

“When Will We Ever Learn?”
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I don't often speak from the pulpit on things that are clearly political issues -- other than to draw attention to concerns that may need a closer look, or at times to address why we as a liberal religious and caring community might be a positive, affective and relevant piece in whatever the circumstance.

As justice is where the needle of my compass points, and as a Unitarian Universalist clergyman I have a responsibility to try to chart a good course for more than just myself alone. And so I must always try to remember the destination and not lose track of it along the way.

This perspective of a destination is a very important one particularly when I deal in the political arena. It is vital to keep sight of what needs to be realized because often the course is a long one and can at times be laden with heavy seas, and at other times with no winds for which to set sail. So it is always important to remember that there is a destination even when we pull into what may seem a safe port of call that tries to lure us into staying.

It is important to remember that we are in port only to wait out the weather or gather fresh water and food, not to fold our sails and strip the ship to build our homes. The voyage is never over as long as we remember the destination and know we are not there yet.

However, with the cisterns filled and the food lockers restocked we can again share the work to keep a sound vessel moving and return to the voyage and towards our destination. One we must never lose thought of it regardless of the weather, or the distance we must travel to get there or the sirens that call us to the shore, For if we do, we risk being set adrift and to circle in the gyre of the North Sea while watching our own wake cutting through plastic debris.

So with that nautical metaphor in place let's move into some thoughts on our journey and our destination.

We all know that we now have a piece of new legislation, which could look to some like a destination that has been reached and done so over some pretty wild and intractable seas. This legislation has been called a Health Care Reform Act, which has been described as a triumph, as well as a socialist plot, a legalization of death panels, and a death penalty for small business

and the economy. These descriptions all are foolish ignorance or political arrogance and rhetoric depending on who is buying into the myth and who is pushing it.

Actually, it is basically nothing more than a set of minimal regulations on our health care insurance industrial complex, which still dictates and leads for the most part the direction of, and the what and how health and illness are marketed, under the rubric of “health care” here in the United States. Which in my personal opinion is a high priced and cleverly presented bait and switch scam for the most part.

A system designed to get folks to think they need overpriced and often unnecessary or ineffective pills and accept overpriced and overprescribed diagnostic treatments that do little more than create obscene profits in the health care industrial complex and ease the minds of Dr's—who if they are in practice must now buy extremely high priced insurance from the same corporate entities that sell health care insurance to all of us. And they must abide by the rules of the health insurance companies proper diagnosis forms. For me this raises some very significant questions.

It is easy to have your head turned with all the glamour and hype around this new legislation. And it certainly is good to have our President, who I personally trust and support, having such a success which will undoubtedly help him down the road if they play their cards right. However I'm not fooled into believing that there is any significant change in how we will be getting health care any time soon.

But young folks who might not have thought of health care insurance as anything very important at this point in their lives are going to need to start thinking about it, and all the rest of the population as well.

As this new law comes into effect we will all be required to buy into some corporate medical insurance policy, and they will continue to make obscene profits playing both ends against the middle which in my opinion is what they do the best. And no surprise that this was the piece they still managed to hold on to through all this blather and noise leading up to this new legislation.

Don't get me wrong there are wonderful parts of this regulation legislation that are now to be law like no denial for preconditions -- well sort of; at least it has been tempered a bit. But this will not

take effect until 2014. Not until then will folks with such classifications have legal recourse if they are refused insurance coverage. Something which insurance companies can do and have done regularly for such things as arthritis, strong reactions to bee stings, being 5% over the proper weight assessment for sex and height, asthma, having received an injection of a steroid for any reason, or even being pregnant, not to mention Cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease, cirrhosis, emphysema, blindness, deafness, muteness, where there truly are serious and life threatening needs associated. All these continue to be legal as points of denial of care. These and even more outrageous assessments, and will continue to be points of refusal for coverage, until the new laws take effect in 2014; with the one exception as I understand it. Children under 18 will be exempt from preconditions in 90 days from the signing of the legislation.

So only after 2014 will it be illegal to refuse people biased on "pre existing conditions" and that is good! But there is still no restriction on how much they can charge for this insurance until -- as I understand it some time after 2018 or 2020 and then the cap will be 9% of anyone's gross annual income.

So if you look at where the numbers are now this seems good but don't be fooled. No matter how you slice it, the medical insurance giants figured out how to get their guaranteed dime on the dollar of every citizen of this nation. And when you add the 30 some million more mandated insured they stand to make even more obscene profits than they have been. And I have no question that the industry had this in their sights all along.

