

May 3, 2020
On the 7th day, we rest.
Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson

If we weren't unanimous
about keeping our lives so much in motion,
if we could perhaps do nothing for once,
perhaps a great silence would interrupt this sadness.

Neruda writes of opening ourselves to life,
of paying attention:
he writes, too, in the context of a Chilean regime of death,
disappearances, horrors –
and what it might mean to be silent,
to keep quiet,
so that we might feel,
might notice the power of life
instead of death.

Which is to say, as Bruggemann notes,
that the sabbath,
what Isaac Watts calls the day free from mortal cares,
is an act of resistance and alternative:
a resistance to the workaholic, commodity culture,
that measures our value in our production,
an act of alternative,
to imagine, to live, for a moment,
the beloved community,
the eternal world of joy:
when we might be present to the holy, each other,
and the world,
without as much anxiety and violence.

When this started,
when the stay at home orders came down,
you know the things we sold out of:
toilet paper, for one,

and yeast.

Yeast – you still can't get yeast.

We all thought it: we're going to bake!
We're going to do so much baking now that we're home,
and you know what else:
the world will pause,
we'll be still,
we'll take that sabbath,
step off the rat race,
stop trying to multi-task and
focus more on compassion than production and
consumption.

[laugh]

Or, as they say, sweet summer child.

That is not what happened for some of us.

A lot of people who bought yeast haven't baked a loaf.

We're going to talk more specifically about parents next
week,
and momma's in particular,
but, my beloveds,
oh.
my.
god.

There was a headline I saw, and a story I started reading,
the other day,
about how hard this is,
about the demand to work, parent, be a spouse, keep up
with friends
and family,
and bake and be crafty and productive in this time,

it was titled

"I feel like I have five jobs."

The article was dated March 20th.

It had been a few days for most folks.

Now it is May 3rd.

And time stretches out before us, wondering,
how long, lord, how long.

Even if you are not trying to manage young children,

if you are working from home,

the rest is . . . no.

There's no rest.

there's no sabbath.

I mean, your work computer is right there.

So what if it's Sunday at 3, or Thursday night at 10pm,

or 6am on a Tuesday,

why not get some work done?

At least you have job, right?

And yes, the situation is different for those who are not
working:

if you were laid off, or furloughed, well, that sucks.

And what do you do?

Go look for a job?

As if there are any?

Wait?

How do you mark the time?

What do you do?

And if you're retired, and I know a lot of you are,

you've built a life with a schedule:

volunteering on this day, taking care of grandchildren on
this day,

a once-a-week class, a set of things to do and places to go

—

that's what you worked for all these years,

so you could fill your time
what what matters,
and we are all left wondering:

what day is it?

Autumn, put up the picture of Gov. Cuomo for a sec.

What day is today?

A question for the ages.

Ok, thanks – back to the camera.

What day is today?

Sweet is the day of sacred rest.
Sweet is the day of sacred rest,
but we don't rest, do we?

We are wired for consumption and production,
for mortal concerns, for the news cycle and
planned obsolescence.
We are told, implicitly and explicitly,
that our worth depends on our productivity,
that valuable people work all the time,
important people don't sleep, they work,
you can rest when you're dead,
and so on.

Some states, some states, are making clear:
if they lift the stay-at-home order
and you refuse to go back to work,
then it is a voluntary quit, and you don't get unemployment.
The man who represents – and I word that word,
represents, loosely,

in the state house thinks we should "return to our American way of life"

even if that means that some of you die.

I mean what I said, John Cabello wants to kill some of you. He is not worthy to hold an office even in the Illinois House, which is not, with some exceptions, a body of distinction in the first place.

But, ironically, he was right about one thing:
structuring work so that some people die so other people can get rich?

That is the American Way of life.

Since the first enslaved Africans arrived at Jamestown 500 years ago,

since Indigenous people were subjected to pandemic diseases on purpose,
so their wealth could be stolen,
from the railroads to the mines,
to the hypertension and alcoholism of the middle manager,
to what is happening right now in slaughterhouses and meat-plants across the country,
death for profit is the American way.

