

In Urgent Response
9/11/01
Charles Blustein Ortman
Minister, Unitarian Church of Montclair, NJ

In the course of history there are events that alter everything that is to follow. I fear that today we have lived through just such an event. Perhaps the event has not yet even come to its conclusion. We are all reeling from the experience or from the news of it.

Somehow it is our task to try to make and find meaning amid the rubble of lives, and buildings, and airplanes. Somehow it is our task to keep the faith and to find the hope that lies at the bottom of all that rubble.

As Unitarian Universalists we hold great faith in humanity and in its capacity for goodness. Today that faith has been severely challenged if not breached.

It is now, more than ever though, that we need to claim our faith, to fan the fires of our faith. Because, it is now that humanity, and especially our nation, needs to experience faith's blessings.

We need to keep the faith in order to go on with our lives. The human race needs to feel that faith so that we might move forward from this experience with the very greatest of motives, the greatest of intentions and the greatest desire to build a better world. We know that we need a better world.

Our hearts are already filled with grief. We need not over burden them with hatred. There will need to be a response to the terrorist actions of this day, but the world will not be served if that response comes out of hatred.

A newspaper reporter came by my office this afternoon and asked me what good reason there might be for hope at this moment. My answer is this: Just like yesterday, the universe is still filled with unlimited possibilities for goodness. The possibilities for evil are limited to the imagination of humankind. But goodness knows no such bounds. My hope is that we will align ourselves with those possibilities for goodness then, and that such an alignment itself will help us to steer in a direction of healing and wholeness.

"Hope is the parent of faith." (C. A. Bristol) Emil Brunner wrote, "Hope...is one of the ways in which what is merely future and potential is made vividly present and actual to us. Hope is the positive, as anxiety is the negative, mode of awaiting the future."

The infamous events of this day are undeniably deplorable. The events of tomorrow are up to us to determine. I wish for you an undying hope, one begetting a faith that will help us to build a brighter future than the one made manifest on this day.