

In the Midst of It All

BY LISA BOVEE-KEMPER, MINISTER, GREENVILLE UU FELLOWSHIP,
SOUTH CAROLINA



Some years ago I had the opportunity to work with a youth group to plan their annual worship service. They had a great theme in mind, all about voices. As youth they felt like they had no voice, but were learning how to speak up. They talked about people who were silenced, and people who spoke out anyway. It was going to be great!

During one of our long planning sessions, someone piped up, “Wait! I have an idea! Let’s hand everyone a blank order of service. It will be symbolic, calling attention to the ways people are silenced and the ways people can speak. The absence of words will be really dramatic.”

Inside my head, I thought, “There is no universe in which that is going to be allowed to happen.” But the conversation that followed gave me one of the most important lessons of my ministerial formation, and a strategy I use to this day. Instead of saying, “Yeeeah, that’s not going to work,” and shutting them down, I said, “Hmm, that’s a really interesting idea.”

The first thing I asked was, “What are you trying to accomplish? What is the goal of the blank order of service?” They then articulated a great set of goals, grounded in their theme and their lived experience. So I said, “Wonderful! Now, will this action accomplish the goals you have articulated?” A longer conversation ensued, in which the youth decided that, among other things, the blank order of service would be so confusing and anxiety-provoking to the recipients that it would be a distraction and would not reinforce their symbolic intent.

I learned from this process that imposing my own assumptions on their idea would have been bossy and unhelpful. I could easily have claimed my authority as their leader and shut it down. Instead, by engaging them in the conversation, I gave them an opportunity to articulate more clearly their own vision and goals.

I ask these questions constantly in my ministry: *What are we trying to accomplish? And will our proposed action meet our stated goals?*

Last year I joined a group of protestors at a prominent Civil War monument in Asheville, North Carolina. I was asked to be part of a peaceful clergy presence at a vigil held in solidarity with those who believe that monuments to Confederate figures ought to come down.

The event might best be described by a statement that the organizers of the vigil released later which began: “Four arrested at Robert E. Lee Monument during symbolic action against White Supremacy.” Their message went on to say, “We understand that the removal of this monument would be symbolic of removing white supremacy from the very center of our city. We know that this must be connected to the deep work of ending systemic racism and white supremacy culture here...”

When I received the call to participate, I wasn’t sure if I would go. It had been a busy week, and Friday morning is my writing time. I also take the kids to daycare in the morning and needed to grocery shop. Further, there is so much going on these days, so many conflicting asks and needs, so many different tactics and movements. I am prepared to take my body to the streets, but I want to know why I’m doing it—I care that the things I participate in are effective and meaningful.

I agree that confederate monuments are not useful in our communities. I do not necessarily agree that removing them is the most important focus. And yet, I participated in this action. Why is that? Because I know my goal. And in this case, my

Quest

Vol. LXXIII, No 8

September 2018

Everything’s got
a story in it.
Change the story,
change the world.

—Terry Prachett

A monthly for religious liberals

MAKING CHANGE

- IN THE MIDST OF IT ALL
Lisa Bovee-Kemper
- TRANSMOGRIFIED
Kimberley Debus
- REVOLUTIONARY LOVE
Emily Wright-Magoon
- FROM YOUR MINISTER
Meg Riley
- RESOURCES FOR LIVING
Lynn Ungar
- ALWAYS BEING MADE
Grace Lee Boggs

personal goal was more important than the goal of the action itself.

My highest value in the context of my work to dismantle white supremacy culture is to support and amplify the marginalized voices in my communities. And that made my decision about the action quite simple. I was asked by the women of color who organized the event to attend as a peaceful clergy presence. So I did.

**It is important, then,
to answer the question:
*Why does this
organization exist?***

When I was helping the youth group plan their service, it was my role to shepherd them through their process. In the case of the solidarity vigil, my role was different.

