



TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

on the Branford Green

May you find Christ, Community and Compassion within these historic walls.

Easter For All Creation

By The Rev. Sharon Gracen

March 31, 2013

Blessed Easter morning. It is a world made new, springtime for the spirit. There are things blooming in here and even in our winter-challenged Connecticut landscape. He is risen and the sun returns. Easter is the Christian observance most closely linked to the rest of creation – eggs, baby ducks and bunnies and bulbs bursting with color are inseparable from the Hallelujahs.

I think of myself as a practical environmentalist – somewhere beyond the middle of the spectrum. I'm keenly aware of how my presence affects the planet and try to live responsibly but I'm not prepared to go and live off of the grid in some backwoods cabin in northern Vermont. Having lived in California, Peter and I were sensitized to a harsh reality of water shortages if not downright scarcity. So we use water carefully even though we now live in a state with abundant rivers and generally ample rainfall. I like an occasional hamburger or steak but know that the planet is better off if I don't do that too often. But while I am well informed, I find that I cannot watch the many programs, movies, videos and news reports that talk about what appears to be an impending catastrophe. The idea of polar bears drowning as they search for ice floes nearly does me in, for the bears and for our wantonness. The condition of the planet seems like a perpetual Good Friday in which I find myself paralyzed with grief.

So it was with great joy that I discovered an Easter story about the environment. It is truly an example of resurrection, the triumph of life over death. This Easter revelation began with a talk by Allan Savory at the most recent TED conference – that exciting gathering of people doing cool things that are worth sharing. Allan Savory is biologist, farmer, environmental activist from Southern Africa and he is the creator of holistic management of grasslands and livestock. His presentation at the TED conference began with the depressing growing problem of desertification – much of the world is turning into desert. There are several causes of desertification and they are almost all human-made.

Historically, grasslands were symbiotically maintained by herds of grazing animals, bison, antelope, elephants, etc. The animals gathered in herds for safety and kept on the move, enjoying the grasses of an area until their presence made the grass less than appetizing at which point they moved on. Their activities, chomping and stomping the grasses, disturbing the dirt, and doing what animals do after they've eaten, all contributed to the health of grasslands, enabling the soil to hold the moisture and carbon rather than releasing it into the atmosphere. And then humans came along and the native herds were displaced by cattle, sheep and other cash crops. Soon, the land began to die as grasses didn't replenish, the soil dried out, rainfall was interrupted and the societies that had depended on the land were in peril.

Historic attempts to stop the desertification were not successful. They usually consisted of removing grazing herds to let the land rest, but it turned into desert anyway. Mr. Savory's idea was to use the very animals that had caused desertification in the first place but in a very different way. He began to concentrate grazing herds in small areas, let them eat what was there and move them regularly, mimicking the ancient wild herds. The results have been extraordinary. In some places the productivity of the land has increased by over 50% in one year. The before and after photographs are like Easter – barren death to green lands with flowing streams. People on five continents are being taught the holistic

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management techniques and the grasslands are returning – more than 30 million acres, so far. Allan Savory found a way to cooperate with nature's processes and has brought dead land back to life.

The benefits of this holistic management are not just environmental but human as well. Mr. Savory claims that the soil of the world's grasslands is not suited for farming and can only feed people through livestock. His processes will allow people to feed their families and stay on the land while keeping the land healthy. Grasslands that function like grasslands no longer contribute to the carbon driven climate crisis. I felt so much better after watching Mr. Savory's talk. It gave me great hope.

Hope is what Easter is. And it's not just one kind of hope. It's not only a promise for those who have died, that there is a better world awaiting because Easter is meant to be lived here on earth. It is grand hope and small hope. It's planting bulbs in the fall and then surviving the winter knowing that fresh color and beauty will come. It is the hope that any relationship, no matter how broken, can be reformed and made new. Those relationships may be personal or global. It can be a broken heart or dangerous threats of armed conflict.

Jesus resurrection is not just his; it is the potential in all of us to live larger lives, to escape the bonds of limitation. Jesus was free to be resurrected because he did not hold on to things. He forgave and let go of anger, disappointment, and fear. That is the how of Easter. When we learn to apply that to our lives, Easter is no longer a Sunday or a season, it becomes who we are.

Easter hope is the grand knowledge that we are not just desperate individual human units bumping into each other here on planet earth. We are part of God's elegant universe, connected in ways we are just beginning to understand. We belong to something infinite and mysterious. Christ is in the connecting. If we can learn to trust in that connection, like Allan Savory, we will find the wisdom and ways to allow the deserts to bloom, to find joy and peace in our daily lives and to become hope for the world. The resurrection isn't meant to be experienced as something that happened once to Jesus of Nazareth at which we marvel. It is meant to show the way for the Christ within each and every one of us to burst into colorful, extravagant eternal, hallelujah producing bloom. Hallelujah!

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