



# Ploughshare

## ***A Piece of Mike's Mind...Looking into the Mind of Others***

*by Rev. Mike Morran*

I know, I know, there is too much information, too much coverage of the election, we are all on election overload, and there's still another month to go!

Nonetheless, sorry, I have something I want to share.

Like many of you, I have wondered about those 35 to 40% of American voters that continue to support the president despite all of his obvious flaws and failures, even as many of those voters will readily admit that the flaws are numerous; i.e. they wish he wouldn't tweet, they wish he were a better speaker, they wish he could show compassion, they wish he were more honest, they wish he weren't so deliberately divisive, etc. Still, they plan to vote for him. What gives?

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## ***Elect to Teach Our Children***

*by Erin Kenworthy, DRE*

"To vilify a great man is the readiest way in which a little man can himself attain greatness." - Edgar Allan Poe

It's fall. Again. It feels as though it's still March in so many ways. But, nearly seven months have come and passed. We've been subjected to the many great failures of our national leadership across many different issues. Education, Climate change, politics, health care, disaster response, racial injustice, and... the list goes on. Most recently, we witnessed a debate between our two leading candidates for the presidency.

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That's what I've been reading about and wrestling with. It's complicated, but I'm comfortable that I can articulate the smallish constellation of reasons for the uncanny level of support. I think there are six, and I recognize that a few of them are not very complimentary.

In no particular order...

1) There is a certain tribalism embodied in "own the libs." That is, anything that exasperates, outrages, angers, or simply bewilders the "left," the "elite," or the "know-it-alls," is something to be enthusiastically supported, overarching all other concerns and issues. I don't necessarily recommend it, but if you want to see this in action, spend some time in the comments section of almost any article on Foxnews.com.

2) As the country has become more obviously diverse and pluralistic, there is a large faction of the American electorate that will support anything that stands against a truly pluralistic democracy. I believe this view is underpinned by a philosophy and world-view that sees the economy as a zero-sum game where their piece of the pie will get smaller if other groups pieces get larger. In this sense, they believe they are voting for their own interests. Trump, I believe, also believes this.

3) There is a significant portion of the electorate that believes Trump is better for the economy. This is the most understandable, even if it can't be supported by facts. If you want to argue this point with a Trump supporter, you can point out that he has only one idea for growing the economy. The single idea is: free up capital. The approach is to first, dismantle (or just not enforce) existing regulations on commerce, anti-trust laws, the environment, labor protection, consumer protection, etc. The second approach is to lower taxes on businesses and wealth. That's it. That's the whole strategy. In theory, freed up capital can be invested in new businesses, innovations, products, and services, which will then create new jobs.

The problem is that there is no correlation between freeing up capital for corporations and the wealthy - and new jobs being created for everyone else. None. It doesn't work. Never has. Never will.

What actually happens, what has been happening for the past fifty years of American economic policy, is that the freed-up capital simply goes into the pockets of the corporations and the already wealthy, and because it is a global economy, when they do invest in new products or innovations, do so wherever they believe they will make the most profit. These days, that typically means in places like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Mexico, and other places where both labor and natural resources can be had for cheap. Study after study, example after example, this is the history of the past sixty years of economic policy in America: increased inequality, no jobs, stagnant wages for working people, aging infrastructure.

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An incumbent who hurls schoolyard insults, like the bully he has always been, and the other who straddles a line between distinguished statesman of the status quo, and the unlikely hopeful and flawed hero of our liberal hearts. Please, Joe... deliver us from this particular evil.

Our children are watching. They will do mock elections in their schools, with some participating virtually in that process. Pay attention to the outcomes. Elementary school students demand fairness in their classroom elections, and they are process observers for any sign of unfair behavior. Also, they are for the most part, repeating back messaging heard in their family units. They will vote along with their family ticket with few exceptions. Allegiance is part of their growing understanding of the system in which they will eventually participate.

