

Service from UU Montclair
January 10, 2021
“Rededicating the Temple of Liberty”

Introduction to Hymn

Welcome! My name is Markus Grae-Hauck, I am the Director of Music Ministries here at our congregation. My pronouns are he, him, and his. We are about to sing our gathering hymn, joining virtually, together in song. And in a moment we will join together for our chalice lighting, where we will invite everyone to light your own flame, at home. To prepare for this, perhaps you will want to find a chalice or a candle, as we sing. Our hymn leader is ...

We'll Build a Land, #121

Though I May Speak With Bravest Fire, #34
Welcome and Chalice Lighting - Intern Ali

Whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever age, identity, history, ability, gender, or sexual orientation, you are welcome to bring your full self here.

Grounded in faith, we come together to nurture the soul, inspire hope, and bring into being a more just and loving world.

I am Intern Ali Bell-Delgado, my pronouns are xe/xer/xers or they/them/theirs. You have gotten to know me as Intern Antonia. I have experienced many wonderful moments of growth with our congregation. This is one more facet of my growth.

Not only do I have a new name, I am starting hormone therapy. In the next few months you may notice changes in my voice and possibly in my appearance.

I am happy that I am starting this next part of my journey with you. I look forward to sharing my naming ceremony with you in the near future.

Today's service is titled “Rededicating the Temple of Liberty.” We rise today after the desecration of the temple of our nation's liberty - the people's house - the capitol building. We rise as a people exhausted and yet still convicted - convicted by the call to a more just union - a just union that will overthrow the threat of demagoguery.

The title of this service has resonance in the stories of the ancient past. The Hebrew scriptures tell of a time in 70BCE, when the Hebrew temple was desecrated by a power hungry ruler who wished to claim even that sacred space for himself. This wrong - known to history as the desecrating sacrilege, speaks to us on this morning of an incredible evil that has been committed and the incredible work left for us to do. For we are called today and the days that follow - to rededicate our temple so that it may be cleansed of this

wrong and prepared to stand again for the cause of democracy, liberty, and the hope of a nation long battling its own stains and scars.

It is good to be together for this work and for the comfort of one another.

If you are joining us at 10am, please continue with us for a virtual “Connection Cafe” beginning at 11am. Check your email and Realm announcements for the Zoom link.

Now a moment from our Board of Trustees:

BOARD MOMENT - Shannon Gattens

(Back to Intern Ali) It's time to light our chalice, a beacon to guide us through these times together. Perhaps you have a chalice or candle at home... anything that you can illumine.

Let's light our collective chalices as we share our chalice lighting affirmation.

Chalice Being Lit

Let us open our senses to take in the beauty
Let us open our minds to learn what is true
Let us open hearts to love one another.

Invocation and Remembrance Info - Intern Ali

Our invocation comes from the writing of Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President of the United States.

“As labor is the common burden of our human race, so the effort of some to shift their share of the burden onto the shoulders of others is our great durable curse.

As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master.

This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.

Our reliance is in our love for liberty; our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all people in all lands everywhere.

Destroy this spirit, and we have planted the seeds of despotism at our own doors.

Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves and cannot long retain it.

Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.

Called, now, by this invocation into worship, we turn to seek a soft meditation, a deep reflection, an ardent prayer. ...Each as we are called, yet all together.

And we enter into this space by hearing the lamentations, the requests, and the remembrances of our community -
Let us hear one another to heal one another.

Candle Lighting -

We light this candle for Dawn Coleman, her father West and his partner, Liz. Each has been diagnosed with Covid-19. May healing come.

Judie Rinearson and Nick Lewis light this candle of concern and love for their nephew Greg Crowder who has been living in a group home for disabled adults, and has just tested positive for Covid. Please keep Greg and his mom (Judie's sister Linda) in your thoughts and prayers.