I had a lot of questions—and a lot of theory and experience in my own mind. I've planned actions myself. As a white woman, a professional clergy person, I have authority in the system. I could have marched into the slightly chaotic 7AM scene and gotten bossy. Instead, I found the people who had called us all together and asked them how I might be most supportive. They answered, and so I set to work singing, holding space, and being a peaceful presence as they had requested.

In another situation, I might have different goals. My highest value might be different. And that's an important distinction to make as well. If I know my highest value in a given situation, I will make decisions differently. Sometimes my highest value is efficiency. Sometimes it is collaboration, or relationship-building, or something else entirely.

It is important, then, to answer the question: *Why does this organization exist? What, specifically, are we here to accomplish?*

The congregation I was serving at the time of the protest holds Compassion,

Inspiration, Community, and Justice as values to guide who they are and what they do. It is an ongoing process to clarify how those values inform activity both within the walls of the congregation and out in the community.

Goals and values exist on multiple levels, from the most abstract “meta” level to the smallest of mundane details. That is why it is important for each group to do their own visioning work. But each group interprets those values differently, and chooses different places to focus. And so does each individual.

We are the ones. We must figure it out for ourselves, together. All of our voices and experiences are essential parts of this community, and essential parts of the resistance. It's worth knowing what your own goals are, and how they fit into the work of community.

It is my greatest hope that the violence and despair we see these days is the last gasp of a harmful system. It is my most fervent prayer that the animosity and vitriol we encounter around and within our communities is simply the wound uncovered and lanced, ready to begin to heal. But I cannot be certain.

And so I turn to my own faith. I turn to my experience of community coming together again and again to show one another that love and commitment can overpower fear. I turn to the faith of the people who came before me, and the strength of those who walk beside me and show me the way.

What is our goal? And are our actions accomplishing that goal?

Love and compassion are the ground underneath us. Even when fault lines cause that ground to shift, we return again and again to the fierce and tenacious spirit of the Love that will not let us go—the indelible shape of justice which calls us deeper into the work of building, into the risk of reaching out and the promise of a faith grounded in history, but calling us forth to a new vanguard. ■

Transmogrified



BY **KIMBERLEY DEBUS**,
COMMUNITY MINISTER OF
THE ARTS AND WORSHIP,
ROUND LAKE, NEW YORK

I first learned the word “transmogrified” from the cartoon *Calvin and Hobbes*.

One day, Calvin built a transmogrifier. To us, it was just an upside-down cardboard box with a dial drawn on the side. But to Calvin and his stuffed tiger Hobbes, it was a machine that could turn them into whatever they wished to become—eel, baboon, bug, dinosaur, tiger, toad. While everyone else still saw a little boy and his stuffed tiger, Calvin and Hobbes saw themselves transmogrified—transformed in a surprising manner.

I think sometimes we forget that we can transmogrify things—especially in religious communities. Which is why I was struck when my colleague Ian Riddell wrote, “I’m in a bad mood that our principles are in a list. So I transmogrified them.”

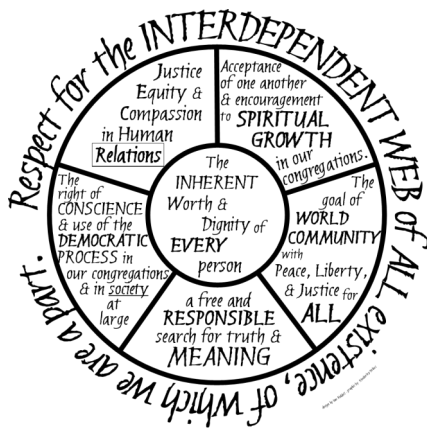
Huh. It's true that our UU principles appear in a numbered list. We even tend to quote them by number: Our fifth principle calls me to fight for responsible gun control legislation. I'm doing third principle work in learning about Hinduism. I'm a seventh principle guy so I invest in renewable energy.

