattered that he was transformed. His followers would have assumed his death was like all others and there was no special message there was nothing different.

Written by Rev. Jennifer Hamlin-Navias

If Jesus does not come out of the tomb it does not matter if his resurrection is a literal one or a figurative one. The Good news of Easter cannot be shared if Jesus did not come out of the tomb.

And imagine if he had emerged from the tomb but no one paid any attention. The story of his coming back happened in the context of his community. Without him emerging from the tomb there would be little if no impact from the resurrection. I don't think I would go as far as to say it takes a village but I do think it is safe to say that first Easter morning could only have happened in a human context.

Howard Dana, in his sermon that he gave at Bethany's ordination, said that these are really hopeful times. Not because everything is going well not because we can see the light not because we can see so much progress. No these are hopeful times because change is happening

Howard Dana spoke about how like Rip Van Winkle America has been asleep for a long time and after the last election we have started the process of waking up of becoming woke to all the "isms" of the world. He said:

"The year 2018 is no time for despair. It is no time for handwringing. It is no time for capitulation. Just the opposite. These are hopeful exciting times—hopeful and exciting because we really do have the power to change things. These are joyous and engaging times—joyous and engaging because we are woke and we ain't going back to sleep again! You and I are not going to pretend sexism and racism don't exist. You and I are not going to pretend immigrants aren't important. You and I are not going to pretend guns aren't a problem in America. We are not going back to sleep. We are not going to ignore women. We are not going to dismiss people of color. We are not going to betray queer folk. We are not going to abuse immigrants. We are not going to turn a blind eye to the poor, the addicted, the ill, or the imprisoned. Caesar can have what he demands—but the rest we are going to give to God! Unitarian Universalism saves lives. Unitarian Universalism redeems people. Unitarian Universalism proclaims justice. You and I are going to champion UU values everywhere we can. We know this fine old faith can make a difference. It has in the past. And it will again in the future. Now that we are woke, we ain't going back to sleep."

The world is being transformed by us and we are being transformed by the world. But no one is going to know unless we share the good news, no one is going to know unless we show up, no one is going to know unless we make ourselves seen.

Second chances sound good. There is hope in that. And birth sounds good - babies are cute and all the possibility is there so much hope. And yet this whole process of change and transformation can be terrifying.

I was 23 when I had my first child and I distinctly remember as I was in the early stages of labor of realizing that nothing, nothing was ever going to be the same again. Up until that point in my life – because I was only 23 and had led a pretty protected life – all my decisions were not final. In that moment I realized that there was only one way through this only forward there was no backing out. It really was the first time in my life where there was no alternative, I couldn't change my mind. Had I not been so distracted by the whole process of the birth I would have been completely freaked out.

Birth is hopeful and terrifying- coming out of the tomb is hopeful and terrifying, showing up is hopeful and terrifying. None of it is easy. In this emergence from the tomb we are given the promise that there are second chances that revelation is not sealed that the possibility of progress is always with us. We are not given the promise that it will all be bunnies and Easter eggs and yummy chocolate. Jesus's followers had a variety of reactions and responses to his emergence from the tomb. The women were terrified, many of his disciples hid in an upper room until he appeared to them. Thomas doubted Jesus re-appearance until Thomas could touch Jesus. No one said Hallelujah we are saved lets go conquer the world. That kind of Christian thinking came from centuries of Christianity being co-opted by the Roman empire.

The message of Easter is not that it is all going to be OK from now on - easy sailing no worries. The message of Easter is that there is a before and an after and our understanding and way of being in the world is different now that we know Jesus has emerged from the tomb. Death holds a different meaning - yes. But way more importantly life holds a different meaning. There is hope because we emerge transformed - woke.

The message is one where it is not all up to me, or all up to you, or even all up to us. I do believe there is a power in this world that is greater than all of us combined. Some people call that God, some people call that the sacred, some people call that their higher power, some people call that the human spirit. I am less concerned with the name than the faith I hold that we and that spirit are at work in transforming this world and that is the message of Easter.

