

September 11, 2011 Meditation and Sermon

The meditation was written on Sept 11, 2001 for the local newspaper in Saugus MA

**MEDITATION/ SILENCE: Spirit of life, God of love,
Amid the destruction, the grief and the sadness, our hearts break for the families of those who will never come home, as this great nation recoils in pain at the horror of this unspeakable act of terror.
Bless them for they are the heart of America.**

We ask for an understanding of the power of unity, for the love and the prayers of our brothers and sisters of every faith community on this continent and overseas who have stood beside us and cried out with us. Bless them for they are the spirit of America.

Through our tears we have seen the face of the real heroes among us, the rescuers, the ordinary, everyday folks who have put aside their fears, and their own safety and walked right into hell itself to seek out life.

Bless them for they are the hands of America.

We ask for the guidance of our leaders to face the days ahead with conviction and courage. May their actions and choices be wise and just. Bless them for they are the peace-makers of America.

Give us we pray, a kinder, gentler vision of tomorrow, that we may grant our children the freedoms that our forefathers and mothers intended, safe places to live, and work and grow and worship, without fear

Bless them for they are the hope and the future of America.

Give us this day us the strength to move forward in the coming of each day, at our places of work and play, with our families and friends, in our communities united by the glowing light of each of our houses of worship, we come together in love.

Bless us all for we are the soul of America.

SERMONETTE: Days of Darkness, Visions of Hope

There is not a one of us that doesn't remember exactly where we were and what we were doing when the towers fell 10 years ago today. The visions and memories of that day are still all too real for so many who were there; who lost loved ones and friends, co workers and children. Even ten years later, the sting of that awful day is very present and real.

America is still stunned by the viciousness and unspeakable destruction fostered by the deep-seated beliefs of Islam's extreme radical right (The Taliban) and their rapturous embrace of hatred and violence. For them, it was about a conviction that served a God of vengeance, a violent God, a vicious and unfeeling God. That realization changed us all. Not just our economy, our politics and fostered an urgency to retaliate, but it also challenged the validity of every faith that once believed that the United States was immune from such an act of destruction.

Never before had we ever thought that we were not the chosen people. For many including the clergy, our definitions of how faith works for us as a nation, whose currency, Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem.. I quote from the last verse.. "And this be our motto: In God is our trust"; all suggest that we are blessed and always will be, by the protection of a loving God. That trust was broken and we were irrevocably changed. When answers were not forthcoming as to why? How could this happen to us? Many left their churches with an enduring sense of divine abandonment. We were left with so much to rebuild, not just in the footprint that was left behind, but in our quests to find comfort for the inner angst, revealed by the fact that we were not as divinely protected as we thought we were.

For us as Unitarian Universalists, we believe that it was the sheer madness of human religious arrogance that shockingly introduced us to our vulnerability as individuals and as a nation, not the whim of an angry deity.

As Unitarian Universalists, be it the spirit of all life, God, Goddess, the natural world or Universe as the greatest source of strength or guidance in times of inexplicable tragedy... not to explain or justify what happened, rather we seek to summon that spark of the divine mystery, the gentle push from within that somehow gets us through the aftermath of destruction and loss, that guides us away from the grief and the sense of hopelessness that invades our spirit. It does not mean we are expected to forget, only to find a way to live by cherishing what was lost.

There is no joy to be found that arises from this unprecedented attack on our lives and our culture. There is no "getting over it" nor do we wish to forget. Yet some of the most violated have found ways to take that first step toward hope, through taking their pain and emotion and weaving it into poetry, music and art... please take a look at the magnificent paintings in the narthex that Joyce Homan painted as her response. Others, like Lisa Beemer, Todd Beemer's wife, who lost her husband on flight 93 that crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, took his last words, "Now Let's Roll" to heart and has rebuilt her life through helping others focus their grief on projects that nurture and build rather than destroy. Some have started support groups, others have created foundations to help the first responders and the families who have suffered so much.

"Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, two friends, David Paine and Jay Winuk, who lost his brother in the collapse of the World Trade Center, joined together to pursue a simple yet forward-looking vision for 9/11...

Over the past 10 years, through the nonprofit group MyGoodDeed that they created, Paine and Winuk have dedicated much of their lives, about 20,000 volunteer hours each, to "ensuring that something positive arises from the ashes of the 9/11 tragedy." Building on that vision, they hope to inspire one million people to participate in the observance they helped establish ... today, the September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance – to inspire the single-largest day of charitable service in U.S. history."

Some have embraced the unfairly accused...

Two weeks after the towers fell, The Heartsong evangelical church outside of Memphis Tennessee, approached their new neighbors to be, The Memphis Islamic Church and extended their hands to welcome them.

Together they ran a food pantry, a clothing drive and sponsored a blood bank and while their mosque was being built, they shared worship space with Heartsong.

From each of the many stories that have arisen from the ashes, has come, not only a glimmer of hope that we can survive, but also a new understanding of how faith works in our lives; person to person, a belief that the goodness of human kindness will prevail and live through those whose lives have been shaken to the core. By acting on our hopes, we can create a vision of a new tomorrow.

It takes a living faith, one that does not grow stale and useless, by asking only why, but rather it invites us to ask, “ what can I do to nurture my spirit, my memories to honor what was lost.” Yes, we now understand that the diabolical acts of human hatred has nothing to do with divine orders. We know now that evil is a human creation and our vision requires us to confront the cause, the deprivation and philosophy that created it. It also requires us to reach out in love, to those, the innocent, who have also suffered from the effects of our need to retaliate.

'The principal thing in the world is to keep the soul aloft.' What will do that? Work won't do it, play won't do it, success won't do it, money won't do it. Hope will do it. Because hope gives the soul wings...

This morning you are all invited to light a candle in silence or to name those you have lost or wish to remember. If you have a vision, a hope for tomorrow you are striving for, please also light a candle and in a few words share your insight.

CANDLES OF REMEMBRANCE AND HOPE The Congregation

CLOSING WORDS

We have seen the faces of evil

And felt its wrath

We have stood in the ashes of destruction and despair

Not knowing which way to turn

Yet we have been blessed by those whose lives we cherish

Let there be in our hearts a space for remembrance

A place of vision and hope,

For a lasting peace among all people.

**Please stand to share in the words printed in your order of service as we
extinguish our chalice**

EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,

the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.

These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

CLOSING HYMN # 1 May Nothing Evil Cross This Door

POSTLUDE