

## Post-Election Care of the Soul

Rev. Florence Caplow

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### Opening Words

Welcome this morning, all those who are here downhearted. I offer you these words of Reverend Bill Schulz, the former director of Amnesty International and the UU Service Committee

*Come into this place of peace*

*And let its silence heal your spirit.*

*Come into this place of memory*

*And let its history warm your soul.*

*Come into this place of prophesy and power*

*And let its vision change your heart.*

## Sermon

I know this is a dark, hard, angry, fearful time for many of us. That is why so many are here this morning. I have heard and read such a range of feelings in the last few days. At first it was shock, mourning, confusion. Now some people are telling me they are angrier than they have ever been, and as I read posts on Facebook from friends and strangers, that anger comes through, bitter exchanges.

I think for many of us, and I speak for myself here, the reality of this is just starting to sink in, the reality of what this election might mean about us and for us.

Some of us are afraid because we are a member of one of the groups that have been singled out by Trump and his supporters. We fear for our safety and for our rights – the right to marry, the right to live here, the right to choose.

In any room of people, there are people who are much more vulnerable than others, and we must remember that, if we are among those who have less to fear. But I think some fear stirs in one form or another in all of us. And when we are afraid, we need to be with others, or the fear can build to intolerable levels, send us in strange directions where we lose our way.

On the night after the election, at the request of many people, we opened the sanctuary at Quimper UU and more than a hundred people came, many from the larger community, to sit quietly in the silence, to weep, to light candles, and to speak of their feelings and offer prayers and words of encouragement to one another.

At the end there was a palpable sense of relief. “I am not alone, we can do this together. We WILL do this together” I think we must continue to do this for one another, and we will do this today.

But first I want to say that I understand that range of feelings, and I think we must remember that we have truly entered deeply uncertain and dangerous times.

Let’s not fool ourselves: we are in new waters, rough waters, and I believe we are going to be called and tested as never before. I wish I could give words of comfort to you, but instead I find myself feeling that desire for comfort is what we must abandon, because if we stay comfortable, *others* will bear the cost and the burden of these times.

What I am hearing, over and over again, from so many places, is that we need to sit down, cry, rage, and then turn what we feel to this clear intention to protect others in this time. Here is something written by the mayor of Minneapolis, Betsy Hodges. I heard words very much like these the other night in Port Townsend too, and every time they brought me to tears:

*To those of you who awoke afraid and more vulnerable to a President who has pledged to attack you: I stand with you, your city stands with you, and we will find a way through. To my Muslim, Mexican, immigrant, indigenous, LGBTQ, low-income, of-color, women, Jewish and other friends: you are not alone, I and allies stand strong with you, we will create more and better allies, and we will find a path forward. Together...*

*We must continue, as always, to take a stand against what is coming, to fight for and with people against the meanness that is upon us. We must continue, as always, to stand for what is best in us as people—helping rather than hindering, inclusion rather than division.*

*The first order of business, however, is to grieve, to rage, to confess confusion, to shake with fear. Only when we let ourselves feel fully do we free our minds enough to think clearly about what is next. Then we get to remember that we have one another, we know how to organize, and we know how to stand up, dust off, and take the next step. Together."*

Some of you may be wearing a safety pin this morning, as a sign that you are willing to create safety for others. I thought of bringing a bunch of safety pins here, but then I heard some deeper thinking that made me say, no, to choose to wear a pin is a bigger decision than a Sunday morning enthusiasm.

It is easy to say that we will be an ally, but do we really know what that means, that we are saying yes to intervening when we see someone being physically or verbally attacked, even if that means we are attacked as well? That we are saying yes to risking arrest for what we feel is right? If someone offers you a pin and you take it, consider carefully what responsibility you are taking on. I don't want those pins to be a sign that we're just part of some nice liberal club.

We are going to have to be so much more, in the coming storm. As part of my training as a UU minister, I studied the work of the Unitarian theologian James Luther Adams. Adams traveled to Germany as a theological scholar in the late 1930's, and met many of the prominent liberal church people as the Nazis were rising to power.

What haunted him for the rest of his life was his belief that early intervention in the Nazi agenda from within or without Germany could have turned the tide and prevented millions of deaths.

Some religious liberals within Germany were entranced by Nazism's promises, and others were so caught up in an inward, individualistic religious understanding that they failed to act quickly enough. They possessed, in Adams' words, "very feeble powers of resistance." In America there was a desire to avoid another war and a liberal disinclination to intervene in another country's internal politics. We must not have "feeble powers of resistance" ourselves..

I know the title of this talk was post election care of the soul. I want to suggest that the most powerful way we can care for our souls is to care for those around us who are more vulnerable than we are, and to care for each other. Call that friend who may be afraid, for good reason, sit down over dinner with your family and talk about what you will do.

And of course, there are other ways to care for the soul. You may find you need to limit your exposure to news and Facebook, that you need to walk in the woods, or be with a child and see the world through her eyes. Remember that Obama is still your president. I invite you to treat yourself and those around you with great and steady tenderness, as you would treat someone recovering from a terrible shock, which we all are.

And I think there will be beauty in this too. I already see it. It is like we are groggily waking up from a dream, and realizing that there is a storm coming and we need to be ready, be strong, and act from love, together. That awareness is powerful and beautiful. Our UU principles can guide us through that storm, and as Clarissa Pinkola Esté's wrote in her letter, written 8 years ago,

*My friends, do not lose heart. We were made for these times. I recognize a seaworthy vessel when I see one. Regarding awakened souls, there have never been more able vessels in the waters than there are right now across the world.*

*"Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good."*

I want to close with words by the Buddhist meditation teacher Jack Kornfield, in response to the election:

### **Practicing the Dharma in Uncertain Times**

When times are uncertain, difficult, fearful, full of change,  
they become the perfect place to deepen the practice of awakening.

After viewing the elections, whatever your point of view,

Take time to quiet the mind and tend to the heart.

Then go out and look at the sky.

Remember vastness, there are seasons to all things,  
gain and loss, praise and blame, expansion and contraction.

Learn from the trees.

Practice equanimity and steadiness.

Remember the timeless Dharma amidst it all.

Think of the best of human goodness.

Let yourself become a beacon of integrity with your thoughts, words and deeds.

Integrity in speech and action, virtue and non-harming brings blessings.

Remember the Noble Truths, no matter the politics or the season:

Greed, hatred and ignorance cause suffering. Let them go.

Love, generosity and wisdom bring the end of suffering. Foster them.

Remember the Buddha's counsel,

"Hatred never ends by hatred but by love alone is healed.

This is the ancient and eternal law."

The human heart has freedom in itself to choose love, dignity and respect.

In every circumstance, embody respect and cultivate compassion for all..

Amidst the changes, shine with courage and trust.

Love people, and...

This is your world. Plant seeds of goodness  
and water them everywhere.

Then blessings will grow for yourself and for all.

Metta, Jack

### Benediction

Dear ones, in closing, hear these words from UU minister Rev. Ashley Horan:

*You are loved beyond belief. You are enough, you are precious, your work and your life matter, and you are not alone. You are part of a "we," a great cloud of witnesses living and dead who have insisted that this beautiful, broken world of ours is a blessing worthy of both deep gratitude and fierce protection. Whatever happens, our ancestors and our descendants are beckoning us, compelling us to onward toward greater connection, greater compassion, greater commitment to one another and to the earth. Together, we are resilient and resourceful enough to say "yes" to that call, to make it our life's work in a thousand different ways, knowing that we can do no other than bind ourselves more tightly together, and throw ourselves into the holy work of showing up, again and again, to be part of building that world of which we dream but which we have not yet seen.*