

CLIMATE CHANGE Taking a Stand with the Scientists

The Bible wasn't written in what we would call scientific or historical language. The Bible is neither an accurate historical record of the last 3+ millennia of human time that it covers nor is it a scientific treatise, and yet it has been treated as both by certain Christian Conservatives and Fundamentalists for at least a century. The regime that now controls Washington claims to be made up of such Conservative and Fundamentalist Christians, but Trump and those Congressmen who have been so focused on taking away health care and safety net social protections certainly are not acting out of any kind of Christian charity or mercy. I love the images posted on Facebook of Trump saying no to Jesus and of Jesus spouting Conservative Philosophies around guns and social programs because they provide such a telling reminder of what Jesus really might have said. We do not live in a Christian nation and the values that the conservatives want to preserve and protect have nothing to do with Christianity or any other religion. We live in a nation of free ranging gun toting capitalists who want few if any limits on their ability to gain wealth and power, the wealthiest of whom have become quite skilled at manipulating the beliefs, practices, and voting of millions of people.

Characterized by Trump and his corporate cronies as fake news and fake science, I would like to address that little matter of Climate Change today. Coming from a family of free ranging science loving engineers, I readily admit that I have always been fascinated by science and the empirical process. Early on, influenced by the first NASA successes and by Jacque Cousteau, I considered both astronomy and oceanography and later considered engineering before following metaphysical explorations and settling on Ministry. I suppose that leaves me more susceptible to news and theories from the scientific world, so I'm sure the Donald will not find any credence in anything I might say anyway. I do find some comfort in a post I saw on Facebook from one of my friends that said something to the effect of, I don't post things to convince others but to let my friends know that there are others who believe like they do.

In that spirit, and knowing full well that I am preaching to the full choir of UUs here gathered, I offer these thoughts on the current state of the world.

Eviscerating the EPA, dismantling what little remains of the social safety net, and freeing US Capitalism and Banking from what few restrictions have been enacted even after the great recession, will not make America Great Again. It will only ensure the growing economic divide between the top 1% and everyone else, and leave our nation, as well as the rest of the world in a more polluted state than before the EPA began its work decades ago. It will also make our nation even more of a pariah among the nations. And this talk of building more warships and increasing the number of nuclear weapons in our arsenal borders on insanity. No nation on this planet can match our current military strength. We already spend more on the military than the next several nations combined. Fiscally, adding billions to the military, while taking money away from education and social programs and cutting taxes on those who are already criminally wealthy is a sure route to even greater deficits and a greater imbalance in wealth here and around the world.

The house of cards constructed by the current President, built on a foundation of lies about others with a facade of self-aggrandizement, capped by a penthouse of corporate cronies is exactly what our nation does not need in the face of an ever-accelerating Global Environmental Crisis for which our nation bears significant responsibility. American consumerism is unquestionably the prime cause of international consumerism and lies at the root of pollution from factories, power plants, and vehicles over the last century. Much of the pollution from China and developing nations comes from factories feeding the voracious appetite of American Consumers. Our most successful export in recent decades has been the pollution of such factories. But America does not exist in a bubble, and even Trump's wall, should it ever be built, will offer no protection from the Greenhouse gasses and particulate pollutants in the worldwide atmosphere.

And now, Trump has begun his wide-ranging assault on the scientific community. So many scientists, even those so rarely seen in public, are upset by his forays that a march of the scientists is scheduled for Earth Day, April 22nd. I would march were I not scheduled at a Minister's Retreat that Weekend.

Like the Women's Marches, the March of the Scientists marks an amazing public divide exacerbated by Trump and his cronies. For decades, American scientific accomplishments have been the envy of the world. Now Trump is making science, and particularly environmental and climate science his whipping boy. This of course appeals to all the industries who face restrictions from the EPA, such as power, oil, coal, automotive and other transportation industries, etc. It also plays into the hands of all those who are already deniers of evolutionary science on religious or pseudo-religious grounds. In terms of power and control and playing to his base, Trump's assault on science is another masterstroke. And like his assault on healthcare, it will have long lasting consequences for our nation and the world.

We did just get some good news on Friday when Paul Ryan had to withdraw the bill to gut the Affordable Care Act and put Trumpcare in its place. And of course much of the Republican opposition came from those who felt the repeal did not go far enough, but at least for the moment those who care about health care for the poor and middle class can celebrate the defeat of Trumpcare. Perhaps some day we will join the other civilized nations and provide healthcare for all!

