

Shaping Change in a Changing World: An Emergent Unitarian Universalist Strategy

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“Connection to each other is the most important thing to cultivate in the face of hopelessness — we don’t want to cling to outdated paradigms; we want to cling to each other and shift the paradigms.”²

“We are the ones we’ve been waiting for”³

INTRODUCTION

In the book *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* by adrienne maree brown, religious congregations are never mentioned. Yet, as the following essay outlines, certain strategies the book is calling for are the natural work of religious communities and especially Unitarian Universalist congregations. In some cases, strategies deemed emergent are available in or are possible within Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations. I argue that Unitarian Universalism (UUism) can be an essential resource and foundation for an emergent strategy of personal, social, political and cultural change.

The synergy between what brown is calling for and what is possible and emerging in UUism is an incredible opportunity for UUism to play a formative role in shaping America’s future. As Barack Obama said in the December 19, 2004 cover article of Newsweek, “Most of the reform movements that have changed this country have been grounded in religious models.” Obama referred specifically to the work of Martin Luther King Jr.; the abolitionists; and Catholic Worker Dorothy Day to make his point.

This essay initially highlights core elements of an emergent strategy, as described in the book, and outlines where and how these elements already exist in some form within UUism or how they could be introduced. Next the essay describes some of the major barriers that need to be addressed in order for UUism to meet the emergent call of our times. Lastly, the essay outlines a vision for the future of UUism as a part of an

emergent strategy for shaping and changing American life, culture and politics. The theological foundation of this essay is Contemporary Affect Theology.

THE CALL OF EMERGENT STRATEGY AS CONGREGATIONAL WORK

In her 2018 book, *Love Beyond Belief: Finding the Access Point to Spiritual Awareness*, Thandeka – who has been lauded by Gary Dorrien as "...a major figure in American liberal theology;"⁴ and by Jaak Panksepp, (founder of affective neuroscience) for her "decisive historical-philosophical analysis" that can provide "a universal substrate for nondenominational religious experience"⁵ asks:

"Will America's spiritual but not religious leaders be the new priests in secular congregations millions upon millions strong? Will these congregations, networked together, launch a new spiritual era in American moral consciousness and behavior...[with] ...a foundation that is not Christian, but strictly speaking is and remains spiritual?"⁶

My essay addresses these two core questions. I begin with *Emergent Strategies* because brown offers a vision that is clearly spiritual and yet not religious. Nevertheless, the values, ethics, practices and forms of community and leadership brown is envisioning could be the foundation for new forms of congregational life within America and within UUism. I want to help make this happen for our religious movement and for the nation.

The discussion must begin with the nature and current state of our congregations. Thandeka explains that, "Millennials ...need secular sanctuaries but they lack access to places that can spiritually rescue them. Mainline churches, on the other hand, have the sanctuaries for this kind of work. What they do not have are the programs or the leaders to inspire and empower."⁷ We have to address and solve this problem.

I emphasize here that many programs and practices that are described as part of an Emergent Strategy are the natural work of congregations. Brown begins this conversation for us; now we must complete it. The most salient comments for congregations can be divided into three sections.

First, liberation. Brown says, "...we are called to lead... from spirit to liberation."⁸ Spiritual leadership and the work of liberation is historically the role of religious congregations and communities.

Second, connection. According to brown, “[Emergence] depends more upon critical, deep and authentic connections.”⁹ Deep and authentic connections are not easily found at work, school, in neighborhoods, coffee shops, libraries or health clubs.

Finally, small groups. Congregations are places where such depth of connections are forged. Brown says it is important for people to have a small group of trusted people so that they can “...speak the truth out loud to those who will hold it with us from the vantage point of unconditional love.”¹⁰ She has practically defined the mission of small group ministry.

She also explains that we need to find ways to “prepare our children to be visionary, to love nature, to be adaptive to change even when it is frightening and incomprehensible.”¹¹ Such learning and personal formation is not provided for children in most secular schools, but is a central role of UU children’s religious education.

