

Worship transcript for January 17, 2021

Prelude (Jen Hayman, Amelia Peele, Rochelle Rice, Dante Pope, Gordon Kent, quintet)

“We Shall Be Known” (MaMuse)

We shall be known by the company we keep
By the ones who circle round to tend these fires
We shall be known by the ones who sow and reap
The seeds of change alive from deep within the earth

It is time now
It is time now that we thrive
It is time we lead ourselves into the well
It is time now
And what a time to be alive
In this great turning we shall learn to lead in love
In this great turning we shall learn to lead in love

Call to Worship (Rev. Kathleen Rolenz)

We the people gather together this morning
We the people gather together at this time of great turning
As we witness the long labor of moments become movements become justice.

We the people gather to bear witness to the words and deeds of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We the people gather this morning to partner with peace
to hew out of the mountain of despair – a stone of hope
which shall become the cornerstone of beloved community. Come let us worship together

In Unitarian Universalist Churches and congregations all across the country, members are kindling a flame in a chalice, symbol of our free faith. This morning, Lydia Mosher and her granddaughter Zadie, will light our chalice.

Chalice Lighting (Zadie and Lydia Mosher)

Hymn

“Love Will Guide Us”

Love will guide us, peace has tried us
Hope inside us will lead the way
On the road from greed to giving
Love will guide us through the hard night

If you cannot sing like angels
If you cannot speak before thousands
You can give from deep within you
You can change the world with your love

Love will guide us, peace has tried us
Hope inside us will lead the way
On the road from greed to giving
Love will guide us through the hard night

Welcome (Paree Roper)

Good Morning! Welcome to All Souls Church!

Good morning – I’m Paree Roper and I am your worship associate this morning. Welcome to All Souls Church, where our name says it all. Where we seek to create a community where ALL people—people of all races, creeds, sexual orientations, gender expressions and nonbinary, those with differing abilities—where ALL people are welcome at the table of God’s love and human fellowship.

In a world of division, our mission at All Souls is to build what Dr. King called the “Beloved Community,” a diverse, spirit-filled, justice-seeking community that bears witness to the unity of the human family. I want to extend a special welcome to our visitors and guests. We invite you to join us on this journey of faith and hope.

If we were in the sanctuary, I’d invite you to turn and greet one another, but for our virtual gathering, we do something called “beholding.” We take a few moments to scroll through the gallery view of faces. Some will be familiar to you – others you won’t know – but today, we are part of the Great Family of All Souls. Hold each soul in your mind and heart as we begin our worship together.

Congregational Concerns and Prayer (Rev. Rolenz)

I’d like to add my welcome and greetings to all this morning. I’m Rev. Kathleen Rolenz and I have the honor of serving as your Interim Senior Minister. This is a special Sunday for two reasons; first, it is the Sunday before the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday when we reflect on the life and legacy of Dr. King; AND, today begins a six month series featuring a guest Unitarian Universalist guest minister to our pulpit.

I am so pleased to welcome my colleague, The Reverend Kimberly Quinn Johnson. Since 2015, Rev. Johnson has served as the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork, in Bridgehampton, NY. I first heard Rev. Johnson speak as a co-presenter at the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association’s Berry Street Essay, the longest running lecture series in the country. We are so grateful to have you!

I also want to acknowledge other special guests we have visiting All Souls this morning. Members of the Winchester Unitarian Society from Winchester, MA are visiting us en-masse. If

you are from the Society – maybe let us know who you are by waving or putting a thumbs up emoticon! We are so glad you're here and hope to meet some of you after the service.

There are some events happening in the wider community and in our church which we'd like you to know about:

Announcements

In the e-newsletter update that went out this morning, we published information about the week ahead. Notably, we'll be tolling the Revere Bell to honor victims of Covid 19 on Tuesday, January 19 at 5:30 PM. We will Facebook live that event.

Also on Tuesday, from 7:30 – 8:30, we'll be holding space for one another on the eve of the Inauguration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

On Sundays, January 31 and February 7, the Board of Trustees is hosting a congregational conversation at 11:45 AM. The purpose is to feedback which will inform the board's decision about delaying the search for a settled minister for one year. Members are welcome to these conversations: Sundays at 11:45 am on January 31 and February 7. Zoom links will be provided on the church website.

Pastoral Concerns

We are thinking of David Lindsay, Front Desk staff, whose mother Adassa is in hospice in Florida, after some months of health challenges. Sending him encouragement in this time of COVID separations.