A handy, step-by-step list. Nice. Neat. Ordered. Isolated. Each principle an individual.

But that was bugging Ian, so he devised something new. Instead of an ordered list, a wheel. No numbered principles, but rather a different pattern of organization. A surprising way to approach them.

The center—the axle—is the inherent worth and dignity of every person. It's where we start, where everything else moves from. Then, encompassing it all, is the interdependent web of

which we are all a part. The spokes are the other principles, the ways we understand ourselves in the world, the ways we act in the world because of who we are and where we are.



So what does this mean? How would we approach our faith, our work, our connection to other human beings, our sense of the divine, if we were willing to transmogrify how we think of them?

Let's start with the spoke calling for justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. Alone, it sounds pretty good; it's the cornerstone of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and Side With Love and of every social justice action we take, both within and outside Unitarian Universalism.

There's something missing, however.

Unitarian Universalists are good at questioning things, but we can forget to examine what's underneath our own principles. Often we might ask *What?*—What do they mean? or *How?*—How do we affirm and promote them? But rarely do we ask *Why?*—Why are they important for us to affirm and promote?

But when we change how we see them, we suddenly have a way to question the *why* of our principles, to interrogate the deeper meanings, to see the connection between the individual and the world.

Why is justice, equity, and compassion so important? Because if I as an

individual am inherently worthy of dignity, then every other individual must be as well. And if we are all connected, how can I be like the pigs in Orwell's *Animal Farm* and say some animals are more equal than others? How can I fail to notice that the compassion I hope you'll show me might be worth showing to everyone else?

This principle calls us to be in that state of becoming just, equitable, and compassionate. We are never *JUST* just. But if we remember who we are and where we come from, we are *becoming* just. The justice, equity, and compassion we see in the world helps us become more just—to others, yes, but also to ourselves.

Now I will admit a bit of my own theological struggle here. I don't always believe that the things I know are true in general also apply to me. In other words, sometimes it is easier to declare that the inherent worth and dignity of every person in this interdependent web of all existence means that there must be justice, equity, and compassion for other people.

But it's hard for me to accept that I am part of that web and am just as inherently worthy. If that's the case, then justice, equity, and compassion should also be for me. For you—absolutely. For everyone in the world who faces injustice, oppression, and hatred—absolutely. For me—eh...

And when the principles are in a tidy list, it's easy to dismiss myself as not really part of it. It's easy to apply these things to the people I love, the congregations I serve, the larger community.

But this wheel, Ian's pesky new way of looking at things... well, it's not letting me off the hook. Instead, it is reminding me of what my colleague David Bumbaugh wrote: "In this interconnected existence the well-being of one cannot be separated from the well-being of the whole... We all spring from the same source and all journey to the same ultimate destiny." In other

words, y'all can't grow into harmony with the Divine without me, nor I without you, nor all of us without each other.

It is this connection—from the individual to the collective and back again—that helps answer questions of *why*. Why do we affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations? Because it's about me and it's about you, neither of which can stand alone, so it becomes about us. As theologian Frederick Buechner famously said, "It's the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you, too."

The question of *why* can apply to any of our principles. Why do we affirm and promote this? *Why*, of course, being the question this wheel seems to ask of us over and over. And over and over we see the need both for affirmation of the individual and for commitment to all of our complicated relationships—including those that reach beyond the human realm.

Each principle connects the self to the interdependent web and back again, in areas of truth, justice, community, connection, process, growth, and compassion—leading us from the familiar form that asks *what*, to the transmogrified form, which inquires *why*.

Once you see it, it can't be unseen. Now we can't think of the principles without thinking about the wheel and the spokes and the interconnectedness. We have transformed our way of thinking about it. We've transmogrified our principles, our ethics, and our faith.