Brown, in effect, describes a vision of using certain practices that have become normative in UU congregational life. For example, Brown recommends emergent leaders and groups use, “...check-ins, retreats, active listening, community accountability...”.¹² All of these are common practices in UU congregations. She suggests groups create, “Group Agreements: At the beginning of a meeting”.¹³ She is describing the creation of covenants as a way of creating safety and sharing power.

Brown also calls for love to be the foundation for the work of emergent change. “If love were the central practice of a new generation of organizers and spiritual leaders, it would have a massive impact on what was considered organizing. If the goal was to increase the love, rather than winning or dominating a constant opponent, I think we could actually imagine liberation from constant oppression.”¹⁴ Many UU congregations have a covenant or mission claiming, “Love is the Spirit of this Church” and the national UU Association’s primary social justice program is called “Standing on the Side of Love.”

The Golden Rule of Christianity includes “Love your neighbor as yourself” and Jesus even told his followers to “love your enemies. So, too, Hillel’s “Golden Rule”: “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn.”

Thus my most basic point. Teaching people how to love and be loved is a primary mission of UU congregations. I believe we are a religious and spiritual community because we are clear that love is the doctrine of our church. We side with love and stand on the side of love because love is the foundation upon which we stand, work,

learn, connect, and never turn back even in the face of defeat. And when we win, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his sermon “Love Your Enemies” as he talked about segregationists who hate him and his work, our victory, Dr. King said, will be a victory for everyone. Everyone will be liberated from the chains of hatred, oppression, and degradation. Dr. King hated the sin but not the sinner. So, too, must we as religious workers today.

There is an idea in Emergent Strategy that says, “What we practice on a small scale can reverberate to the largest scale.”¹⁵ It is a way of being the change we want to see and acting locally while thinking globally. At their best, UU congregations are or can be small-scale communities working to create and demonstrate the kind of change, healing, justice and liberation that brown is calling for in her book. At All Souls in Tulsa, for example, the vision statement includes’ “Our church is an embodiment and celebration of the world as we hope it will one day become.” In so many ways it appears that brown’s Emergent Strategy and UU congregational life are a perfect fit. So what are the barriers that prevent UU congregations from being some of the hubs for an emergent strategy that networks millions upon millions of people who share these same hopes and dreams?

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS KEEPING UUISM FROM RISING TO THIS CALL

The primary barriers that need to be overcome for UUism to address and embrace the emergent call of our times include: 1) the historic focus on critique and deconstruction, and 2) systemic leadership and authority issues. To these ends, we must 3) understand the central role of emotions; 4) heal from trauma; 5) transform an emotionally-cold worship culture into one of sacred warmth; 6) harness the power of small groups, and 7) reaffirm our call to liberation so that no one is left outside this circle of love.

Overcoming Deconstruction

Brown claims, “We are socialized to see what is wrong, missing, off, to tear down the ideas of others and uplift our own.”¹⁶ She asks, “...how do we move beyond our beautiful deconstruction? Who teaches us to reconstruct?”¹⁷ We must answer these questions in spiritual and religious terms. We can do this but we have not yet done so in adequate conceptual and practical terms.

A hallmark of UUism today, after all, is skepticism and critique. This marker is a problem. UU ministers and members have become so good at deconstructing creeds, doctrines, scriptures and religious practices that the act of deconstruction has mostly supplanted the purpose of it, which is to reaffirm the nature and meaning of human

connection. Essentially, most religious forms that UU's tend to deconstruct had an original purpose of connecting people to the ultimate source of life and meaning. Seeing that various religious forms are not achieving their purpose and instead are too often leading people away from love and connection, UUs have become proficient at arguing against them.

What is almost entirely forgotten by UUs is that the purpose of UU congregational life is not to critique, but to heal, namely, to help people experience the ultimate source of life and meaning: love. Instead of UU congregations being places to experience connection with the ultimate source of life, they are too often places to experience disconnection, namely, places to learn new ways to critique socially-constructed concepts, religious ideas, conservative values and traditional doctrines. In many ways UU congregations teach people about religions and offer information, rather than teach people about how to be religious and offer spiritual formation. The analogy would be: a people who have become so good at pouring out the bath water to save the baby from drowning, who eventually forgot there is a baby and became people who proudly pour out bath water.

