



Together on the Journey

Rev. Bruce Beisner
Your Minister

On Sunday May 20, I joined about a dozen other BAUUC members at a community candlelight vigil held in League City to honor the young people who were killed at Santa Fe High School earlier that weekend. In this time of despair and loss, I have to say I left that gathering more troubled than comforted. The violence of May 18 in Santa Fe and the vigil that night at Walter Hall Park have left me with some big questions.

The morning before the vigil, I had invited our entire congregation to attend it and had worked with our Service & Justice Ministry Team to provide funds to purchase candles and other supplies. I saw this as an opportunity to come together with our neighbors to express our support and our solidarity after such a tragedy. The vigil turned out to be two hours of speakers quoting Christian scripture and urging us all to believe in Jesus. One of our elected officials said that this school shooting was the work of the devil and if we all just believed more in God it would not have happened.

I have great respect for the fact that many of our neighbors find great comfort and hope in their Christian faith, especially in the aftermath of such a horrific event. And I don't believe that the ministers, politicians and speakers that night in League City meant to exclude anyone or be insensitive. I just think that they didn't consider the fact that not everyone who lives in Galveston County is Christian or even recognize that one of the young girls killed in Santa Fe was a Muslim.

This last part is what troubles me most. I want to believe that my neighbors here in greater Houston believe that our communities are stronger, more resilient and better because we are people of diverse faiths, cultures and backgrounds. That's what I believe. Yet, what I heard at that vigil was exactly the opposite message. It left me sad and less connected to my neighbors exactly when coming together could have offered hope and support.

Unitarian Universalism teaches me that I should strive to respect other people's religious beliefs. And I know so many wonderful, loving and amazing Christian people who share my values if not my specific theology. But what about those whose beliefs tell them that they are right and everyone else is wrong? What about those churches which teach that the only solution to the troubles and tragedies we face is to exclude those who are different? What about those who use their faith as a weapon to marginalize and devalue others?

These are ongoing questions and challenges for me, and I think for many of us. The events of this past month here in our area have brought them up for me again in a powerful way. After thinking about it for a couple of days, I decided to write a short letter to Moms of Galveston County, the organization that sponsored the vigil on May 20. I expressed my appreciation for their efforts to support our community at this time of tragedy and loss. I also, respectfully, offered the observation that their vigil was an exclusively Christian event that did not speak to the spiritual and emotional needs of non-Christian people, including many members of my church who attended it. I suggested that they consider in the future the need to honor the religious diversity of all our neighbors and children and I affirmed my commitment to making our area a place which celebrates and respects all who call it home. I have no way of knowing how my letter was received or if it will make a difference. But I felt I just had to do something.

As we move into the summer months together, I hope that you will take some time to reflect on whatever big questions are moving around in your mind and heart and what they might be calling you to do. And then come to church for a little support and inspiration.

Stay cool and have a great summer.

Blessings!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce".

Rev. Bruce can be reached at minister@bauuc.org or 513-374-3926. He will be attending the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Kansas City from June 18-22 and will be on vacation leave from June 22-July 15. If you have an immediate pastoral care need during his time away, please contact our Board President at president@bauuc.org