



## Honoring Our Joys and Sorrows

And, now, if you woke this morning with a sorrow so heavy that you need the help of this community to carry it; or if, in the spirit of thankfulness, you woke with gratitude in your heart that simply must be shared, now is the time for you to speak.

Closing:

So too, we remember in silence those whose joys and sorrow go unspoken. May their lives open up to possibility. Where there is sorrow may hope arise, where there is joy, may it be shared. In all things may we seek joy, may we make joy.

**Musical Meditation:**     *Tranquil Blessing*, M. Bartlett

## Offertory Words

### **“Individually and Together” by Heather Christensen<sup>3</sup>**

Unitarian Universalism is a grand vision of a world filled with peace and justice, love and joy.

That vision is embodied in a few large congregations, numerous mid-sized congregations, and many, many small congregations.

No matter its size, every congregation depends on each of its members.

Each one of you, by your commitment of time, energy, and resources, helps make that grand vision real.

Individually and together, we are Unitarian Universalists, building a world filled with peace and justice, love and joy.

**Offering & Offertory Music**     *Choral, Op. 68*, R. Schumann

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/offering/individually-and-together> 1/29/17

Reflections *Marching on the Side of Love*

Rev. Lloyd

First, let me start by saying that I am acutely aware that somehow I am supposed to help you make sense of all that has been happening these past months and this past week. And, beloved, I have to admit that I struggle every bit as much as many of you do. Shaking my head has become habit. Shock is routine. Incredulousness, expected.

My job is to support you as you go through the milestones of life, birthing children, raising teenagers, establishing and retiring from careers, navigating retirement, approaching death, and at the end to offer you gentle hands to prepare you for the journey. Along the way I try to help you discover within yourselves your purpose and meaning in life. And, with that, often comes the work we each do to live compassionately and to create the opportunity for others to likewise be treated justly and with compassion.

It is all part of one package, based on some assumptions! One of them is that progress made previously will not be undone, that the philosophical foundations upon which we make decisions will not unravel, that justice work can be done while also caring for ourselves and our families. And, yet, there are times in the last few weeks and months that those foundations upon which we have built our understanding of the world seem shaken, as though by an earthquake. When reason and moral values no longer seem applicable in our world, we struggle to make sense of it. I say all these things to you, beloved, not as a politician but as a minister charged to care for your soul, to help each of you care for each other's soul, and at times, when the way gets really tough, perhaps, in our shared ministry you will make time to care for my soul.

And, so today, I stand before you to talk about the Women's March that occurred last Saturday in Washington, D.C., in New York City, and hundreds of other places around this world. I had signed up for the New York City march shortly after it was organized. Though I would be going with you, I would not be going as your minister. I was not making a political statement on behalf of the church. I wanted to make a personal statement, my own statement, on behalf of the moral values that I represent as a woman, as a Unitarian Universalist, and as a minister, no matter my specific affiliation.

I do not stand here as a Democrat or a Republican. I have little if any interest in labels and the rhetoric that usually goes with those words. I am an Independent, always have been and I dare say, always will be (though there are days . . .). I believe in picking the best people for the job regardless of their label. And, I believe that there are good and qualified people available for leadership, across the spectrum of political parties. I believe that labels and categorical thinking erodes our understanding of others as full and complex human beings. And, I believe that generally, short-handing all the qualities

of a person into one word interferes with our capacity to truly know the other and compromises our own capacity to reason logically. So, I have this bias against labels – and fortunately it is *usually* quite a suitable ministerial trait.

Nonetheless, I did want to go to the march, to stand, march, or sit, for everything good that humans represent, for everything good we aspire to for people unjustly marginalized, for women’s rights, for American principles, for the children who are watching, and on behalf of all our parents, grandparents and mentors who fought literally and figuratively to “raise us up right,” who taught us that “if you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.” You know, the ones who taught us how to treat others with kindness, how to be patient with one another, how to help one another, how to seek truth, how to practice lives of integrity, how to develop lives of meaning, purpose and character. Taught us ideals to which we aspire and that we must embolden. The pursuit of democracy is a humbling experience, it is hard to accomplish, precious when achieved, and vulnerable to neglect. It rests in our voices, in our hands, in our feet, in our bodies, in our minds and hearts. By us, it rises or falls.

Regrettably, for many reasons, when the time came for me to go on the march, a death in the family prevented me from doing so. Instead, between family responsibilities, last Saturday, I spent the day praying for our marchers safety and watching the news, Facebook and texts. In doing so, I heard the chants of millions who cried, “Tell me what democracy looks like! This, this, is what democracy looks like!” “We will not go away.”

In order to share their experiences with you (experiences I had expected would be my own), I asked if some of our marchers would share with me their reflections of the march. (I did need a sermon after all!) Six contributed their thoughts: They were Verity and Sara Goddard, Beth Skudder, Jen Munro, Jere Armen and her cousin, Mary Hurlburt. Will everyone who went to one of the marches please stand? Let’s give them a round of applause.

These are the overall themes they wrote about, along with a few vignettes and stories.

