

## ***Love and Resistance***

Unitarian Universalist Church of Vancouver

January 25, 2026

### ***The Reflection on the Theme by Jeff Coleman Payne***

Early in our relationship, my wife introduced me to the idea that there are three types of fun. Type one fun is the easiest. It's fun before, during and after the event/occasion. Type two fun is a little harder. Depending on who you are, it may involve going on a really hard and difficult hike or working on a really hard project that's not fun at the moment, but after you're done, you can look back and say that it was fun and enjoyable. Type three is the type of fun other people say is supposed to be fun, but isn't actually fun at all. One of my fondest memories that bridge the gap between type two and three fun was a very memorable night on a vacation to Indonesia where I made the big mistake of taking Sarah and I to a small island village called Parangtritis. Trying to find a way to get to the Indian Ocean, I didn't do enough research and it wasn't until we got there that I realized the situation I had gotten ourselves into. Most things that could have gone wrong, did, including a power outage and rain storm, but now we look back on it and can find the humor in it.

I think that there are similar types of love as well. Type one love is when it's easy. It's easy to love and to care about others when everything is well and easy.

Type two and three love are the more challenging kinds of love. It's these types of love that require us to dig deeper and aren't always easy at the moment, as it may mean sacrificing time, energy and/or resources and setting aside our wants in order to support others as many have done within our community and currently doing in cities across the country. My family shows me every day the power of type two and three love. When things get hard, they will help in any way they can, including in time, energy and even monetarily. They recognize that love is way more than just a feeling, a lot of the time it takes action. I have been lucky to experience and have been the recipient of many acts of type two and three love within my life and am trying to be the type of person that can actively search for opportunities

### ***Love and Resistance©*** by Rev. Kathryn A. Bert

"The flower remains, making its small declaration: that life persists even where it is told it cannot. That softness breaks what hardness cannot bend. That beauty grows not in spite of the cold and unrelenting pavement, but directly through it, transforming a barely visible crack into a doorway."

"Our will to survive is like nothing you've seen, that's why you won't keep us down. We're like weeds in your driveway, we can crack concrete, that's why you won't keep us down"

When I landed on that reading for this morning's service, I couldn't resist including Stuart's song about *Weeds*. And given the thousands of people who marched in Minneapolis Friday, the image seemed even

more apt. We were constantly reminded in Minneapolis this week how many more of us than there are of them.

And you know I hate “us and them” language, but there are those right now working hard to destroy our democracy and install an authoritarian government. But there are so many more of us who want freedom and democracy and health care and jobs and a decent living and a good education and kind neighbors and leaders who hold our values.

I went to Minneapolis this week and I was touched by the goodness of the people there, the everyday teachers and workers, parents and artists, the doctors and ER nurses and cooks and janitors – just people who work hard for a living and take care of their neighbors. There is no domestic terrorist organization sending agitators to the streets – those demonstrators you see on the news are people in neighborhoods invaded by ICE agents who are just trying to survive – “to say that life persists even when it is told it cannot: that softness breaks what hardness cannot bend.”

These people I met, who had every reason to be scared and angry and shut down, were instead brave and determined and active. They exhibited softness and kindness. They aren’t breaking the laws. They are practicing their rights, which the government is ignoring.

I took a webinar called “know before you go” about conditions on the ground in Minneapolis, to help us decide whether or not we should travel there to participate. The chilling fact they included was that since the death of Renee Good, ICE officers were more blatantly sticking their guns in faces of citizens and people when they wanted them to not exercise their rights of watching ICE activity or filming it or following their cars or warning their neighbors. That’s the activity these people of Minneapolis are engaged in – coming out of their houses to witness. If that hadn’t happened yesterday, we wouldn’t be able to see the shooting of Alex Pretti and see that he was clearly disarmed and then shot. Or the killing of Renee Good, that she was trying to get away in her car, not use her car as a weapon to attack an officer. These people are brave, they who are following ICE agents and filming their activity.

