



Tapping Transformation

BY KAREN HERING, CONSULTING LITERARY MINISTER,
UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

Forty to one. That's the ratio of sap to maple syrup in the long, slow process of creating the amber sweetness my family used to boil and bottle every spring. It's a ratio that tells you something about the time and determination required to make syrup, but it gives no hint of the longer arc of transformation that makes it possible. It offers no nod to the long summer days when maple leaves drink up the sunlight. It makes no mention of the way that sweetness seeps into the sap in winter's deep sleep, slowly settling into the dark interior of trunk and root. It pays no homage to the early spring weeks when strengthened sunbeams charm the sap back up into the branches and crown.

The tree makes its sweetness all year long. We humans show up for a month in the spring to tap it and make a lot of noise about the effort of hauling sap to the fire and the time invested in round-the-clock boiling to reduce it, forty to one.

Transformation is like that. We make it out as requiring such great effort—or such unspeakable miracle—that it can seem rare or unattainable. But as every child and parent knows, transformation is as common as a growth chart taped to the wall and marked with a new line every month. Even as adults, we replace our skin cells every 35 days and our blood every 120. In ways both literal and figurative, I am *not* the same person I was just a year ago.

Transformation, generally speaking, is also neutral. Despite the hint of heresy this carries in a culture enamored by progress and its onward and upward mythology, not all transformation is desirable. Nor does it deem what's been left behind as necessarily less worthy. Even the youngest botanist knows better than that. The blossom passes no judgment on the seed, and the fruit claims no airs over the blossom.

Still, transformation of the particularly positive kind—the change in heart, mind and character known as *metanoia*—does not usually occur by happenstance. Sometimes requiring more patience and persistence than even maple syrup, *metanoia* is the work of religion. It arises from our ancient human hunger for the transformative powers of love and community, of beauty and truth. In progressive religion, this is not only about seeking personal *metanoia*, but also the long, slow turning of the world itself toward justice and toward peace.

Can this really come to pass? Will justice ever roll down like waters? Will we find our way to right relationship in our personal lives, in our neighborhoods, and in our world? Many days, it seems the odds are against us, stacked much higher than forty to one. But if it sounds like too much effort or like something requiring miracles too hard to believe in, our congregations teach us otherwise. For whenever and however we gather in a community of faith, we are powerfully blessed by what the early religious communities in New England called an assembly of “visible saints.” It is a sainthood in which each of us presents to one another tangible evidence of the transformative power of faith moving in our lives today. And when we together act upon our faith, within our church or beyond it, we are also making visible the world's own transformative turning.

This is the work of congregational life—to open our awareness of the world as it might be and as it is becoming. It awakens us to the transformation already taking place within us and around us, and strengthens our patience and determination to bring that transformation to fruition. For as the maple tree produces sweetness within the fibers of its being, the world carries its own inner inclination toward justice and peace. May we be willing to show up and do the work of tapping. ■

Quest for meaning

Vol. LXVII, No. 4

April 2012

Not everything that is
faced can be changed.
But nothing can be
changed until it is faced.

—James Baldwin

A monthly for religious liberals

TRANSFORMATION

- TAPPING TRANSFORMATION
Karen Hering
- SEASON OF MUD
Sara York
- REACHING BEYOND
Mark Morrison-Reed
- WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
Martin Luther King, Jr.
- HANSEL AND GRETEL
Lynn Ungar
- KINDNESS
Naomi Shihab Nye
- WHAT ARE WE MISSING?
Darcey Laine
- FROM YOUR MINISTER
Meg Riley
- RESOURCES FOR LIVING
Lynn Ungar
- SPRING
John Muir

Season of Mud

A friend of mine from Maine says that down east there are five seasons: summer, fall, winter, spring, and mud. Mud is the season between winter and spring, the season of melting snow when winter's icy grip loosens its hold...but doesn't quite let go.

