

Jeff's Jottings
January 17, 2020

Gathering

First, simply to say: I hope you will look for the materials related to the upcoming gathering of the Presbytery, next Saturday, January 25. There's a call to meeting elsewhere in this newsletter; a video preview from our moderator and vice-moderator; and the papers for our business will be online soon. I hope you'll come—come to worship; come to build relationships; come to learn; come to do the collective and common work of the church. There is much going on at the January Presbytery gathering.

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Then, this. Last Tuesday, I participated in a different kind of gathering. More than 1,200 of us from the community came together at Temple Israel for a gathering titled, No Hate, No Fear—a public denouncement of the growing wave of anti-semitism across this country, and a public affirmation of what it truly means to be community with each other. You may have seen a mention of it on the Presbytery Facebook page, or the story in the *Star-Tribune*.

At one point in the evening, religious leaders present in the overflow crowd were asked to come to the front and join our voices in a prayer. There we stood—pastor and imam, priest and rabbi—sharing common words of comfort and support. Here's the prayer we said:

For the expanding grandeur of Creation,
worlds known and unknown, galaxies beyond galaxies,
Filling us with awe and challenging our imaginations.

For this fragile planet earth, its times and tides,
its sunsets and seasons.

For the joy of human life, its wonders and surprises,
its hopes and achievements.

For human community, our common past and future hope,
our oneness transcending all separation, our capacity to work
for peace and justice in the midst of hostility and oppression.

For high hopes and noble causes, for faith without fanaticism,
for understanding of views not shared.

For all who have labored and suffered for a fairer world,
who have lived so that others might live in dignity and freedom.

For human liberties and sacred rites:
for opportunities to change and grow, to affirm and choose.

We pray that we may live not by our fears but by our hopes,
not by our words but by our deeds. Amen.

Turns out the prayer was written by a Unitarian-Universalist pastor. (Thanks, Google.) I'm not sure it was the words themselves that mattered, but that those of us who in some way represented God stood on your behalf: stood in the gap, between good and evil, heaven and earth, right and wrong. Stood with the one sure thing we had in our bag: a prayer.

We all have our own stories to tell, of standing up for our beliefs, of gathering. To all of you who, because of your faith, remain fully present to this rough-and-tumble world: thank you. Thank you for being faithful at all times, in ways both small and large. Thank you for being the church, the expression of Jesus Christ in the world.