First they speak of their emotions:

- Some were driven to march by the feeling of being terrified, of living in terror that this country and its aspired values of liberty, justice, and compassion for all will suffer by emerging values that promote the individual above the community, wealth above generosity, war above peace, destruction above life.
- Others acknowledge anger that we must, yet again, do this work for human rights, all the while acknowledging that for many people this work was never finished nor put aside in the first place; that others live with injustices every day,

- and that too often their protests are met with suspicion, acts of violence and the assumption of guilt until proven innocent.
- Just as meaningful, our marchers speak of their feelings of solidarity with others at the march, awed by the sheer number of people, churches, and especially other Unitarian Universalist churches. They speak of being inspired by the power of “the people”; of a sense of boldness, modeling and teaching those who need to be taught that the principle: *that protest and defiance is acceptable on behalf of “the people”*. Beth says, there was “A sense of grounding by being surrounded by many loving, intelligent people who do care about our fellow humans, of all races, colors, creeds, lifestyles; people who care enough to work really hard on the myriad of challenges facing all of us right now. Jen Munro said that she experienced a deep sense of hope and pride. Sarah said, “it’s always comforting to have your choices affirmed.” Another says, in hope, “that even if only a fifth of those who turned out to march . . . continue to protest” perhaps it will be enough to turn the tide against the irrational and emotional impulses that seem to threaten the foundations of this country.
  - And, they speak of gratitude for having been able to sit down, stand up, and march on behalf of their convictions; gratitude for the civility they experienced; gratitude for being alive and together in this moment. And, as Jere says, “Gratitude for those attending: the gray-hairs, women with granddaughters, men with signs who said they were there because of their daughters, moms and dads with children in and out of strollers, people on wheelchairs, young teens, and, people with varying hues of skin, gender identities, . . . and . . . hats.
  - And, there was a sense of being part of “her” story: Namely, the human rights struggle that includes people of many different colors, classes, genders, ages, abilities, faiths, and just about every other way we can label and call another, “the other”. This struggle is not just “his” story, it is “her” story, “our” story, and, unless we do something to fix our habit of labeling others, division will be our children’s story.
  - And, therein is the recognition that the children are watching and we are the mentors, guides, teachers, protectors, promoters, and, advocates. The children are watching and not only will they know whether and how we stood on the side of human rights and love, they will learn from us how to do so, and if we do not, they will learn that, too. The children are watching . . . What will we, by our behavior, teach them? Verity Goddard said, “we went marching because a man said some bad things about women and Muslims and immigrants. [She then said,] I don’t think it was the hardest thing I’ve ever done. Maybe learning to roller skate was the hardest thing I’ve ever done. There were maybe 870 people there . . . or . . . half the world.” Her perspective may be that of a child’s, but she is watching . . . as all our children are. When we fail, they fail. When we rise, they rise.

Many issues were addressed, as well. Such as:

- Affordable health care for all.
- The right of self-determination for how our bodies are used.
- The rule of law, and transparency, thereof.
- Political work whereby together we exercise power to promote basic human rights, NOT along party lines.
- And, the reclaiming of science as a non-political, objective way, to know truth. Without facts substantiated by science, there can be no truth, there can be no ‘facts’.

Those are some of their stories . . . stories worth remembering, values to lift up, and by which we may try to live our lives.

Though I wasn’t at the march, this is what I want to leave you with today. These are the guiding principles by which I am trying to sort this all out. What I’m about to say is not a political explanation or proclamation. But it is, I am convinced, part of the essential truths that guide this nation and humanity toward health and well-being. I’m not going to try to convince you that what I say is “true.” But, it makes sense to me:

The Big Picture: I believe that our democracy is dependent on the people’s capacity to make informed and reasoned decisions when exercising their voice and will. To do that these four cornerstones of democracy must be readily accessible to the public.

1. The Rule of Law: The principle that all people and institutions are subject to and accountable to laws created by the people, and then fairly applied and enforced. Our founders revoked the rule of a monarchy a long time ago. We agreed instead that in order to govern ourselves we will co-create laws by which we will thereby govern ourselves. The rule of law ends the use of force by rulers with personal agendas. This is the principle of governance by law, instead of by persons. In this country, we are all, everyone one us, subject not to a person, but to the rule of law.
2. Science as a methodology to distinguish fact from fiction. Science is the systematic knowledge of the physical and material world through observation and experimentation. It strives to be objective as opposed to subjective. Without it, doctors cannot heal, engineers cannot build, and governments cannot function. Real facts have the capacity to help people make good and reliable decisions that promote a stable society. Fake facts, as with fake news, destabilize democracy.

3. The Rule of Law and the use of Science, together, help to ensure accountability, whereby we can each be held to account when we violate the people's laws and when what we do defies reason.
4. And, finally, (for now), when the Rule of Law, Science and Accountability provide the people with the capacity for reasoned informed decisions, their skills can then (and only then) be effectively applied toward the compassionate and equitable pursuit of human rights. It is then that democracy can rise to fairly serve the people.

Friends, we are bombarded these days with a variety of issues that disturb our lives and our souls. What worked before isn't working the same way anymore.

What the Women's March accomplished more than anything else was the incarnation of Love with a capital L. Love that both transcends and undergirds the highest ideals of this country, a love that calls each generation forward to fulfill these ideals as best we are able. But, Love and our democratic ideals need our help. They need our voice, they need our hands, they need our feet! In the coming weeks, please pay attention to how well we as a society nurture and insist upon: "the rule of law", "scientifically grounded reason", "accountability," and the "pursuit of human rights." Upon these things democracy and freedom will rest. So, too, upon these things, our spiritual health and love for one another depends.

These words from Rev. Robin Tanner, "She is There"

The revolution has already begun

In the sanctuaries, temples, mosques, synagogues

On the prayer mat,

[Knotted shawls brush against] the shoulder

. . . candles [blaze],

Our voices rise

In the resonance of resistance and resilience.

So May it Be.

**\*Closing Hymn #1014** [*Sitting, Standing, Marching*] on the Side of Love, v. 1-3

**\*Closing Words**

"Please join hands for the extinguishing of the chalice."

“We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. We extinguish this flame, but not the power and meaning of our covenant, calling us to our highest ideals and ways of being with one another. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

So may it be.

Extinguishing the Chalice

Closing Music *When the Saints Go Marching In, Traditional*



Announcements

Eric Munro  
Treasurer, Board of Trustees

\* Please stand as you are able and comfortable.

# Latecomers may be seated.