Leadership and Networking

Brown makes a very important point. What brown says of non-religious organizations is often true for UU congregations and ministers: "...our siloed efforts do not add up to more than the sum of their parts. Our approach to change is too often reactive and haphazard."¹⁸ "Without an engaged and self-organized network to support their efforts, each leader is left to work alone within the constraints of their own organization's resources and capacities."¹⁹

Progressive congregations must begin to use their institutional resources and capacities to form collaborative networks that share analysis, resources, collective-learning and best practices. As conservatives have demonstrated over the past few decades, networked congregations have the ability to develop strategic actions that create lasting electoral power and structural change.

One of brown's emergent principles is, "...everyone isn't the same. But everyone is valuable." She goes on, "I can really let go and let other people hold their expertise, and I can call it forward and learn. And this is healthy for a group."²⁰

I have dedicated my life to creating healthy UU institutions. Our first step is the hardest and the most necessary: emotional intelligence.

The Role of Emotions

UUism needs to develop worship and practices to help people connect with their feelings.

Brown recognizes the emotion-deficit problem: “We learn as children to swallow our tears and any other inconvenient emotions, and as adults that translates into working through red flags, value differences, pain and exhaustion”²¹

Our task is to address this problem in religious terms for the life and health of our liberal religious tradition. This strategy is a hard call for many of us because UUs have historically maintained a suspicion of the role of emotions in religion dating back to the Second Great Awakening. In the eighteenth century,

[Charles] Chauncy was the leading opponent of the Great Awakening, the Protestant evangelical movement that swept through the British North American colonies between 1739 and 1745. Prompted by the verbal attacks of the evangelical preachers and his growing distrust of the mass outbursts of enthusiasm they stoked in their followers, Chauncy used his highly-disciplined, dispassionate, rational mind to analyze the major elements he believed were really involved in a personal, spiritual experience of religious conversion and renewal. In the process, he constructed a rational foundation for a theologically progressive but socially conservative liberal faith tradition, inadvertently sparking a new American liberal theological tradition.”²²

Moreover, Ralph Waldo Emerson famously referred to the Unitarian tradition he was raised in as “corpse cold.” UUism is a tradition that finds its emphasis in “...traits associated with the Enlightenment — reason , rights , nature , liberty , equality , tolerance , science, progress — [with] reason invariably [heading] the list.”²³ We are creatures whose hearts break and are in need of healing. Reason cannot make us feel better when our heart is broken.

We must bring our religious tradition back to its senses. Thandeka draws on contemporary affective neuroscience (the brain science of emotions), and the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, the nineteenth-century father of liberal theology, to achieve this end. She created Contemporary Affect Theology (CAT) to achieve this goal. Part of her motivation for this work was racism. As she has noted in many of her public lectures:

White racism against blacks first riveted my attention when I was eight. In 1954, my family moved to Dallas so Dad could become the new minister of a

black Baptist church in that city. I remember the vulnerability and fear I felt when seeing for the first time the Jim Crow “colored” and “white” signs on the bathroom doors in the downtown department stores. And I remember how I felt when climbing up the stairs to the classrooms on the second floor and the stairs shook under my feet. I trembled with fear because of the deteriorating condition of the public school building for colored children.

I saw white racism close up again when I watched the redlining and blockbusting racist white flight strategies in Chicago in the late 1950s, when we moved there so Dad could pastor at another church. Again I felt vulnerable and afraid. What frightful images, I wondered, haunted white minds, terrorized white hearts and made white Americans so afraid of me?

These early experiences explain why I became fascinated with the stereotypes that fill the imagination of whites and create fear and trembling when they think about people like me. So at an early age I began to measure the difference between who I am and who I appear to be in the minds of the whites who speak to me.

