

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, New York  
**“Healing Our Nation”**

Rev. Sam Trumbore November 8, 2020

### Opening Words

While I'm grateful for a Biden victory declared yesterday (and celebrated last night with something bubbly), I'm also experiencing disappointment.

November 3<sup>rd</sup> was a wake-up call for the Democratic Party. The “blue wave” it expected didn't materialize. Democrats may still not capture the Senate and lost seats in the House. The popular vote for Trump increased rather than decreased. The polls were gravely wrong about the level of Trump's support in this country looking at the sea of red across the south and west of this country.

Actually this isn't too much of a surprise given that the electorate hasn't really moved that much over the last 20 years. We are about as divided now as we were in the 2000 election. Except now those divisions have deepened after five years of hatred stoking and fear mongering by Trump and Republican controlled news media.

The election is over. Votes have been cast. The people have spoken. It is time for us to come together again. It may be harder now than in many elections given the close results and the bitter divisions. Today I'd like to reflect on some ways to do that goal that might bring some healing to our body politic.

**Wisdom Story**    [“Spirit of Life by Carolyn McDade”](#) by Leah Purcell

**Spoken Meditation** (based on a prayer by Teilhard de Chardin)

Abide, in the slow, evolving work of the Spirit of Life.

We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything  
 Running, to reach the end, without delay.  
 Wanting to skip the intermediate stages.  
 Impatient of being on the way  
 to something still unknown, something new.

And yet, it is the law of progress  
 that requires passing through  
 some stages of instability -  
 which may take a while.

And so, be calm;  
 Allow ideas to mature in their own time,  
 let them shape themselves, without undue haste.

Don't try to force them into preexisting expectations,  
 as though they could be, today,  
 what time will make of them, tomorrow.

What mortal can accurately predict  
what this new life, gradually forming, will be?

Accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and not yet complete.  
Be willing to be a conduit through which  
the evolutionary process of life may awaken and move  
Be at ease *trusting* you are a significant part  
Of a much greater ... and mysterious ... wholeness.

## Silent Meditation ([Paint Mixing Video](#))

**Video**      [Developmental Politics](#) by Steve McIntosh (YouTube, 2020, six minutes)

## Sermon

Many of us thought that the 2016 Trump voters would repudiate Trump's authoritarian approach, his compulsive habit of lying, disrespect, deception, and cruelty. They didn't. They overlooked those flaws because Trump continues to speak their truths. I remember hearing a podcast that captured that sentiment so well, an Eastern Pennsylvanian Democrat turned Trump supporter who said, "He says out loud what I'm already thinking." Trump is a cypher for so many of his supporters that liberals completely miss. Not only does he say what they are thinking, he shouts and declares it as if obviously true and not in need of any evidence.

It seems odd that someone from New York City, the epicenter of what rural American might say is wrong with this country could be their champion. Somehow Trump identified his core constituency, converted a fan base into devoted supporters, and has been faithful to them ever since. And they continue to respond enthusiastically to him.

Who are these core Trump supporters? You know them:

- Rural and rust belt communities left behind by globalization and international trade deals.
- Resentful Southerners still fighting the civil war and striving to keep the Negroes in their place.
- Evangelical Christians fighting for their belief we are a Christian nation and against a decline in the traditional family and Biblically dictated moral values.
- Xenophobes resisting invading hordes of immigrants who want the few American jobs that are left and consume taxpayer funded social services they don't deserve.
- Libertarian Internet trolls, armed with the second amendment, resisting big government, the deep state, and endless foreign wars
- Uncritical nationalists who promote "My country right or wrong."

These are folks with whom many UUs might have a difficult time connecting, given the sharp contrast with our core values. We believe in world community not isolationism. Many of us enjoy the fruits of technical innovation at an affordable price. How many of us have foreign made

technology in our pockets or are using it right now to watch me speak? We reject nationalistic Christian exceptionalism. We have broad, inclusive view of relationships, families and women's reproductive rights. We value immigrants, especially ones escaping oppression and refugees joining us in fighting for democracy around the world. Many of us value government as a critical support for a good society. We are critical of abuses of power by our nation around the world to exploit people and the environment.

What we may overlook in this identification of major differences however is the recognition of common values. I could sit down across from anyone in our congregation and find many common values. I could also seek out and find some critical differences as well – differences that point to value conflicts.

This is one reason I'm bringing the work of Steve McIntosh to you this morning. He is an [Integral thinker](#). Some of you may remember my interest in the [philosopher Ken Wilber](#) and his "all quadrants, all levels" evolutionary approach to existence, his theory of everything.

I hesitate to say very much about his theory because it is rather complicated. Let me give you a taste from a sermon I gave in October of 2007:

Wilber's key breakthrough, in his book *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* published in 1995, was noticing everything that exists has two qualities, it exhibits "partness" and it also exhibits wholeness, that includes the parts and also transcends the parts. Think of a chair. It is constructed of parts, fibers of wood, cloth and steel, when brought together, create a whole that has properties none of the parts have. If the chair were shredded into sawdust and fuzz we couldn't sit on it.

But when those parts come together in an ordered way, they develop a wholeness that has the emergent properties of "chairness."

Think of our congregation. Individuals develop their own sense of truth and meaning here. We have no creeds or dogma that define our beliefs. Yet each Unitarian Universalist congregation develops an identity that has much in common with all the other Unitarian Universalist congregations. This identity transcends any individual's beliefs but also manages to include them. First time attendees at our yearly annual meeting called General Assembly are often impressed by how affirmed they feel by being with Unitarian Universalists from all over the world. There is plenty of diversity, as attending a selection of the GA workshops will attest, but the message of the General Assembly is powerfully unifying and transcends any individual point of view.

