

Rev. Kim K. Crawford Harvie  
 Arlington Street Church  
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## **Love Like There's No Tomorrow**

On Tuesday morning, Kem & I walked to the polls in the pouring rain. The poll workers thanked us for coming out, but I thought, This doesn't even register on the Richter scale of what our ancestors did for the chance to vote — especially our female ancestors and ancestors of color. All honor and glory to them!

Then I thought, in a way I've never thought before, Voting is really a radical act of faith — engaging with the possibility of shaping the future, and the willingness to act as if we believe in that future.

In every generation, preachers have preached that the world is coming to an end. The standard instructions say, Abandon worldly things, straighten up your act, and look to heaven. And here's the Unitarian Universalist response:

The world as we know it is always ending.  
 What comes next is up to each of us.

We are called not to give in or give up  
 — not on our watch! —  
 but to bear down,  
 set our minds and hearts and hands  
 in the service of saving what is worth saving,  
 and love like there's no tomorrow.

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The husband and wife musical duo Tanya & Michael Trotter are known as The War and Treaty. Friends discovered them at New Orleans' Jazzfest this year; on a perfect August evening, they came with their band to play the Payomet Tent on Cape Cod. The entire experience was electrifying. One of my favorite new songs is their "Love Like There's No Tomorrow." It says, in part,

Loving every night and day  
 Loving all our troubles away

We gon love like there's no tomorrow

Loving every minute and hour  
 Loving past our own power  
 We gon love like there's no tomorrow

Loving on down to the wire  
 Love burning like a wildfire  
 We gon love like there's no tomorrow

Love for my [kindred]  
 Love past the color  
 Love for the nations  
 Love, love, love  
 We gon love like there's no tomorrow

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Twenty-one years ago this morning, four terrorist attacks were carried out against the United States by the militant extremist network al-Qaeda, a murderous suicide mission that unleashed a long tail of unadulterated hatred both here at home, in Afghanistan, and in Iraq. Whether or not we are conscious of it, we continue to metabolize the poison of that hatred every single day.

On one of the early 9/11 anniversaries, I moderated a panel that included Massachusetts resident Susan Retik, whose husband, David, seated next to a terrorist on a New York bound plane, died when Flight 11 hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Susan had a young son and daughter and she was pregnant; it would have been completely understandable had she turned inward to attend to her family and her grief. Instead, she and 9/11 widow Patti Quigley pooled the financial support they had received from strangers, their husbands' companies, and insurance, and cofounded Beyond the 11th, providing literacy classes, job training, and micro-loans to support Afghan widows. Patti explains their vision, "... These widows were widows because of the same terrorists that [killed] our husbands."<sup>1</sup>

Dina Retik, the baby born after her father's murder, says, "I'm so proud that from her pain, Mum decided to show kindness to others. When so much of the

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<sup>1</sup> Please see [archive.boston.com/news/world/articles/2006/05/12/widows\\_reach\\_beyond\\_911\\_to\\_aid\\_afghans/?rss\\_id=Boston+Globe+--+World+News](http://archive.boston.com/news/world/articles/2006/05/12/widows_reach_beyond_911_to_aid_afghans/?rss_id=Boston+Globe+--+World+News)

United States was filled with hatred — bigotry, violence, and war — she was full of love.”<sup>2</sup>

Dear ones, would you rather wake up every morning filled with hatred or filled with love? Aimless or purposeful? Angry or joyful? These are not rhetorical questions, and this directive is as pragmatic as it is in the service of our spiritual growth:

Let us not cede our power to despair.

Whether or not we believe that what we do will tip the scales toward justice and peace, it is undeniably true that it will make a difference to us and to those whose lives our lives touch.

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I want to say just a little bit about my beloved colleague Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs, who died last month at the age of 70. Rob grew up on the South Side of Chicago. Long before my time, Rob interned here at Arlington Street and was a close friend of our own Rev. John Gibbons and Rev. George Whitehouse. He went on to serve with his wife, Janne, at our congregations in Oakland and St. Paul. From that, he showed me the potential for an urban church to be at the heart of community development: to be both a spiritual community and an essential partner in restoring our cities by hosting social services and nonprofit partners in music and arts.

