

“The Butterfly: God in Christ Through You” Part Two

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*While they were talking and discussing together,
Jesus himself drew near and went with them.
But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.*

Luke 24:15-16

Let us pray... O God,
Thank you for the gift of Jesus of Nazareth who so completely identified with you
that he could speak wisdom that holds true for all ages,
that he could heal people from all distress,
and show us by his example how to share your forgiveness and love.

Amen

Christmas has Santa Claus, Halloween has the Great Pumpkin,
and Easter has the Easter Bunny.

What does a bunny rabbit have to do with Easter? And what about Easter eggs?

The word Lent might give us a clue – it actually means “Springtime” –
Lent literally means, “Long days” from its Germanic root meaning;
and springtime – for anyone north of Florida who survived this winter,
is something they are desperately looking forward to.

It is a time when the “green” has come back to the Earth,
with warmer weather and rain.

It is a time associated with new life as baby birds, squirrels, and lizards
frolicking around all over the place.

Rabbits have lots of babies, and eggs represent the promise of new life–
so, these are symbols for the new life of springtime
and new life is a symbol for Christ’s Resurrection.

How about another representative from the natural world to symbolize Easter –
how about the butterfly.

The butterfly starts out as a caterpillar and it eats, and eats, and eats;
Then, encloses itself within what is correctly called a chrysalis,
but generally known as a cocoon.

<http://loyal2him.com/foundations/butterfly.htm><http://loyal2him.com/foundations/butterfly.htm>

After a period of time, it begins to emerge as if from a tomb to become
what seems to be a new creature, with wings like stained-glass windows,
enabling it to fly.

In my hometown church, Plainfield Congregational Church UCC ,
a large representation of a Monarch butterfly is displayed on the wall,
directly behind the altar table.

This symbol, to me, serves as a parable, not only about the life, death, and
resurrection of Christ, but also as a symbol for what *we* can become...

Willard, p.2

The Central Atlantic Conference of the UCC along with the Disciples of Christ, sponsored a high school age summer camp program called the Bethany Beach Folk Arts Festival in the 1970s.

It cost \$40 to go for the week and in the summer of 1971, sixty high school kids converged on the Disciples conference center beach house, a block away from the shore.

The very first night after supper,

all the tables and chairs were cleared out of the large meeting room.

This was followed by a series of activities to organize everybody into small groups, and with ice-breaker games to get acquainted.

Toward the end of the evening, the lights were turned down,

except for enough light to illuminate two chicken wire sculptures,

one, a “Butterfly”, with phosphorescent panels of pink and green... and the other, a “Cocoon” – the theme for the week.

The camp director, Jim Tomasek was seated on the floor, and invited everyone else sit down, too.

Then, he told them all to pretend they were curled up in a cocoon, and when they were ready, to just come out...

But they were warned not to touch anyone else,

not to help someone out of their imagined cocoon.

Just like a real butterfly, they would have to do it themselves,

because if the process is rushed for someone to become who they are, there can be more harm than help.

That week was characterized by opportunities for young people to come out of their cocoons.

Each evening, the large meeting room would be cleared

to share small group songs and skits, in what was called a coffeehouse – except there was no coffee.

There was even open-mike time, for kids to display their arts & crafts projects, as well as just to say what was on the hearts.

Through these activities and together with large group exercises and workshops, everyone got involved that week;

It was like a joyous, great dance where there were no wall flowers.

At the end of the week, kids stayed up all night to watch the sun rise at the beach like Christ rising on Easter Sunday morning.

The kind of experiences these kids had could be called ‘self-actualization’;

They were encouraged to become who they are – to be ‘born again’.

Willard, p.3

When we are invited to share our gifts and open our hearts,
to claim the talents that we have been given, and to express them
under the circumstances that make for a “sacred space”,
then it is not just to ‘do your own thing’, but to be who you are in ways
that encourage others to do the same, in concert with one another
as a Beloved Community.

We are created in the image of God the creator.

That means, to some extent, we are creators too.

The butterfly appears to be something new,
but it really is what was already *written into* the DNA of the lowly caterpillar.
In this life we are like caterpillars, anticipating a time
when we will pass through death to a new life beyond.
The stories of Christ’s Resurrection suggest we will have a new form
becoming like Christ in the way he appeared at the Transfiguration.
Just like a caterpillar enters a death-like state in the cocoon,
to arise like a butterfly, so we will arise as our true selves.

Florida Conference of the UCC used to have its own camp conference center.

This program has continued in a modified form as programs that rely on
the use of other denominations’ facilities.

The camp experience – like Bethany Beach can be crucial for faith formation,
especially for young people – but also for “children of God” at any age.

The more creatively that people respond to problems in life,
the more this helps fill the void that violence so often fills as a shortcut.

Not everybody can expect – or be expected, to be a Mozart, a Picasso,
or a Maya Angelou, but these masters were certainly encouraged by others
to follow their passion, and we all have benefited from their gifts.

There are many ways to be creative – there are many ways to allow
that butterfly in you to emerge or to help that happen for others
like just being a good listener.

When we live creatively, we approach challenges with optimism
and not mere obligations to be dreaded.

It is a giving of oneself without the expectation of credit,
yet somehow getting back more than what was given.

Those of you who don’t think of yourselves as being an artist,
consider how this might make sense to you – perhaps you are creative
by being a good organizer, by marketing, doing finances, gardening,
cooking, plumbing – hairstyling can be like sculpture
and even mixing cement can be a kind of ballet.

You *all* fit into a ‘creative’ category.

Willard, p.4

Love – love is a creative act. There is no limit to how we can do that.

To love with the love of God is to think creatively, such that

when it appears to be a dead end, it's believing it's just a sharp turn.

It's to believe that who we thought of as an enemy

can be transformed into a friend.

It's to believe that when we are treated with contempt,

we remember we have the affirmation of being loved by our Creator.

Even failure means trying again till we get it down right to do better the next time.

God who created the Heavens and the Earth, was expressed through

Jesus Christ as someone who spoke wisdom through poetry,

healed people from all kinds of distress without compensation,

knew where the best places to go fishing were,

organized catering on a massive scale,

listened to people in distress to calm the storms in their lives,

and ultimately to demonstrate courage in the face of senseless violence

and that God's love is stronger than evil

and death is the beginning of new life.

Amen