Kathryn Counsell lights a candle of remembrance for her Aunt Maxine who passed away on January 3, 2021 at age 100. She was blessed with a large extended family and good humor throughout her long life. We will always remember her kindness and loving spirit.

We light this candle for Marcia Mandel to hold her in the light of health and healing.

We light this candle for the US Capitol Police Officer Brian D. Sicknick and his family. Ofc. Sicknick succumbed to injuries sustained in defense of our capitol.

We light this candle for the four people who died while engaging in a terrorist act on our national capitol. We raise up these losses not to honor the participation of the terrorists in an insurrection but to recognize their humanity and the terrible wages of hate.

We light this candle for the family of Tamir Rice, who were just dealt another blow in their case to see their son's life honored, as the Feds denied their plea to hold the police that shot their son accountable.

And we light this candle so it may call us to vigilance - knowing the discrepancy between the racist ways the police treat black and brown citizens and the supremacist ways that they treat white citizens. We know our prayers are not enough to right this wrong, so with this candle we request that we who are able, pledge our lives to uprooting white supremacy.

We light this candle for Stacey Abrams, who kept fighting to register voters in the State of Georgia. Her good work was crucial in the presidential election in November and now again in the senate runoff elections.

Aware of the profound sorrow, rage, and pain present among us today, we light this final candle for all that has not been spoken aloud. In the silence that follows, you are encouraged to speak the names of those you are holding in your prayers or meditations, or to write them into the chat. May we hold this silence as this silence holds us.

(Silence: 10-20 seconds)

May our listening bring forth acts of love.

Prayer - Rev. Scott

Our prayer includes words from Lisa Friedman

Prayer Response: There is More Love Somewhere, #95

Offering - Kate Loysen Turek

There is more love. There is.

When you give to our offering, 80 percent of your gift will care for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair, and 20 percent will support our justice recipient.

Our January Sharing our Riches recipient is RIP Medical Debt, Essex County - a campaign developed by the Montclair Interfaith Clergy Association. Together, we have the opportunity to eliminate the medical debt for hundreds of families and individuals in Essex County. We will be helping families who earn less than 2X the federal poverty level, have debts that are 5% or more of their annual income, and those whose debts are greater than their assets. Through this campaign, every dollar that we give will abolish \$100 of medical debt.

You can text to give, mail us a check or go to our home page and click on the donate button. This is a time of need.

All of your gifts are worthy and they are all received with love.

Reading - Kate Loysen Turek

Our reading is a portion of the poem, "ON THE PULSE OF MORNING" by Maya Angelou, recited by the poet at the Inauguration President Bill Clinton, January 20, 1993.

We have chosen to share the sections of this long poem that may speak to this moment in our political turmoil, in our American lives.

Anthem: A Cleansing Rage - Jason Shelton, sung by Stearns Matthews

Homily

Lift up your eyes, says Maya Angelou, on an inauguration past - Lift up your eyes, a day is breaking for you.

Commented [1]: Rev Scott - I was just about to start recording. Can I go ahead?

We lifted up our eyes, we did... on Wednesday... 14 days before the coming inauguration to see - not a day breaking for us - but our brokenness.

Right there. Right before our eyes. And our eyes were flooded - not with right, not with light - but with the stain of our American sin.

It's a shame that the words democracy and demagoguery are so close in sound and letter because the difference between the two is the cost of our national soul.

I was in shock. Perhaps you were too. My heart beating viscerally in my chest. My mind a cloud of images and prayers. I was in shock, but I was not surprised. Not surprised that white supremacy found a home in our nation's capital. Not surprised because white supremacy has always had a home in our nation's capital.

It usually cloaks itself in the disguise of law and order, family values, opposition to the "welfare state," Christian exceptionalist complaint, and occasionally, though it might be troubling for us to admit this, in the disguise of progress. White supremacy lurks in the spaces between all the pretty words.

But on Wednesday its position was the revelation. It, white supremacy was welcomed in, to ravage.

Right there, no mask, no cloak, no cover.