In the fall of 1988, I was in 4th grade. As part of an assignment, I used Print Shop to create my very own Dukakis campaign poster. It had the year, The democratic candidate's name in big bold letters, and a dot matrix graphic of a sun coming out of the clouds. I was invested, hoping for victory with all of my heart, and then devastated when my champion (whom I knew little to nothing about) lost the election. My side lost. And in that season, I became indoctrinated in our two-party system, suspicious of third party participants, and personally aligned with a political party, due in large part to what I heard from my parents at home on evenings and weekends leading up to that election.

I also remember the side eye, both given and received, from other kids whose campaign signs proclaimed loud and clear that George Bush, the eventual 41st President of the United States, was their candidate. It had begun, the line in the sand, the us vs. them mentality firmly in place. We were all 9 years old.

I continued to have political arguments for the remainder of my public education. In particular, I remember the constant ongoing debate with my friend Sarah, who was the child of Lebanese immigrants who owned several pawn shops and were much more socially conservative in their views than my own family. Sarah and I shared many non-political inside jokes and were absolute allies as we navigated the rough waters of middle school hallways, first boyfriends and attendant other firsts. We shared lipstick, homework answers, and created a library of our own personal notes. And, we disagreed on politics, which was a side dish to the main course of our deep friendship.

We lost touch in High school, we attended different schools, cheered for different mascots, and ran in different crowds. I found her on Facebook and have fond memories of our friendship, but also, am wary of and confused by her political identity. Sarah's spouse serves in the Maryland House of Delegates, and is a member of the Republican Party. She reminds me though, that our connection, our humanity was possible even across an ideological divide that we didn't fully understand.

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4) There is a significant portion of the electorate (even though they wouldn't admit it), that simply doesn't believe in (or want) the messiness of democracy, and heaven knows ours is a mess! and so the tough-talk, I can fix it, leave it to me rhetoric that Trump regularly generates feels right and like a relief. These are our fellow citizens who respond to authoritarianism, flaws and all, they believe he is on their side, and nothing any Dem, lib, media source, or factual statistic is going to sway their opinion or their vote one iota.

5) There is a significant portion of the electorate who are one-issue voters on matters like abortion, Christianity, or law-and-order, who will forgive or overlook any and all other issues because Trump gives these issues lip service, or in the case of abortion, real service in terms of his court appointments.

6) These is a significant portion of the electorate that believes liberals are hypocritical and recognize all the ways the Democratic Party has failed over the years. Many of these people can't bring themselves to support a party that has sold themselves as supporting working people, the poor, racial minorities, women, etc., and so consistently failed to come through when the rubber hits the road. The voters who feel this way are not wrong.

Of course, all of the above categories overlap in complex ways, all of this is an oversimplification, and all of it is heavily informed by my own personal biases. Nonetheless, it has been helpful to me, and calming, and even liberating, to research this, think it through, and articulate what I found. I hope it's helpful to you as well.

## **Experience Sunday Service Online Without a Computer**

People can attend our Sunday service virtually even without a computer. From a telephone dial 312-626-6799, 646-558-8656, or 301-715-8592. When prompted enter the meeting ID 466 677 668 and the password 454623.

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Our children are watching and listening as we approach this election, the most important one in my own life up to this point. Who knows where we might be 4 years from now. But rest assured, in four years, today's high school fresh people will be casting ballots and navigating friendships across ideological boundaries. What then are we modeling in the next five weeks and beyond that will inform their experiences? May we not pass along the dehumanization and vilification of humans, which are tools used to "other" and oppress marginalized groups and folks with identities different than our own. Let our children know that elections can be great opportunities for identifying and lifting up our humanity, celebrating our differences, and having discussions about what really matters to us, and how to live our values into reality through the democratic process of voting. And, include our children and youth in the discussion, because they hold wisdom that we have forgotten along the way.

## ***With Sincere Gratitude***

*by Beth Neva*

I want to thank all of you who have sent such caring messages regarding the loss of my daughter Heather who grew up at First Unitarian and remembered those times fondly. FUSD is a truly caring and loving community.

