

**Full Text of the Service at White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church**  
**Sunday, January 10, 2021**

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**PRELUDE MUSIC**

**Come Into This Place of Peace WBUUC Choir**

Come into this place of peace, and let its silence heal your spirit  
Come into this place of memory, and let its history warm your soul  
Come into this place of power, and let its vision change your heart.

**Take Care of This House (1600 Pennsylvania Avenue)**

*Leonard Bernstein/ Alan Jay Lerner*

Here in the shell of a house  
This house that is struggling to be  
A beacon of light shining all through the night  
So bright that the whole world could see  
But now there's a chill in the room  
Windows are starting to leak  
Floorboards are starting to creak  
And hope, hope may arrive  
The house will survive  
If only these walls could speak  
Take care of this house  
Keep it from harm  
If bandits break in sound the alarm  
Care for this house  
Shine it by hand  
And keep it so clean  
The glow can be seen all over the land  
Be careful at night, check all the doors  
If someone makes off with our dream  
The dream will be yours  
Take care of this house  
Be always on call  
For this house is the hope of us all  
Beware of full smiles that lead you astray  
When someone is telling you lies  
Let truth lead the way  
Take of this house  
Be always on call  
Care for this house  
It's the hope of us all

**GIVING VOICE TO THE SPIRIT**

**Come, come, whoever you are**  
Come, come whoever you are  
Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving

Ours is no caravan of despair

Come, yet again, come.

### **La Ilaha Il Allahu (Zikr Chant)**

La-il-la-ha, Il-al-la-hu

### **Give Light and the People Will Find a Way**

(Ella Baker; additional words/music by Terry Leonino)

Give light and the people will find a way

Give light and the people will find a way

Give light and the people will find a way

The people will find a way, I do believe.

Teach peace and the people will find a way

Teach peace and the people will find a way

Teach peace and the people will find a way

The people will find a way, I do believe.

Stand together and the people will find a way

Stand together and the people will find a way

Stand together and the people will find a way

The people will find a way, I do believe.

Give light and the people will find a way

Give light and the people will find a way

Give light and the people will find a way

The people will find a way, I do believe.

### **WELCOME**

Good morning, and welcome everyone, to White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church. I am Annie Vail, serving on your Board of Directors.

We are a congregation in the free faith tradition, a community of youth, adults and children, dedicated to pluralism in the spiritual search and ethics grounded in action.

Service participants today include Carol Caouette, Amy Peterson Derrick, Rev. Jack Gaede, and Victoria Safford, supported by Anna Gehres and Erin Scott. Music today is from Carol Caouette, and the Choir, directed by Thaxter Cunio.

We send updates from church twice a week by Email. If you don't get them, let us know and we'll get you on the list. This week, watch for invitations to sign up for winter classes, including "Spirit in Practice" with Rev. Sara Goodman and a new anti-racism study circle with Victoria Safford.

Today, at 11:15, please join us for Cyber Social Hour. It's a fun way to meet others and share conversation in small facilitated groups. We'll put the Zoom link and easy instructions in the chat box. And if you're visiting today, please join us for a brief welcome gathering right after the service, hosted by ministry staff and lay leaders. Links to both meetings will be in the Chat Box.

Welcome to our church. Together, we grow our souls and serve the world in love.

**CALL TO WORSHIP** (Rev. Rebecca Edmiston Lange, adapted) VICTORIA SAFFORD

Come in

Come into this space which we make holy by our presence.

Come in with all your vulnerabilities and strengths,

fears and anxieties, loves and hopes,

for here you need not hide, nor pretend,

nor be anything other than who you are

and who you are called to be.

Come into this space where we can heal and be healed, forgive and be forgiven.

Come into this space where the ordinary is sanctified,

the human is celebrated, the compassionate is expected.

Come into this space –

Together we make it a holy space.

**LIGHTING THE CHALICE**

Friends, it's been a week.

It's been a week within a year, within four long years, within the arc of our lives as individuals, as a community of beloved companions, as citizens and residents of this country that we call our home. It's been a week, with more weeks yet to come. Take a breath, from deep within your body. We're breathing all together, none of us alone, together with everyone, and with the trees, and with the land. I light our chalice for those things which shall endure because we cherish them. For a few moments, resting in the space of this moment, let's hold silence together.