Which is why Sabbath as resistance is not petty.

It is not small.

It is sacred.

Sabbath isn't about not being able to buy liquor on Sunday, or not being allowed to do some thing.

That's what we call missing the point.

The point is . . . you are not a product.

You are a human being.

In another passage, Bruggemann says instead of holy time,

we should call it human time.

As Mary reminded us in the testimony,

Jesus taught the sabbath was made for humankind;
to remind us,
all of us,
we are not a product.
We are not a cog.
We are not what we produce.
We are not our work.
We are not our work.

I have learned so much from disability advocates,
people like my colleague Rev. Teresa Soto,
and folks at RAMP here in Rockford,
and others,
and one of the most important things that Rev. Soto says
often is this:
ableism is trash.

I love the simplicity.
Ableism is trash.
Your worth isn't about what you produce.
The sabbath, a real sabbath,
is about remembering that,
that your value is that you are human, that you are sacred,
no matter your age, your stage, your preexisting conditions
or your potential comorbidity.
What horrible words.
You are holy.
And it is time we stop engaging in human sacrifice for the
God of Wealth.

I also love her phrase, ableism is trash,
because it inverts the God of Productivities claim
that people who are not productive for the capitalism
machine are worthless,
that disabled people are trash.

But that, that is wrong, unscriptural, unethical, and inhumane.

Ableism is trash.

People are holy.

So what then?

In this time when we thought we'd get a break,
but instead some of us are working five jobs,
for which we might be being paid for only one,
and some of us aren't working at all,
and some of us don't know what day it is,
what then?

What does the practice of sabbath mean for us, now?

I think it means

breathe

breathe

breathe

stop.

Stop trying so hard.

Stop pushing the needle too far.

*perhaps a great silence would interrupt this sadness,
this never understanding ourselves
and threatening ourselves with death,*

I think --

I know –

we found things to do

we bought the yeast

because we did not want to face grief.

face the existential crisis of who we really are.
stare into the abyss,
or, even, stare into the beauty, either –
that these feelings, this being sacred,
this being human, really human,
limited, beautiful, fragile, strong, incomplete, lovable,
this being human
is hard.

And so we push.
We do.
We fill the calendar.
We even schedule our self-care,
plan our rest,
what we will do on this day and that day.

I do it too, folks, there's no judgement here.
Ministers have it very weird on this front:
Sunday is a workday for me,
has been my whole adult life.
I try to take another day – Saturday, usually,
but there are errands and housework,
even now,
and raising of children sometimes,
and then I have to stop
and breathe
and remember

I am not what I do.
Even I, who am deeply and profoundly called to this work,
this life of ministry,
but I am not my productivity.
My worth is not about how empty my inbox is,
or how many calls I made today,
or even
even
how amazing the sermon is.

Or not.

And the point of sabbath
isn't to rest up so you can be better at your job.
Let me say that again:
the point of sabbath isn't to be better at your job.

it's to step off.
to be human.
to know you are loved by the world, the holy,
that you are sacred

that in order to be worthy of love and respect
you have to do

nothing.

Nothing.
You are worthy of love and respect
regardless of how much you produce.

So is your neighbor.
So is the family scrapping by.
So is the one who has made bad choices.
Or the best they could.
So is . . . everyone.

You don't have to be good at anything to be worthy of love
and respect.
You don't have to hit your quarterly targets,
or fill your retirement calendar with **IMPORTANT**
OBLIGATIONS
you don't have to be a pintrest mom or a cool dad,
you don't have to go to every zoom meeting,
and you don't have follow every bit of news of the world,
you don't have to . . .

anything.

Neruda's point is that there is a kind of activity,
a kind of noise,
that is about fear of death, and that points to death,
Bruggemann class it anxiety and violence,
that we do to ourselves and each other,
and so the silence,
the walk to reflect, the time to step aside,
the sabbath – whatever day it is, a whole day,
for sacred, non-productive presence,
is about being toward life,
about the invitation to the deeper life,
to honor the sabbath and keep it human,
that we might know who we are and what we are for.

