

SURVIVING THE FIRST 100 DAYS!

Prayers from the Loyal Opposition!

Okay, this might not be a prayer, and loyal might be overstating the case, but I do want to share some thoughts from the opposition this morning. If you are hearing this sermon, it means we survived the first 100 days of the Trump regime! After today, we will just have to take it month by month, week by week, day by day, hour by hour, ok, minute by minute for the rest of his four year term, leaving just three years and 265 or so days. It may seem like forever, but remember we got through the first 100 days in only 2400 hours, that would be 144,000 minutes, or just 8,640,000 seconds. And many of us slept for at least a quarter of that time. And just think back on how much of that time was spent praying! Donations at shrines for saints have just soared! We can do this, we really can!

The Trump Presidency has not only inspired prayers, but huge numbers of people have been showing up for marches, for women with their pink hats and hopes of retaining health care and choice, for sensible taxation and his tax returns, for science, and just yesterday for the climate. He may have been 3 million short on votes and way low on the inauguration crowd, but he has really been getting out the marchers! Just imagine how many people his impeachment will draw!

The way his Presidency started, who would have thought we would still have health coverage by now, or that we wouldn't actually be in a thermonuclear war with North Korea by now? And no wall yet, and the Muslim bans are still in legal limbo. What a wonderful world! The EPA and most sensible regulations and taxes on businesses are on their way out, and pollution from power plants, cars and trucks will be increasing soon, but Florida and other low-lying areas should have at least another year or two before the flooding gets really bad! With all the melting, Greenland is really turning green! Many marine animals are exploring new northern territories!

In other political news, there is another Republican health care plan that will take away all those silly expensive guarantees that pre-existing conditions will not increase premiums. With my Congestive Heart Failure, this new plan will only increase my insurance cost by about \$18,000 per year to about \$31K for next year. I may have to downsize a bit, but I measured my office and I think I can get my bed in the back part. So after I sell my house and my car, and auction my treadmill, exercise bike, kayak, some books, and my model trains on E-bay, I should have enough left to join a gym with a shower and maybe even buy food for my dogs. Please, California, make single payer work! But enough about me, how are you all doing?

It still seems strange to me that so many people would vote against their own economic and healthcare self-interests, on the basis of so many lies to elect Donald Trump President. And of course, we will never know if those quashed recounts would have changed the outcome. So, here we are starting the rest of Trump's term after those all-important, at least to the media, first 100 days! It is clearly not the best of times, but so far it isn't nearly as bad as many of us feared it could be.

Now we also should factor in all the ways that Unitarian Universalists can work to make the world situation better. Just kidding! We will be way too busy trying to self-destruct over the issue of how we haven't been including enough persons of color in the top level of decision-making even though our last 2 UUA Presidents were Black and Latino. After Peter Morales' resignation, three persons of color, former UUA President Bill Sinkford, former minister of this church and faculty member at Starr-King Sofia Betancourt, and Professor Leon Spencer were named to accomplish all that has lacked for the last 20 or so years of the Journey Toward Wholeness work before one of the 3 white women running for UUA President is elected at General Assembly in June. Of course the issues are far more complex and difficult, but I really don't see as how UUs will have any time to work on the world situation until we become really anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and multi-cultural. But I really can't comment further on that,

because as a white male clergyperson, I am by definition of those currently on the UUA Board a racist white-supremacist.

Divide and conquer; label good intentions evil; lie, cheat and steal and here we are. We still don't have Trump's tax returns, Ivanka has her Chinese trademarks, and the financial benefits for the Trumps just keep rolling in!

Where did accountability and responsibility go? Why have we allowed this disaster to continue unfolding? Where are the ethical limitations that should have prevented things from getting this far or going further? How does any of this fit the Principles that we espouse as Unitarian Universalists?

Of course there are norms and expectations, but apparently not enough enforceable laws about the behavior of Presidents and their campaigns and staff members, to prevent the kind of corruption, lies, and alternative facts that we have been seeing over the last 100 days and the latter months of the campaign. For decades, every previous President and most candidates for President have not only released their Tax Returns as a way of showing that they are not beholden to wealthy donors, corporations, and international agents, but have actually divested from any such ongoing interests. Since Trump has no plan to release his returns, we must assume that he is indeed beholden to one or many parties or nations who could put enough pressure on him to affect his response to any situation. With the growing web of Trump business connections being revealed with Russia, it is highly likely that Putin and other Russian interests are among those to whom he is beholden. Since the House of Representatives is responsible for bringing any charges of impeachable offenses against a sitting President, it seems unlikely that an impeachment action will come any time soon with the current Republican majority. We must hope that the world and national situation will remain relatively stable at least until the mid-term elections of 2018 allow the possibility of change. This all leaves our nation in a mess, with undocumented workers, those with any serious health concerns, the middle and lower classes, persons of color, and to a large extent women in an uncertain and uncomfortable place.

