

Show Me What You Love

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The day after the election I didn't want to get out of bed, I didn't want to listen to NPR. I didn't want to hear the results of the presidential election that I was afraid I was going to hear when I went to bed at midnight. But I did turn on the news and heard that Donald Trump had been elected. The same nation that elected Barack Obama had chosen his polar opposite. I did get out bed and stood at the glass door by our living room porch in our second floor apartment. I looked across the street, where I saw a young girl around ten years old, all dressed and happy as she skipped to the car to be taken to school. Seeing that young girl gave me a little hope as I thought, "Maybe we will have figured this out and made the world safe for all people by the time she becomes a young adult."

It is good to be around children these days, while we also remember that children of color in our nation are under threat of harassment and deportation. Thinking of the power of hope and innocence that comes from children brought to mind the following story told by a church camp director.

One of my little guys comes up to me after Morning Watch and he still has a sticker on his shirt from Vespers the night before. We were each asked to write a word on a sticker that represents something we are good at or something we want to be come good at. His sticker said "loving." So I greeted my little guy by saying "I see you have 'loving' on your shirt. Is that something you are good at or something you want to become good at?" The eight-year-old responded, "Oh, I'm good at it already." "Yes, I thought so," I said. "What are some ways you are good at loving?" The boy replied, "Well, I love all people whether I know them or not and I keep them in my heart." "Wow," I said, "that is pretty amazing that you do that. How does it feel to hold all of those people in your heart?" "Hmmm...cramped," he said. "Every morning I have to get up and stretch so there's enough room!"

That is what we are being called to do in these times – stretch our hearts and our arms wide enough to embrace and defend immigrants, the LGBTQ community, people of color, and people whose livelihood has been taken away by corporate powers who maximize profits and minimize people.

Among the many articles I read after the election, one written by Dr. Ali Michael, an educator, writer, and filmmaker, spoke to caring for our children. The article is entitled "What Do We Tell Our Children?" and I found it helpful.

"What should I say to my students after the election if Trump wins?" a principal asked me recently. Good question. What should we tell our children? Tell them first that we will protect them. Tell them second that you will honor the outcome of the election, but that you will fight bigotry and bullying. Tell them you stand by your Muslim families, your same-sex parent families, your gay students, your Black families, your female students, your Mexican families, your disabled students, your immigrant families, your trans students, your Native students. Say that silence is dangerous, and teach them how to speak up when something is wrong. Then teach them how to speak up, how to love one another, how to understand each other, and how to solve conflicts.

I shared this article with my wife Betsy, who is a substitute teacher and was going to be subbing that day for a third grade class. The teacher of that class met with Betsy before the school day began and said that he wanted to speak with his students. He had also read the article and he offered to his students the same message of protection and reminded them how they have been taught to respect one another and resolve conflicts peacefully.

What do we tell the children? What do we tell the adults? I offer to you two readings:

**A Reflection from the Charter of Compassion
following the Presidential vote in USA**

Taj James
founder and Executive Director
of the Movement Strategy Center, Australia

The invitation has arrived to step into our courage and our full humanity.

From this day forward the harm can only unfold and multiply and spread with our silence, with our consent, with our participation.

We will not be silent. We do not consent and we will not participate in legitimating violence, lies and division.

We will live out loud the love that we are, the love that connects us all, the love that bends history even in this dark moment towards liberation

We are one, we are many, and we are one.

It is time dear friends.

The revolution of love must be completed, and it is only possible if on this day we commit our lives to walking the hard road because there is now only one way forward.

Romans 12: 9-21 (selected verses)
from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson

Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert students of the Teacher, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder.

Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down.

Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do.

Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if they are thirsty, get that person a drink. Your generosity will surprise them with Goodness. don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.

I invite you to take these words to heart. They invite us to see where not only where we need to take a stand, against bigotry, but also *how* we need to take a stand, non-violently. In doing this we show the world what we love.