So, I invite you.

I welcome you.

I invite myself, frankly – this is a journey I'm still on too –
let us

breathe

breathe

we don't have to prove a point
we don't have to do the thing
to be loved
to matter
to be worthy
to protect ourselves from our fear

I know it feels like that sometimes,
but it isn't true.

And my words aren't enough to make it so for you,
but I invite you to practice, to try,
start slow,

start small,

breathe

breathe

say, I am worthy of love and respect without being
productive

say, you are worthy of love and respect without being
productive

breathe

breathe

practice.

We're going to spend all month on sabbath,
and you don't have to get it right the first day.

That would be. . . not the point.

Indeed, the opposite of the point.

Give yourself permission – to fail, to be confused, to not do
a thing.

Give someone else permission –

give someone else permission – to be imperfect, to do it
wrong,

and still be okay

breathe

breathe

you are sacred and holy and human
and you don't have to do

anything.

Hush.

Hush.

The voice still and small yet sounds,
in storm and rain and even sunny days.

Hush.

Hush,
somebody is calling your name.
you are holy and worthy
and you don't have to do a thing.

May 10, 2020
Momma Needs A Break
Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson

I saw the results of a poll that the New York Times did earlier this week.

They asked parents, who is doing most of the homeschooling in your house?

About 45% of men said they were, with the rest split between "I don't know", "equal" and "my spouse."

Some of those spouses are men, of course, but the main gist is that about 1/2 of dads think they're doing most of the work.

Women, on the other hand, indicated that their spouse – some of who might also be women, or nonbinary, but, take that most of those spouses are men, the percentage of women who said that their spouse was doing most of the homeschooling?

3%.

3%.

The headline was: nearly 1/2 of men think they're doing most of the work.

3% of women agree.

A headline for the ages.

Oh Where are our dear mothers?

They are working.

They are exhausted.

They are carrying the mental load,
the physical load,
the emotional load,
and they are busy.

Or they've locked themselves in the bathroom
to get a moment's peace.

Friends, this was bad before.

Before this virus revealed what some knew but not all knew,
this was already bad.

The load on parents of young children in general,
and on mommas in particular,
is

unsustainable, unjust, unspiritual, and inhumane.

What the hell are we doing?

On this Momma's day, I want to talk about justice and love
for Momma's,

all the mommas, single mommas and married mommas,
mommas who love it and mommas who are exhausted
(most of them are both),
mommas who have lost their babies to violence,
mommas of every race, every size, every religion, every
income,
and every gender and sexual orientation.

When the Unitarian Julia Ward Howe summoned mothers of every land
for a time of peacemaking, she decried how war and fear
undid all the teachings of love and justice;
this was the original mother's day, in the midst of a bloody
19th century,
Mother's day is a justice event, it should be, anyway,
and it is mommas themselves now who need justice,
it is families and children
who need to live in a world that respects them,
that helps them thrive,
a world in which the village actually raises children,
and doesn't just give lip service
to the sacrificial heroism of mommas.
I want mommas to be able to thrive,
not feel like giving trees, cut down to stumps for someone
else's pleasure.

I don't want them to have to be heroes.
I want them to get to be human.

Here in Rockford, I co-chair the ready to learn team,
a community effort to improve outcomes for young children,
and we've been working with huge data set about how our
children are doing.
[the same assessment, through UCLA, is used in California]
And the data tells a clear story:
that when parents are more connected to resources, their
neighbors,
and when they have more stability in housing and
employment,
the kids are more ready to learn and thrive when they get
to kindergarten.

We know what mommas' need.
Childcare and healthcare they can afford.
Paid family leave.