**OPENING WORDS (in unison) JACK GAEDE**

Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our great covenant:  
to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another

**HYMN Finlandia / This is My Song (#159)**

This is my song, O God of all the nations  
a song of peace for lands afar and mine.

This is my home, the country where my heart is;  
here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;  
but other hearts in other lands are beating  
with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,  
and sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine;  
but other lands have sunlight too, and clover,  
and skies are everywhere as blue as mine.  
O hear my song, thou God of all the nations,  
a song of peace for their land and for mine.

**STORY - Amy**

This morning's story is based on several retellings of a tale inspired by a Chinese idiom: Mend the Sheepfold, even if the sheep have been lost. This story is adapted from a retelling in *Harmony: a treasury of Chinese Wisdom for Children and Parents* By Sarah Conover and Chen Hui

Once there existed a small kingdom called Chu. Now, it happened that the king of Chu spent little time concerned with the people of the kingdom--instead he spent his time indulging in feasts, jewels, and silks: he did not see that the more he enjoyed himself, the more the kingdom and its poor suffered.

But a single honest minister, Zhuan Xin, steadily kept watch over the kingdom's affairs, and he knew that the kingdom was in trouble. Finally, could stay silent no longer; something had to be done.

"Your Majesty," said Zhuan Xin, summoning his courage "Your kingdom is on the verge of collapse and you don't know it. You've surrounded yourself with flatterers who tell you what you want to hear. Your treasury is nearly empty, the food reserves across the land have shrunk to nothing."

Affronted by this startling news, the king looked at Zhuan Xin suspiciously. "How dare you spread a rumor like this throughout the country! You are putting a curse upon us! I think you worry far, far too much," said the king. "None of my other ministers has mentioned even a word of this."

Months passed, and finally the truth of Zhuan Xin's warning became obvious to the king--the people of the kingdom, indeed had been suffering. The king finally understood that if something did not change, all would be lost. The king sent for Zhuan Xin.

The king, anxious for advice, asked him, "What can I do now? Is there any hope for my kingdom?"

Zhuan Xin, looking thoughtful, replied with a story: "Once, a long time ago, a shepherd led his sheep daily into the thick, green meadows of the mountains. At night, he brought them back to his sheepfold, which he had carefully constructed out of sticks and branches, down in a ravine. Awake and vigilant all night long, the shepherd kept the sheep safe. And so he prospered."

Zhuan Xin continued. "At some point, perhaps because he was so accustomed to his success, he rarely searched for holes in his fence, and he slept through the night as if in his village home. But one day when he awoke, a lamb was missing. Although angry and upset, the herder felt confident that it wouldn't happen again. After all, nothing like this had ever happened before. And so, he went back to sleep."

Zhuan Xin caught the king's gaze. "The herder was wrong," he said.

"Another lamb disappeared, and then another. Irate, the herder fumed to the village folk about the wolves, but no one else had lost any sheep.

"Finally, one villager asked him, 'Have you taken good care of the fold? Have you examined each branch and twig for any sign of weakness?' The herder admitted that he hadn't.

"Then you must do that right away,' said the villager. "You must search for your mistakes and correct them."

Zhuan Xin surveyed the king and his councilors, all of them in grave distress, much like the shepherd. "Sire," he said, "it is not too late for you to mend the sheepfold, even though some of the sheep are missing."

The king nodded slowly. He understood why Zhuan Xin had told his court the story. Saving his kingdom would require a changing his ways--it would take a mighty effort to ensure that all wouldn't be lost.

**MEDITATION - Rev. Jack Gaede**

Please join me for a moment of prayer and meditation. Take a deep breath and center down. Find a comfortable seat, lift your shoulders up to your ears as you inhale and then as you exhale, let them fall back down--finding length in your neck. Breathe in peace, breathe out love.

Spirit of Life, Spirit of Love, Spirit of Mystery and Wonder, here we are--on a bright and clear winter morning, on the heels of a stressful and anxious week. Our eyes witnessed conflict and tragedy, and our bodies are still holding tension and trauma. Breathe deep and let the breath move all the way in and break apart some of that tension, break it into smaller digestible pieces so that we can metabolize it and learn from it. Move through it and beyond it. This is a week where hidden things are being revealed, people are waking up to some hard realities, and epiphanies are taking place. This is the week where many people celebrate the wisdom of the Magi, the wise people who witnessed the miracle of new life and promise and then disobeyed the orders of a corrupt leader. They chose civil disobedience, resistance, and solidarity; they chose life over destruction. May we also be wise and choose hope over fear. In this moment, in the midst of all this brokenness and pain, fear and exhaustion, may we choose life and breath, wholeness and rest.