And maybe that's the real message. Not that we become something new overnight, but that we—and our world and how we act in it—are always in process, always rolling forward on this wheel which carries us to new lands, but always brings the essentials with us as we go: *You matter. You are not alone.* ■

Revolutionary Love

BY EMILY WRIGHT-MAGOON, MINISTER, UU CHURCH OF MIDLAND, TEXAS



When I gave birth to my daughter, I had already been laboring for days—not hours, but days. Later we learned we were waiting for her to turn so she was in the right position for productive labor. But at the time the excruciating contractions just kept coming and coming. Doctors call this part of labor *transition*.

Perhaps now our world is in a stage of transition. One of my classmates from divinity school, the Sikh activist Valarie Kaur asks: *What if this [time] is not the darkness of the tomb but the darkness of the womb?*

That day in the hospital room, when our daughter finally turned in my womb, all of a sudden it was time. The doctor told me, *It's time to push*. And I looked at my husband, Ethan, terrified: Could I do it? I couldn't.

But he told me I could. He stood beside me and held my hand. So, I breathed and I pushed. And I breathed and I pushed. Ethan roared for me so loud they could hear him on the whole floor. We all—he and the doctor and the nurses and even my own baby—we all worked together to bring that new life into the world.

Transition. “What if this is not the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness of the womb?”

Valarie Kaur founded the Revolutionary Love Project. Years ago, a man she considered her uncle was murdered standing in front of his gas station, because he was wearing a turban. He was of the Sikh faith, and the first person killed in a hate crime after 9/11.

Fifteen years later, Valarie returned to the gas station where he was killed. She set down a candle in the spot where he bled to death. His brother,

Rana, turned to Valarie and said, “Nothing has changed.”

Valarie then asked, “Who have we not yet tried to love?”

They decided to call the murderer in prison. In her talk, “Three Lessons of Revolutionary Love in a Time of Rage,” Valarie describes what happened:

The phone rings. My heart is beating in my ears. I hear the voice of Frank Roque, a man who once said: “I’m going to go out and shoot some towel heads. We should kill their children, too.” And every emotional impulse in me says, “I can’t.” It becomes an act of will to wonder.

“Why?” I ask [him]. “Why did you agree to speak with us?”

Frank says, “I’m sorry for what happened, but I’m also sorry for all the people killed on 9/11.” He fails to take responsibility. I become angry to protect Rana, but Rana is still wondering about Frank. Rana says:

“Frank, this is the first time I’ve heard you say that you feel sorry.”

And Frank—Frank says, “Yes. I am sorry for what I did to your brother. One day when I go to heaven to be judged by God, I will ask to see your brother. And I will hug him. And I will ask him for forgiveness.”

And Rana says: “We already forgave you.”

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is freedom from hate. Because when we are free from hate, we see the ones who hurt us not as monsters, but as people who themselves are wounded, who themselves feel threatened, who don’t know what else to do with their insecurity but to hurt us, to pull the trigger, or cast the vote, or pass the policy aimed at us.

But if some of us begin to wonder about them, listen even to their stories, we learn that participation in oppression comes at a cost. It cuts them off from their own capacity to love.

We Unitarian Universalists talk a lot about love. Many UU churches say the words every week: “Love is the doctrine of this church.” My congregation preaches love from multiple sides of our building. The quote on our sign out front says: “We need not think alike to love alike.” The big yellow banner on the side of the church says: “We are Standing on the Side of Love.”

What does it mean to Side with Love?

Standing on the Side of Love was an official campaign of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Recently it was changed to “Side with Love” to acknowledge that not all can stand. And the UU composer who wrote the song, “Standing on the Side of Love” recently changed his lyrics to “Answering the Call of Love”—also in response to concerns about ableist and exclusionary language.

The campaign grew out of our denomination’s support for same-sex marriage. We said that while some might side with judgment, discrimination, and shame, we side with love. As playwright and actor Lin-Manuel Miranda says, “Love is love is love is love...”

