

CLARE'S COLLOQUY
The Rev. Clare Petersberger, Minister,
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"We would be one in building for tomorrow a nobler world than we have known today."

On the evening of September 11, 2001, after watching news coverage of four national terrorist attacks---hijacked planes crashing into the World Trade Center towers---and the burning and crumbled remains of a whole wall of the Pentagon, about 50 people of all ages met within the sheltering walls of TUUC.

Older members, who had vivid memories of Pearl Harbor, expressed their hope that our government would not over-react with hasty retaliation; that our citizens would not over-react with hatred against any particular religion or nationality; and that our nation would continue to embody the ideals of our Founders: freedom and democracy.

Parents, who struggled with how to make sense of the day's events, themselves, wondered how to talk to their children about the news without instilling fear and mistrust.

A young adult, who works for Mayor O'Malley shared how she had spent the day doing something she never imagined having to do---preparing Baltimore for a terrorist attack. At one point, after her courageous co-workers had been sent home, she realized, "I am now the adult. I am responsible."

A child, old enough to comprehend that it was no accident that planes flew into buildings---that humans filled with hatred had done something horrific and evil---simply wanted to light a candle. When she became shy about actually walking to the front of the meeting room, her parents reassured her that she could light a candle when they got home.

What all of these responses had in common was the recognition that while our world-view had been shattered like the buildings and thousands of lives lost that morning, we needed to affirm our humanity, to preserve our democratic form of governance, to repair bonds of trust, to act rationally and responsibly, and to light candles rather than curse the darkness.

This religious community's witness reminded me that the terrorist attacks, crimes against humanity, could not destroy the true purpose of religion---to point us to that which binds us together in our humanity.

May we Unitarian Universalists continue to offer our wisdom, care, and example as we meet for worship, education, and social action to honor our commitment "to build for tomorrow a nobler world than we know today."