

March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Palm Sunday, Unitarian Church of Calgary  
Service Leaders the Rev. Fran Dearman and DRE Sandy Cooper

*Our service for Palm Sunday was designed as a multigenerational service, accessible on multiple levels. Here are some of the selections we used that day.*

*Please note that many of the words we used that day were taken from work collected by Michelle Richards in her book “Come Into the Circle: Worshipping with Children”, Skinner House Books. Boston, 2008, (pages 130-132).*

*The homily was adapted from “Quest”, the newsletter of the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF), UUA, April 2010, from an article (page 3) excerpted from work by Munroe Husbands, a CLF staff worker, published by the CLF 1962. See <[www.clfuu.org/quest](http://www.clfuu.org/quest)>.*

*During this service, Rev. Fran offered a guided meditation, and then a homily.*

*Invitation to Meditation for Palm Sunday:*

As we begin our meditation, I invite you to close your eyes and let yourself become still enough to feel your heart beat. Become quiet enough to hear your breathing. Think of your favourite spot in nature. What does it look like?

Some birds stay with us all winter; I’m thinking of the birds who pass through here, this time of year, headed north. Birdwatchers tell me the great spring migration has begun, that Snow Geese and Tundra Swans have been seen near Calgary.

I’m thinking of the jack rabbit I saw the other morning, very early, in the fog, by a hedge near where I live. His ears are dark, and his coat is no longer all white as snow; his fur is starting to turn the colour of spring.

Guided Meditation “Hush”,  
*[words of Gail Forsythe-Vail] [MR pp131-32][adapted]*

“Hush. Something [is] about to happen. Everything [is] ready.  
We are poised on the edge of something. The robins [will soon be singing] as they build nests and begin families. Listen. It’s about to happen. The daffodils beneath the ground have gathered up all the moisture and the nutrients and the energy. They are getting ready to grow. It’s about to happen.

In the Christian story of Palm Sunday, Jesus has entered Jerusalem, a dangerous place for him. Can you feel it? Hush. Something’s about to happen.

In the Jewish story told this week at Passover [suppers], Moses has told Pharaoh to “let my people go”. Will he do it? Something’s about to happen.

The chicks in their eggs are ready to break out of their shells. Hush. It's about to happen. Children all over the [province] have gotten out their spring jackets and bicycles. [The warm days are] coming. Can you feel it coming?

This week, Easter is coming. Plans are being made—baskets and bonnets, special foods, special decorations, all made ready. Something's going to happen here. Hush. Can you feel it? Do you know it, deep down inside yourself, that something important is coming?

This is the week to hush, to get ready, to know, deep down inside, that something wonderful will happen very soon!

This is the week to pay attention to all that is around us—to worship with our eyes and ears and fingertips as everything and everyone around us prepares to get ready for life to return.”

*Homily: “Palm Sunday: A Time for Renewal”,  
Adapted by the Rev. Fran Dearman, from the words of Monroe Husbands, as published in the April 2010 issue of the “Quest” Newsletter of the Church of the Larger Fellowship. Monroe Husbands wrote this as CLF staff for the CLF Easter Bulletin in 1962.]*

In the year 325, the Emperor Constantine called all the bishops of the church into council at a place called Nicaea in Asia Minor. Constantine ordered the bishops to make up their minds once and for all about the character of Jesus: was he god, half-god or human?

After a tempestuous few days of argument, in which one of the bishops was banished, the bishops declared that as far as they were concerned, Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, was wholly a god, but still wholly human, which has been a tad confusing ever since, and people still disagree about this.

Having sorted that out, as far as they were concerned, the bishops then decided to settle which day people should observe Easter. The bishops decided to set the day for Easter celebrations on the first Sunday after the first full moon that falls on or next after the spring equinox (on March 21).

The bishops said that if the full moon falls on a Sunday, Easter would be celebrated one week later. The difficulties of travel, we are told, prompted the bishops to schedule this most important of the Christian holy days at a time when the moon was full, to light the way for the traveling pilgrim. Thus, the day that Easter happens might be any day between March 22<sup>nd</sup> and April 25<sup>th</sup>.

But whether it happens in March or April, there has always been an Easter, as there has always been a spring.

When we take a quick look at other religions and cultures, we find that there has always been an Easter, by whatever name, and it has always been in the springtime. Further, it has always had a religious connotation: either related to the gods people worshipped or to an important event in religious experience. There could not help but be an Easter—so long as there is life, nothing and no one could stop an Easter from happening.

Easter is the time of year when all nature responds and people, as children of nature, cannot but do likewise. Who or what could stop the trees and shrubs from budding? Who could stop the birds from singing? Who could stop the beehive from awakening, and the animals from mating and people from falling in love?

We humans are given at least five senses, and we are given the intelligence to appreciate our senses. Accordingly, we humans must also react to the spring resurrection of Nature. We have no choice. Call it a fertility rite, Passover or Resurrection, the challenge and the joy of the season is too great for us to ignore. Easter, perforce, is celebrated in the spring.

*--words of Monroe Husbands, adapted for Palm Sunday at Calgary.*

*DRE Sandy Cooper then read a story about the life of Jesus, written by Lynn Tuttle Gunney and titled, "Meet Jesus: The Life and Lessons of a Beloved Teacher.*

*Our service for Palm Sunday was about spring and renewal. May your Easter season bring you hope and renewal also.—Rev. Fran Dearman*

## Bibliography

For information on bird migration, see <<[www.birdwatchingcalgary.com](http://www.birdwatchingcalgary.com)>>.

Lynn Tuttle Gunney, "Meet Jesus: The Life and Lessons of a Beloved Teacher". Skinner House, Boston, 2007.

Michelle Richards, "Come Into the Circle: Worshipping with Children". Skinner House, Boston, 2008. [various excerpts, from pages 130-132]

"Quest", newsletter of the Church of the Larger Fellowship, UUA, April 2010; the article excerpted from work by Munroe Husbands, CLF staff in 1962, is found on page three. See <[www.clfuu.org/quest](http://www.clfuu.org/quest)>.