This morning, we are holding so much together, and our hearts and our minds are full to the brim with thoughts and prayers for the people that we love--people that need comfort and support, strength and wisdom. For those people who struggle with addictions of all kinds, for the people who have received challenging health diagnoses, and for people who are just barely hanging on, we pray for resilience and courage. For people whose relationships are shifting beneath them, for those whose jobs and opportunities are fading or disappearing, and for those whose family ties are losing strength, we pray for opportunity and we pray for connection.

While we meditate on the people that we hold dear to our hearts and our minds, we pause so that we may name them out loud with intention--sending them love and peace, courage and power.

May we reach for repair--and not just the easy fixes or simple apologies; may we strive toward healing, piecing ourselves and each other back together again--one stitch at a time. May we aspire toward our highest ideals, knowing that we are in good company and that we are among a Beloved Community. We are the ones that we've been waiting for. So see it and see to it. Amen.

#### **OFFERING INTRODUCTION - Victoria Safford**

In a few moment we'll receive the offering, to support the work and vision and programs and services of our church, the Zoom accounts and ethernet cables, staff salaries and utility bills, everything that makes everything happen. You can text to give, with information in the chat, or send a check.

Carol's going to play for us a tune you know by heart, America. Like all the music that we hear and sing together here, this song is not set in stone, but fluid, more like water. Melodies bend sometimes, to fit the mood, the tenor of our times, and lyrics always shift and change, as we evolve our understanding and our need to sing what's true.

Most of us likely learned "America / My Country, 'Tis of Thee" in grade school, where so much of what we know about these United States was imprinted on us early. And what we know, or thought we knew, evolves, our whole lives long, which is a good thing. The tune dates at least to the 17th century, when its plainsong lyrics were replaced with "God Save the King." The song crossed the ocean and different words were sung, the ones we all remember but they have not stayed static. Before the Civil War, poets in the North wrote abolitionist lyrics, and then after the War, the great social critic and writer W.E.B.Dubois added these lines, which to me ring just as patriotic as the ones about the "pilgrim's pride." He wrote:

My country tis of thee, Late land of slavery, Of thee I sing.  
Land where my father's pride Slept where my mother died,  
From every mountain side Let freedom ring!

My native country thee Land of the slave set free, Thy fame I love.  
I love thy rocks and rills And o'er thy hate which chills,  
My heart with purpose thrills, To rise above.

Our fathers' God to thee Author of Liberty, To thee we sing  
Soon may our land be bright, With Freedom's happy light  
Protect us by Thy might, Great God our King.

Carol's going to play for us as we receive today's offering. And I invite you to imagine, as you listen, what new verses we need now, what lines you might write for this old song, "America."

## **OFFERTORY - "America"**

### **FIRST READING - Rev. Jack Gaede**

*The first reading is from Jill Lepore, historian.*

The United States began with an act of severing. Its Constitution aspired to create a more perfect union, but it was slaves and the descendants of slaves who, by dissolving the bonds of tyranny, helped to realize the promise of that union, in bonds of equality. Those new bonds tied Americans to one another, and to the world.

The American experiment has not ended. A nation born in revolution will forever struggle against chaos. A nation founded on universal rights will wrestle against the forces of particularism. A nation that toppled a hierarchy of birth only to erect a hierarchy of wealth will never know tranquility. A nation of immigrants cannot close its borders. And a nation born in contradiction – liberty in a land of slavery, sovereignty in a land of conquest – will fight, forever, over the meaning of its history.

The American experiment rests on three political ideas - "*these truths*," Jefferson called them: **political equality, natural rights, and the sovereignty of the people**. The roots of these ideas are as ancient as Aristotle and as old as Genesis, and their branches spread as wide as the limbs of an oak. It was by declaring these principles that the nation came to be. In the centuries since, these principles have been cherished, decried, and contested, fought for, fought over, and fought against. After Benjamin Franklin read Jefferson's draft, he scratched out the words "sacred and undeniable truths" and suggested that "these truths" were, instead, "self-evident." Truths that are "sacred and undeniable" are God-given, the stuff of religion. Truths that are "self-evident" are laws of nature, empirical and observable, the stuff of science. This divide has nearly rent the republic apart.