No matter how imperfect our nation. No matter how flawed our rule. No matter how soaked our history in the stain of white supremacist fuel, we can still recognize our capitol as a hallowed hall - the space where sparks of liberty and justice have been and may still be fanned. A place of possibility at the least.

And we watched, right there on TV as one of the domestic terrorists who entered this hallowed hall worked to pry an American flag from the place where it was fashioned... to steal the space for a demagogue.

...To replace the symbol of our nation that at its best stands for us all - to replace this symbol with a man's name - an idol, a symbol of our fall.

If you were raised on the biblical tales - both from the Hebrew and Christian canons you might recognize this desolation. This sacrilege. It happened at least once before. It is the seed of the story told on Hannukah.

In the year 70BCE Antiochus the fourth, the king of the Greek Seleucid dynasty, ruled Palestine. The Hebrew people, a small tribe within this territory, were an occupied people, beholden to this Seleucid rule. Powerless to overthrow the empire they suffered nearly all the subjugation - until, until that is, their temple, their holiest site, was desolated from within.

It is understood, by reading the texts of Daniel and Thessalonians, and from Matthew and Mark that Antiochus ordered a statue of his gods be placed within the temple walls - that he forced within that holy space, a testament to a foreign, an ignoble rule, and that, as some sources say, it carried the face or the name of he, Antiochus, the king, the demagogue.

...There, it was placed, in the holiest of holies, the space for the Hebrew people of offering and sacrifice - the place of possibility - their citadel of liberty. It was placed there - an abomination, a contemptuous deformation of the sacred and hallowed potential of that hall.

We are told that this caused, that it *called* the Hebrew people to rise and defend their right to worship and to live as their God ordained. And we are told that their fervor was enough to overcome their overlord ... which was not... not only Antiochus, not only the demagogue, but their long acceptance of his rule.

Wait... this is important.

You see - when it was revealed - there with its blunt and brutal force - when the statue of a foreign occupier was placed there in the hallowed hall - they finally saw how deeply the terror had crept in - how it had infiltrated - how it had stolen - how it had won.

Good god - how it had won.

That's what we saw on our nation's capital - - don't get me wrong, it was there all along -- but what we saw in its naked and disgusting truth is that white supremacy had won.

Imagine if the protest had been for Black Lives Matter. Two thousand would have died.

May we be as brave as the Hebrews, as the Maccabees, who knowing their temple had been breached, gave all for liberty. As the ancient scriptures say when you see "the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be" (let the reader understand.) DO not look away. This desolating sacrilege must be cleansed.

Homily Part 2

Rev Scott

When Maya Angelou sings,

"[We], created only a little lower than/ The angels, have crouched too long in/ The bruising darkness^[SEP]

Have lain too long^[SEP] Face down in ignorance."

I am reminded I have confronted a willful ignorance inciting cruelty my entire life

I grew up in Maryland, just 14 miles south of the Mason Dixon line.
The evil around me demanded that I declare,
"which side are you on?"
As a privileged child of ten years old,
when I refused to wear the stars and bars of the traitorous Confederacy, I had to defend
myself with my fists,
or with my feet when I was outnumbered.
Even so, my trials pale in comparison to those endured by people who are not white, male,
straight or able bodied.
I know violent traitors, like those who assaulted our democracy, have no honor ...

I also know the time to speak plainly has come.
On January 6, 2021, Evil marched to the capitol,
wearing red hats of shame, waving idolatrous flags,
as the broken glass they shattered reminded us, once again,
that fascism is very much alive in these United States
We saw the infamy of our nation's foundational White Supremacy on broad display,
as Capitol Hill Police willingly stepped aside,
removed barricades, and took selfies with angry white nationalists hell bent on demeaning
all our nation has tried,
but often failed, to hold dear.
Beloveds, if this would have been Black Lives Matter they would have gotten nowhere
near those Capitol steps;
you know how swiftly the batons and the bullets would have started to fly.
The need to immediately dismantle white supremacy by every means necessary has not
been made so clear since the assault on freedom marchers in Selma, Alabama, in 1965.

