The Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota joins with the nation in mourning the loss of John Robert Lewis, Civil Rights leader, Georgia Congressman, and moral conscience of the republic. Courage, intelligence, compassion, and principle — these words come to mind when we try to describe him. The list of his accomplishments is long and has been recounted elsewhere. "He helped change the laws and heart of the Jim Crow nation into which he was born, making us all a better people," said *New Journal & Guide* publisher Brenda Andrews.

To John Lewis, religious faith was a core value; the teachings of Jesus and Gandhi shaped his political philosophy and practice. He once told PBS, "In my estimation, the civil rights movement was a religious phenomenon. When we'd go out to sit in or go out to march, I felt — and I really believe — there was a force in front of us and a force behind us, 'cause sometimes you didn't know what to do. You didn't know what to say, you didn't know how you were going to make it through the day or through the night. But somehow and some way, you believed — you had faith — that it all was going to be all right."

Seven months ago he was diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer. Always a fighter, he remained active in his fierce dedication to a better America. "I have been in some kind of fight – for freedom, equality, basic human rights – for nearly my entire life. I have never faced a fight quite like the one I have now," Lewis said in a statement released at the time. "I have decided to do what I know to do and do what I have always done: I am going to fight it and keep fighting for the Beloved Community. We still have many bridges to cross."

"We still have many bridges to cross." Indeed, we do. He broke the trail for us. He pointed the way. Now we must carry on.

(**Audacious Icons and the Soul of America.** *John Lewis, C. T. Vivian and Joseph Lowery, three civil rights luminaries who passed away within months of one another, will be the focus of the sermon on August 2 by Rev. Dr. Budd Friend-Jones.*)