When I lived near the bay that divides the eastern end of Long Island into two forks, I witnessed the beginning of this fifth season in a phenomenon which Thoreau describes as the "thundering" of the ice. Dressed for insulation from the February wind, I walked on the snow-covered beach. A sharp cracking sound boomed from beneath the frozen stillness of the bay's surface. I marveled with Thoreau: "Who," he asks, "would have suspected so large and thick-skinned a thing to be so sensitive?" The beach resembled an arctic glacier, large chunks of ice reflecting

both sun and sky. They imposed a barrier between sand and sea that appeared invincible even though it was disappearing every moment. Many white ice-rafts drifted with the current while a flock of ducks squawked noisily above.

Two weeks later only a remnant of the imposing glacier remained, and the shoreline was visible again. I could stroll along a thin strip of sand between the water and the ice. I thought of the paradoxes of this in-between season when the rigid is juxtaposed with the fluid; when spring's warmth softens the winter earth and winter's chill snatches back the spring air; when each day is an unpredictable and unreliable combination of what was and what will be.

The season of mud begins with thunder and announces change; it is the season of transition. Transitions are times when the thick skin of habit that pro-

tected us surrenders to the possibilities of growth and renewal. The inner thawing renders us sensitive and vulnerable to the unpredictable, until we emerge comfortably into new ways of being. We aren't sure who we are or where we will end up.

In the midst of the mud and muddle of all transitions, the seeds of promise stir quietly beneath the surface like spring bulbs drinking the snow.

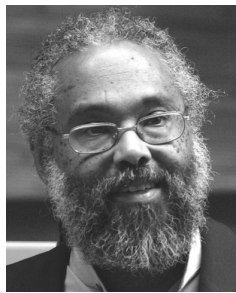
by **Rev. Sarah York**,
published in
*Listening for Our
Song: Collected
Meditations,*
Volume Four.



Collected by Margaret L. Beard and published by Skinner House in 2002, this book is available through the UUA bookstore (www.uua.org/bookstore or 800-215-9076) or the CLF library (617-948-6150). ■

Reaching Beyond

If Unitarian Universalism stands for love, it is wed to freedom. Freedom invites vision. Vision leads to change. Change causes anxiety. Anxiety awakens resistance. Abolitionist Frances Ellen Watkins



Harper sought freedom from bondage for blacks and suffrage for women. Mary and Joseph F. Jordan sought to free blacks from poverty through education.

Freedom begets vision. Vision leads to change. To embrace change means welcoming someone with an open mind and responding with interest to different behavior or beliefs rather than with a raised eyebrow, frozen smile, and silence. See that reaction for what

it is—a sophisticated way of masking fear. Hold that fear at bay and let your heart lead the way. Change means discomfort, and because of that discomfort, some people will leave.

Freedom begets vision.
Vision leads to change.

They have in the past and will again. Let them go. For those who remain and commit, the discomfort becomes bearable when we recognize that it is for our benefit, that transformation is its result.

Healing the systemically transmitted virus that is racism is nothing less than grace. Grace—the moment when we sense within ourselves that something broken has become whole—cannot emerge without freedom. Stasis and control are fear's bastion. Welcoming change means being open and adventuresome. It asks us to celebrate the

breadth of theological and social diversity Unitarian Universalism already encompasses, and then to reach beyond it. It means recapturing the excitement we once felt about the new: the wonderment, the curiosity, the openness we knew as children before fear shut it down. It means seeing diversity as a gift we cannot wait to get our hands on.

Change will come whether we work for and celebrate it, or distrust and resist it, or simply wait. Our history says it will come whether we want it or not. For that we can be thankful.

by **Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed**,
excerpted from "Afterward" in *Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism*. Published by Skinner House Books in 2011, this book is available through the UUA bookstore (www.uua.org/bookstore or 800-215-9076) or the CLF library (617-948-6150). ■

Where Do We Go From Here? (Excerpt)

by **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, 1967

Let us be dissatisfied until America will no longer have a high blood pressure of creeds and an anemia of deeds.

Let us be dissatisfied until the tragic walls that separate the outer city of wealth and comfort from the inner city of poverty and despair shall be crushed by the battering rams of the forces of justice.

