

Rev. Kevin Tarsa, opening words  
Post-election rally/march organized by Ivy MacLeod,  
6pm November 13, 2016, Nevada City, CA

My friends, here's my question for you...  
What brings you here tonight?

Anger and frustration, anyone?

Fear, worry, terror, anyone?

Fear for the safety and wellbeing of someone you love, anyone?

Shock and disillusionment, a crisis of faith in the U.S., anyone?

Not knowing what to do, anyone?

A need to be with kindred spirits, anyone?

I will name that  
Underneath anger and frustration,  
Underneath fear and worry and terror,  
Underneath shock and disillusionment and a crisis of faith  
Is always some great longing,  
Some great desire or need,  
Some great hope that is not being met.

We can each answer the question of what brings us here  
By naming what we are wanting to avoid,  
By naming the things that scare us,  
And those are valid motivations,  
We have to pay attention to them,  
However, in the spirit of this gathering  
I ask you, instead,  
To answer the question, "What brings you here tonight?"  
By looking beneath the painful surface to name the deeper good that you long for ultimately,  
The vision that you see through your deepest  
and most exciting hope.

What is it, really, that brings you here tonight?  
What is the good that you long to see in the world?  
What are you looking for in our future together?

[people call out their answers]

It's easy and tempting to tell a story about a candidate that you abhor,  
It's easy and tempting to tell a story about THOSE people who voted for him,  
It's easy and tempting to tell a story that someone else is making you feel the way you feel.

I invite you to tell a different story, a story about YOU.  
I invite you to tell THIS story instead:

Tell the story of your heroic effort in these times to find a path to the future you dream of, no matter  
what the obstacles.

Tell the story of your heroic effort to find enough compassion in yourself to genuinely want to understand someone who sees the world very differently than you do.

Tell of your attempt to maintain a holy curiosity about every person, even the persons who baffle you, even the persons who frustrate you to no end.

Tell the story of your heroic effort to act compassionately and kindly, even when you are not feeling all that compassionate or kind.

Tell the story of your heroic effort to take on the messy, dangerous, hard and gritty work of building bridges across divides that seem unbridgeable.

One way to begin crossing some physical gap en route to building a bridge, is to get a string across the gap. To find something with just the right weightiness, to attach a string to it, and to throw it across the chasm. Then you can tie a stronger string to your end, with someone willing on the other side to pull that string across. Then a thin rope to pull across, and a thicker rope, and an even thicker rope and a then cable...

Tell the story of your trying to get a first string across, maybe even a tiny thread, using whatever you have at hand, something with just enough weight. Or... grab the end of the thread that comes across the gap toward you.

In other words...

Tell the story of your attempt to love,  
Tell the story that love brings you here tonight.  
That compassion brings you here,  
That kindness brings you're here,  
That hope brings you here.

Love for the earth,  
Compassion for the most vulnerable among us,  
Hope for a just and equitable society,  
a vision of building the world that you dream about.  
Make that your story.

Can you do that?  
Will you do that?  
Will you help each other do that?  
Because that's what our nation and our community need.

In words from my UU tradition, (by Wayne Arneson)  
The tradition of the people with the yellow Standing on the Side of Love shirts,

*Take courage friends,  
The way is often hard, the path is never clear,  
and the stakes are very high.  
Take courage,  
For deep down there is another truth:  
You are not alone.*