

Pastoral Letter October 3, 2017

Dear Companions,

Sunday night in Las Vegas - Like you, I am in shock, pain and grief. Most of all my heart breaks for the victims and families of this tragedy. The chaos of deadly uncertainty surrounding them is a special, horrible hell.

And again as my friend, Cecilia Kingman says, "we face another horrifying national tragedy." As you know, a gunman fired from a hotel into a crowd at a concert in Las Vegas, NV, late Sunday night, killing and injuring many people. My heart is broken open and I weep for all who are affected. I weep too for the state of our nation, and the brokenness we see in so many people. And my heart aches for each of us, that once again we must grieve."

It helps me to remember, in these hours of sorrow, confusion, despair and anger, the refrain of "Love has already won," from UU composer, Jason Shelton. It is a declarative sentence. It is a theological statement. It is not just a feel good prediction, but a declaration of our faith.

We declare that Love has already won.

We declare it even as our hearts break.

We declare it even as we bury our dead.

We declare it in the face of trauma and hate and brokenness.

The first line of Jason's song is "Will this violence break our spirits?" The refrain is the answer. No, it will not break us, for "Love has already won!" We refuse to let hate take hold in our hearts, for we have chosen love. We give ourselves over to Love. We answer the call of Love.

Love has already won, friends, even though it seems otherwise at times. Love has already won. Do not lose faith in the power of our love to heal the brokenness of the world.

What is next? How do we live out that love? You may already feel overwhelmed by so much violence in our world. This tragedy will bring up moments of deep trauma and memory for many in our community and society. Now is a time to offer kind words, loving presence, and compassion. Please be gentle with one another and reach out to those in need of care. Take a nap, take a walk, ask for a hug, check in on a neighbor, drink some tea, and, most importantly, breathe.

And after we grieve, let us be of use. Let us figure out ways we can use our grief and anger to bring about change. Maybe some among us want to work on ending gun violence. Maybe there are other things we can do. I am confident we will find a way to serve, to bring healing and justice to our nation. Let us declare with our hearts and hands: Love has already won!

Rev. Terry

UUSWH Interim Minister