This aggregation of parts into wholes, and wholes that become parts of greater wholes, exhibits emergent properties when the right amount of energy is added to the system. Too little energy, nothing happens. Too much energy, it flies apart. With just the right amount, atoms organize into molecules, molecules into membranes, membranes into cells, cells into organisms. As larger groups of people congregate together, they develop from families to tribes, from tribes to settled villages, from villages to empires, from empires to nation states, and now we are in the process of evolving from nations into a planetary state.

McIntosh takes this evolutionary model and applies it to our current political situation in what he calls, “Developmental Politics.”

As we saw in the video, he sees three cultural worldviews underlying American politics: traditional, modern, and post-modern or progressive. Each has its highest goods and sources of truth.

- The traditional worldview’s highest goods are faith, family and country; self-sacrifice for the good of the whole; duty and honor, law and order, and doing God’s will. Their source of what is true comes from religious authority, scripture, and the rules and norms of religious community.
- Contrast that with the highest goods of the modernist worldview: Economic and Scientific progress, personal liberty, human rights and the rule of civil law, higher education, and personal achievement, growing prosperity and wealth. Modern truth is found in science, philosophy, literature, reason and objectivity based in facts, evidence and proof.
- The Postmodern worldview, however, highly values social and environmental justice, diversity and multiculturalism and planetary healing. Individual subjectivity is honored along with a high degree of sensitivity to honoring each other’s differences. The progressive worldview recognizes systemic oppression in power structures and roots it out.

The key idea here from Integral theory is each worldview includes and innovates on the older worldview interdependently. Modernists include and build on the foundation of traditionalism. Without that personally internalized moral foundation, it will fall apart as we’ve seen in failures to export the American modernist approaches of economic and democratic principles to the developing world. Similarly, post-modern progressivism also is built upon modernism and takes for granted some of Modern ideas like individualism. Modernism was able to transcend the limitations of traditionalism just as progressives critique and transcend the limitations of the modernist worldview.

The important message here from the Integral approach is the recognition of the interdependence of each worldview on the others. The reason they need each other is to help them address their limitations and liabilities.

Traditionalism can easily fall into racism, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia. Modernism suffers from the flaws of excessive individualism, exploitation of people and the planet, and all the problems associated with materialism. Progressivism too has its limitations though I’d quibble with the ones McIntosh listed. Progressivism depends too on a unifying moral foundation that traditionalism celebrates and the modern individualism that is assumed for individual gender expression and sexual orientation. Progressives must remain rooted in the past while not being limited by it. They must be open to creative innovation to pull them beyond the limitations of the present.

Unfortunately, we are a long, long way from this kind of appreciation of interdependence of these worldviews. Today, the traditionalists, the modernists and the progressives are mortal enemies. The closeness of the election will likely incite more resistance to mutual appreciation. For what is at stake is who has the power to control their agenda.

Behind that hostility of course is fear. Fear is one of the most troublesome emotions because of the way it narrows the mind rather than opening it. One of the ways Trump keeps a tight hold on his base is by keeping them fearful and angry all the time. Yet I have hope that Americans don't want to be angry and fearful all the time. Neither emotion is very pleasant. And human beings tend to be pleasure seekers and pain avoiders.

I suspect a President Biden will be the opposite of Trump, seeking to calm people's fears and angers and address their concerns.

One group that started after Trump's election to work on addressing fear, building awareness of shared values and common purpose is an organization called the [One America Movement](#). I've tracked them because I worked with [Andrew Hanauer](#), their CEO, in another non-profit advocacy group called [Jubilee](#). This fellow is a good organizer. He has done some good work with One America. We might want to consider working with them as they work with religious organizations.

We here in the Capital Region are surrounded by a sea of red voters. This is especially true where I live in Rensselaer County. You don't have to go far to find the people progressives are polarized with. I know liberal and UU ministers who have churches in these dark red communities. If we want to do repair work to heal this nation, there is work to do right here in our back yard.

I close with a video discussing this work that the One America Movement is doing right now. Join me after the service at 11:30 to further discuss study of Developmental Politics and the One America Movement.

## **Prayer of Affirmation**

Let us give thanks today  
 That our Democracy has survived a test  
 A demagogue has been exposed  
     and the majority of people have sent a message at the ballot box.  
 The majority do not want this form of leadership.  
 The record breaking numbers of people want their vote counted.  
 They believe in our system of voting.  
 They have made their decision for November 3, 2020.

Let us give thanks today  
 There was almost no violence at polling places.  
 For the hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of ordinary people  
     helped each other vote peacefully,  
     including all of you who worked with UU the Vote.  
 Those votes were counted honestly and reliably.

All the absentee ballots got counted.  
All the provisional votes were checked.  
Our voting system works and, for the most part, worked well.

Let us hold out hope for a new day in America.  
A day when we don't have to deal with  
    a barrage of obnoxious Presidential tweets on a daily basis.  
Dignity will be restored to the Oval Office.  
Decency and humanity will become a priority again.  
Professionalism will be prioritized once more for our civil servants.  
Foreign policy will return to advancing democracy and human rights.  
International authoritarian leaders will not find comfort from the White House.

Let us prepare to stand behind our new President  
Encourage him to do what is right  
Let him know when we believe he has erred  
And come together as one nation unified by the principles  
    that our the foundation of our democracy.

May the Spirit of Life and Love, May God,  
    May anyone or any Being else out there to be influenced  
    or any interbeing between and within us

Hear these words and bring them to life.