And if you compare this cost it to say France or Canada, even the Netherlands, nations like these with arguably better health care than here in the United States, the health cost figures in their tax mix are no where near 9% of taxable income. And these countries offer universal health care.

We need to remember that this new legislation is not a done deal, only the first step in a long and arduous ongoing trudge towards a 'just community.' We need to remember that the course we have charted even with the weather, shoals, winds and the currents in mind is still far from over. The most important thing for us to do now is to remember the destination, even if we take some R and R, or time in port. And the destination of this journey is: full and comprehensive health care for every one in this nation, provided by and for the people.

And as of yet those prophetic words of Lincoln that a “nation by and for the people shall not perish from the earth” still stand. But they, that ubiquitous they, are chopping away at that at every chance they get now.

They can see that though full and comprehensive health care for all people who reside in this nation is far from realized in this new legislation, it certainly opens the doors for further travel on this journey toward universal health care.

And not to lose sight of how the greedy operate in this nation, in the midst of all this health care legislation rhetoric, obscured behind the scenes while this dominant news story of health care was taking front pages, we had another absolutely frightening undercut to our nation, one that rendered the people in this nation all but impotent.

While eyes were focused on the health care debate the Supreme Court ruled that it was legal for corporations to fund political candidates without restriction. Corporate America can now literally buy the political process. And this same Supreme Court has now for years made this kind of decision with a 5/4 split right

down political lines. This is just another step in the ongoing drift to corporate governance that for all intents and purposes has been growing and stabilizing itself in our nation since Dwight D. Eisenhower warned us of it.

I guess it has to do a lot with how you are brought up. I imagine there are still people that believe an Irishman doesn't have the brains a good Englishman does, not to mention a Scotsman. Or that a Chinese person is somehow an underdeveloped a hairless monkey or that people from India or Africa are some kind of subspecies.

One would think that if there was anyplace on the planet these mythologies were debunked and laughed at, if addressed at all, would be here in the United States of America. But we know better. Just listen to right-wing radio for an hour or FOX news. Listen closely to the angry tirades there and you might hear a real twist of what was once immoral and sad ignorance alleged as clear and accurate information. Remember the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, envy, lust, sloth, anger and gluttony? Perhaps with the exception of sloth, they have all been adopted in our contemporary western culture as positive ways to conduct our affairs in life. There seems to be no end to blatant lies to push one's agenda. But

perhaps the greatest sin that modern society has is in the oversimplification of the issues and the name calling against those who believe different than an inside group who claims moral superiority.

So when the going gets tough and the ideals which I have grown up with are threatened by a fast moving, harsh and often shallow corporate world I remember Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi, one of the most influential proponents of democracy that we have had in modern times, made the following observation in his struggle for freedom in India:

“Yes, there are seven (deadly) sins:

wealth without work, pleasure without conscious, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, politics without principle.”

Overcoming the sins of our modern world which has tended to isolate one group from another and left true dialogue and working consensus in the dust, we need to set our sights on the working values inherent in building a multifaceted community which emphasizes combinations not only of differing beliefs and perspectives, but combinations of ideals with hard work. There

still is a place in this world for real effort, consciousness, character, morality, humanity, sacrifice and principle. Are these parts to the common community lost? Will we ever learn?

I suspect we will learn if we don't lose sight of the greater destinations. Though the maps of navigation are open to all who might set course and we need to take the helm of our ship and work together to stay the course we all know we must set. The open seas and its vast vistas still await us on our ongoing journey. Undoubtedly it will continue to be strewn with monsters of the deep and big storms now and then. It won't be easy. The challenges will be great. But our dreams are greater.

And too we must remember that the natures of these dreams we have of a just and equitable world community are worth the arduous journeys it will take to realize them. And when we come together, like a good crew, the adventure and life uplifting experience of the journey, with a common horizon ahead, will be more than worth the efforts. So let us take the helm together to push toward the bounty of a just and caring world. Let us engage the course which stretches out before us. And in the words of another great captain of dreams and a great ship the enterprise, shall we, "make it happen".

Make no mistake: We have just begun and have a long way to go. But begun we have, and that will make all the difference in path ahead towards a better day, a better nation, “by and for the people,” which “will not perish from this earth.” And that is the good news!

So be it.