I met some of these brave people in a panel discussion on Friday morning before the march. But let me tell you my story in order. I arrived in Minneapolis Thursday morning and after breakfast with my friend, Phil, we went to a church in the city where all the clergy gathered – 650 or more. I don’t know the actual number, but it was around 650. Lots of rabbis, lots of Christians, many Unitarian Universalists.

They asked us not to check in online or post photos, for security purposes. We sang songs together. This traditional looking church reminded me of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL which I visited on a Civil Rights Pilgrimage of the south. At least the pulpit and pipe organ and pews. And the singing. When I visited the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church, I wondered what it would be like to be there during the movement, singing and listening to inspiring words, getting ready to hit the streets – and my visit to this church in downtown Minneapolis felt just like I had imagined it. They taught us this song – which I’ll have Emily and Jeff teach you now.... (*Our Power* by Rina Branson)

We will not underestimate our power any longer

We know that together we are strong

We will not underestimate our power any longer

We know that together we are strong

Like drops of water shape the rocks

As they rush down the falls

We know that together we are strong

It was joyful to be together with so many clergy from so many traditions, gathered in Minneapolis for a single purpose. The purpose wasn't joyful, but the gathering was – to know that others saw the injustice of the situation, too, and were united in opposition. The armed occupation of Minneapolis by the federal government, supposedly to enforce immigration, is not in fact doing anything but targeting brown and black people – one neighborhood they are particularly targeting is Native American. These people are not immigrants, but they are getting arrested and detained along with so many others who have done nothing wrong but try to survive in a brown body within a white society. Thursday was all preparation – they told us what was happening on the ground. They asked us not to take photos, because the people telling us their story have been targeted by the feds – some have been doxed, with their information put out on the internet to encourage hate groups to target them. We chose from several learning tracks, and learned from those who have been experiencing this occupation first-hand.

The organizers of the clergy – were tapped into the other groups also organizing actions and witness these days, and so they gave us choices about our activities. Friday morning, some colleagues distributed food. Some colleagues paid homage to the sites of the death of George Floyd and Renee Good. Some got arrested, you may have heard, at the airport – those arrests were intentional and on purpose – a way to shut the airport down to force a meeting with the CEO of Delta Airlines, to ask them to pressure the federal government to remove their lawless “immigration” troops from Minneapolis. Most of those arrests were Minnesota clergy. They didn't want to risk the out-of-town clergy not being able to return home. I chose Friday morning to visit a church in the neighborhood where much activity is taking place, blocks from the site of Renee Good's murder. St Paul – San Pablo's Lutheran Church. St. Paul's - San Pablo Lutheran Church is an ELCA, Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation founded in 1887. They were founded as an immigrant church, served the needs of the Swedish Lutherans of the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis, and now serve a latine neighborhood with worship services in Spanish and English instead of Swedish.

What you need to know about that description is that “Reconciling in Christ” means what our “Welcoming Congregation” designation means – the full welcome, inclusion, and equity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations, and community. Their pastor is in fact a gay latino Lutheran, Pastor Hierald.

I was there to learn what they were doing in the neighborhood, given we are similarly located in an immigrant neighborhood now targeted by ICE.

One of the first questions they asked us to explore with one another was what brought us there to Minneapolis, and I was struck by the answer of a colleague and friend – a minister I had worked with in Michigan. He said he was there to prepare his nervous system. That he knew that he had to get brave and be brave because the violence they are experiencing in Minneapolis is coming to all of us – he serves in California.

In fact, my body, stressed from a red-eye flight and night on a hide-a-bed, began to tell me how stressful this was – listening to the trauma experienced by people in Minneapolis and knowing that similar trauma was occurring in Vancouver, only less visibly and therefore easier for a white person to ignore. My hip began to hurt – the sitting on a plane and the sitting all day Thursday and Friday morning to hear these stories of trauma and resilience, my body doesn't sit very well for long periods of time – and the truth of my colleague's words seemed apt. I need to learn how to care for my body in times of stress and trauma, because this occupation is likely coming to us.

So here I want to deeply apologize to the participants of the new member class yesterday, that I wasn't able to show up to meet you and be with you. I love the new member classes! And I would have been there if my body hadn't told me I needed to tend to it. I was able to get a chiropractic appointment yesterday and already had a massage scheduled for the afternoon, so am on the mend. The problem is I leave tomorrow for Georgia, where I have scheduled a week of family systems work with the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center – and I need to be mindful of how I sit on yet another couple of planes.