But the real dispute isn't between Jefferson and Franklin, or between faith and reason. **The real dispute is between "these truths" and the course of events: Does American history prove these truths, or does it belie and contradict them?**

The American experiment has not ended.

### **SECOND READING - Rev. Jack Gaede**

*The second reading is from the Rev. Raphael Warnock, declaring victory after his election as Georgia's first Black US senator*

The other day, because this is America, the 82-year-old hands that used to pick somebody else's cotton went to the polls and picked her youngest son to be a United States Senator.

**MUSIC - Carol Caouette "American Tune" (Paul Simon)**

Many's the time I've been mistaken  
And many times confused  
Yes, and I've often felt forsaken  
And certainly misused  
But I'm all right, I'm all right  
I'm just weary to my bones  
Still, you don't expect to be  
Bright and bon vivant  
So far away from home, so far away from home

And I don't know a soul who's not been battered  
I don't have a friend who feels at ease  
I don't know a dream that's not been shattered  
or driven to its knees  
But it's all right, it's all right  
For we've lived so well so long  
Still, when I think of the road we're traveling on  
I wonder what's gone wrong  
I can't help it, I wonder what's gone wrong

And I dreamed I was dying  
I dreamed that my soul rose unexpectedly  
And looking back down at me  
Smiled reassuringly  
And I dreamed I was flying  
And high up above my eyes could clearly see  
The Statue of Liberty  
Sailing away to sea  
And I dreamed I was flying

We come on the ship they call the Mayflower  
We come on the ship that sailed the moon  
We come in the age's most uncertain hour  
and sing an American tune  
But it's all right, it's all right  
You can't be forever blessed  
Still, tomorrow's going to be another working day  
And I'm trying to get some rest  
That's all, I'm trying to get some rest

**SERMON** What Do You Love? **(Victoria)**

*Dear America, you beautiful  
range of varied  
states,*

These lines come from Jennifer Freed, a poet:

*Dear America, you beautiful range of varied states,  
There is a part of you that harbors, still,  
the dream that you are Captain America, un-nuanced hero  
with a strong clean jaw, honest eyes reflecting blue and spacious skies,  
who only fights for good and right—  
those amber waves of grain, the purple mountains' majesty,  
the grace God shed on thee and me*

*[But actually, America],  
You are Iron Man—gifted maverick, troubled lore,  
empowered by the armored suit you built to save yourself.  
Yes, you've changed. You want to heal.  
You yearn for brotherhood from sea to shining sea.  
But injury still hovers round your core—shards of your own shrapnel,  
encroaching on your heart—  
and you will die, dear America, you will die  
if you cannot address those wounds  
that made you what you are.*

Where did you feel it on Wednesday, when you first saw those images from the Capitol, and the images kept coming – from the sight in midmorning of elected officials, senators, delaying and disputing the certification of a legitimate election; to the gathering storm on the lawn around noon, thousands and thousands of people; to the crisis soon after, the calamity, the sight of the Confederate flag in those hallowed spaces, more than one flag, and so many other terrible sights? Where did you feel it, the wound? Not “what did you think, in your head” - this self-encased ball of opinions and umbrage rattling around, your conclusions and analysis, your politics - but where did you feel it in your body, in your muscles and your bones, your skin, as you watched or you listened, your cells, your scalp, the place behind your eyes where pressure sometimes pulses, or maybe in your jaw, or in your gut, stomach clenching, teeth clenching, fists clenching? One person told me she began by mid-afternoon to feel physically, literally sick. What was that about? Did you notice where it landed, where it dwells, within your body – still dwells, four days later?

I ask because I'm learning, so slowly, have been learning and forgetting, then remembering, all my life, to trust my body as much as my mind to give me the news of the day, the weather report, the information I need to set the direction for what happens next, for what I need to do next. It's easy, I find, to think my way out of hard things I need to attend to; my mind is like a crafty weasel. But the body is honest and insistent in the way it tells you, *you have to pay attention to this. This is of ultimate concern.* The body is sometimes a more reliable informant when we're troubled in the soul and don't exactly realize it. The wounded spirit literally hurts.

