

January 7, 2020

Dear friends,

Yesterday in America, Reverend Doctor Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff were both declared winners of the Senate races in Georgia. Both elections are historic firsts: Rev. Dr. Warnock will become Georgia's first Black senator and Mr. Ossoff will become the state's first Jewish senator. As we honor the legacy of Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. later this month and throughout the month of February, it especially is powerful to witness Rev. Dr. Warnock—current pastor at King's spiritual home of Ebenezer Baptist in Atlanta—proclaim a vision of beloved community in and for a multifaith and multiracial America.

Yet on this same day, a mob of armed insurrectionists marched to the Capitol and stormed the building, resulting in vandalism, terror, and death. This was white supremacy at work, and the treatment of this mob stands in stark contrast to recent protestors fighting for the dignity of Black life. White supremacy is a grave sin of systemic violence, bigotry, and domination, and it must always be named and confessed as we seek to understand, and heal from, this day.

In his message to the Tufts community, President Monaco wrote that these incidents “should give, and must give, our community greater resolve to stay true to our ideals, our values, and our duties as responsible citizens of our country and the world.”¹ As a multifaith community within Tufts, I hope that we will trust anew that our religious, spiritual, and philosophical practices, prophets and teachings have within them deep reservoirs of the wisdom, compassion, mercy, and love we need to confront the sinister evils of white supremacy, racism, and falsehoods in our society. As we prepare to begin a new semester together, let us join together as a multifaith community to find our common voice on behalf the common good.

We are living in both dangerous and hopeful times. I hope that you all are safe; that you are finding the support and community you need to process and respond to these events; and that you will seek out the people and resources of this University Chaplaincy. We are here for you. We are here to question and live out our deepest convictions about what it means to be human, to be in community, to care for one another and the earth.

In the past twenty-four hours, I have returned again and again to a prayer by Joan Chittister, an American Catholic nun and outspoken peace advocate. It is a prayer addressed to God, but it also works as a call to our own selves and to our human community. This prayer challenges me. It also gives me solace and direction. I hope that you find, within this excerpt of the prayer, helpful words for today:

*...save us from ourselves,
save us from the vengeance in our hearts
and the acid in our souls.*

*Save us from our desire to hurt as we have been hurt,
to punish as we have been punished,
to terrorize as we have been terrorized.*

*Give us the strength it takes
to listen rather than to judge,
to trust rather than to fear,
to try again and again
to make peace even when peace eludes us.*

*We ask, O God, for the grace
to be our best selves.
We ask for the vision
to be builders of the human community
rather than its destroyers.
We ask for the humility as a people
to understand the fears and hopes of other peoples.*

*We ask for the love it takes
to bequeath to the children of the world to come
more than the failures of our own making.²*

Pax et lux,

Rev. Elyse Nelson Winger
University Chaplain

¹President Anthony Monaco, [The events of January 6, 2021](#)

²Sister Joan Chittister, [Prayer for World Peace](#)

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Tufts University Chaplaincy | Goddard Chapel, 3 The Green | Medford, MA 02155 USA
[chaplaincy.tufts.edu](#) | [chaplaincy@tufts.edu](#) | 617.627.3427

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