Thandeka’s CAT is a theological strategy that reveals what she discovered about white racism and other forms of social exploitation in America: the destruction of the emotional integrity of the oppressor. So she created a theology of emotions designed to track and explain how human emotions become religious feelings that either preach hate beyond belief or love beyond belief. To this end, Thandeka highlights the differences between thoughts and feelings. By doing so, she shows how the human experience of feeling part of the web of life (our seventh UU principle) is the “natal hour of everything living in religion” (Schleiermacher) and thus the starting point for theological reflection. In recognizing the centrality of feeling in spiritual experience, CAT identifies the access point to spiritual experience as being in the transition between thoughts. This “nullpoint of consciousness” is empty of thoughts and ideas and infinitely filled with the universe astir within our bodies, our feelings, our affections. We thus experience absolute emptiness and infinite fullness at the same time, which is a classic description of mystical experience. This affective state of feeling is the way we first feel nurtured, held, and loved by life itself. This affective state of consciousness is a universal human experience.

On the other hand, religious thoughts, ideas, and doctrines are not universal, but rather cultural constructions and constrictions intended to explain this feeling of being dependent upon life itself, this feeling of being loved beyond belief. But these cultural constructions easily become venues for hate rather than love beyond belief.

Thandeka’s work shows how both love and hate beyond belief come to the fore. She sets out to transform broken souls by “unlocking a revolution in values,” as Dr. King wrote in his last book—*Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*—that will lift neighborly concerns beyond one’s tribe, beyond one’s race, and beyond one’s nation and become a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all

persons. This kind of love re-orders our heads and our hearts.²⁴ He knew this kind of love might be our last chance to create community rather than chaos.

My own work as the senior minister at All Souls in Tulsa, a large, racially diverse UU congregation, is work for community rather than chaos. I use Thandeka's theological work for this reason. It gives us a roadmap to community by attending to emotions that have been traumatized and must be healed as a spiritual practice. All the rest is commentary.

In the 2005 Commission on Appraisal Report, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*, UUs claimed "almost universally" that personal experience is the major source of their religious convictions. With the help of affective neuroscience, related fields, and CAT, it has now become possible for us to reaffirm the central importance of personal experience—and the need for emotional healing and health—in UU spirituality and our faith tradition. CAT helps outline for UUs why direct experience is central to UU theology and clarifies the necessity of recognizing emotions as distinct from thoughts in this process.

For theists, for example, the first word that comes to mind is "God" when they have the direct experience of being part of the web of life (our seventh principle). For humanists, the first word that comes to mind is the "universe." William James called this state of human consciousness "cosmic consciousness."²⁵ These are the "...drug-free personal experiences of bliss that the poet Rilke called "cosmic space." Etty Hillesum, killed in Auschwitz, described her own experience of this exalted affective state in her letters and journal entries as "heaven [which] is inside one, like Rilke's 'cosmic interior.'"²⁶ Expressions such as: being "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Christian), "Samadhi" (Buddhist/Hindu), "feeling one with the web of all creation of which we are a part (UU), being "In The Zone" (non-religious) are different ways people refer to this state of human consciousness.

We are a religious tradition that strives ever anew to find and reaffirm this experience of the natal hour of everything living in religion: love beyond belief.

Healing From Trauma

Brown pays special attention to trauma: "If we hope to advance, we have to find ways to move through and out of the vice grip of trauma that so drastically limits our choices."²⁷

She goes on:

“I have found that the work of cultivating personal resilience, healing from trauma, self-development and transformation is actually a crucial way to expand what any collective body can be. We heal ourselves, and we heal in relationship, and from that place, simultaneously, we create more space for healed communities, healed movements, healed worlds.”²⁸

As UU leaders, it is our work to address and heal trauma as a spiritual practice.

I begin with psychological definitions of trauma and the success stories of new affective strategies. My definition of trauma is informed by Bessel van der Kolk in his book, *The Body Keeps the Score*. Trauma, as this medical doctor observes, is a wounding of a person’s soul. Although van der Kolk, uses the term “soul” only six or so times in his entire book, his meaning of the term is clear. The soul, for van der Kolk, is the part of a person that makes meaning and that experiences love and joy and trust in relationships and that gives a person an innate sense of their own goodness and interconnectedness and agency. The soul is connected to the body and the brain but is different. For example, when either the body or brain of a person has holes in it, those holes usually cannot be repaired. Brain damage is irreparable and so are many literal holes in the physical body. Holes in the soul, as described by van der Kolk are repairable. We can affirm van der Kolk’s conclusion as liberal ministers, which is why we reject the doctrine of original sin that claims that human nature is damned. We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person and work to heal broken souls.

