



Image: A modern interpretation of Jesus on the cross. Photo by A Bethune

## Easter letter

Along with the poet A E Housman, most of us in modern Unitarian congregations are sure Jesus lies in some 'Syrian garden, ages slain' and that the resurrection claimed by the Christian Church never occurred. Given this what on earth are we celebrating at Easter?

To be sure, many congregations concentrate on pre- and other non-Christian themes of rebirth and spring. Such a celebration seems to me wholly right and proper but it can tempt us to avoid dealing in any way with the historical fact that we are church that has its roots deep in Christian tradition. Is there any way by which we may talk about the resurrection of Jesus and mean it? Well, yes and no.

When it comes to Jesus the human being, the answer must firmly remain 'no' — Jesus died on the cross sometime early in the first century. But when it comes to 'Christ' we can begin to sense that there is a way of saying 'yes' and that we too, despite our firmly held heretical views can, with a clean heart and a good conscience, say on Easter morn: 'Christ is risen'. How so?

Well, Cliff Reed, the retired minister of the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House (under whom I began my own journey into ministry) wrote a hymn that we often sing together on Easter Day. In it, Cliff suggests that we should understand our human community to be the resurrection, to understand that it is only human beings who are trying their best to live according to the high standards of love and justice that Jesus died for, who can be the 'risen body of Christ'. This is certainly not an orthodox Christian view; it's not really a Christian view at all; but which ever way you cut it, it is certainly an Easter view and so I leave you with Cliff's hymn upon which some of you may wish to meditate as we make our way through the season of Lent.

Andrew Brown

*Jesus died, but Christ has triumphed  
Broken now the chains of death;  
From the tomb comes God's anointed,  
Kindling cold hearts with his breath.*

*Now at last we see his purpose,  
Breaking through like sunburst bright:  
Liberation for God's people  
Ends humanity's long night.*

*For there is a Spirit greater,  
Who has now the victory;  
And our God indwells the human,  
striving for our liberty.*

*And that Spirit dwelt in Jesus,  
Teaching us that love redeems;  
How God, through a man's compassion,  
Gains great ends by human means.*

*But for love and life undying  
Death of self must be the key;  
Jesus died to bear this witness  
And Christ rose to make us free.*

*[Hymn written by Cliff Reed. Number 110 in our green hymnbook 'Hymns for Living']*

## For your diary

### Sundays 6, 13, 20, 27 March:

10.30am - family service of prayers, hymns, readings, music and an address followed by tea, coffee and conversation.

6.30pm - quiet service of mindfulness meditation, prayer, reflection and music.

**Sunday 6 March:** Bring & share lunch after morning service

**Wednesday 23 Mar :** 12noon-2.30pm. Lunch Club. Offering companionship, good food and an opportunity to talk about a particular issue relevant to the well-being and happiness of retired people or those planning retirement. A donation of around £3 is suggested to cover the cost of the meal. Throughout 2016, we will be exploring 'Attachment and Separation'. Contact: 01480 432284.

**Friday 25 March:** 10.30am: Good Friday Communion Service

**Sunday 27 March:** Easter Sunday : Mark Mason will give the address at the morning service

## Accessibility project:

### improving access to church and hall

We now have draft plans for the project and are grateful to those of you who were at church on 7 February and commented on the plans. Final plans are now being drawn up and planning permission sought.

We hope most or all of the cost will be paid for by grant money. To help build a case for grants, we need comments from users of the church and hall, who have impaired mobility, describing the access difficulties they experience. So we're contacting all our regular hirers, inviting them to complete a simple questionnaire. The questionnaire will also be circulated to members and friends of the church, and you should receive a copy with this newsletter.

Sue Tombs is collecting the responses, by post and email. It will also be possible to hand in comments in person - to a box placed in the Church Hall.

Please submit your comments by 31 March.

If you'd like more information about the project, or wish to see the plans, please speak to Shirley Fieldhouse or Andrew Bethune.

## Music at morning services:

6 Mar - Julian Warren (organ)  
13 Mar - John Dillistone (organ)  
20 Mar - Peter Shepherd (piano)  
27 Mar - Jeremy Wong (organ)

## Church AGM : Sunday 17 April

Please make a note in your diary that our AGM will be on Sunday 17 April immediately after a shorter-than-usual morning service.

Our church is run on a democratic basis, with the committee elected annually by the church members. There are vacancies for up to 4 people: might you be interested in joining the committee?

Anyone may attend the AGM and speak at it, but only 'members' of the church may vote. If you have been part of our community for 6 months, and would like to affirm your commitment to our community by becoming a 'member', please speak to Andrew Brown.

### Experiments in democracy

Thursday, 3 March 2016 7.30-9.30pm

Our church is hosting this event when four leaders of democratic thought and action come together to inspire and challenge Cambridge citizens. The speakers will be from Transition Cambridge, 38 Degrees Cambridge, Rebooting Democracy and Pivotal. Details <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/experiments-in-democracy-tickets-20888891236>

There is a second 'Experiments in Democracy' meeting focussing on the question: 'How can we improve our democracy?' (Monday, 7 March 2016 7.30-9.30pm - Friends' Meeting House, 12 Jesus Lane, Cambridge CB5 8BA .

Tickets are free, but a suggested donation of £3-£5 will be collected on the night.

## About our church

This church belongs to a liberal Christian tradition which welcomes the loving, critical and enquiring spirit. It is founded upon an 'open trust' which imposes no doctrinal tests upon its minister or members. We meet in the spirit which is exemplified in the life and utterances of Jesus, for the worship of God and the service of humankind.

**Church address:** Memorial Church (Unitarian),  
5 Emmanuel Road, Cambridge CB1 1JW

[www.cambridgeunitarian.org](http://www.cambridgeunitarian.org)  
[@CamUnitarian](https://www.facebook.com/Cambridge-Unitarians-446299165559139/)  
<https://www.facebook.com/Cambridge-Unitarians-446299165559139/>

### Hall Bookings:

Sue Tombs 01223 338543  
[roombookings@cambridgeunitarian.org](mailto:roombookings@cambridgeunitarian.org)

**Minister:** Andrew J Brown 01223 576952  
[minister@cambridgeunitarian.org](mailto:minister@cambridgeunitarian.org)  
<http://andrewjbrown.blogspot.com>  
[@caute](https://www.facebook.com/andrewjbrown)

**Pastoral care:** Please let Andrew Brown know of any cases of sickness or if you would like him to meet with you or someone else.

**Minister's Rest Days:** Mon, Tue

**Minister Emeritus:** Frank Walker  
01223 874460

**Chairman:** Andrew Bethune 01480 387883  
**Vice-Chairman:** Tony Burns 01480 432284  
**Treasurer:** Shirley Fieldhouse 01223 426514  
**Secretary:** Brendan Boyle 01480 387883  
**Committee Members:**  
Katie Burns 01480 432284  
Sue Tombs 01223 844454