Our healing prayers remain with Jose-Luis Sanchez, in treatment for colon cancer. Jose-Luis is staying with a friend for several weeks who is assisting with his home care.

Please hold Brian Barger and his family in your prayers. Brian is in the hospital in New York following surgery on Wednesday to treat pancreatic cancer.

Our prayers are with Julie Agarwal's good friend Anna Kapellan. Anna is struggling with multiple health issues, and her second round of COVID.

Our hearts and prayers go out to the family of Patrick Warren Senior, of Killeen, Texas. Mr. Warren was shot and killed by a police officer who responded to the family's call for psychiatric help.

Our sympathies remain with the family of Moisés Santos, who finally received his body for wake and cremation this weekend. Moisés was our unhoused neighbor who died on the front steps of All Souls on December 18. Condolences to sisters Francisca and Marta Santos, daughter Katerín, and extended family in El Salvador. Patrick Warren Sr.,

Prayer

O Spirit of Life – known to us by many names and beyond all naming – be with us now in this time of meditation – reflection or prayer.

Our hearts are heavy this morning, with the weight of these past ten days – for these events did not just happen on the news; they happened in our home; in the District. This time has been traumatic for many – but especially black, brown, indigeneous peoples and people of color and those who work at the Federal Government or serve as federal contractors – this has been a time of great stress and trauma.

Our hearts may be heavy with worry for the week ahead – what should be at time of joyous celebration is tainted by fear. Fear of the virus – which continues to mutate and rise; and fears of violence from our own fellow citizens.

Dr. King and his colleagues knew something about fear. He reminds us that fear cannot lift us out of the morass – for there is something larger and stronger happening in this nation right now...it is the birth pangs of a a holy disturbance, a benevolent rage, a revolutionary love, which is protesting, urging, insisting That which is sacred will not be defiled. (adapted/Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker)

This morning we pray for peace. We pray for safety for all those who have been charged with protecting democracy; for all those who participate in the peaceful transfer of power; for the entire District, for the nation and for the world.

May we use our prayers and our power to bless this world and may we live our lives as a gesture of thanks, for this beauty – and this rage. Amen.

Hymn 123

“Spirit of Life” (words and music by Carolyn McDade) (sung in English and Spanish)

Fuente de amor, ven hacia mi
Y al corazon cantale tu compassion
Sopla al volar, sube en la mar
Hasta moldear la justicia de la vida
Arraigame, liberame
Fuente de amor, ven a mi, ven a mi

Spirit of life, come unto me
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea
Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice
Roots hold me close, wings set me free
Spirit of life, come to me, come to me.

Reading (Rev. Maybelle Bennet)

“On the Uses of Anger” (Audre Lorde)

My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing, also.

Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy, serving progress and change. And when I speak of change, I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration in those assumptions underlining our lives.

...

Anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification, for it is in the painful process of this translation that we identify who are our allies with whom we have grave differences, and who are our genuine enemies.

This hatred and our anger are very different. Hatred is the fury of those who do not share our goals, and its object is death and destruction. Anger is a grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change.

It is not the anger of other women that will destroy us but our refusals to stand still, to listen to its rhythms, to learn within it, to move beyond the manner of presentation to the substance, to tap that anger as an important source of empowerment. ...Anger is loaded with information and energy

I cannot hide my anger to spare you guilt, nor hurt feelings, nor (your) answering anger; for to do so insults and trivializes all our efforts. Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness.

I have no creative use for guilt, yours or my own. Guilt is only another way of avoiding informed action, of buying time out of the pressing need to make clear choices, out of the approaching storm that can feed the earth as well as bend the trees. If I speak to you in anger, at least I have spoken to you.

My response to racism is anger.

Sermon (Rev. Kimberly Quinn Johnson)

“On the Uses of Anger: Creative Maladjustment”

Anger is one of those topics that we try to stay away from.
We tell children: to be nice, smile.

We tell adults: to get over it; to forgive and forget

If you visit the bookstore or the library, the shelves are lined with books on how to control our anger, or manage our anger.