This treason came on the deadliest day in American history - almost 4000 people died of
Covid on Jan 6 -
more dead than on 911, or any single day of warfare ...
This treason came the same day climate scientists revealed that 2020 was the hottest
year on record
And COVID, climate change, and racism were all made worse over the last four years by
the same villains who incited terrorists to storm our Capitol;
let us never forget, and how could we?

Growing up so close to Washington, I love DC, the parks, the monuments, the
Smithsonian.
I get teary eyed whenever I regard the Capitol building
Seeing our Capitol attacked, all goodness, attacked,
I felt an urge to rush to her defense,
offering its defilers no quarter ...

So let us speak plainly.
What we witnessed Wednesday was evil ~

Evil courted from out of the shadows to goosestep thru our streets
Evil fueled by hatred -
Evil falsely believing it is a victim
Evil that planted a desolating sacrilege -
the flag of a demagogue - on our Capitol
Evil that objected to our constitutional processes,
knowing those objections were based on lies
Evil aimed at America's heart by the craven occupier of the oval office

~ What we can do now ... ~ what can cleanse our citadel of liberty so it can be rededicated
to its sacred purpose ~
is to tell the truth, plainly

The truth about the free and fair 2020 election
The truth that white supremacy must be resisted,
by force when necessary, everywhere, and always
The truth that intersecting horrors like homophobia and wage theft must also perish
The truth that those who supported such infamy must be sanctioned
The truth that White Supremacy is a pandemic infecting far too many in law enforcement
The truth that, in accord with the 13th and 14th amendments to the US Constitution,
White supremacy disqualifies one from public office and public employment
The truth that our nation's sins must be taught,
and when denied, the deniers silenced
The truth that there is some speech that must be limited
- speech inciting riots, yes -
but also speech desecrating entire classes of human beings must be disallowed;
~ If liberty, if "Equal Protection Under the Law," mean anything, then that which seeks to
defile liberty must be prohibited, including speech promoting such evil

It is time to speak these deeps truths plainly,
for all to hear and obey :-)
Roll up your sleeves. The time is now ...

Amen

Reflection Question Video -

Our Congregation has a role
Reverend John Haynes Holmes, Co-Founder of the NAACP, and minister of Community
Church, Unitarian, in New York, from 1907 until 1947, proclaimed the purpose of a
congregation in turbulent times: [quotation from Revered John Haynes Holmes]

Abraham Lincoln taught us,
"Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our
duty as we understand it."

Reflection Question -

Will you reflect with us - what comes after this desecration?
How do we Rededicate our Temple of Liberty?

Please join us now in singing... let's keep on moving forward, never turning back.

Hymn - Keep on Moving Forward (percussion: Brian Crooks x 7)

Benediction - Rev. Scott and Rev. Anya

We Rededicate our Temple of Liberty by telling the truth,
And by demanding the truth in our media, online, and especially from the mouths of
leaders who are sworn to uphold our constitution
For too long we have suffered the bruising darkness^{SEP} of White Supremacy and
indifference to public and social evil.
But no more

Those who have 'Have lain too long^{SEP} Face down in ignorance" Must be lifted out of the
mire they willingly sought and forced to face the light of truth,
And if not, they must be sanctioned and kept from having any part in our public life

Let us build the beloved community together,
With faith and courage and hope and love and a steely resolve to stay at the task of justice
making

We are so glad to be in this work with courageous, truth telling patriots like you, the
people of UU Montclair.
Bless you for your witness and courage

Chalice Extinguishing Video

Song: "Our Worship Has Ended, Let our Service Begin"

Sign-Off - Intern Ali

Join us right after this for Connection Cafe
And register your children for our innovative Religious Education programs, and
Until we meet again,
Virtually or otherwise,
You are in our hearts.