For gods sake, paid family leave.
Parks and activities that are clean, safe, and fun.
Including, for too many momma's, safety from racist law
enforcement
and vigilantes and ICE raids.
Mommas also need other parents to connect with for
resources, help, and solidarity.
And a village – a network of other adults, teens, families,
mommas need aunties, and grandpas, and abuelas, and all
the rest.
Not just biological family, either,
I mean neighbors, friends, and yes – other congregation
members.

Some of these things that mommas need are things those of
us who are not mommas
can do.

If we are the co-parent –
whether we are in the same household or not –
we can make sure that we are doing as much as we can –
and not just “what we are told” but taking initiative.

If we are another relative, a neighbor, a friend,
we can provide respite, help.
You can help a momma during social distancing
by just having a conversation over video with the kids,
read them a story,
or drop off a fresh pack of sidewalk chalk and a bottle of
wine,
whatever they might need.
And offer non-judgmental support and love –
momma's don't need judgement.
They really really do not need anyone's judgment.

And all of us, all of us, can advocate for justice.
A systemic remedy, a social shift.
If we come out of this crisis without a national commitment

to free preschool, paid family leave, better health care,
ecological justice, and so much more for our kids,
then we will have learned nothing.
It is possible we will learn nothing.
That's always possible, but I hope that all of us,
raising our voices,
will make sure that we build something better for parents
than this.
Because this? This is not working.

And the idea that it is a problem for momma's and their
friends to solve
by themselves
just replicates the false idolatry of individualism,
the bad theology of self-sufficiency,
the nonsense of "all by myself"
that is the problem in the first place!

This is what we do.
Over and over again.

We praise the momma who can do it all,
as if it is fair to ask that.
We revel in the story of the child who overcame oppression
and poverty,
as if any child should have to do that.
We celebrate survivors – she's so brave –
when that kind of bravery should not be required
in order to live, find joy, and make meaning.

Julia Ward Howe's call for mothers of the world to unite,
which gave this day its original purpose,
to unite for the cause of peace,
is a reminder that separation, isolation, and division
serve the purposes of consumption, violence, and
domination.

If we have to do it by ourselves, and there isn't enough to go around,
well, then,
we all better scramble.
Get one of the limited spots in the good preschool.
Buy off the admissions counselor to get into the best college.
Clutch.
Grab.
And shop for the newest thing.

This is so toxic, and it is a bill of goods we don't need.
Mark it "return to sender" and send it back.

We are in this together, we should be,
one village, we have to be –
the data on early childhood, if nothing else,
makes it clear:
isolated families, stressed out mommas, unjust structures,
cause life-long challenges, trauma, a cycle of violence,
which is bad for everyone.

Our Unitarian Universalist values, our human values,
call us to do better,
to build better than this
a world where we collaborate
instead of compete
for the sake of all the mommas and all the babies.

When we value the worth of each person,
the interconnected web of life,
the potential of each heart,
this is our work: all of us –
to give our momma's a break.
Build a society that makes it easier, not harder.
That's the calling of our faith,
and if we don't do this,

if we don't,
then our most beloved phrase
every night a child is born is a holy night
is nothing but a cheap Christmas platitude.

So imagine with me, won't you?
Won't you imagine a world
that respects mommas instead of sacrifices them?
A world where are values,
are made real?
A world that is sustainable, just, and decent for all kinds of
mommas
and all kinds of people?

Because what we need in this time is imagination –
we need, in this time of fear, to begin to see the world
we want to build, we want to live in, to name it, to claim it,
so we can make it.

Here's what I picture, based on the data, our values, and
my conversations with all kinds of mommas.
First and foremost,
mothers and parents need the financial resources so that
parenting a child
isn't such an enormous financial burden.
That extends from health care with low co-pay for
pregnancy
all the way to affordable college,
with paid leave, free preschool, and everything else in
between.
I dream of a Universal Basic Income for every child,
delivered each month to the parent,
no strings attached.
These federal financial policies would be a huge boon.

But we also need to restructure how we do things:
why is school 9 months and 6 hours a day,

and how are working moms and parents supposed to do that?

Why does zoning laws make affordable housing for families impossible in large parts of the country, extending commute times for parents?

