



# Ploughshare

## ***A Piece of Mike's Mind***

*by Rev. Mike Morran*

Without a doubt, direct communication is what I miss most in this quarantined world. I'm becoming adept at Zoom and other online communication platforms, but if I'm honest, there is an essential element missing from those interactions and I don't much like them. Probably, this just shows my age.

I'm thinking about this because normally I would use the pulpit to share what I need to share with you right now.

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## ***What Will You Create?***

*by Erin Kenworthy, DRE*

How are you doing in this moment? Check in with your body, go ahead. This column can wait.

What emotions are present? Where do you feel each one in your body? How is your heart feeling today? What do you need? Listen to the wisdom in your body.

We've entered unprecedented times, my friends. It is now time to do some radical resting. I've been pretty disappointed in my own resiliency skills lately, and my response to the Covid19 Pandemic has me feeling pretty surprised at myself. I'm very uncomfortable and I really don't like it.

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First Unitarian Denver is a Sanctuary Church. Beginning in 2014, we have three times offered our building as a temporary home for immigrants facing deportation. Currently, Jeanette Vizguerra has been with us for over a year(!), and a lot has changed that you (the congregation) should be aware of.

Some history is in order. First Unitarian got involved in immigration justice in 2012. For about two years, the Immigration Justice Project held forums, brought in guest speakers, facilitated classes along with our ministerial interns, visited legislators, provided letter-writing opportunities for the church, worked with our Religious Exploration program for the kids, lobbied at the State Capitol, created Sunday worship and Wednesday Vespers services, hosted film and book discussion groups, attended monthly vigils at the Immigration Detention Center, and developed working relationships with the American Friends Service Committee, the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, El Centro Humanitario, Denver Dreamers and more.

For all that time, offering sanctuary wasn't even on our radar screen. In January 2014, because of the partnerships with the Immigrant Rights Coalition, they approached us. Would we take someone into sanctuary? Allow them to move into our building with their family? Offer them the protection of our church and our faith?

After some initial stumbles, we got an attorney to advise and represent us. We consulted with the city about zoning. We had long discussions about and with our insurance carrier. I cannot say enough about the group who worked and met, and held forums, answered questions, did the homework, and spent the time to process and listen to the people who had concerns. That June the congregation voted 74 percent in favor of being a sanctuary church. That August we kicked off the Metro-Denver Sanctuary Coalition (MDSC). And that October, Arturo Hernandez Garcia moved in.

For the next several years, we worked closely with the MDSC, American Friends Service Committee, Mountain View Friends Meeting, and other organizations. Arturo finally went home in July, 2015, and Jeanette moved in (the first time) in January 2017. That was the year Jeanette was named one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people and First Unitarian made national news.

Since that time and the current administration, the entire landscape of immigration and immigration activism has changed. Deportations have gone up, due process is minimal, ICE no longer communicates, and no one anywhere believes immigration reform has a chance of happening.

Most important for us locally, the American Friends Service Committee and Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition have decided that supporting Sanctuary is no longer a viable strategy. Both these organizations, along with the Mountain View Friends Meeting, have left MDSC.

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The reality is that First Unitarian is now largely on its own, and the once strong and focused team that supported Sanctuary within First Unitarian (THANK YOU!) has lost enough members that there isn't much coordination happening at the moment - beyond the wonderful people who continue to transport Jeanette's children to school (when school is in...). All of this has left Jeanette feeling unsupported, even as she continues living at church.

In the coming months, we are going to need to rebuild an Immigration Justice Team that can coordinate Sanctuary support, and also communicate with the congregation about current needs and partnerships.

That hasn't happened yet, and COVID 19 has made everything harder on everyone, including Jeanette. I apologize for having to write all this down instead of telling you face-to-face, but that's where it's at.

In the meantime, please refrain from sharing any stories or news you might hear about Jeanette. If you have further questions or would like to help out, give me a call. I'd be happy to fill in more details.

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And yet, sitting in our discomfort, acknowledging that feeling, and being able to name it is a really important spiritual practice, one that keeps us aware of our own comfort levels and the comfort afforded to (or not) the folk around us.

Broken institutions and systems are on full display right now, and social media is full of lamentation as our culture is laid bare by illness that does not care about the plans that you've made and the accomplishments you've collected.

Parents, in particular, are feeling the squeeze of the unrealistic expectations that exist in a culture that values progress, quantity over quality, perfectionism, and efficiency. Our children can feel those influences as well, and so, I wonder how we might re-imagine and release some of those expectations, and replace them with ones that better lift up our collective humanity, rather than our perceived individualism.

Unitarian Universalists, I am asking us to consider embracing the discomfort. Notice the ways your body responds when a limitation blocks you from accessing something you want or need. Listen to the wisdom of your body. Embrace complexity. Notice the tugs of opposition between your head, your heart, and the overwhelming amount of information that is available to each of us. Expect mistakes, embrace conflict of all sizes so that we might practice collaboration even as we are distanced physically from one another. Let us value quality over quantity, effective leaders over efficient ones. Let's include moral and faithful outcomes in our cost/benefit analysis process, rather than just the monetary impacts.

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Let us ask for help, and radically abandon the myth of self-sufficiency. Let's do some honest practice to tear down cultural expectations that don't serve everyone.

We will get through this difficult time. I wonder what we will create together on the other side of this global tragedy. I hope it is something that serves all of our children, all of the survivors of a broken system that needs rebuilding. What will you do differently, when given the chance?

When we can see one another again, safely in our congregational home, let us dance and sing and eat together, treasuring this opportunity to work for justice in the presence of beloved community. It's going to be time for another all ages dance party! I look forward to celebrating with you soon.

