

September 11, 2001
Vigil Service
UU Society, West Redding, CT
The Rev. Daniel Simer O'Connell

Call to Worship:

We gather this evening to embrace that which is most holy.
We gather to remind ourselves that despite terrorism and violence in our world, we bring each other compassion, courage and love.
We gather to be about the work of creating a world where children and women and men will live in peace and not afraid.
Come, let us worship together.
-- (*Duane Fickeisen*).

Hymn: "Find A Stillness," #352

Homily:
"The News":

In the days ahead, we will hear the news come out in drips and drabs. Four commercial airplanes were hijacked. Apparently 3 hit and totally destroyed both World Trade Center towers. Another crashed into a helicopter landing pad at the Pentagon. As many as 50,000 people were in those towers. We don't know how many dead or wounded. We don't know how many victims. Undoubtedly friends and family, or friends of friends or acquaintances will be injured, maimed or killed. How many new widows and widowers? How many orphans? We don't know who has caused this mayhem or why. That knowledge will be slow, and maybe never fully known.

In the days ahead we will hear stories of heroism. Of a policeman standing still enough to warn others away from parts of buildings and parts of bodies raining down, and the survivors seeing the policeman struck down in order to try and save strangers. We will hear about the man and woman who looked at each other, held hands, and jumped 80 stories up from one of the towers to escape the inferno about to incinerate them.

In the days ahead we will be warned that the United States is now in a war with the aggressors who caused these catastrophes to happen. And other catastrophes will be brought to mind. Pearl Harbor, Oklahoma City, and now the Two Towers will be added to the litany. And our soldiers will gear up, our tanks & ships will move out, and we will all be on a "high state of alert." And in the days ahead, there will be a lot of anger, regret, denial, compassion, and acceptance.

In the days ahead, we will take time out to pray for the victims and their families. In the days ahead, we will come to know ourselves and our place in the world a little differently. In the days ahead, I hope we can come together as a religious community and be there for one another. For one or another or many of us will find out exactly what and exactly who we have lost. I pray that we

will come together and know that our strength comes from our communion, and that we promise to be there for one another.

Hymn: "Spirit of Life," # 123

Open Reflection & Sharing

(People are invited to speak from their hearts here.)

Prayer & Silence

Let us join in a moment dedicated to that quiet power within us.
It is within that we find the will to face the world;
It is within that we find the love to embrace the world;
It is within that we find our personal identity and know the world.
Yet, within us is also a great void.
We feel this void at times of great loneliness, frustration, and despair;
Sorrow, hatred, and greed, too, are within us.
Just as we need to be alone at times, to put things right,
So do we need to be with others, to love and be loved.
This great social urge also is within us,
As powerfully as that separateness and uniqueness that gives us identity.

Let us look within ourselves with honesty and trust.
We shall find there a personal center important to who we are.
We shall find there something held in common with those about us --
Family, friends, neighbors, and in ever-widening circles,
Until we find that which we have in common with all people,
Something irreducibly human, something completely natural.
This is the center of all religion, all love, all concern for others;
And it is the center of all personal growth.
May these few moments be a personal time for you;
A time for that person within you who feels at one with humanity,
With nature, and with all the universe that was, is, and shall be.
Amen. (Jay Abernathy).

Hymn: "Though I May Speak With Bravest Fire," #34

Benediction:

There is, finally, only one thing required of us;
that is, to take life whole, the bright and dark together;
to live the life that is given us with courage and humor and truth.
We have such a little moment, out of the vastness of time, for all our
wondering and loving.
Therefore, let there be no half-heartedness;
rather, let the soul be ardent --
in its pain, in its yearning, in its praise.

Then shall peace enfold our days, and glory shall not fade from our lives.
-- (*Kendyl Gibbons*)

Let us seek peace
Let us pass the peace.
Let us go now in peace, Amen.