

Speaking of Faith, 9/29/17 (for publication the week of October 2)

Hopeful....

World events of late have not let up: twelve hundred people now dead in Southeast Asia's monsoon season, the devastation from hurricanes inconceivable in southern states and the islands, violence churning in St. Louis with another police acquittal, a deadly earthquake in Mexico. Not to mention the unnerving impact of blustering world leaders who hold nuclear codes.

Just when you think you've reached your limit, something hopeful comes along.

How hopeful, a couple of weeks ago, that forty people attended our congregation's vigil in support of New Hampshire people of color, waving signs of love at the four corners. We had been dismayed about Indonesian citizens in Dover and Somersworth facing imminent deportation, only to then be stunned by the lynch-style attack on an 8-year-old biracial boy in Claremont...right here in NH.

How hopeful that most passersby beeped and fist-bumped their support. How hopeful that, the next Saturday, people in Carroll County read about it in the *Conway Daily Sun*. How hopeful that some of our congregants wanted more and headed out to the street with their signs the next week after worship, living their values out loud.

How hopeful that last week a federal judge halted the deportation order for up to seventy NH Indonesians.

How hopeful that 150 people crowded into the Wolfeboro Public Library last Tuesday for a talk about Islam – the room overflowing, an officer at the door keeping count and dozens in the hall, leaning in to hear. How hopeful that white people, people of color and people of different generations came: students from Brewster Academy, young adults who worked nearby, teachers, ministers, retirees. How hopeful that women wearing headscarves and Dover Imam Mohamed Ibrahim had opportunities to be heard.

How hopeful was the energy in the room for honoring this faith and for promoting a wide, balanced conversation about it. While the mood occasionally grew edgy, how hopeful that what stood out – and *what remains* – was the extraordinary civility and graciousness of certain speakers. How hopeful is the thoughtful, curious, well-chosen word. How hopeful is the desire to listen and understand. How hopeful is going home, feeling compassion for everyone in the room.

Rev. Betsy Mead Tabor serves the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes (UUFES) in Tamworth, a congregation known for its warm welcome and plurality of theological understandings. Learn about UU values at <http://uufes.com/principles-sources/>