What if we had community schools and neighborhood networks, robust ones, real ones, where people shared – shared their wisdom, their resources, their time, and their care for each other? More multigenerational community, where we live into our theological commitment that all people are siblings to each other.

Can you imagine?

Some of you know what this feels like.

I'm lucky that I do. I love my house, a big old Victorian on the river, but one of the best things about my house is my neighbor – a family who have helped me raise and love my children. I honestly don't know how I would have lived so far from my family and done it without them.

But so many parents don't have this – we are more likely to know the names of our favorite TV characters than we are the names of our neighbors.

I imagine a world of multigenerational trust, connection, and care.

One of the hardest things about this isolation for some of you

has been being separated from your grandchildren, and we are reminded of how much these connections matter.

So when we can return, restoring and making these connection –

with your own grandchildren or someone else's! is vital.

And in this time, which we are likely to be in for a while, I imagine more quaren-teams – groups of families who cooperate together, whose household stretches across backyards and crosses the hallways of apartment buildings, because this has revealed the bankruptcy of individualism, the idolatry of the nuclear family, the futility of the white supremacist, capitalist illusion that we are ourselves all we ever need.

No, we need one another.

Mommas need other mommas and other people, children need other children and other people, we all need one another.

The vision, the theological and social vision, that we would be one, that we would all be there for each other, isn't just about mommas and their babies, though starting there makes a ton of sense to me.

But it's even bigger.

This is everything:
this is the sum of our theology,
the north star of our faith:
that we belong to each other.
That the test of faith is love,
and that love isn't a sentiment,

but an act, concrete, sustained, real acts,
acts of justice, a world made fair,
that the beloved community,
heaven on earth,
the kin-dom of God,
is made read in everyday living,
and we test that faith, that love,
by how the most vulnerable are faring.

Right now, a lot of mommas are having a real hard time.
A real hard time.

So our love needs to be wider,
our faith needs to be deeper,
our imagination needs to be more vibrant,
our efforts at justice need to get louder,
cause,
god knows
momma needs a break.

It's hard.
But it's clear.
We know the world we need, the world we want,
we can name it
and we can shape it
we can imagine it
and we can build it,
and show to all
a new community.

May it be so,
this day
and in the days to come.

May 24, 2020
Tragedy + Time
Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson

God of our ancestors,
this is a prayer for all those who are ill
may they be held in compassion,
may they be renewed in spirit
and in body.

A prayer for healing.
A prayer for renewal.
A prayer for the body and the spirit.

Today I want to talk about healing,
and a renewal of the spirit and the body –
our own, our individual body,
our own spirit,
and ours together,
our collective body,
our collective spirit –
of our faith, Unitarian Universalism,
of our nation,
of our whole world,
for we are not well,
we are troubled,
we grieve,
we struggle,
and we come needing renewal.

What does renewal look like?
How do we heal from trauma, from individual and collective
trauma?
Where do we go from here?
How do we gain that strange perfection,
our wounds healed over,
gather our accidents into our purpose,

stronger and more just,
more resilient than we have been?

I keep being on zoom calls with faith leaders
and civic leaders
and we say, "we have to build better than we were."
We say "the new normal, not the old normal."
We say, "the inequities, the failures of our global society
have been 'hyper-illuminated', and now we can do
something new."
That's a good phrase, "hyper-illuminated."
That's a true phrase.

The patient, all of us,
we have been ill –
ill with greed and inequality, with environmental collapse
and pollution,
ill with hopelessness and rage
for a long time.
But now these underlying conditions
have been hyper-illuminated.

So how do we heal?

How do we heal ourselves and our world
in body and in spirit?

I love maps.
I have old maps in my house and my office.
Maps are not the territory,
but they give a suggestion of where we go from here,
of what the road looks like,
of what to pack, where to turn, and how long it might take.

This journey of healing
is not a stroll around the block.
We need to pack, and know our route,

and we need to know that this will take time.
Plenty of time.
The road to healing
is acknowledging our tragedy
and taking the time it takes.
Tragedy plus time.

