



30 DAYS OF LOVE: Questions for Theological Reflection

Your gifts—whatever you discover them to be—
can be used to bless or to curse the world.
The mind's power,
the strength of the hands, the reaches of the heart,
the gift of speaking, listening, imagining, seeing, waiting
any of these can serve to feed the hungry,
bind up wounds, welcome the stranger,
praise what is sacred, do the work of justice, or offer love.
Any of these can draw down the prison door,
hoard bread, abandon the poor, obscure what is holy,
comply with injustice, or withhold love.
You must answer this question:
What will you do with your gifts?
Choose to bless the world.
The choice to bless the world can take you into solitude
to search for the sources of power and grace;
native wisdom, healing and liberation.
More, the choice will draw you into community,
the endeavor shared, the heritage passed on,
the companionship of struggle,
the importance of keeping faith,
the life of ritual and praise, the comfort of human friendship,
the company of earth, its chorus of life welcoming you.
None of us alone can save the world.
Together—that is another possibility, waiting.

-Rev. Dr. Rebecca Ann Parker

Reflecting on This Moment in Time

With the developments of the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement that have been built this year in the face of continued oppression and injustice, there is a growing sense that “we” are in a transformational moment.

What meaning do you derive from the movements for justice building around the world? How do you interpret the signs of the times? Where do you think we are heading or could we be heading?



Integral to these developments is the ability to envision a better world.

Can we imagine another way of living together?

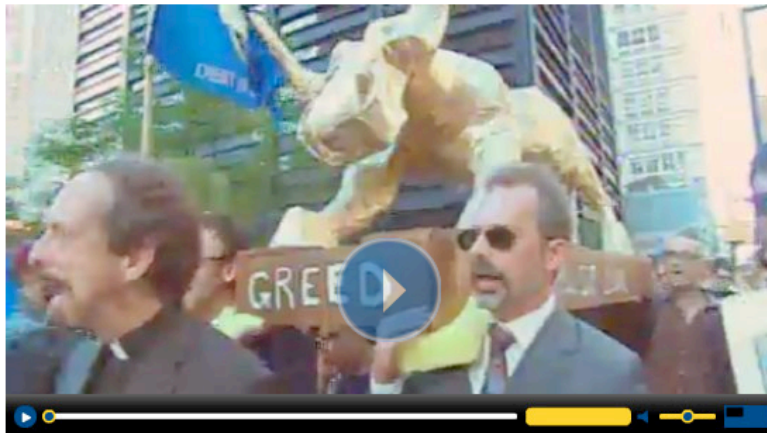
UU theologian, the Rev. James Luther Adams, said, *"The prophetic liberal church is the church in which persons think and work together to interpret the signs of the times in light of their faith, to make explicit through discussion the epochal thinking that the times demand."*

How do you see justice unfolding and how can we part of it?

What are the modern day parables in our lives right now? Are there stories of what has been happening today that illustrate morality and immorality? Action and inaction? Who today are the Good Samaritans? How do we, as people of faith, respond to inequality and oppression? What do we need to step back and reflect on? And how do we act? What relationships do we need to build? What actions do we need to take?

Clergy Members March Alongside "Occupy Wall Street" Protesters

By: Erica Ferrari



The "Occupy Wall Street" demonstrators who have been camping in Lower Manhattan for more than three weeks to protest the country's economic inequality marched to Washington Square Park on Sunday, and members of the clergy joined them in solidarity.

Chanting as they marched around the perimeter of Zuccotti Park, an interfaith coalition of Muslims, Jews and Christians carried a golden reproduction of the "Wall Street" bull, symbolizing greed and the biblical "golden calf" that was idolized as a false god.

"This is a symbol of our spiritual poverty in this country, of how far we've come from the basic principles of what we are supposed to be doing in this country," said the Reverend Michael Ellick of Judson Memorial Church.

"This golden calf is a symbol of the economic slavery Americans have allowed themselves to be trapped by," said activist Warren Goldstein.



On the Present Moment and the Occupy Movement

What constitutes a “moral” movement? -- 99% vs. 1% -- 99% for 100%? What kind of society organizes itself where there is a 99% and a 1%? What does our tradition say about this? How is our Universalism important here?

The Occupy Movement may feel more like an “unfolding journey” than a distinct and easily categorized act of social justice, such as rallying against anti-LGBT or anti-immigrant legislation or signing a letter to a member of Congress for the DREAM Act. What is comfortable or uncomfortable when you think about participating in Occupy vs. more “traditional” forms of social justice actions?