Over the decade since the campaign’s founding, it has evolved and expanded to include many additional kinds of activism such as immigrant justice and racial justice. Since love is clearly such a central part of Unitarian Universalist identity and theology, we would do well to consider what we mean by love. What do we mean when we say we side with love?

Too often, the kind of love our culture talks about is actually “emotional bosh,” as Martin Luther King, Jr. put it. There are so many ways that commands to love can in fact be abusive, manipulative, weak, or condescending. For example: “Love the sinner; hate the sin.” I find this refrain is most often used by those who are vehemently anti-gay, both in their attitudes and in their efforts to deny gay people basic rights and dignities. How is that loving?

After the death of so many unarmed black boys and men by police, Regina Shands Stoltzfus reflects on her fear for the life of her own black son. In an essay entitled, “I Cannot Speak of Love to You Today,” she wonders whether love is enough to save his life:

The systemic nature of oppression means that oppression functions despite the good will, intentions, and yes, the love, of many, many people. ...At the end of the day I am more interested in my son coming home alive than I am with someone learning to love him.

So if we are going to rely on love, it must be a radical love, a revolutionary love. What is that? The psychologist Erich Fromm said that mature love has four characteristics: care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge.

Likewise, the feminist writer bell hooks says, “Embracing a love ethic means that we utilize all the dimensions of love—care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge—in our everyday lives. We can successfully do this only by cultivating awareness. Being aware enables us to critically examine our actions to see what is needed...”

So love requires us to lean in, to listen, to learn deeply, to be transformed, to act. Valarie Kaur talks about revolutionary love having three directions.

First: Love for others means that we “see no stranger.” Think of what you might do for a family member in danger. Think of the ways you stay in relationship with family even when you don’t like them, or even when they hurt you. What if we fought for every one on this planet as if they were family? If we see everyone as a part of us, we can then wonder about them. We can jump in to protect them when they are in harm’s way.

Second: Love for our opponents means “tending the wound.” Valarie says: “Tending the wound is not healing them—only they can do that. Just

tending to it allows us to see our opponents: the terrorist, the fanatic, the demagogue. They’ve been radicalized by cultures and policies that we together can change.”

Third: Love for ourselves—breathe and push. Valarie asks: “How are you breathing each day? Who are you breathing with? ...How are you protecting your joy each day?” We cannot do this difficult work of loving others and our opponents if we are not continually grounding ourselves in the reality that we are loved, deeply and unconditionally.

Finally, let’s dig a little deeper into what it means to *side* with love. Given everything we’ve just said about love, it seems we should have abandoned the idea of “sides.” But, as with most spiritual truths, here we come to the paradox: revolutionary love calls us into the fray, where we must take a side in order to create a world where sides are dissolved.

What does it mean to Side with Love?

As Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said: “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.”

Radical love allows us to see that we are all interconnected, and so any action or inaction we take mends or tears that fabric. There is no “neutral” position. No way to stay “out of politics” or stay on the sidelines while the bull in the ring is slaughtered, while the Jews are hauled away to Auschwitz, while people of color are treated as second-class citizens. Staying on those sidelines implies that we approve.

The really tricky thing is how we can work to love our opponents—such as torch-bearing white supremacists—while still stopping them from murdering our siblings of color. Or: how we can love ourselves unconditionally, while still holding ourselves to high standards of accountability?

The late writer and activist Barbara Deming wrote about “two hands of nonviolence”:

With one hand we say to one who is angry, or to an oppressor, or to an unjust system, “Stop what you are doing. I refuse to honor the role you are choosing to play. I refuse to obey you. I refuse to cooperate with your demands. I refuse to build the walls and the bombs. I refuse to pay for the guns. With this hand I will even interfere with the wrong you are doing. I want to disrupt the easy pattern of your life.

[And] then the advocate of nonviolence raises the other hand. It is raised outstretched—maybe with love and sympathy—maybe not—but always outstretched... With this hand we say, “I won’t let go of you or cast you out of the human race. I have faith that you can make a better choice [than] you are making now, and I’ll be here when you are ready. Like it or not, we are part of one another.

