

## “Home for Healing”

I said it last week, and I’ll say it again because we don’t hear

It enough: I love you.

And it is out love that I remind us:

*“Here is the world; beautiful and terrible things will happen.*

*Be not afraid.*

*Because this is what we are about:*

*We hold hope for each other when hope is hard to find.*

*We plant seeds that will one day grow.*

*We are prophets of a future not our own.*

*We cannot do everything,*

*But we can do something.*

*So forget your perfect offering.*

*There is a crack in everything.*

*That is how the light gets in.”*

This week finds us heading home for Thanksgiving,

Wherever or however and whomever home is for you,

A holiday my colleague Forrest Church, bless his life now gone,

Once referred to as an our country’s most secular sacred holiday,

Almost like an American Seder, he said,

For the ways we share a meal and give thanks for the life we did not earn

And the grace we do not have to buy,

Forrest’s prescription for gratitude reminding us in three parts to:

1) *Want what you have,*

2) *Do what we can, and*

### 3) *Be who we are...*

Which is as good a religious instruction as any,  
 Even as we acknowledge that this holiday,  
 like everything in our country's history (and in our personal history),  
 is complicated and never quite as innocent as the Macy Day parade  
 or Charlie Brown Thanksgiving episode might have us believe...

Because remember, the Thanksgiving story tells of the time when it was  
 people who looked like me were the immigrants,  
 And it was people who looked like me who were so dependent those first  
 winters on the brown people already here,  
 even as they, the Pilgrims, looked to push those brown people out and  
 away...

....this holiday, Thanksgiving, that didn't become a holiday until Lincoln  
 proclaimed it so in the middle of the Civil War, in October, 1862,  
 Looking, he said, to bring together the divided nation, and I'm quoting now,  
 To offer "*tender care all those who have become widows, orphans,  
 mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are  
 unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the intercession of the Almighty  
 hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it, as soon as may be  
 consistent with the divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony,  
 tranquility, and union.*"

Lincoln's words feel as if they could be written for today, don't they?  
 Which is why I feel so drawn to them,

And drawn also to the words there at the base of the Statue of Liberty -

Who has been there to see them? –

That preach an oh-so Universalist sermon,

So much so that I've put them for us at the top of the order of service.

Will you read them with me?

*Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

So drawn to these words – Lincoln's and Liberty's – because

Whereas once they might have simply been historical to me and maybe to you,

worthy of a PBS special on Sunday t.v. or a Doris Kearns Goodwin book on the nightstand,

Now, in these times, they seem so prescient, so necessary

As we wend our way home this week, wherever, however, whoever home

Is for you,

In a country that over the last weeks and months,

and especially over the last few days,

has revealed us to just how wounded we are....

Cut open with class resentments,

Cut open with urban and rural divisions,

Cut open with unabashed racism,

Cut open with economic disparity,

Cut open with scapegoating the immigrant leaving home to find home,

Cut open with women and girls spoken of as objects to grab...

So cut up, we are, and the scab has been ripped off,  
 The sores have been broken open,  
 And we see our wounds fully as they are...

And Heather reminding me this week of a word etymology I did not know  
 (can you imagine?)

That the word *apocalypse* from the Greek means ‘*to uncover, to reveal....*’,  
 Which is to say, and this is true regardless of who we voted for,

That we are living in *apocalyptic times, uncovered times,*

*Wounds revealed times, cuts uncovered times, sores broken open times...*

And as we find our way home this week, giving grace for this life

We don’t have earn, but that we do have to live as though our lives  
 are worth dying for (which is another Forrest message),

what I’m wondering is:

*How are we supposed to heal?*

*When the cuts are so deep? When we’ve kept the wounds hidden for so  
 long?*

*How do we heal our home? How do we make our communities a home for  
 healing?*

This week, I think it was Wednesday after a day long with ministry I feel so  
 privileged to share with you, because remember my job description:

Which isn’t about being a superhero of holy availability,

But instead to help ministry happen between you and the communities we  
 live in,

Because we’re all ordained now, you’ve got stoles around your necks,

We’re all preaching with our lives even more than our lips

The good news and healing word we all so desperately need to hear...

This week as Karyn and I found half an hour to walk the dog down to  
Beautiful Winthrop Lake near our home,

We talked of how we wanted to respond to the news happening around us –

- The letters received on the Natick doorstep last weekend telling the owner that there is zero tolerance for black people and that the election means the country has been taken back ...
- My mom calling me from St. Louis to say how some high school boys in a nearby town told two black girls to go sit on the back of the bus...
- My needing to call my adopted Vietnamese sister, she coming to this home because her home, as the poem says, was the mouth of a shark  
When she left the war there in 1974, just a baby, to ask: *Anna, Just want to ask if everything is ok. Anyone say anything to you?*  
“So far, so good,” she says. “Scary though...”

And Karyn saying to herself as much as to me as the dog bounded  
Without a clue into the mounds of golden leaves...

*How people who look like she and I do will be fine;*

*It's those in the margins, on the shadows, on the shores*

*Who are feeling so frightened now...*

*“I feel like the scab has been ripped off, I feel like we've been asleep,”*

She preached to the preacher,

As we went home and did a few concrete things:

- She booking her trip to DC in January to take our daughter to the MillionsWoman March,
- We setting aside money every month to give to reproductive rights,

Environmental protection, GLBT protection, refugee support, NAACP..

- And, perhaps most importantly, to engage our two teenagers in the reality of the times we're living – to put the screens away and talk about the racism, the class divisions, how Ella faces barriers that Emerson doesn't, how they have privilege they don't notice, which is the definition of privilege, and so much more...and to keep talking despite the eye rolls And 'aren't we done yet?' shoulder hunch...

Because here is the thing, folks, the sermon in a sentence: *I can't begin to preach that I know all about how to help us heal these uncovered wounds, But what I do know is this:*

*The first step toward healing begins when realize we can no longer pretend.*

The hurt in our home is real, and time for the tending to the wounds is now.

Bandages need to come off.

Eyes need to be open.

Attention needs to be paid.

Love needs to be practiced.

And no, not a Hallmark,

Can't we all just get along kind of love,

But a fierce love – love fierce enough to stand shoulder to shoulder

And skin to skin against every voice that says: *go home, foreigner;*

*Back to the back of the bus, black girl.*

*Get straight, transgender teen.*

*Take off the scarf, Muslim woman.*

Which is going to be hard to do, this work.

Hard for me. Hard for you.

Which is why you might be surprised to hear

That in these recent days I have felt more energized, more purposeful,  
More clear-eyed, more rooted in my vocation than maybe at any other time  
in my 14-year ministry with you.

And why might that be?

Because this work of healing is what UUism and this church is made for,  
It's why we exist, it's why we're not a living tradition and not a museum,  
it's why we are movement and not a building.

Will you help me?

Our work is bind up the brokenhearted. Will you help me?

Our work is to welcome the tired, the poor, the huddled and hurting?

Will you help me?

Our work is lift our lamps beside our doors. Will you help me?

Our work is to proclaim freedom for the captives. Will you help me?

Our work release from darkness the prisoners. Will you help me?

Our work is say that black lives matter. Will you help me?

Our work is, like these safety pins show, is the we are safe person

For GLBT, Muslims, immigrants, to find solidarity with. Will you help me?

Our work is to comfort those who mourn. Will you help me?

Our work is build a home for healing. Will you help me?

Thank you. Because Life Calls Us. We cannot despair.

There is too much work to do.

Let us sing...