Let us be dissatisfied until those who live on the outskirts of hope are brought into the metropolis of daily security.

Let us be dissatisfied until slums are cast into the junk heaps of history, and every family will live in a decent, sanitary home....

Let us be dissatisfied until from every city hall, justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Let us be dissatisfied until that day when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and every[one] will sit under [their] own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid.

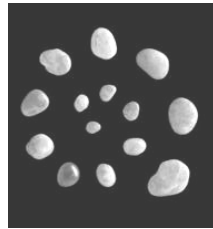
Let us be dissatisfied, and [all] will recognize that out of one blood God made all [people] to dwell upon the face of the earth. ■

Transformational Giving

The Church of the Larger Fellowship believes that generosity is transformational for both the giver and for the receiver.

Support the CLF and each other—make a gift using the enclosed envelope, or visit www.QuestforMeaning.org.

We are grateful for your presence, and thankful for the gifts you make to this community. ■



Hansel and Gretel

by **Lynn Ungar**

“Read it again!” she says,
and again we do. The same
disaster predictably reenacted
night to night. “Don’t go in!”
I want to warn them, “It’s a trap!”
But children rarely listen, and
storybook characters, never.
When they see that confectionary
cottage
their entrance is inevitable,
like the mosquito bite you swear
you will not scratch and always do,
and always make it worse.

Each decision is invariably
a rigged game. The witch
is always ravenous and grasping,
the children neglected and naïve.
Preach all you like about conversion,
about the will to good and unending
grace—
you know the witch will never
lose her taste for the sweet
resilient flesh of boys.

Night after night we stumble
into the forest of our fears,
and night after night we’re duly caught.
Every morning we awake
to the same reports of mayhem and
every morning we poke forward
some narrow stick of ourselves,
hoping to get by uneaten
one more day.

But listen. Each time through
the story I’ve dropped
a small white stone. Others
have too—I’ve seen them
glowing in the moonlight,
a nightly shifting of the scene,
building a path both ragged and new.
Next time, look down. Tear your vision
from the gingerbread house.
Drop a stone.
Tell the children. ■

Kindness

by **Naomi Shihab Nye**

Before you know what kindness
really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and
chicken
will stare out the window forever.
Before you learn the tender gravity of
kindness,
you must travel where the Indian in a
white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with
plans
and the simple breath that kept him
alive.
Before you know kindness as the
deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other
deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.
Then it is only kindness that makes
sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to mail
letters and purchase bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
it is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

from The Words Under the Words:
Selected Poems. © *Eighth Mountain*
Press, 1995. ■

What Are We Missing?

BY DARCEY LAINE, MINISTER, UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ATHENS AND SHESHEQUIN, PENNSYLVANIA

The year my son turned six we held his birthday party at a neighborhood park. We found a great site right next to the slides, swing, and assorted climbing structures. We had brought sidewalk chalk and bouncing balls for everyone. Within minutes after arriving, the children had all disappeared. They were hiding in a giant bush at the back of the playground. For almost an hour it was their clubhouse/fort/castle. It never occurred to me to say “Honey, would you like to have your party in a bush this year?” But that was apparently what the children most wanted. Until it was time for cake, that is.

It would seem that this generation of children just doesn't have many chances to hide in a bush with their friends. Why is this? As a society at this moment, we simply don't have the time, we don't have the space, and we don't see playing in a bush as something valuable to our culture.

And why should we value playing in a bush? Why would we, as adults, feel the need for free time in nature?

First, I always believe in the value of doing what our heart calls out for. Your heart knows, your soul knows, your inner child knows that being outside is good. Your heart knows that looking out a window at trees feels better than looking out at a wall. Your heart knows that something about standing on the edge of the ocean having the worries blasted out of you by the blustery winds has the power to change the course of your week.

But there is another voice inside us saying that, really, this is goofing off. When children are hiding in bushes, and when adults are standing on the back porch staring blankly at the



dappled sunlight on the grass, they are not *accomplishing* anything.