On Wednesday afternoon it surprised me, late in the day, when my throat choked up, when tears so blurred my vision so I couldn't see the computer screen. *Brush that away! Get back to work!* – but no. I couldn't do it. I was listening to a reporter interviewing Linda Sanchez, a US Representative from California, who was calling in from some remote and undisclosed location. She said, “You know, I called my husband last night [Tuesday night], to ask him how our son is.” They have an 11 year-old boy. “He said, ‘Fine, why?’” She said, “I don't

know; it just felt like I should call. And listen, I want to tell you where I keep my will.' And he's like, 'What? Why?'" She said, "I just think you should know. In case anything ever happens and I can't get home, I don't come home." The reporter asked her if that was some kind of premonition she'd had on Tuesday night, and Representative Sanchez said, "No. It was not a premonition. It just made sense, after all the rhetoric we'd been hearing for so many days, so many weeks, leading up to the vote, and all the news we'd heard about these people coming to the capitol, it just made sense to call." It was a live interview. I could hear in her voice that it was just now catching up with her, that she'd felt she had to do this thing, make that call, that she'd known, viscerally and also intellectually, that something was coming down. She told the reporter, "I have a little boy and I really want to raise him, and I also want to do the job I'm here to do." She said she was not in hiding at the capitol with her colleagues, but someplace else in the city, because she was really concerned about Covid exposure in the cramped secret space where the senators were taken. She was all by herself somewhere in DC as darkness was falling, not sure at all what the night would bring, talking like this to a stranger, a reporter, and talking also to me, directly, to my heart, my mother-heart, talking directly to the whole world, to anyone tuned in to MSNBC - and that's when my throat tightened and my head sent down words to name what had been building in my body all day: grief, for our country's failure (not just the breach of the capitol but everything that made it possible, all we've done and left undone). Fear - for people on the line down there, elected people who work for us, and also the people who work for them, like the aides who saw the boxes of electoral ballots on the table and thought to swoop them up as they were hustled out to safety, and like whoever it was who came in to clean and disinfect the spaces in the aftermath, so the Congress could reconvene. Fear for them all, and for people anywhere at risk who might somehow inadvertently step into the way of a rabid racist mob, or brush up against the lethal danger of white hatred and white power on any given day. Grief and fear, in my shoulders, in my back, for people, and for the country as a whole, which as Jill Lepore reminds us in the reading, has always been a fragile experiment, so vulnerable from the very start to what is worst in us, as well as what is best. Grief and fear, and also rage, clean-burning, boiling, purifying rage that this has gone on so long, white supremacy in all its overt and its covert forms: not only the disgusting antics of several thousand bad actors (who we know represent so many millions more) - not only individuals, even in large and terrifying numbers, but the poison that lives in the sinew and systemic design of every institution we cherish. Grief and fear and rage for the original sin, the original wound, in America that could only ever lead to where it did on Wednesday, and where it could so easily show up again tomorrow or the next day or the next, as it shows up, as it lands, already, daily, in the lives and on the bodies of black people and indigenous people and brown people and all people of color, and poor people, gay people, trans people, everyone vulnerable, whose existence is such an existential threat to whiteness in our body politic. So grief and fear and rage on Wednesday, palpable in tears for me, and also in this heaviness in my chest, like a stone, a weight of dread, almost getting in the way of breath, reminding me about complicity and how if I'm not doing, all the time, all within my power to resist, then I am aiding and abetting the continuous, ravenous damage.

So no wonder we were all so exhausted on Thursday. And Friday. And Saturday. And now. Our bodies and our souls are holding so much, including the realization (if there was any doubt before) that everything we thought could be true about our country, our people, ourselves, in fact is. That was not a one-off on Wednesday, but a bubbling up and over of the essential, inherent infection. It takes centuries to cure a wound like that. And that is what our work is. That is what it takes to love a country.