Under healthy circumstances a person grows to feel a wide range of emotions and feelings in the body that correspond to what is happening to them in the moment. In the absence of trauma a person is able to draw meaning and information from their feelings that allow them to learn and grow and understand themselves and be in relationship with the world and people around them. Once traumatized, a person often finds him/her/themselves unable to trust, unable to articulate what is felt. As van der Kolk notes, in the aftermath of trauma and neglect people describe a loss of meaning, community, physical satisfaction, faith and even their reason to live.

...trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body. This imprint has ongoing consequences for how the human organism manages to survive in the present. Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think.²⁹

The soul is injured through witnessing or experiencing or perpetuating violence or through abuse or neglect, especially from people who are supposed to care for and

protect us and is often compounded by silence or dishonesty about what happened. Racism is trauma enacted. So, too, sexism. So, too, the destruction of the natural ecosystems.

Most victims of child abuse suffer from agonizing shame about the actions they took to survive and maintain a connection with the person who abused them. This was particularly true if the abuser was someone close to the child, someone the child depended on, as is so often the case. The result can be confusion about whether one was a victim or a willing participant, which in turn leads to bewilderment about the difference between love and terror; pain and pleasure.³⁰ Silence reinforces the godforsaken isolation of trauma.³¹

Trauma, whether it is the result of something done to you or something you yourself have done (i.e. harming another), almost always makes it difficult to engage in intimate relationships. Racists, for example, have broken souls. So, too, sexists. So, too, classists. Dr. King called for a revolutionary change of heart. I became a UU minister to work with congregations to answer this call. I know through personal experience that after you have experienced something so unspeakable, you are at a loss as to how to learn to trust yourself or anyone else again. Most of you know my own personal story about primal loss. It is hard to surrender to personal relationships after you have been devastatingly hurt or brutally violated.

Normal experiences of love and tenderness can become numbed and replaced with anger, rage-filled feelings and shame. Van der Kolk describes a Gulf war veteran suffering from PTSD who he worked with:

Maybe the worst of Tom's symptoms was that he felt emotionally numb. He desperately wanted to love his family, but he just couldn't evoke any deep feelings for them. He felt emotionally distant from everybody, as though his heart were frozen and he were living behind a glass wall. That numbness extended to himself, as well. He could not really feel anything except for his momentary rages and his shame.³²

Many conversations about oppression break down because of overwhelming feelings of rage and/or shame. Understanding trauma helps explain why. Experiencing, perpetuating and even witnessing oppression are all traumatic; they all create holes in a person's soul. Moreover, trauma does not only come from our own experiences, it crosses the generations. We carry secret stories from before our lifetimes. We carry our parents' injury into the future. In Brown's words, "We are never just individual bodies, individual traumas – our lives and the ways we survive are interconnected."³³

I became intimately aware of transgenerational trauma in a workshop when the presenter read a poem with a scene of people watching smoke rising from some

chimneys in a European town. In that moment I unexpectedly felt frozen and found myself in a scene watching vapor rising from the gas chambers of Auschwitz. I did not hear another word of the poem, as I sat feeling alone, afraid, cold and empty. I am a generation or two away from my ancestors who experienced the Holocaust and yet in that moment I was there.

Research shows that “what human beings cannot contain of their experience—what has been traumatically overwhelming, unbearable, unthinkable—falls out of social discourse, but very often onto and into the next generation as an affective sensitivity or a chaotic urgency.”³⁴

It can be passed on with the squeeze of a hand.

“Maurice De Witt, a sidewalk Santa on Fifth Avenue noticed a marked change in behavior the holiday season following 9/11 when parents would not “let the hands of their children go. The kids sense that. It’s like water seeping down, and the kids can feel it... There is an anxiety, but the kids can’t make the connections. This astute man was noticing a powerful double message in the parents’ action,” Fromm says. “Consciously and verbally, the message was ‘Here’s Santa. Love him.’ Unconsciously and physically, it was ‘Here’s Santa. Fear him.’ The unnamed trauma of 9/11 was communicated to the next generation by the squeeze of a hand.” Psychic legacies are often passed on through unconscious cues or affective messages that flow between child and adult.³⁵

“Hurt people, hurt people.”