So radical love requires that we resist and dismantle the systems that oppress some of us more directly than others, and all of us in the end.

As we resist these systems, we hold out a radical love for all the people within the systems—which is all of us. That love isn’t just “emotional bosh.” It’s a commitment to listen, to wonder, to “tend the wound,” to act, and to humbly consider that we can just as easily be hardened by hate, immobilized by indifference, or stifled by ignorance.

As Valarie Kaur says, “Love is more than a feeling—love is sweet labor that can be modeled, taught, and practiced.”

So let us lean into this time of transition. May we know that we are assisted by partners and midwives of many kinds. May we be brave when it’s time to push, and remember to breathe. For when we side with Love, when we labor for Love, something revolutionary can be born. ■



From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY
SENIOR MINISTER,
CHURCH OF THE
LARGER FELLOWSHIP

When I was a kid, it seemed like magic. My mother would take a piece of fabric and somehow bewitch it, so that it became a shirt, or a pair of shorts, or a dress for me to wear. Flat, lifeless pieces of cloth in a drawer, and suddenly—*voilà!* A piece of new clothing!

I asked my mom about it, and she told me to watch her. She took pieces of paper and pinned them to the fabric and cut them out. Then, following a huge sheet of directions with pictures, she sewed them together in particular ways. And plain old cloth became a beautiful new garment to wear.

It was amazing to watch, but I remember as the magic fell away. There was disappointment, but also a way forward. Suddenly, I knew how to move from cloth to garment, and none of it was mysterious at all. Some people do the same thing with words, with images, with food. They create something that, to the untrained eye, appears to have been conjured from stardust and mystery. But actually they are doing it methodically, step by step, following written instructions, or the teachings of their ancestors, or a particular gift that lets them do it intuitively.

Which is how we need to go about making change in the world. Methodically. I was taught history as if it were full of magic—benign acts by which people in authority handed over power to those without it. But watching and listening and reading history has taught me that the words of Frederick Douglass are true: “Power cedes nothing without demand.” Ceaseless demand.

I study the patterns, the templates, the instructions built by people who have demanded and achieved a shifting of power. I am alert when anyone

succeeds in creating something new and life-giving.

After yet another horrific school shooting—this time in Parkland, Florida— young people demanded change. Mainstream media was in awe of the mysterious, magical power that the students had to actually convince corporations and politicians to change their policies.

I am grateful for all people, especially the young, who dare to believe that we can still co-create the world....

And yet, further learning said that this was not completely mysterious. These were young people fortified with information gained in Advanced Placement history class about how discussion had previously been stopped in the aftermath of shootings. Gun control had been a subject of a year’s worth of debate for some of them.

Others were theater students, well-practiced at speaking before large crowds. The pieces of what they were doing were not magical or mysterious, but rather specific and well-honed. So much so that detractors accused them of being paid by left wing sources to fake their emotional states.

These young people also got boosts from celebrities, and from mainstream media that could not gush enough about their talent and their heroism.

Making change is not easy for anyone, and my hat is off to these young people. However, watching the assists that they have received, the open doors to power, the millions of dollars amassed to help them with their work, I’ve also noticed a sharp contrast to how the grief and anger of other young people has been met recently.

When Michael Brown’s murdered body was left lying in the hot streets of Ferguson, Missouri for four and a half hours before being tended to, his com-

munity, like the community of Parkland, was both angry and deeply grief-stricken. When the people came to mourn their beloved, to hold a vigil, they were met with tanks and militarized police. Mainstream (white) media labeled the protestors as dangerous and violent, when in fact the vast majority of them were grieving neighbors and peers. The scene escalated, and many people and businesses were hurt.

