

WITNESS for JUSTICE

A weekly commentary from
the United Church of Christ

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Living into Our Legacy

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Since the election of President Trump, the United Church of Christ has collectively engaged in an ongoing effort to maximize the impact of our agency. We have been, have been throughout our history, one of the most powerful agents for social transformation this country has ever known. There have been few times when that agency has been more necessary.

As I travel around, I am hearing the pain and fatigue of leaders from across this denomination who must endure daily assaults to our religious commitments, spiritual sensitivities, and justice orientation. An Executive Order banning refugees, preferring Christians and casting the Muslim as a terror threat; appointments of people to key positions who have strong ties to white supremacist organizations; a historic and blatant disregard for ethics and conflicts of interest; public humiliation of women and people with disabilities; and public speech from the highest office in the land designed to cast doubt and aspersions on the integrity of our judicial system all conspire to make religious leaders committed to a just world for all feel beleaguered, battered, and weary.

The temptation in these days is to adopt a defensive, reactionary posture. To be sure, we cannot refuse to react when an Executive Order is written that closes borders to seven countries. We cannot fail to respond when the President brags about his history of sexually assaulting women who, by his own words, want him to do it because of his celebrity. We cannot not speak out when religious freedom is threatened as a means of discrimination against women who exercise their reproductive choice options or to protect bigots and homophobes who don't want to hire or sell to LGBT folk. In all these matters and more, we will respond, react, and speak out.

That cannot, however, be our default mode. There is a calculation to this that heavy hitters on the political right, including and especially the architects of this madness (Steve Bannon, Rex Tillerson, Betsy DeVos, Kellyann Conway, et. al.), are using to wear down and distract their progressive antagonists. We play

God is still speaking,
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right into the hands of their machinations if every day we make note of what has happened and express our righteous anger and outrage. Again – we can't not respond. But we soon must move from a defensive posture in which we expend our energy and resources articulating what we stand against; and start expending our precious time, effort and energy declaring what we stand for.

Let love of neighbor motivate us.

Let a commitment to build a just world for all catch us all feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and providing sanctuary to the immigrant and refugee among us.

Let a proclamation of a gospel of extravagant welcome recreate the world in the image and likeness of a God who shows no partiality.

Let clear, courageous, and passionate commitments to radical hospitality be as evident in this time as whatever rhetoric we develop to address the madness that issues forth from our Nation's leader.

In other words, let us be the United Church of Christ – a body built to love neighbor and create a just world for all.

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