It was Steve Allen, the comedian and inventor of the late-
night talk show
who said that the formula for comedy was tragedy plus
time.
Which makes me think of the line from the Indigo Girls,
if you can't laugh at yourself
you'll cry your eyes out.

Now, I'm the last person to say that we should not
experience grief,
that we don't sometimes need to cry our eyes out.
But laughter is important.
Joy is important.

Sorrow and joy are not opposites, but connected –
the story today illustrates this very well;
she protects her heart from sorrow
by putting it in a glass jar.
But then she can't get it out,
she can't feel joy and new beginnings, either.
You can't get stuck in grief, but if we don't grieve,
if we don't cry our eyes out,
we will not heal from trauma and tragedy.

On the map, this is the first stop on the journey of healing:
mourn the losses.
Weep.
Express your sorrow.
In our collective grief, we must mourn.

And this is missing, right?
One of the historic jobs of President is Mourner-in-Chief,
it's a job that Bill Clinton did after Oklahoma City,
and we were we not blessed by the tears that Barack
Obama shed
at Mother Emmanuel Church?
And now . . . almost nothing.
So many dead, so many beautiful precious lives lost,
and if we want to heal in body and soul,
we will have to grieve these losses,
name them, know them, weep for them.

We can't put our hearts in jars.

On the map, this is the first way station,
grief.
There's a path, it swings off into the mountains,
and circles around endlessly,
with destinations like denial, refusal to face facts,
conspiracy thinking, magical thinking, and the like.
We can go that way.
Some are.
But let's not.
Let's not go that way,
because the guides –
the ancient and modern guides,
those who have made this trip,
they warn us, up that way leads nothing good,
no healing in body and soul,
you have come down out of those mountains
and rejoin the journey.
Get your heart out of the jar.

What's next?

Time. Time and practice.
Things to do.

New rituals, old ones.
A healing of spirit and body,
as the prayer calls for,
requires to care for both body and spirit.

I have been fascinated and inspired
by the research done by trauma specialists
on how people heal from trauma.
Bessel Van Der Klerk's book, "The Body Keeps the Score"
is particularly good on this,
but there are many resources now, about this.
Some of you are fans of the work of Brené Brown,
who has written about how shame keeps us from the
courage
we need to heal, and how opening our heart –
taking our heart out of our jar –
is essential to finding a life of meaning.

What's been most powerful for me is hearing from trauma
survivors
themselves –
survivors of violence, neglect, and oppression,
both individuals and communities,
particularly including the descendants of enslaved Africans,
indigenous people,
and women who have survived domestic violence.

The research and the stories
tell us some of the next stops on the journey of healing.

Loving your body.
There's a whole part of the map of healing
called loving your body.
Exercise, especially things requiring balance, like yoga,
dance, and so forth,
is very powerful in healing from tragedy.
Moving, gently and with love, through the world.

Eating things that honestly feel good -- this really helps.
Eat well, move well, sleep well.

And touch.

That's hard right now for many folks –
when some are separated from their friends who hug,
from holding hands at church,
from their massage therapist or their grandchildren.
And some of you may be in places where getting healthy,
loving touch
is a challenge.

But as we heal, as we rebuild, especially when our bodies
are starved for touch,
find ways to get and give
good, healthy, consensual touch.
It is an essential part of healing in body and in soul.

Next to "loving your body" on the map
is a whole area called "be creative."
On some of the old maps, it is just called "have fun."
Some of the professional descendants of the
aforementioned
Steve Allen, the late-night host,
have been giving this to us to see –
getting the band to make music from their homes,
surprising zoom calls to graduates,
laughter, joy, sharing some good news.
They know that tragedy plus time can get you to comedy –
and back to life.