I have been really angry lately. Each time I see or read, or hear about the death or shooting of another Black person at the hands of the police. Each new story about a white person weaponizing the police against another black person. I am angry. When I learn of the death of another friend or family member to COVID-19—the unnecessary death of a loved one far too young. Each time I counsel or assist another person struggling to make ends meet during this pandemic while billionaires are getting richer than ever. And then, last week. Armed, white supremacist, insurrectionists attack the capital, in all likelihood aided and abetted by those in power. And over and over again little or no accountability I am practically vibrating with anger

For years, our politics have seemed intent on roiling up our anger—pitting person against person; group against group. Sometimes that anger can feel or seem like a default state—a kind of permanent way of being.

And so we have this urge to smooth that out—to tamp it down. But our typical, canned response to anger: be nice, smile, move on, forgive and forget elicits the exact opposite reaction than I think the speakers intend. Rather than soothe, this attempt to mollify anger—without addressing its source—only exacerbates it.

I understand the impulse to want to minimize anger. I think anger is one of our most dangerous emotions. It can wreak havoc on our bodies and our minds. Your temperature rises, your muscles tense. Your breathing becomes shallows or stops altogether. Your mind goes blank.

Anger can be destructive—leading us to lash out in ways that hurt ourselves and others. Yet anger is not an emotion to be avoided—just the opposite. Trying to avoid anger—to tamp it down—can cause more harm than good.

It can needle us—like a little jab that won't let go. Do you remember the story of The Princess and the Pea? It's a fairytale: a princess goes to sleep on dozens and dozens of mattresses, but there's a pea underneath bottom mattress. And no matter how many mattresses are piled on top of it, the princess can still feel that pea—poking at her. Our anger can be like that. Anger, unaddressed, can be like that.

Or it can simmer and fester. Have you ever had the experience of leaving a pot on the stove with the lid on? And what's in the pot starts to steam and simmer until it's bubbling over the top of the pot, seeping past the lid and spilling over onto everything. Anger, when we try to tamp it down, can be like that. Bubbling over and spilling over onto everything.

One of the nerdiest things I do is to subscribe to the Merriam Webster word of the day. Each morning, they email a new word with etymology and use. If you are in any way a word nerd, I recommend it. Their word for yesterday was effusive, which I think most of us recognize as “the expression of great or excessive emotion or enthusiasm.” But there is a secondary definition: “characterized or formed by a nonexplosive outpouring of lava.” Our anger, unaddressed, can be

effusive. This non-explosive outpouring of lava. Quiet, understated. But still dangerous and destructive in its heat. Hardening over into rock.

We can let our anger lash out, or poke, or fester and spill over.

But we can also use our anger constructively, creatively, in our lives and in the world. Anger tells us something about what's going on in our world. It signals us that something has offended our sense of rightness and fairness—of justice. Anger is not an end or an action unto itself. Anger is a catalyst that sparks our action and points it in one direction or another.

I don't mean to suggest that we should always give in to our anger—that's the lashing out. We can be steered wrong by a singular sense of personal injustice. We can be angry when our pride is hurt, or our lives are inconvenienced. But a righteous anger is one born from a sense of injustice in the world outside of ourselves. A righteous anger is one that motivates us to work for change.

The title for today's sermon: On the Uses of Anger comes from a 1981 speech by Audre Lorde. Rev. Maybelle read an excerpt from this as the first message. Audre Lorde was an African American poet, essayist, feminist, womanist, lesbian, and civil rights activist. Lorde introduced the radical idea—radical to 1980s feminism—that for feminism to truly serve women, to be a truly liberating movement, then it needs to address and take seriously the lives of all women—not just middle-class white women. For this woman, who was working class, also Black and also queer, the daughter of immigrants; liberation could never be simply a matter of women's liberation. It needs to also be liberation for: women of color and all people of color; poor women & men & children; queer people of all and any race. all people.

In her presentation to the National Women's Studies Association, Lorde addresses not just anger as a useful—potentially productive—emotion. She addresses the fear of anger —fear of one's own anger, and fear of facing someone else's anger.

She says:

My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing, also.

Lorde warns not to confuse anger with hatred.

“This hatred and our anger are very different,” She says. “Hatred is the fury of those who do not share our goals, and its object is death and destruction.” Anger is different. “Anger,” Lorde writes, “ is a grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change.”

When I think about: Ahmaud Aubrey & Rayshard Brooks, & Daniel Prude, & George Floyd, & Breonna Taylor and the more than 220 other Black people killed by police in 2020, I feel anger. Yes. But what is underneath that anger is not hatred, but grief.

Beneath my anger—is grief.