What does Occupy mean to UUs? Who are the people who have joined Occupy in your communities? Do you believe this is a crucial opportunity for connection? What does it mean if we ignore Occupy?

Have you heard a story of someone participating in the Occupy Movement that particularly resonated with you? What was their story? Did you hear it firsthand or through the media?

UUism is rooted in democratic principles (our 5th principle). How is democracy being strengthened today? How is it being undermined? What can we do to support the worldwide trend for democracy? How do we participate in actions to stop forces that repress democracy?

Have you been uncomfortable with any of the messages you have heard emerging from the Occupy Movement? What and why? What about people involved in the Occupy movement? Are these individuals you personally encountered?

Can we claim and occupy a space of understanding that is based in our Universalist faith? Can we embrace the journey even though we are not sure of where we are going and where we will end up?



Bridging Divides

“We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap
Warranting endless competition among us
But as a deliberate act of God
To make us a community of brothers and sisters
Jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer
To the varied problems of life.”

-Steven Biko

Some have critiqued Occupy encampments for their issues with racism, classism, ableism, sexism, and religious plurality. Yet, these are issues of systemic oppressions that are all at play in larger society.

How do we ensure that the divisions among us, reflected in inequality, don't prevent us from reaching for something better? How do we act from both a sense of righteousness and humility? How do we engage with people and keep up the momentum of working for a just cause while having the humility to know that we are not perfect but that we are reaching for something better? How do we keep each other accountable? How do we stay in the embrace of love?

What does it mean that listening is an act of love?

In what ways are you part of truly inclusive communities? In what ways do you fall short?

Do you ever think of yourself as a member of a class, i.e. “upper class,” “rich,” middle class,” “working class,” “struggling,” “poor.” etc.? If so, what categories describe your feelings? Why or why not? Do you hold shame in talking about these ideas out loud with others?

Can you think of times when you have contributed to being an “oppressor?” What about times when you were the “oppressed?”

How do we imagine another way of living together? How do we see justice unfolding and how can we part of it? Can you imagine it?



Standing on the Side of Love Campaign

Cornel West said, “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.” What does that mean to you? What does our love look like in public? How must we open ourselves up to make this possible?

Standing on the Side of Love is about to enter its third year. We have joined together to address issues related to LGBT equality, immigrant justice, Islamophobia, bullying, and much more. What does the Standing on the Side of Love campaign mean **now**? What could it mean? How might the campaign hold all of the issues you are concerned with today?

How might bringing Standing on the Side of Love into your community contribute to a conversation grounded in love, in actions of solidarity, and even non-violent civil disobedience?

Some of the media is characterizing this moment as a class war, leading to great potential for polarization. How does Standing on the Side of Love play a role in being a non-polarizing force? Do we feel polarized in our own congregations? In our communities? How do we build bridges?

Imagine what the world would look like the day after tomorrow if “the revolution—the great transformation” came – where economic disparity between the uber-rich and the majority who are struggling was bridged. Where scapegoating of LGBT people, immigrants, Muslims and others was eradicated. What does this world look like to you?

How do we hold the tension of our dreams with the realities of our imperfections? How can our faith, our communities, and the Standing on the Side of Love Campaign sustain us?

What is the moment calling for us to do NOW?

This is a time for boldness – not giving up. It is a time for great courage – not letting our fears stop us. If we just work on small changes, though they are fulfilling and valuable, we will not make long term, big changes in the world. We have to bring all the puzzle pieces together—small changes, individual work and big ideas — in order to create a different world.

– Linda Stout, Executive Director, Spirit in Action



Many faith leaders and activists are saying that they believe this moment is calling for us to think about and act on the connections that exist between the various justice struggles of the people, and how we can strengthen the connections between us while working in a context of what divides us.

How do we occupy a space where we try and fail and try again? How do we respond to evil? To our own complicity?

Unitarian Universalism is a relational – a covenantal religion. Who is embraced in our covenant? How?

This moment challenges us to ask -- how do we treat each other? How are we offering hospitality? What is the basis for the relationships that we have? How are we treating each other regardless of identity?

Where is there opportunity to create more inclusive community?

Justice, equity, and compassion — the democratic process in action – these are our principles. How do we strengthen our ability to demonstrate compassion for those who are suffering?

UU theologian, the Rev. Rebecca Parker, says that spiritual practice means just that – developing our ability to be compassionate, to act for justice, through practice. How might we participate in the 30 days of love campaign to develop our spiritual practice for justice, for love?

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