But you don't have to watch others be creative.
What's your own fun to have?
To make?
Art to create?
A garden to tend and watch the flowers bloom?
This isn't about distraction,

when we are creative and joyful we actually knit the torn parts of our brain back together,
or, to put it another way,
creativity, joy, art, fun reminds us and recreates in us a fuller humanity,
restores our soul to its larger and truer nature.
We are not just our pain,
but we are also our joy.
We are our tears,
but we are also our laughter.

In this whole area of the map,
next to love your body and be creative
is a beautiful, but slightly dangerous area
called "kindness."

It's dangerous because if we leap to this place
without thoughtfulness or intentionality,
we risk causing more harm.
We need to process our stuff.
But, it is also so very very clear
that you cannot real heal from tragedy
as an individual,
and we absolutely cannot heal as a society,
without making justice, showing mercy, and living with
kindness.
May you be filled with loving kindness,
may we all be filled with loving kindness,
and, as Naomi Shihab Nye writes so beautiful,
to know what Kindness really is,
you have to lose things.
You have to know you have lost things,
to know that sorrow is real,
and this collective humanity,
this friend or shadow that goes with us,
fills our hearts and motivates our actions.

The journey to healing our collective trauma
must include the work of loving kindness,
of changed hearts and a changed world.
In honor of our losses, as a way to make meaning,
we should, we must,
build a better world.
Filled with the spirit of kindness,
we might work to improve public health, or childcare
systems,
devote ourselves to electing better leaders,
or to caring for the sick,
we might focus on vibrant neighborhoods,
serving our congregation, who we value in a whole new
way,
or it may just be
how we carry ourselves in the world –
with more compassion, more mercy, more sweetness.
This old world, they say, is full of sorrow,
if you love your neighbor, love will come to you –
to all of us – the more.
The world can be a garden, full of grace,
if we love one another, with genuine kindness.

On the map, the road that connects these areas:
love your body
be creative
loving kindness
the road that connects these areas
is called spiritual healing.

There is a balm in Gilead,
a source of hope.
That song, with which we began,
is a powerful African-American spiritual,
a reminder that the holy power of God
would heal you,
would roll down like waters,

and bring justice and a new world.
When we are sinking down,
love can come to us,
if we get our hearts out of our jars
and prepare ourselves.

We call the road spiritual healing
because taking this road
invites us to recall that we are loved,
that we are part of this great beautiful universe,
that we are worthy and sacred.
Each theology, each faith,
names this in different ways:
a child of God
filled with Buddha-nature,
stardust,
the beloved of the ancestors,
a member of the human family,
part of the circle of life,
call it what you will,
name it how you must,
but remember that your healing is important.
That you are worthy of healing.
That you can heal.

We all are.
We, collectively, are worthy of healing.
I refuse to give into the despair, the nihilism,
that says there is nothing we can do,
that humans are the real virus,
that we should give up on a better world.

That is not my faith.
That is not our faith.
We are called to be people of hope,
but let us make it a real hope,
a deep hope,

a hope born of grief,
and love, and art, and mercy,
a hope that together we can do better,
that we can clean off the muck and the dust,
and, with friends gathered 'round,
meet the day we are given.

Where does the road go after that?
After loving the body and making art
and showing kindness and doing justice,
where does it go?

Some maps say "there be dragons there"
but that's only because dragons are powerful and fierce –
after the healing comes the power,
the power of an integrated life,
the power to help others,
the power of love and justice
the power and the wisdom of one who knows,
the strange perfection, the scars healed over,
the sense of being rooted,
of being maker and made,
the power of a real life.

That's what the map looks like
and we have a long way to go.
There's no shortcut.
No tesseract, no undergrown bullet train,
no snake-oil miracle cure.
It takes time.

We must pack our supplies –
water and food, good shoes,
patience, curiosity, and open mind and heart –
and set up.
Take the time to mourn, and avoid the danger of the
mountains.

Travel the road of spiritual healing.
Spend the time.
Claim our power.

That's what the future looks like
what is before us,
what we can do,
what we must do,
so that with wondrous love
we can make anew
the world we long for.

It will take time.
Let us begin today.