## ***New Date for ZiMBiRA Concert!***

*by Lia Davis*

Capitol Hill Concerts is pleased to announce our first virtual concert with ZiMBiRA Afro Fusion Band on **Saturday, October 24th at 7:00p**. This concert was previously scheduled for April 18th. The ZiMBiRA concert will premiere on First Unitarian Denver's YouTube channel; stay tuned for further details on how to watch. The concert is free with a suggested donation of \$15. A portion of this show's proceeds will be donated to Humwe.

## *The Board Beat*

*by Melany Deem, member of the Board of Trustees*

There are so many immediate pressing issues to deal with simultaneously now. In the last 7 months, many of us have lost or changed jobs. Many experience financial challenges and some level of isolation. Our interactions with family, friends, neighbors and our church community are different. Even going to the grocery store has become a whole new adventure. Like so many, I have at times been stressed and depressed. I've found myself focusing on the potential worst outcomes for employment, the election, unification of our country, the economy, healing our environment, and moving beyond white supremacy- just to name just a few.

I remember a game that I used to play with my kids when they were young. I used the game to talk about how different situations could lead to both (or neither) bad and/or good outcomes. I would make a statement and my children would identify the situation by saying either "Oh, that's good!" or "Oh, that's bad". Then I would move onto the next situation. It would go something like this:

Joe and Jane were happy to be on their first plane ride. Oh, that's good!

A motor failed on the plane and the plane could crash. Oh that's bad!

There were parachutes on board. Oh that's good!

The parachutes were old and did not work properly. Oh that's bad!

They landed in hay bales and were ok! Oh, that's good!

Remembering this game reminded me to be more aware of my self-talk and re-direct my focus to possibilities. While I mourn the awful loss, pollution, and damage caused by the wildfires, I am holding hope that the scale of the damage can open possibilities for impactful policies to address climate change. While I weep for the many deaths and countless injustices in communities of color, I have faith that those of us expanding our understanding of white supremacy and becoming allies can help to create new possibilities here and across the world. While I miss in-person church services, I am thankful that we can experience worship online and trust that we reach out to check on one another and to deepen connections. While I miss bear hugs with friends and family members in the worst way, I trust that the time for bear hugs will return.

Wishing for the power of hope, faith, gratitude and possibilities for us all.

## *Whole Souul Living*

Scripture is our Whole Souul Living Theme for October. Spiritual traditions like Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and many others look to very specific, historic texts for inspiration, truth, guidance, or comfort. For our purposes, solidly in the liberal religious tradition, we will more broadly define Scripture as, "Anything we turn to for guidance, truth, inspiration, or comfort." With this definition, nature, love, music, community, or silence could all be considered scripture. This month, you are encouraged to spend some time considering the sources of your own inspiration and truth, and especially exploring or remembering some of the quotes, passages, poems, prayers, or books that have served this function for you.

Some questions for individual and communal reflection:

- What are the scriptures...; quotes, passages, poems, prayers, or books that have served you as sources of inspiration and truth?
- What memories, feelings, or thoughts arise as you think about identifying and re-reading your scripture?
- Imagine that the wisdom, knowledge, message, or truth of your scripture was desperately needed by someone you loved (for whatever reason). How would you try to share that wisdom, knowledge, message, or truth? Or, do you feel that people just need to learn things for themselves?
- Wisdom literature suggests that guidance and truth are all around us all the time, and the trick is being open to it. Reflect on this openness... Can this openness be cultivated?



1400 Lafayette St.  
Denver, CO 80218

**Phone:** 303-831-7113

**Fax:** 303-831-8458

**E-mail:** [office@fusden.org](mailto:office@fusden.org)

**Rev. Mike Morran:**  
[revmorran@gmail.com](mailto:revmorran@gmail.com)

**Erin Kenworthy, DRE:**  
[erin@fusden.org](mailto:erin@fusden.org)

**Website:**  
[www.fusden.org](http://www.fusden.org)

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