Rev. Jackie Lewis is the pastor, African American pastor, of Middle Collegiate Church in New York, in the East Village, where for years she's convened an annual conference for leaders and learners and activists from all over the country called "Revolutionary Love." (It's powerful and transformational, it takes place every spring, and this year you can all attend because, of course, it's all gone digital.) Jackie has given her whole heart to the messy, sacred work of racial restoration, studying, preaching, teaching, and working it out every day in workshops for anyone who comes (wherever they are on their journey) and also in her congregation. On Thursday morning she wrote, "What a lousy, horrific, [expletive-deleted] day yesterday was. On the one hand,

Warnock!! Ossoff!! But then the madness in DC. Last night my thoughts finally crystallized and I tweeted, I'm 'so damned tired of living in a country that treats Black grief as a threat and white rage as a sacrament.' (She means the racist rage, of course.) It's clarity like that, and love like hers, that help the stone in my chest to break apart a little bit, to soften up, to let something like hopefulness shine through, something like belief that transformation, of each of us and all of us, is possible, and something like a new resolve, befitting a new year, to stay bright. To stay hopeful. To stay brave. To stay in it, this work of transformation. Who are we to lay it down? Something rises... maybe hope. Because it's true: what happened this week in Georgia is historic. Even this President cannot steal that shine.

"Take care of this house," sang our choir, an old song about Washington and politics and the buildings there that hold the fragile, fractured aspirations of this imperfect democracy, those solemn, beautiful containers, housing all the sacred truths and every self-evident flaw:

*Take care of this house.  
Keep it from harm  
If bandits break in sound the alarm  
Care for this house  
Shine it by hand  
And keep it so clean  
The glow can be seen all over the land  
Be careful at night, check all the doors  
If someone makes off with our dream  
The dream will be yours  
Beware of full smiles that lead you astray  
When someone is telling you lies  
Let truth lead the way  
Take care of this house  
Be always on call  
For this house is the hope of us all*

What was breached on Wednesday was not just an historic building, a monument where privileged people play with a lot of money and a lot of power while principled people try to make good laws. What was breached was the promise that the building holds, as yet unfulfilled, but ever beckoning to us. And our work is the work of repair.

I've been thinking about reverence since Wednesday, the way we hold, together, in community, certain customs, rituals, traditions, institutions, covenants that in themselves are not sacred, but which signify or point to or guard something larger than any one of us, or any group of us, something more important and eternal. Reverence is not religious, it's communal. Sometimes the customs and traditions become tarnished or rusty, or outlive their usefulness; they need to be repaired then, or revised, sometimes retired or replaced. But the larger thing, the sacred thing, the aspiration that the customs represent, the intention, the vision, remains, a noble and important thing. Reverence – not idolatry, but reverence – for the customs and traditions, the institutions of governance, for example, by consent of the governed, holds us accountable to each other, to our history, to our shared future and to certain larger truths we're always striving to define, to describe in better language, to articulate, because they're not self-evident: equality, freedom, justice, mercy, civil rights, human rights, the sovereignty of the people's voice, democracy. Our understanding of the depth and breadth and scope of these truths evolves, the living power of what these things can really mean. We've come so far from what our founders had in mind. At every step the evolution is a struggle, and almost always, the struggle makes us stronger as a people.

We agree in our country to constrict our freedom somewhat, to live on purpose, voluntarily constrained, by an imperfect Constitution and the laws that flow from it. We expect that certain rights will be, or ought to be, protected by this contract. We accept that certain responsibilities, heavy responsibilities, will fall to us to guard it, and defend it, chief among them, our participation in the whole messy and imperfect process. Reverence doesn't mean we can't challenge or critique the customs and the systems; just the opposite: we're bound to. We vote the scoundrels out, change the laws, dissent, dispute, strive toward a more perfect union, and if all else fails, and some injustice threatens to eclipse what's true and good, we can resort to civil disobedience which, if it's truly civil, is an act of deepest reverence for what once was called the common weal. That was not what erupted on Wednesday, because racism, white nationalism, unfettered self-interest, greed, authoritarianism, fascism - everything this president stands for and embodies, everything he called for Wednesday morning and has called for all along, enabled by his craven cronies and his deluded followers, reeks of irreverence for the principles this fragile, rare republic represents.