The challenge of course, for us as Unitarian Universalists, is to figure out how to respond in a positive way, what to do to make the situation better. Our association will likely be tied up in knots for at least the next several months in internal squabbling over race, hiring and power, though I am actually hopeful that the interim presidential triumvirate and the soon to be elected new UUA President will find a way to return some stability to the UUA by this fall. Until then, we will mostly be on our own to find ways to make a difference in the world.

When I first became concerned about the environment decades ago, the anticipated changes due to air and water pollution seemed a long way off, far in the future. With that perspective, it seemed ok to take individual actions and work close to home with conservation, recycling, and reuse efforts. As warming temperatures, melting polar ice, rising seas, intensified storms, and somewhat less visible but more dangerous particulate increases and low level ozone in the atmosphere have taken their toll, it has become even more clear that local individual efforts are not nearly enough. The decimation of the Environmental Protection Agency, with rules and regulations that had already been watered down by corporate interference is probably the worst disaster in long term impact that Trump is close to accomplishing. The loss of the Affordable Care Act will hit many of us as individuals, but a return to unmitigated pollution of air, water, and land will hasten the environmental disaster already unfolding.

The first 100 days of the Trump regime has raised so many concerns about the lack of justice, equity, compassion, failures to respect the inherent worth and dignity of persons, and a lack of respect for most of the web of all existence that I can hardly begin to list them in a single sermon. Our world and all her inhabitants are at risk, and I can hardly overstate the danger. And if the environmental risks weren't already enough, Trump continues to goad North Korea, Iran, the Islamic world generally except where there are Trump Hotels, and on alternating days Mexico and Canada, China and Russia; all dangerous actions in this all too real Game of Thrones.

What plan or strategy might inspire Trump's action? Is there anything other than spreading chaos, making money, flaunting power and helping wealthy friends behind the actions of the current occupant of the White House? Where do we even begin to counteract the efforts of the Donald? Before he sought the presidency, most of us could just ignore him as an ignorant loud-mouthed boor. Now that he has managed to become President, we do not have the luxury of ignoring him. With his recent actions, we have to ask whether his purposes are more malevolent, and therefore infinitely more dangerous. Has he sold us out to Putin and Mother Russia? What kind of deals is he making with China? What is it he expects to gain in renegotiating NAFTA with Canada and Mexico and who will really benefit? Where to and why did his promises of transparency disappear? We could argue all day whether or not he is a narcissist, a sociopath, and what tendencies he exhibits, but clearly we can neither predict nor anticipate his next actions, let alone his next tweets. For those of us with middle class or lower incomes, and those who are in this country without full and current documentation, those who are women and persons of color, and those who care about the earth, this first 100 days has been absolutely terrifying.

We are just a small group of people, a single congregation from a small religious association, and yet perhaps we are just the group that can find ways to help our nation and world survive this test! We know that we cannot give up, we cannot just admit defeat and hide. We have to do something, we have to make a noise, we have to try to make a difference! All those times we have affirmed the Principles of Unitarian Universalism have committed us to continue to make the effort. Now we must search out ways to live out our Principles even in these dark and difficult times. We must be prepared to get through the next 3 and 2/3 years before we have much hope of relief.

Laughter will help, as will cooperation, but resistance to inhumanity, racism, sexism, and ableism will be essential. Whatever we do to survive these times, we must remember to treat others as we would like to be treated, with respect, acceptance, and love.

And even in the midst of potentially great personal losses, we must find hope, hope that we can share with others, hope that can inspire transformation when the opportunity comes. Unitarian Universalism, if nothing else, is a hopeful tradition. We do not easily give up, even in the face of great challenge, because we have a message that the world needs to hear, a message of inclusion and acceptance, a message of hope and a message of love. We may not have all the answers, but we recognize that we are all in this together and the work that we do is for a better world of justice, equity, and love. My friends, go out and change the world and make it a better place for everyone!

So may it ever be, Amen!