

Isaiah 2:4

God shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they train for war any more. O people of God, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Isaiah 11:1-9

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

As I write these words yesterday, September 11, the bells are tolling and a violin is playing as the names of the victims from that horrible, tragic day, that none of us, especially those who were alive, can ever forget.

Sarah Busalacchi, one of our Associate Principals at McFarland, shared these words with our high school students and staff on Friday morning. I thought they were worth sharing with you this morning, as we too pause and remember. She writes:

"On the eve of September 10th, 2001, 246 people went to sleep in preparation for their morning flights. 2,606 people went to sleep in preparation for work in the morning. 343 firefighters went to sleep in preparation for their morning shift. 60 police officers went to sleep in preparation for morning patrol. 8 paramedics went to sleep in preparation for the morning shift. None of them lived past 10:00 am Sept 11, 2001."

Who of us can forget where we were when we heard the news, and then watched in horror as the events unfolded as four planes, American Airlines Flight 11 (traveling from Boston to Los Angeles) hit the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City, followed by United Airlines Flight 175 (traveling from Boston to Los Angeles) hit the south tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. Then American Airlines Flight 77 (traveling from

Dulles, Virginia, to Los Angeles) hit the Pentagon Building in Washington, and finally, United Airlines Flight 93 (traveling from Newark, New Jersey, to San Francisco) crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

We were living in Monroe, where I served as the pastor at Union Presbyterian Church. Sam was a year and half old. I was in the back room of the manse in Monroe, watching Sam, who was playing while I had my morning coffee watching the Today Show. Staci, who was the executive director of United Way of Green County was at a breakfast meeting. She came home just after the first plane had hit the north tower. Together we watched, glued to the television, as the events continued to unfold.

Where were you and what were you doing when you heard or saw the news reports. What did you do the rest of the day?

Our Executive Presbyter at the time, Hal Murray, was on a plane traveling home from a meeting. Like many others who were flying that day, the plane he was on was forced to land, immediately, in Columbus, Ohio. As was a colleague I work with at McFarland High School. She and her husband had just left Midway Airport, bound for Orlando. It was their first vacation without the kids. She said the pilot announced that they had to land immediately without any explanation, and did so in Kentucky. She and her husband, like the other passengers watched the fighter jets off their wings.

Our good friend, Sue, was in New York City for a training workshop they were leading. While they were far enough away from the World Trade Center, they were stranded, unable to fly home, they had to wait for a friend to drive in to NYC to pick them up.

After the towers fell, I worked with the other faith leaders in Monroe to organize a community prayer service at the new high school auditorium. In the days to come, I would help organize a community educational event with UW Professor, Joe Elder, who helped us learn about Afghanistan and its citizens.

How did you come together to grieve and support each other that day?

Did you know anyone who lost a loved one or friend in the attacks on September 11?

My colleague and friend, Rev. Barbara Heck, who grew up in the Marshfield Presbyterian Church, where I served, and whose father was a member, lost her brother-in-law, David William Nelson. He worked in one of the towers.

She and her husband, and their family are in New York City where they attended the memorial service at Ground Zero. In her Facebook post, she shared the following:

Our family of five is in NYC this weekend remembering my husband's brother, David William Nelson. We spent the afternoon--for our first time--in the 9/11 Memorial Museum. It is a beautiful and terrible place. To enter this museum is to enter extraordinary pain. This is what sets family members apart from the nation--to be stewards of extraordinary pain that is so public. We learn how to live with it--with greater or lesser ability--but it never goes away. Here are no political solutions, only stewardship of memory and pain, and gratitude for those who responded and helped, for family and friends able to connect honestly, witness with respect, and stand together with greater love.

Senator John Kerry said, "It was the worst day we have ever seen, but it brought out the best in all of us."

One of the things we remember most about that day was how people came together as nation, as communities to care for and support one another. From the NYC fire fighters who risked their lives going up into the towers to help people find their way down to safety, to the first responders and medical personal helping the wounded, to the people of NYC and around the Pentagon helping each other get to safety.

My friend and colleague, Maren Tirabassi, remembers the rescuers who used trained dogs as they searched for survivors among the collapsed towers.

In her poem wrote this poem "Humane Society" she talks about how stressful this was not only for the human responders, but for the dogs, who were finding no one alive. So each evening, the dogs were given a living human to find, just to help them cope.

Humane Society

We want to find something alive
in the rubble.
We want rescue
or resurrection,
we want to wag our hearts,
to hope,
to pant after the long exertion
of searching
the September news –
like the dogs
trained to follow children
down deep ravines, into cave-ins,
over wooded hillsides,
trained to lead home gently
the wandering elderly,
trained to
find the lost.
Our talents ache
at encountering this

long tragedy.
We don't want to let the lost lie.
We don't want
to pick up the pieces.
We want to find something alive.

Maren follows that up with this new poem on the 20th Anniversary:

"Lost and Found September 11, 2021"

I'm sorry I asked twenty years ago
about what we would find
in the ruins,
because "We will remember,"
seems to be the common answer and,
though a patriotic phrase,
it is exactly avoiding
the search for
a new way to be in the world.

My town, too, has a piece
of the World Trade Towers,
where I can go
and grieve
any day but the anniversary.

We found, what we did not want –
an endless war,
a holocaust of gun tragedies,
a global pandemic,
the destruction
of earth and seas and air.

But let me return to dogs –
for them, you know,
long years don't matter,
if courage for climbing the stairs
in my house
is any evidence,
and 'why-were-you-gone-so-long-eyes'
are so real, but vanish
the minute the screen door
is completely open.

There are so many still alive
that need finding,
so, for the sake
of those we remember,
and all the sorrows

pinned under the stones of these years
may the rescue begin.

I was struck by her words:
"We found, what we did not want –
an endless war,
a holocaust of gun tragedies,
a global pandemic,
the destruction
of earth and seas and air."

Sandy Dahl, wife of Flight 93 pilot Jason Dahl said, "If we learn nothing else from this tragedy, we learn that life is short and that there is no time for hate."

"Life is short and there is no time to hate."

And yet, as much as we remember that in the midst of such national tragedy, when so many people were killed by a few terrorists, how we came together as a nation, that since that time, acts of hatred, violence, and insurrection against our own government by our own people have continued to escalate.

Over the past 20 years, hate crimes and hate groups been on the rise. From the neo-Nazi torch march in Charlottesville, Virginia, to the shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, by a young white man, who killed 9 members of the congregation, to the deadly January 6 insurrection by some Americans who sought to use violence to overthrow the fair election and threaten to hang Vice-President Mike Pence, hate not unity seems to be what we now focus on.

Over 600,000 Americans have been killed by other Americans using guns since September 11, 2001.

We face a growing Climate Crisis.

Maren Tirabassi is correct, "We found, what we did not want – an endless war, a holocaust of gun tragedies, a global pandemic, the destruction of earth and seas and air."

And yet, in the midst of the tragic events that occurred on September 11, and those tragic, hate filled acts still going on in our country, we find signs of hope, grace and healing.

Of people of variety of faiths, and no-faith traditions, who engage in acts of love, kindness, compassion, courage to bring about healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

We can never forget, and what we can never forget is not the memory of death, but as my friend and colleague Barbara Heck said, that in the midst of the pain and suffering, violence and hatred, we will stand together with greater love!

And in doing so, we will be able to, as the Prophet Isaiah points us to that great Day of Peace, when we will beat our weapons into instruments of healing, so that we will not train for war any more.

O come, people, let us walk in the Light of God!

Amen.