Our spiritual task, our calling, is to heal broken souls.

Liturgical Temperature

UU liturgy is a template for healing broken souls. The primary goal of worship, according to CAT, is creating a “change of heart” so that the raw and ravaged emotions with which each person enters the service are transformed through the course of the liturgy into what Schleiermacher called uplifted feelings, namely, “exalted emotion.” The emotions of the congregation are shifted and lifted by the liturgy (through music, breath exercises, ritual movement, focused meditation and contemplative prayer). We create, affirm, and sustain a change of heart.

Emotional intelligence means the ability to acknowledge and name your own feelings and empathically attune them to the emotions of the people around you for loving connection and healing.³⁶ The only way we can change the way we feel is by becoming

aware of our inner experience and learning to befriend what is going on inside ourselves.³⁷

Giving voice to what people are feeling and have just experienced is one of the ways corporate worship helps the healing of trauma and repairs soul wounds. These aspects of worship do not replace intellectual content, but compliment it. We must learn how to dive into the dark places in our lives and illuminate them. According to Howard Thurman, when we are able to stay the course through our pain and despair we are like deep sea divers: our eyes begin to pick up the luminous quality of the darkness; what was fear relaxes and we move into the depths of our pain “with confidence and a peculiar vision.”³⁸ In these moments, emotional devastation gives way to the elevated, hallowed experience of life itself. Van der Kolk explains some of the ways church services can help fill the holes in people’s souls:

Collective movement and music create a larger context for our lives, a meaning beyond our individual fate.³⁹ Since time immemorial human beings have used communal rituals to cope with their most powerful and terrifying feelings.⁴⁰ Religious ritual is often steeped in symbolic and communal actions” which van der Kolk highlights as a source of healing trauma.⁴¹

Music binds together people who might individually be terrified but who collectively become powerful advocates for themselves and others. [Ritual] along with language, dancing, marching, and singing are uniquely human ways to install a sense of hope and courage.⁴²

Dr. Bessel van der Kolk says:

“The healing power of community as expressed in music and rhythms was brought home for me in the spring of 1997, when I was following the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

In some places we visited, terrible violence continued. One day I attended a group for rape survivors in the courtyard of a clinic in a township outside Johannesburg. We could hear the sound of bullets being fired at a distance while smoke billowed over the walls of the compound and the smell of teargas hung in the air. Later we heard that forty people had been killed.

Yet, while the surroundings were foreign and terrifying, I recognized this group all too well: The women sat slumped over—sad and frozen—like so many rape therapy groups I had seen in Boston. I felt a familiar sense of helplessness, and, surrounded by collapsed people, I felt myself mentally collapse as well.

Then one of the women started to hum, while gently swaying back and forth. Slowly a rhythm emerged; bit by bit other women joined in. Soon the whole group was singing, moving, and getting up to dance. It was an astounding transformation: people coming back to life, faces becoming attuned, vitality returning to bodies. I made a vow to apply what I was seeing there and to study how rhythm, chanting, and movement can help to heal trauma.”

I am a UU minister because I have made a similar vow to love beyond belief.

In our role of loving beyond belief, UU clergy and musicians must become masters of how worship can heal broken hearts and injured minds. For us, this strategy means that we must be emotionally fluent and congruent while leading worship (and in all leadership roles).

One of the reasons that those of us leading worship need to be emotionally congruent with ourselves and empathic with our congregants is that congregants are attuning their emotions to our feelings. If the leader is embodying disingenuousness, smiling while speaking of a painful experience or otherwise disconnected or disassociated from emotions it reinforces unhealthy patterns of hiding, secrecy and deceit in our congregants.

