

Ministerial Musings... [21 September 2001]

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I ended up in New York City this past Monday. It wasn't a planned trip, but since I had to drive to New Jersey and was taking the train back, I thought I would check in with my city. I wanted to see the ruins with my own eyes, and be with the people. I thought I try walking around and see if I could get to the site, but easy access was blocked off and the crowds were dense. Passing vendor after vendor selling all manner of t-shirts commemorating the disaster, I made my way to Union Square.

You've probably seen pictures of the memorials that have sprung up there, as they have all over the city. Hundreds and hundreds of candles, of all shapes and sizes, laid out in circles with cards, flowers, pictures and messages - people trying to come to grips with this tragedy or reach out in sympathy to those who mourn.

I was moved by all of this. Seeing it first hand made it more real. I thought of all the lives these spent and burning candles represent, lives that were crushed by acts of terrorism. And now what of the lives we must, by our very being, go on living?

How do we go on from here? What added meaning do these events give our lives? People who knew they were not going to make it called their loved ones and sent messages of care and concern and pledges of their affection. They did not call for stock quotes or try to tie up loose business ends. Small comfort, this, but something we can hold close to our own hearts as we move through the days ahead.

And as it is with every crisis, we can see in it danger and opportunity. The opportunity for we Unitarian Universalists lies in our responses to this tragedy - both the personal and the public. Recognizing that there will be a difference of opinion among us, we are challenged to weigh our responses against our espoused values. We will stay connected to one another and explore the issues beneath the slogans and our government's action. We will rededicate ourselves to this beloved community and continue to work for justice. We can reach out to the wider community to oppose acts of prejudice and threats of violence against those who might be targeted by those anxious for vengeance.

Yes, there will be those who rant and take the opportunity to push jingoistic agendas. And yes, our peace-loving souls will be tried as perhaps never before. What I take from my visit to my city is that life will go on, and it will be different. But love is strong, and we are people of great heart and much resolve. In the words of one of our hymns, "Love will guide us; peace has tried us; hope inside us will lead the way..."

peace, --Susan