Buddhist teacher Rod Owens, (who claims identifies as Black, queer, cisgender, and male-identified) in his recently published book *Love and Rage*, argues that the source of anger is hurt. “Anger,” he writes, is “the mental and physical tension we experience between being emotionally hurt and determining a strategy of self-care to tend to the hurt. From this tension, aversion and rigidity arise, resulting in the expression of aggression, whose energetic force distracts us from self-care into self-protection, often resulting in violence. Anger and rage are expressions of the same experience of being hurt, and the tension from needing to care for ourselves while also trying to figure out how to be safe.”[1]

Anger the fire kindled from my hurt and grief. Anger is the fire that won’t let me walk away or turn my back on pain, harm, and injustice.

This, anger, can be a tricky emotion for Black people to claim—let alone pronounce out loud. Owens confesses

As a Black man, I was conditioned to believe my anger was dangerous—if I channeled anger and expressed anger, then I would be punished. I would be killed. I would be put in jail. I would be silenced. I would be erased. To protect myself from my dangerous anger, I learned to bury it and distance myself from it. When I buried it, it became passive aggression. It also fed into my experience of depression[2]

As a Black woman, I have a similar experience. Among the prevailing stereotypes of Black women is that of “the angry black woman.” I remember, a few years ago, I was in a class workshopping sermons, practicing preaching. I had delivered two sermons. I don’t remember the order, but they were both in some ways about race. One talking about our Unitarian Universalism’s missteps where race is concerned. The other describing some of the actions of the Klan in the 60s. And afterwards, I think the first, bit of feedback that I got, was how good it was that I didn’t come across as an “angry black woman.” That my lack of perceptible anger made the sermon more accessible, or palatable, or acceptable. I keep that story alive for myself because I don’t want to lose sight of the expectation that I shouldn’t be angry. This insinuation that my anger (or the perception of my anger) would be a justification for dismissing me and what I have to say. The suggestion that I should tamp down or at least mask my anger and smile to be heard and taken seriously. That a lack of anger at horrific things is a good or even acceptable thing. Lack of anger is not a good thing. And for me at least – when terrible and horrific things happen: the bloodthirsty rush to execute 13 prisoners since July, more than any president in over a century. When terrible and horrific things happen a lack of anger is not only not good, it is not acceptable.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. talked about creative maladjustment. He said in a 1963 speech:

I say to you, my friends,... there are certain things in our nation and in the world to which I am proud to be maladjusted and which I hope all men of good-will will be maladjusted. I say very honestly that I never intend to become adjusted to segregation and discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism, to self-defeating effects of physical violence.

In other words, I’m about convinced now that there is need for a new organization in our world. The International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment—men and

women who will be as maladjusted as the prophet Amos. Who in the midst of the injustices of his day could cry out in words that echo across the centuries, “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” As maladjusted as Abraham Lincoln who had the vision to see that this nation would not survive half-slave and half-free. As maladjusted as Thomas Jefferson who in the midst of an age amazingly adjusted to slavery would scratch across the pages of history words lifted to cosmic proportions, “We know these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator certain unalienable rights” that among these are “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” As maladjusted as Jesus of Nazareth who could say to the men and women of his day, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you. Pray for them that despitefully use you.” Through such maladjustment, I believe that we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man’s inhumanity to man into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice. My faith is that somehow this problem will be solved.[3]

We ought to be maladjusted – yes. Creatively maladjusted. Filled with the force of anger that Audre Lorde describes. Anger that carries information. Anger that Lama Rod Owens describes. Anger that points to the tension between hurt and care—between heartbreak and healing. Anger that speaks to injustice. Anger that is a catalyst for the kind of creative transformation that leads to liberation.

This kind of creative catalytic anger is born of our hurt and our grief—yes. And also born of our love. Love is creative. The deep, abiding love that tells us that ultimately, we are all of the same flesh—all children of creation. Love that reminds us that we are tied together in a single garment of destiny. Love—the handmaiden of justice.

As I close, I want to leave you with one more word from King on Love. (this time from a 1967 address)

And I say to you, I have also decided to stick with love, for I know that love is ultimately the only answer to mankind’s problems. And I’m going to talk about it everywhere I go. I know it isn’t popular to talk about it in some circles today. And I’m not talking about emotional bosh when I talk about love; I’m talking about a strong, demanding love. For I have seen too much hate. I’ve seen too much hate on the faces of sheriffs in the South. I’ve seen hate (on the faces of too many Klansmen and too many White Citizens’ Councilors in the South) to want to hate, myself, because every time I see it, I know that it does something to their faces and their personalities, and I say to myself that hate is too great a burden to bear. I have decided to love. If you are seeking the highest good, I think you can find it through love. And the beautiful thing is that we aren’t moving wrong when we do it, because John was right, God is love. He who hates does not know God, but he who loves has the key that unlocks the door to the meaning of ultimate reality.

