

SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE WAR – May 27, 2007
Raising of the banner “Stop the War, Act Now for Peace”
First Unitarian Church of Oakland -- Rev. Kathy Huff

Tomorrow is the day that we mourn. Tomorrow, Memorial Day we will express our despair, our deep sorrow, our agony over the loss of so many soldiers in the service of war. Tomorrow is for weeping, for holding the names of all those who have died in the devastations of war in our hearts and in our prayers. Tomorrow is for remembering with longing and sadness the family members, friends and ancestors who have died in war.

But today, the poet Adrienne Rich exclaims, today

“My heart is moved by all I could not save”
so much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely,
with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.”

No, today is not for mourning, today is when ordinary citizens like you and I must cast our lot together and “reconstitute the world.” Though we have stood in the valley of death, though we have been torn betwixt hope and despair. -- let us overcome the fear that has been and *act now for peace*. Let us stand now (in body or spirit, with our legs or wheels held firm) stand boldly and resolutely together as people of faith, as a community of neighbors and friends, to affirm our commitment to peace, to doing everything we can possibly think of to bring about an end to this war.

Today we gather beside this banner and later we will hang these precious words from our church walls so that all can see - because we hold to the radical assumption that every life is sacred, that the human family is not meant to be destroyed by violence. In a world seemingly intent on bending toward *division* we stand together as people of conscience united by vision of a world that “bends toward justice.”

Just a few yards from where we are standing is the cornerstone of this church, in that stone is carved one word – “truth.” When that stone was laid back in 1890, the headline in the newspaper the next day said “Truth at its Base” – The First Unitarian Church of Oakland. Now I’ve always heard that “to tell the truth was to call things by their right name.” For over 100 years this congregation has been calling things by their right name and speaking truth to power. Whether it be against this war or the one in Vietnam, or against apartheid or the genocide in Darfur, this congregation and Unitarian Universalists across the nation have born witness and action to truth in the service of justice.

And today we must again name those truths which ought to be self evident, which is that people are not just dying and suffering from guns and bombs. This war is not just about what is happening in some distant place far from our day to day lives. This war will have a lasting local and global impact on us all. Just as it is costing us hundreds of billions of

dollars to destroy and rebuild Iraq, here at home the myth of scarcity being perpetuated is forcing massive cuts in education, health care, and job creation. The truth is that not even our veterans (if they are lucky enough to return home) can get the help they need to rebuild their own lives. Did you know that healthcare which used to be a lifetime benefit has been reduced to two years? (It sometimes takes a year just to get the paperwork processed!) Sacrifices are being made, promises are being broken, future generations will be paying for this war for a long time to come.

The truth – the distorted imagination of what constitutes national security has been systematically eroding the human rights and civil liberties of all those who are deemed "other," creating yet another wave of highly racialized internal and external enemies. It is not a coincidence that the repression of immigrants has intensified so far beyond our imaginings since September 11th. If the human cost to this war were not enough, what about the environmental cost? In times of relative peace, the U.S. military is probably the single-biggest polluter and energy user on the planet but in times of war the damage is far more extensive. When we begin to monitor and expose the environmental consequences of this war we may discover that it will be impossible to recover.

These truths are just some of what we ordinary people of conscience are compelled to name. But let us not allow these truths to deter or depress us, instead let them be the fire that gives us the renewable energy to build a new, positive vision of peace and security. As people united for peace, let us refuse to sit or stand silently by while our government tries to keep us marching on the path of death and destruction. Let us arm ourselves with the conditions for peace, with generosity of spirit and resources that are designed to heal not harm. Let us create a *peace plan* that will make for a world of economic stability and environmental sustainability.

When Memorial Day comes tomorrow let us remember, that this war, is not a reflection of who we really are...this war is an aberration that has been perpetuated by the misguided actions, and manifestations of greed and craving for power and control by a handful of our leaders who are profoundly out of touch with themselves and with the needs of humanity.

When tomorrow comes, when we mourn and pray for the soldiers who have died, let us also mourn and pray for those leaders, who have forgotten their connection with the web of life, who have forgotten their place in the human family, who have been blinded by their own ambitions, who have fallen into an abyss of forgetfulness, that has destroyed not only the fabric of our world community but their very own souls.

And let us be the ones to remind them...to wake them up to their better natures. To use whatever means necessary to remind them that there is a better way. And until that day when their forgetting is over, we will be doing all that we can to create the conditions where war becomes a thing of the past, where the poverty and oppression that fuel violence is erased forever.