#BlackLivesMatter (BLM) emerged as a powerful, visionary force of collective liberation. These mostly young, mostly women and queer folks pieced together their own pattern for change, for creating a different way of being. Indeed, much of what the Parkland students have done is crafted on the techniques of BLM: create your own video and send it out via social media rather than relying on other sources; use many voices rather than electing one leader to represent the group; speak truth to power.

And yet the young people involved with BLM were not seen as heroes or visionary leaders. They were criminalized and judged and violently assaulted in cities across our land. Some are in jail still. Nonetheless, their work has had a positive impact on many communities across the land.

I am grateful for all people, especially the young, who dare to believe that we can still co-create the world; who can see the world we live in now and somehow find a way to imagine shaping something new from it; who take whatever tools are at hand and, with or without approval or support from others, use them to make something new.

Now that I’m older, I can also see that such leaders, such movements, such moments, are not to be taken for granted. That, in fact, when they happen—when groups are greater than the sum of their parts, when the walls crack enough for new life to come through—there is perhaps a bit of magic going on after all. Method... and magic. ■

REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

Our UU faith encourages us to be agents of change in the world. Rather than leaving it up to God to reward or punish people after they die, we think that folks should spend their lives not only trying to be ever-better human beings, but also trying to make the world an ever more just and compassionate place.

If our mission is to make the world a better place, what exactly is our job?

This is, of course, a tall order. Being an agent of change isn't easy. Mostly individuals and social systems alike want to stay the same. "Homeostasis" is a high-priced word for exactly that phenomenon. In the same way that our bodies fight to stay at an internal temperature somewhere around 98.6 degrees regardless of what the weather is like outside, relationships between people—including complex social relationships—tend to actively preserve things as they are.

So how do we serve as agents of change? If our mission is to make the world a better place, what exactly is our job?

It seems to me that there are all kinds of jobs, all kinds of agents, and that some people naturally gravitate toward some roles more than others.

Most obviously, there are **activists**. Activists agitate. They lead protests and other symbolic actions, drawing the attention of both politicians and the general public to wrongs that need to be righted. They get arrested. They take to the streets with songs and banners. They sit in. They write letters, and ask their friends and neighbors to write letters. In whatever way they can,



they pressure those with power to attend to the needs of the people.

Blessed are the activists, for they claim

power for those who seem powerless.

Less obviously, behind the activists there are **strategists**. They plan. They identify not only what exactly they hope to change, but also where there are points in the system that might yield to pressure. They organize, build coalitions, foster conversations to help discern what the next move will be.

Blessed are the strategists, for they carry a map for the journey.

Somewhere in the mix of activists and strategists there are **communicators**, who cast a wide net to draw people toward the work of change. They articulate the message of existing wrongs and new possibilities in ways that change hearts and minds.

Blessed are the communicators, for they widen both the conversation and the community.

Significant social change only happens with the sustained efforts of large groups of people, but not all movement toward change happens in groups. Some agents of change are **explorers**, bold thinkers who are able to share both a clear picture of the world as it is and also a vision of the world as it might be. Explorers are people who offer possibilities. They are often historians, people who have a clear enough understanding of how we got to where we are to enable them to imagine where we might go from here.

Blessed are the explorers, who know the path we have traveled, and can imagine the road ahead.

Finally, there are **artists**, the creatives, people who, in music or paint or words or dance or sculpture or any number of other forms, create new worlds for us to inhabit. Artists give us the ability to not only see things as they are and to see other worlds that don't yet exist,

they also enable us to live in the gap between those two. Artists both create visions of what is possible, and invite us to live in the longing for something better than what we know.

Blessed are the artists, for they invite us into worlds of possibility.

Of course, many people operate in more than one of these categories, and a lot of us have a hard time finding our way into any of them. All the roles I've described are for different kinds of leaders, and the reality is that in many situations a whole lot of us not only aren't called to be leaders, we *shouldn't* consider ourselves leaders. If we are trying to be supportive of a community we are not members of, being a follower is probably a better choice.