And so I say to you today, my friends, that you may be able to speak with the tongues of men and angels, you may have the eloquence of articulate speech; but if you have not love, it means nothing. Yes, you may have the gift of prophecy, you may have the gift of scientific prediction and understand the behavior of molecules, ... you may ascend to the heights of academic achievement so that you have all knowledge, and you may boast of your great institutions of learning and the boundless extent of your degrees; but if you have not love, all of these mean absolutely nothing. You may even give your goods to feed the poor, you may bestow great gifts

to charity, and you may tower high in philanthropy; but if you have not love, your charity means nothing. [4]

I have decided to choose love. Love that is the handmaiden—love that is the servant—of justice. And because I choose love – I must speak my anger as truth to power.

Anthem (All Souls Choir; Rochelle Rice, soloist)

“City Called Heaven” (Traditional; arr. by Josephine Poelintz)

I am a poor pilgrim, a poor pilgrim of sorrow
I'm left in this ol' wide world, this ol' wide world alone
Ain't got no hope, got no hope for tomorrow
I'm trying to make it, make heaven my home
I am a pilgrim, a pilgrim of sorrow
I'm left in this wide world, this wide world alone
Ain't got no hope, got no hope for tomorrow
Trying to make it, make heaven my home
Sometimes I'm tossed and I'm driven, Lord
Sometimes I just don't know which way to turn
But I heard of a city, a city called heaven
I'm trying to make it, make heaven my home

Offering (Paree Roper)

Hymn

“We'll Build a Land”

We'll build a land where we bind up the broken
We'll build a land where the captives go free
Where the oil of gladness dissolves all mourning
Oh, we'll build a promised land that can be

REFRAIN:

Come build a land where Siblings and Spirits
Anointed by god may then create peace
Where justice shall roll down like waters
And peace like an ever-flowing stream

We'll build a land where we bring the good tidings
To all the afflicted and all those who mourn
And we'll give them garlands instead of ashes
Oh, we'll build a land where peace is born.

REFRAIN

Come build a land where the mantles of praises
Resound from spirits once faint and once weak
Where like oaks of righteousness stand her people
Oh, come build the land, my people, we seek

REFRAIN

Benediction (Rev. Rolenz)

Here now these words, from Dr. King who reminds us of the twin responsibilities of love and power:

“Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

May we use righteous revolutionary anger in the service of justice empowered by love. —
Martin Luther King Jr.

Music (All Souls Choir)

“Nina Cried Power” (Hozier)

It's not the wakin', it's the risin'
It is the groundin' of a foot uncompromisin'
It's not forgoin' of the lie, it's not the openin' of eyes
It's not the wakin', it's the risin'
It's not the shade we should be casting
It's the light and it's the obstacle that casts it
It's the heat that drives the light, it's the fire it ignites
It's not the wakin', it's the risin'
It's not the song, it is the singin'
It's the heaven of the human spirit ringin'
It is the bringin' of the line, it is the bearin' of the rhyme
It's not the wakin', it's the risin'
And I could cry power (power)
Power, Lord!
Nina cried power, Billie cried power, Mavis cried power
And I could cry power
Power, Lord!
Curtis cried power, Patti cried power, Nina cried power
It's not the wall, but what's behind it
Oh, the fear of fellow men is near assignment
And everything that we're denied by keepin' the divide
It's not the wakin', it's the risin'
And I could cry power (power)
Power, Lord!
Nina cried power, Lennon cried power, James Brown cried power
And I could cry power

Power, Lord!

Billy cried power, Joni cried power, Nina cried power

And I could cry power

Power has been cried by those stronger than me

Straight into the face that tells you to rattle your chains

If you love bein' free

Ah, Lord, I could cry power

'Cause power is my love when my love reaches to me

James Brown cried power, Seger cried power, Marvin cried power

Yeah ah, power

James cried power, Millie cried power, Patti cried power

Billie, power

Dylan, power

Woody, power

Nina cried power