Contrary to the all-knowing Donald's proclamations that Global Warming is a Chinese Hoax or fake science, all climactic signs point to an accelerating impact of Climate Change from human causes. Polar ice and glaciers continue to diminish, the ice covering Greenland continues to melt, the intensification of storms predicted by climate scientists is readily apparent around the world, and the drought plagued areas which continue to grow all testify to the veracity of Climate Science and its predictions. The increasingly effective modeling of wind and water vapor patterns, and the increasingly more accurate tracking of storms, and ozone and particulate dispersion also buttress claims of the effectiveness and accuracy of Climate Science.

The increasing accuracy of earthquake tracking and prediction science also helped to prove that pumping contaminated water from fracking back into the ground has been causing earthquakes in Oklahoma as well as to suggest that such practices could initiate or exacerbate quakes along known faults such as the New Madrid in Missouri.

Nuclear scientists are concerned about Trump's cavalier and clearly uninformed comments about the use of Nuclear Weapons. Beginning in the 1980s we began to reduce our nuclear arsenal and to move away from a reliance on Nuclear weapons even as a deterrent. Non-proliferation treaties and Nuclear Arms Reduction Treaties have helped the world move away from the threat of mutually assured destruction posed by a possible exchange of Nuclear weapons. The science really is there to give most people pause before even thinking about the use of nuclear weapons. The meltdown or near-meltdown of just a few nuclear power plants has been enough to almost close down the nuclear power industry over the last 3 or more decades. Both nuclear weapons and nuclear power depend upon a vast cadre of nuclear physicists, nuclear engineers, and other scientists so that the science related to these areas has continued to grow ever since nuclear fission was first achieved in the 1940s. This is not fake science, but it clearly is beyond the grasp of Trump.

Interestingly, the scientific reality contrasting Trump's claims that we must free exploration, development, and production of oil, gas, and coal, is that even oil companies are investing in alternate sources such as solar and wind power. Green energy is now a large and growing field for employment and successful production of electricity. Some nations have turned entirely to green sources and others in Europe and Asia are moving in that direction. A return to sole dependence on fossil fuels will hamper the development of electric vehicles as well as increase air pollution. Even American car companies are continuing to develop hybrid and electric powered cars as the wave of the future.

It is frankly still almost unbelievable to me that Trump was elected President. His pronouncements, proclamations, and Tweets continue to astound me. How can anyone reach such an important office by promising to tear down decades of progress in so many areas of life. He clearly enjoys the benefits of aeronautical, automotive, electrical, civil and mechanical engineering and the science behind each field. He seems ignorant of the differences that environmental science and EPA restrictions made to the air in our cities. I imagine he occasionally sees a Doctor, but he clearly values the short term profits of insurance companies more than he values the health of at least 24 million Americans, including me.

At this moment in time, Donald Trump appears to pose the greatest threat of all to Earth and the Environment. Humanity has faced challenges before, but no prior US President has seemed so determined to insure the demise of humanity as well as most other species as the Donald in acting with little or no understanding of the severity of the environmental problem. It is almost as if he had been trained by the climate change deniers paid by the oil industry and perhaps he has been so indoctrinated. In some ways it is unfortunate that climactic problems have been such a slowly developing reality, so that with every snow or rain storm, the deniers have been able to make light of climate change predictions. Since they have had so many years of practicing denial, most of them seem to even believe their own lies about how little impact humans have on the environment (even if there are now billions more of us).

The scientific record on global warming, storm intensification, melting ice, rising seas, changing patterns of precipitation, and increasing drought is becoming clearer and more alarming each year. It isn't the scientists or the markers of global climate change that are lying. We all know that this isn't fake science. The more important question is how people can see the changes and follow someone like Trump in continuing the denial? Friends don't let friends deny science!

Where do we go and what do we do from here? It is already too late now to avoid many of the negative impacts of climate change. As those who are more aware, more cognizant of the problem, we must continue to bring attention to the problem, drive hybrids and electrics and fuel efficient vehicles, install solar panels, put up windmills, support advocacy groups that are addressing the problem, show up for meetings about ways to mitigate and prepare for climactic change, be part of the solution and not just part of the problem.

The United States, as one of the worst polluter nations and the most consumer oriented major nation has been and remains a big part of the problem and we need to be a big part of the solution. California continues to lead in fighting pollution, calling for more hybrids & electrics and supporting the use of wind water & solar power. Our state is a leader in addressing these issues and we need to continue to support those efforts. Our planetary home is at risk and we are called to do all that we can to protect it. This is our challenge, now! May we rise to this occasion to make a difference! Shalom, Salaam, Namaste, Blessed Be, & Amen!