



Ploughshare

A Piece of Mike's Mind by Rev. Mike Morran

The first thing I need to do in this column is apologize for some remarks I made on January 22nd, the day after the National Women's March. In reflecting on and celebrating the thousands of people who came out for that event, I also shared some of what I was hearing from activists in the African American Community.

Specifically, I shared how largely white the event was perceived to be. I shared some of the historical mistrust of white people by the African American Community, and I shared some aspersions I had heard about the motivations for white people who chose this particular moment to organize a protest. In sharing these things, I was insensitive and offensive to many of the women at First Unitarian Denver, those who have been activists for a very long time, and perhaps especially those with a personal history of sexual harassment. It was wrong of me to do that. I am sorry for what I said and for the pain that it caused. Heaven knows these times need all of us need to be kind, sensitive, and collaborative with each other. I pledge to do much better.

The second thing I need to do is thank all the faithful and dedicated souls who have shown up at marches, community meetings, protests, vigils, sign-making parties and more..., who have made calls to their senators and representatives, who have had the loving and hard conversations with their friends, neighbors, co-workers, and relatives. Who have in so many ways made their voices heard and felt in these confusing and troubling times.

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How WE Face the Future

by Erin Kenworthy, DRE

Our world is heavy right now, and so is my heart. I am weary. Reading articles and discussing concerns is a daily practice. The reality of our political climate has manifested as both physical and spiritual pain. I'm processing a flow of information that seems to never end. I know that I have engaged conversation around my children that may not be entirely appropriate. Amidst the fear, anger, and uncertainty I wonder how to use the countless opportunities for social justice without transmitting my fear and anger to my children. I suspect that I am not alone.

Right now, I don't have an easy answer. I don't want to ignore the dangers of rolling back environmental protections, nor turn a blind eye to dehumanization of people different than our family. I also do

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Some of these might not feel like much, but the cumulative effect matters a great deal! Thank you! You are not alone.

Third, you should know that plans are beginning for my next sabbatical, currently scheduled to begin in November of this year. The Covenant between the congregation and the senior minister reads:

Sabbatical Leave: *The Minister shall use sabbatical leave for study, education, writing, meditation, and other forms of professional and religious growth. Sabbatical leave accrues at the rate of one month per year of service, with leave to be taken after five but before seven years of service.*

It's been eight years since the last sabbatical, and for the spiritual health and well-being of the entire church, it's time to make this happen again. In the coming months I will be working with the board, the staff, and other leaders in the church to arrange coverage for the four major areas of my work at First Unitarian: Institutional leadership, Sunday worship, Pastoral Care, and Administration/Staff support. More information will be made available in the coming months.

Lastly, I'd like to hold up some of the great things happening around church right now. You should know that on Christmas Eve, we collected \$5,776(!) for MetroCaring. First Unitarian continues to be the single largest congregational supporter of this vital food ministry in Denver. You should know that for the first time in many decades, First Unitarian has officially reported over 400 members to the Unitarian Universalist Association. Bucking all national trends, this congregation continues to grow, slowly.

You should know that the Capital Campaign continues to go very well, keeping up with and in many ways exceeding all expectations. With luck, construction on the interior of the church will begin this summer!

And, you should know that we continue to partner with an ever-growing list of community groups, making our space available, hosting events, and more. It is possible that more people have come through our front doors in the past four months than over the past four years. You should know that our Homelessness programs, our Mental Health Initiative, our Immigration Justice and Racial Justice projects are all going fantastic, including more people, reaching out to the larger community, making an impact.

We All LOVE First Unitarian ***by Kimbely Urish, Abundance Ministry Co-Chair***

I know this because I went online to review First Unitarian Society of Denver on Google and Yelp and saw friends saying how much they love it. (You could do that too!) But this month with Valentine's Day, I was thinking about the romantic love found at First Unitarian. It didn't take much to find a sweet example. Robin Reed and Michael Delvaux met in our very community room in during coffee hour in January of 1995. Their friendship started with a conversation that continued over many Sundays. Robin remarked how wonderful it was to get to know someone as friends, within her beloved community, before starting a relationship. They were married at First Unitarian in October of 1996 and it has been their second home ever since. Abundance talks a lot about the value that First Unitarian brings to the community through spiritual reflection and social justice. But don't forget the many relationships, of all kinds, that are created here. Look around at coffee hour - you never know who you might meet! Happy Valentine's Day.

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I also do not want to pile the weight of this world upon them, because I know that they will inherit it soon enough. Navigating a middle path is not an individual assignment, but a collaborative project that we participate in with this community. I am more aware of which conversations occur in the presence of young ears. It is my intention to move forward with honesty, conviction, and care. As a religious educator, I intend to equip our youth with the strength, self-awareness, and connection that will prepare the next generation of the resistance. Our middle school program this year has actively taught resiliency skills to our 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Our K/1 class has spent time thinking about and recognizing kindness in the people around them. Our Pre-School class has begun to learn the importance of self-care, doing yoga together on a Sunday morning. Our High school youth have discussed the importance of identity in social justice work. Our 2nd-5th graders have begun to envision their own social justice project for the year. Our RE community gives me hope and inspiration in the face of the weight of the world. We will move together, young and old, into the resistance. We will bear the weight together and work to push back the tide of injustice.