Rev. Barry Black has been chaplain to the US Senate for almost 20 years. Sometimes he opens the sessions, sometimes he closes them, bearing witness there quietly to every debate and every vote. He prays them, chiding them sometimes, chastising them with greatest respect, with reverence for the office they hold and compassion for each of them as humans. He calls them back, or tries to, their dignity, integrity, their duty and their sacred honor. I'm not sure I actually believe the US Senate should even have a chaplain, but if they have to have one, I'm glad it's him. On Thursday morning, very early, minutes after the vote confirming the free and fair election of Joe Biden as our 46<sup>th</sup> president, Barry Black took the podium and offered this prayer for his congregation of 100 senators. They rose as is their custom, and bowed the heads. He spoke in the language of his tradition, as a Seventh Day Adventist, but I think you can hear his intention, and trust that he was praying for us all:

He said,

*Lord of our lives and sovereign of our beloved nation, we deplore the desecration of the United States Capitol building, the shedding of innocent blood, the loss of life, and the quagmire of dysfunction that threaten our democracy.*

*These tragedies have reminded us that words matter and that the power of life and death is in the tongue. We have been warned that eternal vigilance continues to be freedom's price.*

*Lord, you have helped us remember that we need to see in each other a common humanity that reflects your image.*

*You have strengthened our resolve to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies domestic as well as foreign.*

*Use us to bring healing and unity to our hurting and divided nation and world. Thank you for what you have blessed our lawmakers to accomplish in spite of threats to liberty.*

*Bless and keep us. Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to do your will and guide our feet on the path of peace. And God bless America. We pray in your sovereign name, amen.*

When I heard his voice, something in my body, some tension there, released a bit, enough to see that the house, though battered, still stands. Renovation can begin.

In South Africa, where for generations under apartheid the people lived in parallel universes (the white country and the other country; white rules under white rule and the other rules; white power and the people's power), the people's movement for liberation gave voice to the spirit through song. by old, old songs with new and revolutionary words and new songs cast in the people's own languages.

Siph'amandla nkosi is a prayer, to center the spirit of the dispossessed, to reclaim power (power within as well as power among), to anchor in courage (the word comes from coeur, from the heart itself), and to remember whose country it is, and what kind of country it is, even if in the moment, that country does not yet exist. It's a beautiful prayer for a struggling democracy, like ours.

Carol's going to lead us, but I want you to hear these words first as the prayer that they are:

*Siph' a-mandla N'ko-si  
Wo-kung-e-sa-bi  
Siph' a-mandla N'ko-si  
Si-ya-wa-ding-a*

*O God, give us power  
to rip down prisons.  
O god, give us power  
to lift the people.*

*O God, give us courage  
to withstand hatred.  
O God, give us courage  
not to be bitter.*

*O God, give us power  
and make us fearless.  
O God, give us power  
because we need it.*

May it be so. Amen.

**HYMN** Siph'amandla #172 STLT

*Zulu:*

*Siph' a-mandla N'ko-si  
Wo-kung-e-sa-bi  
Siph' a-mandla N'ko-si  
Si-ya-wa-ding-a*

*O God, give us power  
to rip down prisons.  
O god, give us power  
to lift the people.*

*O God, give us courage  
to withstand hatred.  
O God, give us courage*

not to be bitter.

O God, give us power  
and make us fearless.

O God, give us power  
because we need it.

*Zulu:*

*Siph' a-mandla N'ko-si*

*Wo-kung-e-sa-bi*

*Siph' a-mandla N'ko-si*

*Si-ya-wa-ding-a*

**CLOSING WORDS - ANNIE VAIL**

May peace dwell within our hearts, and understanding in our minds

May courage steel our will, and love of truth forever guide us.

**FAREWELL - Victoria**

Friends, thank you for joining us. Watch for the Enews tomorrow and Thursday for news about programs and classes for children and adults.

The gathering for newcomers and visitors happens right now, after the service. At 11:15 all are welcome to join us for Cyber Social Hour. Find links in the chatbox.

Friends, we're sending love to you today from Maple Street, and from Stillwater, Minneapolis, Woodbury and St. Paul.

Farewell, and stay well. Stay bright. So be it. See to it. Amen.

**POSTLUDE Om Namo Kali WBUUC Choir**

Om namo Kali Kali om namo

Om namo Kali Kali om namo

Oh great mother, we invoke you in this space

Take away our fear and fill us with your grace

Burn it all away Kali, burn it all away

If it doesn't serve us then burn it all away