Robbie’s spiritual practices included singing, chanting, memorizing poetry, Tai Chi, reading, journaling, and prayer. He could be tough; he insisted that every member of his congregation commit to a spiritual practice as a daily ritual to keep them centered and make them fit for usefulness. I invite you to join me in honoring him today by thinking about what gifts of the spirit we might bring to this new church year — curiosity, wonder, awe, generosity. After the sermon, I’m going to ask you to write down a gift or two, if you will, so Rev. Beth and I can share it from the pulpit with everyone.

Our colleague Jen Crow<sup>3</sup> said this about Rob, and what a beautiful tribute and a challenge to each of us: Central to his ministry was the idea that there are no “other people’s children.” We are all responsible for one another. And if we can practice feeling and expressing the same kind of love we have for our beloveds for everyone we meet, it will change everything.

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<sup>2</sup> Please see [aleteia.org/2021/09/11/meet-the-9-11-widow-raising-funds-for-afghan-widows/](https://aleteia.org/2021/09/11/meet-the-9-11-widow-raising-funds-for-afghan-widows/)

<sup>3</sup> Jen Crow is the senior minister of the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

I think of the close of Gwendolyn Brooks' poem, *Paul Robeson*. She wrote,

... we are each other's  
harvest:  
we are each other's  
business:  
we are each other's  
magnitude and bond.

\*

On April 3rd, 1968, on the day before he was murdered, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "Mountaintop" speech to the striking sanitation workers of Memphis. Like so many of us, I can hear his voice, the cadence of his words, from that final speech — his last sermon. Today, I'm thinking of the part that began,

Well, I don't know what will happen now.  
We've got some difficult days ahead.  
But it doesn't matter with me now.  
Because I've been to the mountaintop.  
And I don't mind.  
Like anybody, I would like to live a long life.  
Longevity has its place.  
But I'm not concerned about that now.  
I just want to do G\*d's will.

We can choose to do whatever we want to do with those words.  
I pray that we choose to do something.

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I want to thank Jon Andersen-Miller, chair of Arlington Street's Restoration Committee, for so much, and, in this moment, for leading me to poet Brad Aaron Modlin. This is his wildly exuberant *With Somebody Who Loves Me*.

In my daydream, I take  
the 9am train  
and greet everyone on it.  
I say, *In this messy  
and sometimes destructive world,  
let's create something!*  
I show them the elaborate  
group dance I have

choreographed, and everyone  
 eagerly leaps to feet.  
 Because we all have pretty decent  
 coordination and timing,  
 no one says, *Dancing's*  
*not really my thing.*  
*Giving a burst*  
*of joy to strangers*  
*is too hard.*

We practice, practice,  
 super-speed, and at the last  
 stop before the city,  
 an unsuspecting audience  
 boards. I strike up the  
 old boombox and we all  
 become alive and hopeful —  
*look* at such a world  
 as the one we live in,  
 a world that hath  
 such generous amateur  
 dancers in it!  
*My baby takes the morning train,*  
 we sing. And each of the harried commuters,  
 the balding uncles,  
 the bobbing kids  
 realizes that the song is about them,  
 that each of them is someone's baby  
 taking that morning train.  
 When the train stops, we all burst out.  
 We find strangers on the sidewalks,  
 take their hands, and lead them  
 in waltzes and polkas. They call  
 their friends to join. The city orchestra  
 hears the crowd and runs toward us,  
 cellos and tubas lightweight in their hands.  
 The mayor  
 declares it a holiday. We all toss  
 away our afternoon to-do lists,  
 our planners and plans  
 without a second glance.

The orchestra lifts its batons and its bows  
and the whole city becomes  
a giant tea dance.

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Beloved spiritual companions,

I pray that we honor our ancestors,  
engage with the possibility of shaping the future,  
and find the willingness to act as if  
we believe in that future.

Let us not cede our power to despair.

We are called not to give in or give up  
but to bear down,  
set our minds and hearts and hands  
in the service of saving what is worth saving,  
and love like there's no tomorrow.

Love like there's no tomorrow.

Amen.