We need to start doing things that don't accomplish anything in particular *immediately*. This is urgent. This will not wait until you are retired. (Just last week a retired volunteer said to me, “I really have to take a sabbatical. One of these days I am just going to disappear for a month.”) It takes practice, and if we don't start young, it will be hard to learn later in life.

In 1890, Henry James defined two kinds of attention: directed attention and fascination. Directed attention is the kind of attention we use when we're being productive, doing tasks like writing, or proof reading, or homework, or preparing our taxes. Fascination, or “involuntary attention” is, on the other hand, what happens when you are watching a bug crawl up a blade of grass, or an eagle circle in the sky.

Rachel and Stephen Kaplan did a study on this topic, finding that too much directed attention leads to what they call “directed-attention fatigue” because “Neural inhibitory mechanisms become fatigued by blocking competing stimuli.” This leads to “impulsive behavior, agitation, irritation, and inability to concentrate.” In an article for *Monitor on Psychology*, they wrote, “If you can find an environment where the attention is automatic, you allow directed attention to rest.”

The Kaplans did a study of office workers and found that those with a window looking out on trees, bushes or large lawns were less frustrated and found more enjoyment in their work

than employees without such a view.

In his most recent book: *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv has gathered together some of the growing research about the effects of spending time in nature—or the lack thereof—on our mind, body and spirit. Much of the information I've put together here comes from this book. For instance, there are a growing number of studies that show how proximity to nature has measurable benefits to both mental and psychological health.

Howard Frumkin writes in the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* about a 10-year study finding that patients whose room had a view of trees went home sooner than those who had a view of a brick wall. A study out of Cornell University's environmental psychology program showed that “Life's stressful events appear not to cause as much psychological distress in children who live in high-nature conditions, compared to those who live in low-nature conditions.”

In addition to the physical and psychological effects on us of our contact with nature, we also must consider the impact of this contact on our eco-system. Most people who camp as adults were taken camping by their parents. Most adults who care about the natural world established that wonder-filled relationship as children: building tree houses, fishing, throwing rocks into creeks. When you read stories about Teddy Roosevelt's childhood experiences in nature, it seems only logical that he would have been the one to put his presidential weight behind the national park system.

Our children are the future's conservationists—or not. Will children raised indoors grow up to camp in our national parks? And if they do not love the open spaces, how will they vote when housing pressures increase? How will this generation of voters and activists know that those national treasures are worth preserving?

And we as UUs have a particular investment in our own connection with the earth, with the web of life. This connection with nature is one of our deepest sources of renewal, inspiration and wisdom. Whenever we are intimate with the natural world we revisit the knowledge carried by our tradition: that we are not separate from beings who are not human, from things made not by human hands.

We must make sure that the way we live our lives honors our articulated theology. If we don't spend time with the natural world we lose the chance to grow deeper in that wisdom and inspiration, to develop a mature understanding of our interconnection, to let it guide and inform our lives. What better way could we share this knowing, this value, with our children than by giving them time to be fascinated by the natural world?

So why aren't our children given the time to be in nature? Now that higher test scores are the main focus of our schools, recess is being shortened or even eliminated, because this is time legislators feel could be better used preparing for tests. But studies suggest that nature can be used as a therapy for ADHD, in some cases replacing medication or behavioral therapy. Remembering the Kaplan's research, it seems that regular breaks in nature would restore the ability to focus and could *improve* test scores.

Children lose some of the time in nature that previous generations have enjoyed because they participate in more organized sports and other adult-programmed activities. And they lose their connection with nature as they spend more and more time with technology. Today's children spend an average of 30 hours a week in front of the TV. Schools increasingly emphasize technology; curricula are geared more towards visiting a website about the rainforest than toward being fascinated by local flora and fauna.

We adults have less time to spend in

nature ourselves. We spend increasing energy on our daily commute, as housing and jobs sprawl apart. And, as Juliette Schorr writes in *The Overworked American*, we are working more hours than at any time since the industrial revolution over a century ago. If we don't value our time to wander in nature, the external pressures of test scores and commutes quickly push aside our time for wild places.

