

Where Do We Go From Here?

Sermon by Reverend Rebecca M. Bryan

January 21, 2025

Delivered after the 2025 Presidential Inauguration

My friends, these are difficult times. Some would say they are ludicrous; others describe them as terrifying. Whatever we call them, they are extraordinary and challenging. And they are the times we are living in.

Whether we believe we are made for these times or feel utterly unprepared, we are here. It is important to understand how we got here and to decide what we are going to do. It is equally important to decide *how we are going to be in these times*, because we are in this for the long haul.

We will be and already are being called to step up as individuals and as a faith community to act and help to protect all that is under attack. We are called to defend and protect our Earth, its future, and the future of all its creatures. We will be called to interrupt violence and injustice against vulnerable populations to the best of our ability and to partner and collaborate with others in this effort. Immigrants, trans people, disabled, elderly...

This is no time to be alone as an individual or as a church. We have always needed one another. This truth will become more apparent in the days, months, and generations to come. This is the time to go beyond our walls and to open our doors. To go to people and to welcome people. To turn strangers into neighbors.

We are not isolated people. We are not independent communities, states, or even countries. We are deeply and inextricably interconnected.

As we talk about where we go from here let's also talk about and commit to how we are going to be in the days, months, and years to come.

How are we going to be?

My friends, we are all called to be the light, by which I mean people who do not succumb to anger, hatred, and fear. It is an act of spiritual bravery and subversive resistance to walk forward into the fires of our times and respond with vigor

but not malice.

The amount of energy it takes us to be outraged is energy much better used in our resistance and our actions. I encourage us to turn our energy of anger into conviction and steady commitment which will fuel us rather than deplete us.

When we are afraid we can reach out to those who we know understand and tell them, "I am afraid." We need to be there for those who are afraid and let others be there for us when it's our turn. We cannot allow the rampant fear that is being used to control this country to have its way with us.

Being the light is a spiritual imperative right now.

We need to learn to notice when we are giving our power away to all those in power who are using their power to hurt and decimate all that we believe in, and say, "You do not own me. You are not worthy of my anger. I will use that energy, my anger and fear, for good." We need to take back our power and use it to both help heal the world and to care for ourselves.

Giving our power over to those who do not deserve it harms us and the movement we are part of creating. Not giving into our anger and outrage may be a change and a challenge for many of us. You may be tempted to think that if you are not rageful then you do not care, or you are unaware. This is simply not true.

None of us are better when we are depleted or overwhelmed. Some of you may remember the Trump rally that took place on Pleasant Street outside our church one Saturday this fall. The Trump supporters want you to be afraid. Their anger hides their own fears and terrors, though they would deny that this is so.

Mind you, I am not saying that it is easy to resist feeling anger and fear and I am not underestimating the needs and situations that make it hard to do so right here in our own church community.

It is hard and sometimes nearly impossible not to feel fearful and rageful when you or your loved

Where Do We Go From Here?

January 21, 2025 *page 2*

ones are under attack. It is hard and sometimes feels impossible not to be triggered and lash out in anger or fear when you live with Post Traumatic Stress and/or worry about how you will pay your bills.

That is why we are here together. We can be grateful for the days we are able to turn our rage into action and our fear into outreach and connection. We can be compassionate and have forbearance on the days when it's just too hard, and then we can try again.

Fear, anger, and misappropriated power that are used to harm others are dangerous forces. They need to be stopped. But so help us God, these forces will have everything if they remove us from ourselves.

I urge us to turn our rage into actions that work for what we believe in, looking for places we can help and taking whatever actions we can. I also invite us to turn our energy to healing, to joy, and to community—maybe together and sharing stories rather than stewing in all the news of the day. So that we may carry on toward all that we believe and all that we are here for.

Amen.