There is a story about the writer Anais Nin who was traveling from her home in Europe to visit the great photographer Arthur Steiglitz who lived in New York City. Anais Nin apparently did not like New York City and did not look forward to meeting Steiglitz there. Upon arriving in New York and meeting Arthur Steiglitz she said, "Show me what you love. Show me what you love about this city. Take me to those places where you love to go." Show me what you love. Somehow that seems like such a powerful active prayer to me. Two people, showing each other what they love. Why they have chosen this place to be their home.

On October 30, CCC held a Congregational Meeting to approve the nominations of the members of your Minister Search Committee. Following that meeting I facilitated a workshop where I asked you all to write down *what you love about CCC*. I want to share with you some of the responses you gave.

- *I see our strength is having a lovely, loving, contemplative congregation, which also loves and serves Marin County's vulnerable ones.*
- *Openness to a range of faith journeys representing different paths.*
- *Lack of insistence on dogma and the acceptance of all wherever they are on their spiritual journey or non-spiritual journey.*
- *A community that supports one another seeing our radical possibilities for who we are in the world and who we can be.*
- *Support received during difficult and heartbreaking times*
- *Welcome when I first got here; felt like coming home.*
- *Connecting with the sacred space of the land.*
- *Spiritual empowerment rather than indoctrination. The laity rather than the minister has always been its strongest asset.*
- *Development of my spiritual journey, my identity as we walk each other home. The freedom and encouragement to believe in each person's own way and opportunities to be stretched in new and deeper ways through discussions,*
- *Reminded me of my church in Holland, the first liberal church founded in 1631! We are "Rooted in Christianity but not root bound by it."*
- *Love that the sacred spirit has never left this place through all its ups and downs We are as strong and steady now as 38 years ago, through many ministers.*
- *I love the feeling of family that sings together, prays together, celebrates together, supports one another, and helps others in our community and elsewhere*
- *Humor, diversity, openness, prayerfulness, music, music. Commitment to serving the needs of the community.*
- *Ministry of Curran Reichert, Ann and Bill Eichhorn, Carol Saysette and Dan Hatch, and our creative and awesome Office Managers, Julie Taylor and Joanne Lefferts.*
- *A place to make a contribution. Also love the physical setting, garden and Bay views.*
- *The laughter, raising questions to ponder, love-centered spirituality, social action.*
- *Hanging my art and being able to share it with my friends here.*
- *It is a wonderful place to show spiritual art.*
- *Scott and Carl's concerts.*

- *Love that CCC gives me the opportunity to do a variety of things in an organization. Working together. Learning new skills.*
- *I love having a place to my gifts feel a part of something greater, part of a community—creating a valuable sense of belonging to something meaningful and important.*
- *Renewing my wedding vows.*

As I reflected on this list of what people love about CCC, two things stood out. One was the appreciation individuals feel for the support they receive for their own spiritual journeys. At CCC spiritual growth is held as an important life-long endeavor, and people are supported in finding what is true for them rather than being told what to think. So CCC becomes a place where all are truly welcome. This is radical, especially in light of the recent election rhetoric where fear of “the other” was so prevalent.

The second thing I noticed about CCC is the view, literally. This is the first church that I ever served that is located on the top of a hill! This brings to my mind that notion of a light on a hill, a beacon on a hill. In these next few years, we are called to renew our vow to be a beacon for diversity, compassion and justice. We cannot leave our light under a bushel, especially in affluent Marin County. We need to let people know that we are a safe and brave place for peace, justice, inclusivity, caring for the earth, the refugee, the immigrant, and the children.

One simple way to show people what we love is to begin wearing a safety pin. After the “Brexit” vote when the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, largely because of the backlash against immigrants, people began wearing safety pins as a statement to all marginalized people that “You are safe with me. I will protect you.” (I shared pins with members of the congregation and I invited us to wear these pins both as a sign of safety for those who are rightfully frightened of the Trump presidency, and as a reminder to ourselves.)

We are the light of the world. We don’t know yet how we will respond or what we will be called to do, but we will be ready to stand on the side of love.

Come for the view. Stay for the Spirit! Stretch yourself so you can hold all the people in your heart. Show others what you love by how you live.

Amen.