The locations for such fascination and exploration are disappearing as well. Local open spaces are designated as playing fields and structured playgrounds, which researchers have found encourage less creative, and more competitive play. Most adults of my

Why would we, as adults, feel the need for free time in nature?

generation can think of a spot of "left over" land, around the edges of organized development, where they played as children. I had a creek through my back yard growing up. My husband had a patch of open lots in his housing development where he and his friends played. The development where my son is growing up is all filled in. The creek down the street has chain link fence on all sides.

Yes, we are blessed with a very lovely park just a couple of blocks away, but current parenting practices being what they are, I would never let a kindergartener walk by himself to the park. My generation ran to the park after school and had only to be home in time for dinner, but this generation is never out of sight of an adult. And parents aren't the only ones letting fear come between children and self-organizing wild places. Who has the liability insurance to allow children to climb a tree, much less build a tree house in this overly litigious age? The park near my house has play structures, paved paths, picnic tables, a skate ramp and

several grass playing fields. And one really cool bush.

For my son's generation it is no longer legal to build tree houses or pick flowers in our open spaces. Though researchers have observed that children have more creative, imaginative play in natural play areas with "loose objects" than children playing in constructed play zones, public parks and open spaces are increasingly designed for particular purposes. We are to stay on the path and look.

We know that the wild places are in danger from too much contact with us. We know that we need high density infill housing to preserve open spaces and reduce the carbon footprint of lengthy commutes into the sprawl. But the downside of this sensitivity is that because there is so little nature left, kids are taught "don't touch"—read about it in a book or see it on a screen.

So this month I offer you a spiritual practice. Find yourself a bush, a tree, a nook, a path, a place on the edges of life organized by humans. Visit it when you are burned out, and let your attention go deep into the particular life of that place. Visit it when it rains, or when the sun comes out, and see how it responds and grows.

Spring is a particularly exciting time to notice a place, because change happens so quickly and with such artistic flourish. Take a child or a friend to your special place, and see what they might notice that you have missed. And when you know it well, and it becomes part of you, remember that this ordinary bit of wildness is just as much a miracle as the Amazon rainforest, and as deserving of our attention.

Environmentalism is not just about protecting the earth: it is about letting the earth renew you, letting it transform you, body, mind and spirit, and letting the earth and all her creatures be your companions on this journey. ■





From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY
SENIOR MINISTER,
CHURCH OF THE
LARGER FELLOWSHIP

Three things about transformation:

1.) I can still see her face. She looks up at me, head bent over, hair partially covering her face. “I don’t know if Jesus turned water into wine,” she says, tentatively, as if I might not be interested. “But I do know that he turned crack cocaine into a couch and chairs, because that furniture is in my living room now.”

2.) When a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, the entire DNA changes. It’s not about a bug getting wings. Rather, the caterpillar disintegrates and a new winged being rises out of gooey slime. Everything that was—every fuzzy bit of caterpillar—must die before the new can be born from the chrysalis. Scientists have named those first daring cells that initiate the re-creation process “imaginal cells.” It is as if these cells have imaginative vision and can say to each other, *Yes! I know we need to give up all we have known, and I liked crawling, too. But can’t you see us kissing flowers, tumbling in air, all beautiful?*

It takes a while for other cells to align with the frequency of those imaginal pioneers—for the impulse ratio to tilt from “remaining caterpillar” toward “becoming butterfly”—but at some point the whole system swings.

Sometimes I pray that this earth is a chrysalis.

3.) That early winter morning, I needed to be at the crematorium. My brother and I touched the white hair, said *I love you* and *Goodbye*, cried. Then we slowly pushed our father’s body—lying on its cardboard bed, that body so intimately familiar and yet suddenly so strange—into the big silver oven. We

lowered the big door and looked into that room with no exit. My brother pushed a black button and I a red one to start the fires burning. I watched the thermometer slowly increase to the temperature at which bodies burn—1600 degrees.

