



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York

"Honoring Our Beloved Dead"

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["Glorious chant of remembrance"](#)

Praise the ability to feel this deep:

The goldfish. The grandparent. The ball player.
The children detained. The spoiled water. The
sewer spilt government. The son. The daughter.
The bullet. The gift of ghosting. The promise of
no more. The mother. The father. The empty
womb. The empty heart. The desertbranch throat
clenching tightly, a name no one will speak."

Oh, empty heart.

We awake each morning to a world full of grief, brimming, utterly overflowing
with grief. The hurting world stands ready, not just on our doorstep but just
beside our bed, always within reach, never far from memory, from reminder,
from the din of loss.

Oh, empty heart.

Each week we recite a litany. Here in this space, we name the cities that
experienced a mass shooting. We sing the names of our beloved dead. In our
waking lives, in our sleeping lives, more litanies - all the loss, all the hurt, all
the pain, all the suffering. More than weekly, daily. More than daily, hourly.
When will it stop?

Oh, empty heart.

Do not make grief your god. Instead, make it a cup of coffee. Give it a name. Be gentle with your grief as it resides outside of you, a heavy presence - be gentle with yourself as your grief resides within you, filling those corners you had forgotten about or denied.

Oh, gentle heart.

Remember your heart is not empty. An empty heart is a still heart. A still heart does not move, cannot grieve, yes, but also cannot soar with joy.

“On the third day
pull yourself out of bed
wake with a start
Can you feel death’s bone milk?
Good. This means you are among
the living
Good. This means your heart is yours”

Your heart is *yours*. When you feel your heart lifting with the spirit of the song, when you weep at a small loss or an enormous one, when you laugh from deep below your heart down into your belly, when nostalgia grips you after two notes of a song that belonged to you in another time - all these possessions, all these feelings, they are yours. They make you, they fill you, they sustain you, they challenge you.

Oh, gentle heart.

Your moving heart needs grief because grief is the companion of love. Always. When grief is beside you, when grief is inside you, it is seeking always its home within your loving heart.

Oh moving, loving, living heart.

“Invite Grief for a walk, remind it with a whisper
we all need fresh air

You and Grief
move soundless
beneath the sun

You climb the stairs
pass the puddles of dew
and undisturbed dog [crap]

You and Grief
walk side-by-side
hands not touching
but feather whispclose

The light tips its full cup
Everywhere”

The poet, beloveds, didn't write dog piles, or dog crap, she said dog shit. Because this is the reality of the world where grief enters, the necessary companion to love for mortal creatures such as we. We need rest and we need water and we need to break open and we need to invite grief to come with us, to be our companion through all the world's beauty...and its tiny indignities.

The light tips its full cup EVERYWHERE.

Grief is our close companion because love is the beating heart of who we are. Love is the beating heart of how we show up in the world, how we make connections, how we seek and promote both justice and joy, how we celebrate every tiny win and pick ourselves back up with each loss. Love is the beating heart of this faith. Love is the beating heart of the litanies we recite, because

they are beautiful too. We can count our grief like beads on a string but remember also every bead on that string - each and every beautiful, amazing, astounding thing that makes a human life.

“Text every contact

In your cellphone

I love you

I love you

I love

You

You

You

Try this same exercise with your email inbox

newsletter, spam and such correspondence

Each item will bounce back with your declaration

in the subject line:

I love you. I love you. I love you. you. You.”

Every spoken word of love, every counted bead of love, every movement taken for love, every head lowered for love, every hand raised for love, every beating, loving, moving, living heart pulses the truth of our lives. That we grieve as strongly as we love, and that these are the dual gifts that move our hearts and bear witness in this healing world. Chant that glorious remembrance each day: I love you, I love you, I love you. The way not to grieve is not to love, and that is not to live. Today, celebrate all the love in your life so strong, so powerful, so overwhelming that its loss is your companion, your shadow, your friend. Make it a cup of coffee. Chant every glorious loving thing in your moving, living heart. Honor your grief, honor your love, and spill that full cup of life everywhere.

So may it be.