After putting the kids to bed last night, Jason and I stood on the threshold of our front door to welcome the awakening spring. It was a spiritual act of resistance and connection. We stopped to breathe, to connect with each other, and with the cycle of seasons. Even though it was a short disruption of our regular schedule, it was enough to bring me back to awareness. It was an intentional action, one that renewed my hope, and lifted my heavy heart. I invite you to take time to care for yourself. Interrupt the flow of news and opinions. Recognize kindness. Welcome the resistance. Connect in new ways with this community.

I hope to see you soon. You can come join us for the Fun and Games at Board Game Republic on February 19th anytime between 11:30a and 3:00p.

Whole Souul Living

This month we are considering **Evil** as our Whole Souul Living Theme. Obviously we are not celebrating evil, but in the spirit of religious community, seeking healing and greater wholeness through a deeper understanding. Evil, so far as we know is not embodied in any kind of being called Satan, and certainly not, at least conclusively, in any historical figures like Stalin, Hitler, or Sadaam Hussein. The Anti-Christ, if he (or she) is coming, has not yet made any significant, self-defining gestures except perhaps for a generalized, inarticulate feeling of uneasiness here at the beginning of the third millennium. We will consider evil from several perspectives this month, and invite you to explore and share with each other the following questions for reflection.

Focus Questions:

- What is Evil? (Try to construct a working definition.)
- Does evil have reality independent of specific events? In other words, is there such a thing as evil in and of itself? Or, are there only instances of human behavior that are evil?
- What personal experience(s) have you had with evil?
- Were you surprised? Angry? Bewildered? How were you changed from that experience?
- Can you imagine yourself doing something that someone else would consider evil?
- Is there an antidote for evil? In other words, can human evil ever be overcome?

Women's Suffrage and First Unitarian

by Kathlene Sutton

Anyone up for a scavenger hunt in downtown Denver—with first prize being the rediscovery of a bronze plaque honoring Unity Church's role as the 1876 meeting site where “the Colorado Women's [sic] Suffrage Association” was founded? (Unity Church was the name FUSD chose to emblazon on its first church building.)

In her Historic Denver guide, *Denver Women in their Places*, Marcia Tremmel Goldstein accompanies a photo of the plaque with the disappointing news that the plaque is “hidden among the surface bricks at the edge of Wells Fargo Plaza” at the corner of 17th & California. (So younger scavengers will first need to identify the plaza, no longer dominated by Wells Fargo.)

Seventeen years after CWSA's founding, FUSD member J. Warner Mills drafted the successful enabling act that granted Colorado women the vote in 1893. What took so long? Though Wyoming claims bragging rights as the first state to enfranchise women (in 1869), Colorado was the first state to do so through a popular referendum.

Colorado and Wyoming took vastly different paths to equal suffrage, as each state responded to the transformed political landscape of the post-Civil War Union. In 1870, after the 14th Amendment granting citizenship to slaves, Congress passed the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, prohibiting states from denying citizens the right to vote on the basis of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Knowing they would be forced to let blacks vote, Wyoming's Territorial legislators forged a pragmatic, speedy compromise to extend the vote to women: it was the only way to appease male legislators who couldn't abide the thought that blacks would be allowed to vote, when their wives couldn't. According to historian Tom Rea, “Thanks to an uneducated Virginian who had no use for blacks [Wyoming legislator William Bright, who introduced the bill], Wyoming Territory became the first government in the world to guarantee women the right to vote.”

By contrast, Colorado's path to equal suffrage took 17 years. Suffragists had to overcome both disabling divisions in their own movement, and the resounding defeat of their initial campaign in 1877 (only one year after CWSA was established). Meanwhile, at FUSD, the Ladies Aid Society was rescuing FUSD and its finances (after the board recommended in 1879 to abandon the struggle to establish liberal religion in Denver), culminating in the building of FUSD's second church at 19th & Broadway in 1886. Did these monumental, women-led efforts leave little time for FUSD members to support the equal suffrage effort, notwithstanding J. Warner Mills' key role?

FUSD's archives and other sources still need to be mined for definitive answers. Inquiring minds might start by combing FUSD's early membership rolls for more names linked to the suffrage movement. But it's hard to imagine that there weren't FUSD members among the countless suffrage activists. And it's very likely that there were Unitarians and Universalists among the nine hundred women who voted in the first post-suffrage election, a nonpartisan Highlands (Denver suburban) municipal election, on April 3, 1894, and among the throngs of Denver women photographed at the polls at Broadway and Third Avenue on November 24, 1894.

Final Phase of Campaign in Full Swing

by Karen Derrick-Davis

We have raised \$2.1 million of our goal. With YOUR help we will reach our goal of \$2.6 million! If you have not yet participated in the campaign, you'll be receiving a brochure in the mail. Please consider a three-year commitment that feels right for you—and complete and return the form.

We have a group of friendly volunteers who might just drop you a line to see if you have any questions. You can also mail capitalcampaign@fusden.org or go to the web www.fusdcapitalproject.org.