

Silent Meditation led by Dennis Ryan

MESSAGE by Rev Brigid Beckman:

Welcome to Unity. Welcome Home.

Core Values: “It’s All About Love”

We are a Spirit-centered community

We warmly welcome all

We embrace diversity

We walk our talk with integrity

We are compassionate

We are joyful

We practice Sacred Service

We claim Spiritual abundance

Our Core Values help tell the story of who we are as a community. They point to how we “do” community— from those early days of the folks who committed their time, energy, elbow grease and financial support to this home at 21 King Ave— right through today.

We are called to live those values in our close, intimate circles, and in the broader spiritual home we build with and for each other. It’s an inside job! And yet, as always, I know I **must live that call in community.**

Last weekend, Rebecca Solnit was [interviewed in the New YTimes](#) about her new book, ***The Beginning Comes After the End: Notes on a World of Change***. I came across this through a [substack article by Liz Bucar](#), whose tagline is: “A professor, prize-winning author, and long-time scholar of religion who somehow ended up with no religious affiliation of her own.”

What struck me about both the interview, and Ms. Bucar's response to it is that both women look clear eyed at what is alive in the world today. They see the myriad ways cruelty, greed, violence and power-over are wielding destruction here in the U.S. and around the world. They also see a collective hunger for a "counterweight" to that destruction, and yet recognize that too often we are waiting for a single, heroic leader to be that counterweight. Here is Rebecca Solnit (with my own emphasis in bold):

*"I often think one of the great weaknesses of our era is that we get lone superhero movies over and over that suggest that our big problems are solved by muscly guys in spandex whose superpower is the ability to inflict and endure extraordinary violence. **When actually the world mostly gets changed through collective effort.** It brings up something really beautiful that Thich Nhat Hanh said at some point before he died a few years ago, which is: **the next Buddha will be the Sangha. The Sangha in Buddhist terminology is the community of practitioners...Maybe the next hero is the community...changing the world is a lot more like caregiving than it is like war.**"*

Here in this spiritual home, this spiritual family, caregiving is what we do, and it is who we are. Liz Bucar links that caregiving as both metaphor and a multi-faith filled response to the world's suffering:

*"In Jewish tradition, **chesed** is usually translated as loving-kindness but it's... more like **steadfast relational attentiveness**, the quality that holds communities together not through conquest but through showing up, again and again, for the people in front of you. In Buddhism, **karuna** (compassion as active practice) is one of the four... "divine abodes," which means it's **not a feeling you hope to have, it's a discipline you train.** In the early Christian church, **diakonia** (service, where we get the word deacon) was the radical distinguishing practice of the movement: **caring for widows, orphans, and strangers** at a time when the Roman world had no framework for that. And in Sikhism, **seva (selfless service) is so inseparable***

from worship that it's been made literal and institutional in the langar, the free community kitchen attached to every gurdwara, open to anyone who walks through the door, every single day. Of course these are four very different religious traditions, but all insist that ***tending to people is not a distraction from the real work. It is the real work.***

Tending to people is the real work. Tending to creation is the real work. We do that real work in small, quiet, personal ways, and we do it together as we connect through prayer, laughter, singing, SHOWING UP. Moment by Moment. Choice by Choice. In that way, we sow the seeds of love, compassion, justice, mercy and hope— in the homes of our hearts, and for this Unity of Albany family— for the next 30 years, and beyond!

For A New Home by John O'Donohue, adapted for our spiritual home

May this *community* shelter your life.

When you come home here,

May all the weight of the world

Fall from your shoulders.

May your heart be tranquil here,

Blessed by peace the world cannot give.

May this home be a place *of spiritual abundance,*

Where the graces your life desires

Always find the pathway to your door.

May nothing destructive

Ever cross your threshold.

May this be a safe place

Full of understanding and acceptance,

Where you can be as you are,

Without the need of any mask
Of pretense or image.

May this home be a place of discovery,
Where the possibilities that sleep
In the clay of your soul can emerge
To deepen and refine your vision
For all that is yet to come to birth
*In a world transformed
by the spiritual awakening of us all.*

May this be a *sacred space* of courage,
Where healing and growth are loved,
Where dignity and forgiveness prevail;
A home where patience of spirit is prized,
And the sight of the destination is never lost
Though the journey be difficult and slow.
May there be great delight around this *sanctuary*
May it be a house of welcome
For the broken and diminished.

May you have the eyes to see
And embrace the Divine essence of All Beings, to see
That no visitor arrives without a gift
And no guest leaves without a blessing.

And so it is, Amen