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From Death to Life

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*And when we had invented death.
had severed every soul from life
we made of these, our bodies, sepulchers
and as we wandered dying, dim
among the dying multitudes
He acquiesced to be interred in us
and when He had descended thus
into our persons and the grave
He broke the limits, opening the grip
He shaped of every sepulcher
a womb*

The above excerpt is from Alana Levandoski's and her co-writers' "Christ Hymn."

I've been playing her CD for several weeks now, and the phrase "And when we had invented death" catches my attention every time it plays. As humans, I am well aware that we *suffer* death, that death affects all living organisms all life's relationships, and that we all too frequently *cause* death. But, did *we* invent death? Is death our *invention*? The suggestion that humans are to take credit for something as final and ugly as death gives me pause for sober reflection. This assertion frames the global, universal and historic impact of death in a closer causal relation than I would like. But, this assertion also causes me to be even more wary of humanity, our character, our motives, our activities and our limitations.

The apostle Paul also affirms our human tendency toward death. "Just as sin came into the world through one person, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned... death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses" (Rom 5:12, 14 also 1 Cor. 15:21; Eph. 2:1). One wonders whether Adam and Eve were aware that the gift we call "freedom of choice" could lead to making decisions whose consequences lead to death. Surely, humans aren't the

cause of death! What of the complicity of the serpent? The lack of explicit warning and outline of consequences? Or the limitations of the system in which God had placed humanity?

As a community of congregations in the peace church tradition, we are motivated to peace making action, prayer and teaching, because of the value we place on life. Not only do we abhor lethal violence because it causes death, but we strive to be peace makers in contexts and relationships where even the quality of life is threatened by humanity's 'deathly' propensity. Life is our motivation but life is not our invention. Our faith names not only the Inventor of life, but life's Creator. Life in all its fantastic, curious and diverse forms comes from the Creator; our Creator.

Easter, the celebration of Jesus' resurrection, of his restored and renewed life, is once again a celebration of the creation of life. Not only is the Creator alive and present but the Creator shows a new level of power in creating life out of the human invention of death. Ephesians 1:19-23 is full of superlatives to talk about the extent of God's *dunamis* (think "dynamite," Greek for "power"). The inventor of death has been outdone by the inventor, Creator of life.

We can be thankful to the Creator not only for the invention of life, but for the intervention and granting of new life at Easter. Left to ourselves, death would be the only answer, and a final answer at that. So transformative is this new life reality that Paul begins imagining a new humanity. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (1 Cor 5:17)

"He shaped of every sepulcher, a womb."

May new life be born in you this Easter!