

## Guided by Conscience

Hello. Good morning. This morning I wanted to speak to you about the UUA's Declaration of Conscience, which we as a congregation voted to adopt a few weeks ago. The Declaration of Conscience is, I believe, a statement in reaction to, or if I may, an indictment of the current presidential administrations policies. With almost every Executive Order that has been signed it appears and definitely feels as if we are moving away from a humanitarian influence in governing decisions toward a corporate mentality of profitability at any cost regardless of how it affects the parts of the whole. In the case of our government the parts of the whole are the people who are the Democracy. Democracy is a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives. Democracy means government of the people, by the people, for the people. In a Direct Democracy, people directly participate in the administration of the country. An Indirect Democracy is run by the representatives of the people. So in my less than scholarly view it appears we have a combination of both; a Direct Indirect Democracy. Or simply stated, people elect or vote for representatives who run our Democracy.

### Advantages of Democracy

1. It recognizes the worth of people as equal to each other, in the sense that each person gets one vote, or at least now they do.
2. It ensures the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people.
3. No one is above the law, therefore people willingly obey the law.

4. It is least susceptible to revolution, because there are peaceful means of achieving change.
5. It is self government, it functions best when we all participate.
6. It has immense educational value.
7. It is self- corrective.

I believe that this is the most important and it is also the most encouraging characteristic of Democracy.

### Disadvantages of Democracy

1. Democracy emphasizes quantity rather than quality.
2. It is the government of amateurs.
3. It is the government of opportunists and power seekers.
4. It cannot function without political parties which sometimes harm the interests of the people.
5. Election propaganda misguides public opinion. I don't believe this happens more in a democracy but it does happen never the less, and it can certainly be considered a disadvantage.
6. The elected representative majority can tyrannize over the elected representative minority. There is nothing wrong with Democracy itself. The defect lies in the socio-economic system in which it is made to work. The future of a Democracy hangs in the balance. It may turn into a Capitalist Democracy or a Socialist Democracy.

When the elected representative majority is not truly indicative of the popular majority's interests the will of the people can become subverted. One of the ways this can happen is when a climate of political apathy develops within one of the political parties. In a democracy your vote is your voice, when you chose

not to vote you have given up your right to representation. When this happens on a large scale it opens the door for the political ideology of the minority to become representative of the majority when it is not. The best way to remedy this is to participate, or simply put use your voice, vote.

This last disadvantage is where I find the concerns which may have incubated the ideology of the Declaration of Conscience. Although our 7 Principles are what define the Unitarian Universalist faith, they have never been under attack as they are now. The current political administration's policies and their agenda are in direct opposition to our 7 Principles on many different levels.

Now I would like to read our 7 Principles to you, I would also like you to entertain the thought or idea that these 7 Principles are the "conscience" of our faith. We affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

As Unitarian Universalists we are not bound by creeds, or doctrines that we must believe in, or adhere to, instead we covenant to affirm and promote our 7 Principles. We hold these 7 Principles as strong values and moral guides. We chose to live out these Principles within a living tradition of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience. As the Reverend Barbara Wellsten Hove explains, “The principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who chose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities.

I believe that the 7 Principles are our conscience, they guide us to live in such a way that is beneficially harmonious to human beings, animals, the planet, and the universe. We are all a part of an interconnected whole and we will “Profit” from an understanding, that our own actions can and do have far reaching effects on not just ourselves, but the whole as well. When we think of ourselves as a part of a whole then we realize that actions guided by love, kindness, and compassion will help to bring peace, liberty, and justice to the whole, or all of the world community, as well as the individual pieces of the whole, otherwise known as ourselves and the environment.

By this Religious Philosophy then it only stands to reason; that when we are not guided by a loving conscience we inadvertently or in some cases even purposefully bring anger, greed, jealousy, injustice, inequality, and fundamentalism to the whole. In doing this we create the illusion of being separate from the whole, rather than reinforcing that all of us and everything is part of a whole. So the obvious conclusion we can draw from this is; when we stand on the side of love, this is beneficial to the whole and so is also beneficial to the individual parts of the whole.

So how do we stand on the side of love? How do we act on the side of love? I have a suggestion which I believe is as obvious as it is simple. We allow ourselves to be “ Guided by Our Conscience” a.k.a. the 7 Principles of Unitarian Universalism. If we notice something or if we feel or see things that seem to be morally opposed to our UU Principles we need to act to correct the trajectory of the injustice in what way we can. For if we do nothing, we by default allow the behavior to continue on its own path or direction. This is what I believe the UUA has addressed with the “Declaration of Conscience.”

## Declaration of Conscience

At this extraordinary time in our nation’s history, we are called to affirm our profound commitment to the fundamental principles of justice, equity and compassion, to truth and core values of American society.

In the face of looming threats to immigrants, Muslims, people of color, and the LGBTQ community and the rise of hate speech, harassment and hate crimes, we affirm our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

In opposition to any steps to undermine the right of every citizen to vote or to turn back advances in access to health care and reproductive rights, we affirm our commitment to justice and compassion in human relations.

And against actions to weaken or eliminate initiatives to address the threat of climate change—actions that would threaten not only our country but the entire planet—we affirm our unyielding commitment to protect the interdependent web of all existence.

We will oppose any and all unjust government actions to deport, register, discriminate, or despoil.

As people of conscience, we declare our commitment to translate our values into action as we stand on the side of love with the most vulnerable among us.

We welcome and invite all to join in this commitment for justice.

The time is now.

The current political administration appears by way of their executive orders and the direction of their policies to be in direct opposition to the majority of if not all of our principles. The travel ban is in direct contradiction with the ideology of American democracy, we are a nation of immigrants. Restricting entry into our country based on religious preference does not affirm or promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Removing regulations to protect the environment when over 90% of scientists agree that we are accelerating climate change at an alarming rate does not seem to be in the best interest of humans or the planet. Where is the justice, equity and compassion in repealing healthcare for over 20 million people and replacing it with what amounts to a massive tax cut for the people who earn in the top 10% of our country. Our voices can make a difference the latter example aimed at the most vulnerable among us was never even brought to a vote thanks to the public outrage it generated.

These are but a few examples of why the time is now, of why there is a sense of urgency to stand on the side love. Love for peoples diversity as a strength not something to condemn or judge them for. Love for a culture of acceptance of each other, you know peaceful coexistence. Love for the environment, we live on our planet how ignorant is it to

deny what we are witnessing and what scientific data is telling us, in the name of corporate profitability. Love is exhausting any and all diplomatic options before even entertaining the thought of war.

We need to make a choice to do something when our conscience is telling us there is something wrong. As we are all a part of a whole any unjust action that is done to any one of us is done to all of us. When your conscience starts speaking to you don't ignore what it is telling you. Open your heart to it. Let it be your guide so you can stand on the side of love. Make no mistake about it we as Unitarian Universalists do have a "conscience", these are the 7 Principles which we covenant to affirm and promote.

So be it.

Namaste'