## ***Love, Justice, And Connection***

***by Jen Simon, Ministerial Intern***

Greetings, beloveds! How do I even begin?

How about here: I am SO PROUD OF US. In the last few weeks of what has been a jarring transition to a disorienting new normal, this community has come together, even as we are physically isolating.

The Caring Committee and Karen have been crafting ways to reach out to all of our congregants to assess needs and stay connected. Medical professional volunteers have made themselves available remotely in order to advise congregants. Tech volunteers and staff have been learning and experimenting with how best to communicate with all of our people, and congregants and committee members have gamely learned new online platforms. People have made financial donations to the minister's discretionary fund, as well as other offers of financial and material help for those who may need it. Social justice advocates have urged us to advocate for the people who will be most vulnerable to this illness and its economic effects. And people who need help have bravely reached out and asked for it.

In short, the members and friends of First Unitarian have in the face of COVID-19 been focusing on what matters most: love, justice, and connection.

At the same time, if you're finding that you don't have the bandwidth to carry on as "normal" right now, that is perfectly ok. This is not normal. In fact, much of what has constituted our normal has completely failed us during this crisis: the expectation to produce at all costs, the imperative to be constantly busy with something, to tie our health to our employment, and to tie our self-image and worth to our ability to muscle through and produce.

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So many of the assumptions underlying the way our society is structured are being exposed as unhealthy and unsustainable.

And even as the entire world is forcing us to slow down, to reexamine, to sit with ourselves and our feelings, I find myself resisting the obvious need for rest and connection. In times when, a few weeks ago, I might have been working - when I now find myself on a neighborhood walk with Gabe and Eric, or in the garden, or contemplating a nap - I keep thinking, "Shouldn't I be doing something?" - as if spending time with my loved ones, communing with the earth, or taking care of my body isn't something. Such is the pervasiveness of our conditioning to capitalism.

As many of us began to self-isolate a couple weeks ago, Tricia Hersey of the Nap Ministry wrote, "During this week, we have buckled in and created enough digital content to last us another decade. I have noticed this tendency in our culture to skip steps during trauma. We jump right to getting over it immediately, leaving no space for the precious ritual of grief, rest and lament... We want to remain in the way it always was - super productive and focused on doing, even while the systems around us are failing and slowing down."

<https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/2020/03/20/as-grind-culture-slows-down-will-you/>

But these systems very obviously are no longer serving us - the whole us that we're called to create as Unitarian Universalists. Our healthcare system is failing us, even as thousands of brave and dedicated medical professionals fight to save lives. Our economic safety net systems are responding to this crisis at a pace that is frustrating and sometimes deadly. Our legislative systems are ill-equipped to attend to the basic physical needs of all of our people. These are not new problems; many will tell you that they have existed for centuries. But now even those in relatively privileged positions cannot ignore their brokenness.

And so, dear ones, I urge you to be as gentle with yourselves as you can in these times. To whatever extent your situation will allow, I invite you to embrace your unproductive time - connect, rest. Notice the voice inside your head and the tension inside your body telling you to produce, take a breath, and tell that voice to connect. To create. When you need it, reach out to this community for help. When you are able, reach out to help.

And talk to one another. Now is the time to harness the impressive capacity of Unitarian Universalists for conversation - for exploration and curiosity - and for creating love and justice. In the coming weeks, I will be hosting a discussion group for the purpose of dreaming together, of talking to one another about the world you want to emerge into, and of what your part in that might look like. (Watch FirstAnnounce for an invitation.)

Until that time, remember: Rest is the task. Taking care of yourself is the task. And in a time of exciting and terrifying transformation and of shifting physical reality, remember the most solid things to hold onto are community and love.

## *President's Corner*

*by Mary Sullivan, First Unitarian Board of Trustees*

My very inadequate words for this month.

Stay home, love our families, value our friends, be grateful for all relationships, forgive and forgive again loved and unlovable ones, appreciate beyond bounds our unsung heroes, recognize our privilege and be truly thankful for every minute of our lives.

I can't say it any better than this.

And The People Stayed Home - Kitty O'Meara

And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still.

And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently.

And the people healed.

And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

## *On the Path at First Unitarian*

### **Online Class - Insight**

In this class of five sessions we will explore the ancient idea that every human soul is a tiny spark of the Oversoul, of the divine. From that basic assumption, or ***Insight***, we will explore the possibilities of intuition, self-examination, and self-knowledge as a doorway or entry-point to divinity and spiritual growth. Facilitated by Rev. Mike Morran, ***Insight*** will mix experience with study, reflection, and sharing. Classes will be held live over Zoom online meetings, handouts and materials will be emailed ahead of time. Login details will be sent upon registration.

Five Wednesday evenings, April 8th through May 6th, 7:00p to 8:30p. Email [revmorran@gmail.com](mailto:revmorran@gmail.com) to register.

## *Whole Souul Living*

**Create:** verb

1. To cause to exist; bring into being.
2. To give rise to; produce
3. To produce through artistic or imaginative effort

Our Whole Souul Living theme for the month of April is Creativity. Human beings create art but also community, love, hope, justice, war, violence, more.... We create when we work, cook, speak, clean, sing, make love, imagine the future... To be conscious and intentional is to be creative, creating the quality of each moment.

In traditional Christian theology, humans are made in Gods image because of the capacity to know good from evil. But a more modern interpretation is that it our ability to be creative that makes us divine.



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Questions for individual and communal reflection:

- In your thoughts, your relationships, your Life, what are you creating right now?
- What do you aspire to create? In your thoughts, relationships, Life?
- What can a community create together that no one can create alone?
- What inspires/evokes/cultivates your creativity?
- Can we inspire/evoke/cultivate creativity in each other?  
How?

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