Adrienne maree brown gives us “permission to rest our bodies so that we don't burn out our spirits and minds in our lifelong commitment to liberation.” And it is hard when it feels like the world is on fire and “we who believe in freedom cannot rest.” “Put on your oxygen mask and open to the pleasurable experiences of life...” she writes. And I think, as I've shared with you before, we preach about what we most need to learn.

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The rabbi of the local synagogue blocks from San Pablo church is the person who taught us this song. We sang it – actually walked around the block of San Pablo singing it.

It was a trying experience for me as my glasses fogged up and they darken – transitions into sunglasses which get darker the colder it is. Did I mention it was -8 degrees outside? In any case, it was a good trial run for the march later that day when I chose to not wear glasses at all – a blurry view is better than no view at all. At the end of our walk, we went inside. Stop slide

The clergy who had visited the sites of Good's murder were returning and had been harassed and followed by ICE, and we actually had a lockdown so that ICE wouldn't enter. Though we were ready to leave for the 2pm march, we had to wait until there was an 'all clear.' Even so, when we returned to our car, there was another car pulled over in front of ours where the driver's window had been smashed. There's no reparations for the violence done to citizens and their property – ICE just smashes your car

window, abducts you (or kills) you and the cars are left on the streets for the Minneapolis police to deal with.

I was fortunate to be in town with locals. My friends live in St. Paul and were able to get me where I needed to be easily. They joined me on the march.

Phil was in my class at seminary at Meadville Lombard at the University of Chicago – 1998. We graduated 2002. So, then, we marched. We joined the hoards. We tried to find the meeting place of UU clergy, in vain. There were so many people there. At one point, as we were deep in the middle of a crowd, the Rev. Dr. Sofia Bentancourt, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, was being escorted to the front of the line because she was a speaker, so Phil, his wife, Julia, and I followed closely behind, easing our way to the front.

We were in search of the other clergy. We got handed signs with Martin Luther King's mug shot on it and placed in a row behind a vehicle leading the way. Sofie was on that vehicle – that's where the speakers were. Phil and I were sure our faces would be on the front of the New York Times there were so many photographers filming us as we began. But I've not seen any such photo in the media. It was inspiring and hopeful and joyful to walk with so many Minnesotans in the frigid air. I was so well equipped that only the tips of my toes got cold. I had handwarmers, but there wasn't room in my boots to put anything but a double layer of socks in there. I could have taken photos then, but that would mean removing them from my mittens and handwarmers and I just didn't try. I wanted to experience it fully, not document it. Fortunately, other colleagues have been generous with their sharing of photos.

There is too much to share this morning from my experiences in Minneapolis. I'm sure you'll hear more from about this – but I want to return to the blurb I wrote for today's service, long before I knew I'd need to travel this week - I called this service "Love and Resistance" and I couldn't have chosen a more apt title (even though it was done in complete ignorance of what would yet transpire). "As we practice resistance to evil, we practice love," I wrote. "What does this look like in our families and congregation?" So, I'm not getting to the "what it looks like here" this morning, but I do feel like I know in my bones how this resistance to evil is practicing love. There was so much openness and kindness and cooperation among the people and families who are resisting – so much love.

Here's a sign I loved: "For those who believe in 'Paid Agitators': you couldn't pay me to be out in this weather. But for our neighbors we'll Freeze for Free!"

It was in such stark contrast to the violence being perpetrated by ICE, and the tactics they use. And yet the people of Minneapolis are not deterred. They are holding fast and holding each other. It was inspiring.

The news Saturday morning was hard. Many of my colleagues were still in Minneapolis and were there to help. Some changed their plans to stay after the execution of Alex Pretti. My heart broke yesterday, even though we knew that things were likely to get worse before they got better, it was a shock after all the good feeling on that march – it felt like victory, and this event reminds us how much more work there is to do. But "softness breaks what hardness cannot bend." "That's why you won't keep us down."