So on this day, we do not mourn, instead we come together as ordinary people to “recognize the things that make for peace” to affirm our own commitment to act now and “reconstitute the world.” May it be so. Shalom. As-Salaam-Alaikum. Peace be with you.

Let us start by bringing the peace we want for the rest of the world more fully and faithfully into being within our own hearts that we may have the strength we need to bring about a new tomorrow. Let this be the last war that we remember soldiers on Memorial Day.

the to name the injustice of racism, or homophobia, or ec overtly or
we cannot let the rising material and spiritual cost of this war diminish our
capacity for creating change. Even if the change we can see is only that
which happens inside ourselves.

We are here because the material and spiritual costs of war costs of this war continues to
grow so must our resolve to end this war and all wars grow. We will not be satis what a
few people in Washington would have us believe.

against this ongoing assault on the human family just as we have done for

ilray industrial complex

and wondering when are we going We have despaired, we have agonized over
losses far beyond our imaginings. We have worked and wept, and prayed for
peace. Some days it has been hard to know what to do when faced with what
has seems like an endless attack on the human family.

this is not who they really are, this is not who we will let them be.
Let us remove the blinders they wear by becoming the

“Blessed are the Peacemakers”

for All Souls has been a gathering place for UUs and others of good faith
for many, many years. He cited gatherings in the 1950s to organize the
integration of lunch counters in DC, the 1963 walk with Martin Luther
King, Jr., in the March on Washington, the marches against the Vietnam
War in the 1970s, the 1993 march for gay rights, and then today, this

march for peace. "We follow a long line of people in our faith tradition who have gathered in this sacred space," said Hardies, "and let us remember them today as we gather for peace."

We stand together here today in mourning... We have despaired, we have agonized over losses far beyond our imaginings. We have worked and wept, and prayed for peace. Only to be faced with yet another day and another dollar being spent in the service of war. Some days it has been hard to know what to do when faced with what has seems like an endless attack on the human family.

And I, like most of you, have grown weary from this mourning, the time for this war to end is long overdue. The time to end the violence and oppression that keep tearing apart our human family is long past. Peace must not be just a dream but be something we are capable of bringing into being right now. In this very moment.

Though we may be weary, though we may be angry, though we may sometimes even lose sight of our hope, [That is, the Church is called to a special ministry in a time like this. We must pray for all of those who are touched by this conflict, and especially for those who have been ordered to serve overseas. We must also provide a place for those whose friends and family members have been deployed; we must pray with them and accompany them as they face the possibility of great personal loss. We must at the same time support with our voices and hearts those who work for a rapid and just end to the conflict in which we are now engaged.](#)

We must sustain our resistance to the war. Even

- > though we have failed to stop the war, our collective pressure may be
- > able to prevent some of the worst military excesses, and this could
- > translate directly into saving the lives of both civilians and

- > soldiers. Sustaining resistance means we need to remain
- > optimistic, and not to be depressed by the opinion
- > polls, which tell us over two-third of Americans are For that is a powerful peace, it can help sustain us, give us the strength we need to create the justice we want to see in the world.

- > for the war. Those figures change dramatically
- > according to how the questions are asked. We are not
- > alone protesting the war, as well
- > as thousands more in other cities in the United States
- > and around the world. It is also important that people
- > in other countries see that there is resistance here,
- > in the "belly of the beast."
- >
- > 2. We must squarely recognize the class challenges of
- > this war and the resistance to it, and guard against
- > the arrogance of white, middle-class entitlement in
- > framing both resistance and a proactive program of
- > peace and social justice. This was brought home to me
- > when I attended a demonstration at Westover Air Force
- > Base in Chicopee, Massachusetts, not far from where I
- > teach at Hampshire College. Families in front of their
- > houses were shouting insults at us, while men drove by

- > in flag-covered SUVs and trucks, giving us the finger.
- > The chasm was not only about attitudes toward the war
- > but social class; it felt like middle-class Amherst vs. working class
- > Chicopee. In a depressed economy, with enormous gaps between rich and
- > poor, joining the military is often an economic, not a political or
- > moral decision. Students at universities and colleges across
- > the country serve in the reserves or the National Guard
- > because it is one of the only ways to pay for college.
- > How do we negotiate the class divide? We can shout,
- > "Support our troops, bring them home," but bring them
- > home to what?
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