But one way of being an effective agent for change is to look for the activists, the strategists, the communicators, explorers and artists who inspire us, and throw our weight



behind their efforts. Rather than feeling inadequate and overwhelmed in the face of injustice, we can look for places where we might lean in, places where our own lives can shift toward something just a bit new, just a bit brave, just a bit outside our familiar comfort zone where we know what will happen because it has always happened that way before.

It might be scary. We might say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing or feel like we're not up to the task. Remember, it is as natural to long for the safety of the familiar as it is for your heart to return to its customary beat.

But what feels natural and what feels possible are two different things. You can, through diligent exercise, actually change your natural resting blood pressure. And you can, through diligent exercise, move down new paths, re-envisioning your journey as one of creating change. ■



Church of the Larger Fellowship
Unitarian Universalist
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02210-1409 USA

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 55362

You can listen to audio recordings of *Quest Monthly*, read back issues or get electronic versions of the text to share with friends (and much more) at questformeaning.org

Quest Monthly Editorial Team: Stefan Jonassen, Janet Lane, Kat Liu, Beth Murray, Meg Riley, Jaco ten Hove, Niala Terrell-Mason, Arliss Ungar, Lynn Ungar, editor

Copyright 2018 Church of the Larger Fellowship. Generally, permission to reproduce items from *Quest Monthly* is granted, provided credit is given to the author and the CLF. **ISSN 1070-244X**

CLF Staff: Meg Riley, senior minister; Jody Malloy, executive director; Lynn Ungar, minister for lifespan learning and *Quest Monthly* editor; Jeremy Nickel, minister of sacred virtual reality; Mandy Goheen, director of prison ministries; Lori Stone Sirtosky, director of technology; Beth Murray, program administrator; Judy DiCristofaro, fiscal administrator; Hannah Eller-Isaacs, social media coordinator and administrative assistant; Andrea Fiore, webmaster.

Learning Fellows: Margalie Belizaire, Rodney Lemery and Jessica Star Rockers

Web Site www.clfuu.org — Email clf@clfu.org — Toll-Free Line 800-231-3027 or 617-948-6150

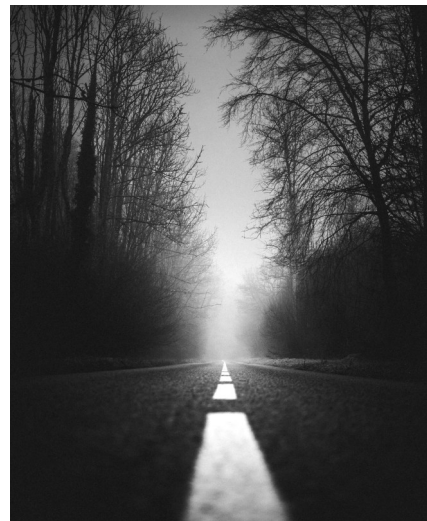
CLF Jewelry at *inSpirit*, The UU Book and Gift Shop 800-215-9076

CLF Unitarian Universalist, 24 Farnsworth Street, Boston MA 02210-1409 USA



We are beginning to understand that the world is always being made and never finished; that activism can be the journey rather than the arrival; that struggle doesn't always have to be confrontational but can take the form of reaching out to find common ground with the many "others" in our society who are also seeking ways out of alienation, isolation, privatization, and dehumanization by corporate globalization.

—**Grace Lee Boggs**
(1915-2015);
author, activist, feminist,
philosopher



The unofficial CLF motto is "Always in beta." We're not afraid to make change within our own organization, and we are deeply committed to making positive change in the larger world. Whether it's imagining and supporting criminal justice reform through our *Worthy Now* network or providing groundbreaking discussions on the VUU, the CLF is proud to be an agent of change. Please support this important work by sending a check in the enclosed envelope, or by donating at clfu.org/give. ■