I knew that my father, the scientist, would be interested in this process, and I cloaked myself in his objectivity. It gave me peace. “How long ‘til the whole body is burned?” I asked the attendant. Hours? Really?” I nodded thoughtfully to myself, as if time meant anything here. After a while my brother left quietly. I walked, prayed, laughed and cried, stared at that big silver oven door and that thermometer until my witness no longer felt needed.

I went to sit outside, for a quiet moment and fresh air.

Sometimes I pray that this earth is a chrysalis.

I sat down on a bench and just as I sat, knew with utter clarity that what is gone forever from this earth is only the particularity of my father’s form. Personality, body, mind, sounds, smells, feel—gone. That barely discernable West Virginia accent, the dumb jokes and poignant memories he sent out on email, the memory like a steel trap—no more. Freed from all this specificity of location, his energy might be anywhere in the universe. I sat very still, grateful, looking out with unfocused eyes into the gray day.

In the front yard of the house next door, I saw what I thought was one of those big fake grey plastic owls people nail on posts to scare rabbits. This one was in a low branch of a tree, maybe

ten feet off the ground. What a funny place to put that, I thought to myself, and in curiosity my mind sharpened and eyes narrowed a bit to focus.

As I looked more carefully, I saw an enormous striped wing begin to move slightly. I stared in awe and then, as if in a dream, stood and walked, mouth agape, towards the tree. *Dad!* The word I spoke aloud came from the depth of my being, through a throat almost closed from astonishment. I stared into a face I knew well, saw a particular glint in that bird’s eye, a glint I had never thought to see again, staring back at me.

A person watching me walk across the parking lot might have thought I was an extra in a zombie movie—my mouth hanging slack, my arms lifting up towards the tree, my walk straight-legged and flat-footed. When I got very close to the tree, maybe ten feet away, the red tailed hawk flew directly in front of me up into the air, soared in a giant circle, flew back to the same tree and landed in a higher branch, looked down. We stared into each other’s face for what felt like eternity. And then peace swept over me, head to foot, every cell of me.

Thanks, Dad, I thought. Thanks, Universe. Yet another blessing received. ■



April 2012

REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

Are you a fan of the "Transformers" action figures or movies? I'm not really into either action figures or action movies myself, but I have to admit there's something kind of appealing about anything that can turn itself into a whole different thing. The idea of being able to shape-shift shows up in everything from Harry Potter to werewolf movies, not to mention ancient Greek myths. So I suspect that the ability to transform yourself from one thing into another is woven pretty thoroughly into the human soul.

Transformation, for instance, is at the heart of the two major holidays of this month, Passover and Easter. Passover is the story of how one man, Moses, transforms from a tongue-tied sheep herder into a leader of the Hebrew people. But more than that, Passover is the story of how the Hebrews, a group of people living in slavery to the Egyptians, transformed themselves into the Jewish people, a people with a religion and a relationship with God and eventually a land that was their own.

This transformation of the Hebrew people doesn't happen overnight. They aren't transformed the moment they escape from Egypt, or when they reach the opposite shore of the Red Sea that had miraculously opened up to make a path for them. They aren't transformed when they see God going before them as a pillar in the desert, and they aren't even transformed when Moses brings down from the mountaintop the stone tablets containing the rules that God has set for them. They're transformed as they go along, and no one can really say at what moment it happens.

The Hebrew people make a lot of mistakes and bad choices, and there's plenty of grumbling and complaining



the whole way. They whine that they would have been better off staying in Egypt than wander-

ing around in the desert eating boring old manna every day. And when Moses goes off to talk with God on the mountaintop the people sort of give up on the idea of one indescribable deity, and start to worshiping a golden statue of a calf.

There's no single moment when they get enlightened or perfected. They just stumble around in the desert for forty years, and over all that time something...shifts. They become freer, more responsible for themselves, more able to be in relationship with God. They transform. Not from bad or stupid people into perfect people, but from Hebrew slaves to Jewish people in a covenanted relationship with their God.

The truth of the matter is that, although none of us can shift between animal and machine, or wolf and person, or from dead to alive, all of us are transforming all of the time.