Effective Small Group Ministry

Relationships are essential to recovery. We know this as UU ministers and strive to create such groups in our congregations. Congregational healing happens in small groups. Brown writes: "Often the biggest support we need is to speak the truth out loud to those who will hold it with us from a vantage point of unconditional love."⁴³

Small group ministries give opportunities for people to "hear each other into speech," as the Methodist theologian Nelle Morten put it. These settings are containers for people to be seen and heard so they can give voice to their experiences, thoughts and feelings and feel loved instead of judged.

Bessel van der Kolk explains how "...fundamental to healing the isolation of trauma is finding words where words were absent before and, as a result, being able to share your deepest pain and deepest feelings with another human being. This is one of the most profound experiences we can have, and such resonance, in which hitherto unspoken words can be discovered, uttered, and received. ...Communicating fully is the opposite of being traumatized."⁴⁴

UU congregations, at their best, are containers for love beyond belief. These ways of being in community produce our personal and collective liberation as a spiritual practice.

VISION OF AN EMERGENT UU MOVEMENT

An Emergent UUism is one grounded in direct experience of cosmic consciousness, namely, in love beyond belief. All the rest is commentary. In a new emergent era, UU worship, small group ministries and other sacred practices and spiritual programs move people to a change of heart. Emergent UU justice is done in collaboration with others.

Individual congregations will be linked together to form a network of UU communities and interfaith organizations, millions upon millions strong because we will no longer be the ones we are waiting for. We will have arrived.

¹ This version is slightly revised after November 2018 based on feedback from the 2018 Prairie Group. In the original version some unnecessary dicotomies were proposed between adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy* and Thandeka's *Love Beyond Belief* Theology.

² brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Kindle Locations 3841-3842). AK Press. Kindle Edition.

³ from *Passion* (1980) and from *Directed by Desire. The Collected Poems of June Jordan*.

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⁴ Dorrien, Gary *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, and Postmodernity, 1950-2005*

⁵ Panksepp, Jack and Lucy Biven, *Archeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions* (2012). Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology, 391.

⁶ Thandeka. *Love Beyond Belief: Finding the Access Point to Spiritual Awareness* (Kindle Locations 3544-3549). Polebridge Press. Kindle Edition.

⁷ Thandeka, *Love Beyond Belief*, 3561-3566.

⁸ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 205.

⁹ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 222.

¹⁰ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 2843.

¹¹ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 903.

¹² brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 2787.

¹³ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 3350.

¹⁴ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 142-144.

¹⁵ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 802.

¹⁶ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 71.

¹⁷ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 908-911.

¹⁸ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 2582.

¹⁹ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 2587.

²⁰ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 2510.

²¹ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 755.

²² Thandeka, from Introduction to Tapestry of Faith theology series, Part Two: Charles Chancey. <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop2/282489.shtml>

²³ Thandeka, *Love Beyond Belief*, 2976-2977.

²⁴ King, Martin Luther, Jr., *Where do we go from here?* (1967). New York: Harper & Row, 190-191.

²⁵ James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) cites the major characteristics of cosmic consciousness delineated by the psychiatrist Richard Maurice Bucke:

- a consciousness of the life and order of the universe
- an intellectual enlightenment that places a person on a new plane of existence as if a member of a new species
- a state of moral exaltation
- an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and joyous-ness greater than the enhanced intellectual power
- a sense of immortality
- a consciousness of ethical life, and
- not a conviction that one shall have all of this, but a conviction that one has it already

²⁶ Thandeka, *Love Beyond Belief*, 254.

²⁷ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 3022.

²⁸ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 2830-2832.

²⁹ van der Kolk, B. A. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. New York, NY, US: Viking. p 21

³⁰ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 13.

³¹ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 232.

³² van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 14.

³³ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 2997. AK

³⁴ Fromm, Gerald M., Karnac, London, *Lost in Transmission: Studies of Trauma Across Generations* (2012).

³⁵ Castelloe, Molly S., Ph.D, *How Trauma Is Carried Across Generations: Holding the secret history of our ancestors*. Psychology Today. May 28, 2012

³⁶ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 354.

³⁷ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 206.

³⁸ Howard Thurman (1965), *Luminous Darkness*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

³⁹ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 333.

van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 331-332.

⁴¹ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 335.

⁴² van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 333.

⁴³ brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 2843.

⁴⁴ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 235.