

**Adapted from Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist,
Palatine, IL
Violence, Terror, and War**

Chalice Lighting and Reading

To face the world's coldness, a chalice of warmth.

To face the world's terrors, a chalice of courage.

To face the world's turmoil, a chalice of peace.

May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives.

--unknown

Personal Check-in (How is it with your spirit?)

Reflective Reading:

When I despair, I remember that,
all through history,
the way of truth and love has always won.
There have been tyrants and murderers,
and for a time they can seem invincible,
but in the end, they always fall.
Think of it. Always, they fall. Always.

--Mohandas Ghandi

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Please remember, this forum is not for political analysis. Rather, we'll be sharing our own personal feelings and reactions to this topic.

1. What were your feelings in the aftermath of the Newtown, CT tragedy? Try to find the feeling words—sad, afraid, angry, numb, unaffected—and understand why you felt that way.
2. Did your feelings change in the days that followed? If so, why?
3. How do you cope with violence, terror, and war in our society? Are you doing anything special to keep your spirits up despite the difficult news each day? Do you see any positive outcomes or reasons for hope?

Check-out

Closing Reading/Extinguishing the Chalice

Reading:

Go in peace. Live simply, gently,
at home in yourselves.

Act justly.

Speak justly.

Remember the depth of your own compassion.

Forget not your power in the days
of your powerlessness.

Crave peace for all people in the world,
beginning with yourselves,
and go as you go with the dream
of that peace alive in your heart.

Hymnal #686 (adapted), Mark L. Belletini

So May We Be.

Preparation for CCUU Session: Violence, Terror, and War

This session was written after the tragedy at Virginia Tech in 2007. These readings might be read in preparation for a covenant group or you may use any part to supplement or alter the group session.

The recent events at Virginia Tech have once again brought us face to face with the dark side of our society. Multiple shootings at schools have become so frequent as to almost seem commonplace. The pictures and words of the media have almost lost their meaning—"massacre," "horror," "killer," "insanity," "grief," "mourning," "devastation." We are become numbed to them. The analysis is endless; the answers elusive.

And is the maltreatment of our soldiers at Walter Reed and other military and VA hospitals not a form of violence? Or the endless political debate and maneuvering that produces nothing more than killed, wounded, and terrorized soldiers?

And, after all, what is the meaning of 32 people killed at a rural university compared to twice and thrice that number killed everyday in Iraq. Ten times ten that number in Darfur.

Violence, terror, and war certainly affected our society before September 11, 2001. But the context of such acts—if not the frequency and scope—has changed dramatically. Increasing levels of high anxiety, stress, hopelessness, fear—of traveling, of other people, of never being safe, of everything—are just some of the symptoms ordinary Americans are suffering from this cycle of violence.

Where does it end? How do we change the context for ourselves so that we can walk in beauty as opposed to fear? As individuals, we can choose to be helpless or hopeful.

Food for Thought

We'll be talking about some of these issues in covenant at our next meeting. Please remember, this forum is not for political analysis. Rather, we'll be sharing our own personal feelings and reactions to this topic.

1. What were your feelings last week in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech tragedy? Try to find the feeling words—sad, afraid, angry, numb, unaffected—and understand why you felt that way.
2. Did your feelings change in the days that followed? If so, why?
3. How do you cope with violence, terror, and war in our society? Are you doing anything special to keep your spirits up despite the difficult news each day? Do you see any positive outcomes or reasons for hope?

Meditation Readings

--Martin Luther King, Jr. "Where Do We Go From Here?" August, 1967

Through violence you may murder a murderer,
but you can't murder murder.

Through violence you may murder a liar,
but you can't establish truth.

Through violence you may murder a hater,
but you can't murder hate.

Darkness cannot put out darkness.
Only light can do that...

Difficult and painful as it is, we must walk on in the days ahead
with an audacious faith in the future.

When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair,
and when our nights become darker than a
thousand midnights,

*let us remember that there is a creative force
in this universe,
working to pull down the gigantic mountains
of evil,*

a power that is able to make a way out of no way
and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.

*Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long,
but it bends toward justice*

Sequence for the Day: A Prayer for Peace
Mark L. Belletini, on the beginning of the Iraq War
First UU Church of Columbus, Ohio

O Love,
you who struggle so to hold me close
even on the days when I peevishly push you away,
I just have one question today:
so why not some peace for a change?
You know, peace.
No dying children.
No houses burned to the ground.
No bullets.
The guns melted and made into jewelry
or doll frames,
the hollow missiles used for grain silos.
Peace. You know.
No one posturing, blaming,
describing who's at fault for a hundred years,
or a thousand, no one shouting,
or galloping smugly on steeds of righteousness
while they trample kids with cruel hunger
in one place, explosions in another.
Peace. You know. No one claiming that Adonai
blesses bayonets, or that Jesus has been misunderstood all these years and that
what he really said was: "Blow up your enemies."

Peace. A simple word. A roof over your head.
Some love and kindness. A satisfying meal.
A poem read by candlelight. Somersaults
in a green park. Laughter. Tenderness at the hour of death. Music. Peace. You know.

And so, amidst all the noise, the shouting, the horror,
the terror... offer us, right oh Love, a gate,
a gate crafted from blocks of deliberate silence.
And bricks of simple grief.
And ordinary tenderness.
And vulnerability.
Invite us, oh Love, now, at last,
to enter through this gate and find a meadow there,
bright and sweet. Bid us lie down for a time there,
amid the fragrant field grass, remember the real love we have known in our lives,
person by person, and in that silent meadow, in that remembering,
in that recommitment to you, o Love, grant us peace.

Stephanie Certain Matz, Countryside UU, 4/06, adapted from FUCSJ (San Jose)