The Easter story is about transformation as well. Although if it's hard to pin down exactly the shape of the transformation that the Hebrew people go through after they escape from Egypt, it's harder still to say what exactly the transformation is that happens in the Easter story. One way of describing the story is that Jesus died, but then he was resurrected—brought back to life again—which, of course, would be a pretty amazing transformation, since people just don't do that. But really, I think the transformation Jesus goes through in the Easter story is even more amazing—and not so counter to reality as we know it.

For me, the Easter story is about how Jesus transformed from a man who walked and ate and talked with people

into something that couldn't be killed—a set of ideas about how we should treat all people with love and respect; how we should care for those who are poor or hurting; give kindness when we want to take revenge; and love our neighbors as we love ourselves, even if our neighbors don't look or sound or act the way we think they should. The man who taught these things was transformed into the teachings themselves—something that his companions could take out into the world to share.

Those transformations, from slave to free person, or from teacher to teaching, are anything but small changes. I guess Passover and Easter wouldn't be big holidays if they weren't about big transformations. But the truth of the matter is that, although none of us can shift between animal and machine, or wolf and person, or from dead to alive, all of us

are transforming all of the time. A five-month-old baby and a five-year-old child are so different that they could be different species, or even from different planets. A person who can read enters a whole new world from the one

they lived in before. Anyone who overcomes an addiction to drugs or alcohol relates to the world in a whole new way, as does a person who emerges from depression.

Every day, people manage to move from being enslaved to anger or bitterness into freedom. Every day, ideas and insights go out into the world to take on new life beyond that of the people who started them. Every day, folks try things they never dared to try before, and come out of the experience just a little bit different. Maybe these kinds of transformations don't deserve holidays or action movies, but they might warrant a little recognition and celebration of their own. Happy Transformation Day to you—today and every day. ■



Church of the Larger Fellowship
Unitarian Universalist

25 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108-2823
USA

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 55362

Did You Know

That you can join in video
worship services each
week at 7:00 pm EST Sun.
and 1:30 pm EST Mon. at
[www.livestream.com/
questformeaning](http://www.livestream.com/questformeaning) ?

Quest Editorial Team: Meg Riley; Lorraine Dennis; Celeste DeRoche; Janet Lane; Beth Murray; Cindy Salloway; Jaco ten Hove; Arliss Ungar; Lynn Ungar, editor

Copyright 2012 Church of the Larger Fellowship. Permission to reproduce items from *Quest* is granted, provided credit is given to the author and to the CLF. **ISSN 1070-244X**



CLF Staff : Meg Riley, senior minister; Lorraine Dennis, executive director; Lynn Ungar, minister for lifespan learning and Quest editor; Patty Franz, prison ministry director; Linda Berez, minister of technology; Kristin Schmidt, minister in residence; Joanna Crawford, ministerial intern; Mary Frances Comer, pastoral care associate; Eric Hausmann, young adult minister, Beth Murray, PR & program administrator; Cindy Salloway, fiscal administrator; Lisa Kiehl, development director; Sue Conley, membership assistant

Web Site www.QuestForMeaning.org — **E-mail** clf@clfu.org — **Jewelry** 617-948-6150 — **Minister's Toll-Free Line** 800-231-3027
CLF Unitarian Universalist, 25 Beacon St., Boston MA 02108 USA — Telephone 617-948-6166 — **Fax** 617-523-4123

How deep our sleep last night in the
mountain's heart, beneath the trees and
stars, hushed by solemn-sounding water-
falls and many small soothing voices in
sweet accord whispering peace!

And our first pure mountain day, warm,
calm, cloudless—how immeasurable it
seems, how serenely wild! I can scarcely
remember its beginning. Along the
river, over the hills, in the ground, in the
sky, spring work is going on with joyful
enthusiasm, new life, new beauty, un-
folding, unrolling in glorious exuberant
extravagance—new birds in their nests,
new winged creatures in the air, and new
leaves, new flowers, spreading, shining,
rejoicing everywhere. ■

by **John Muir** (1838-1914),
American naturalist

