



ALL SOULS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

This time last year, I sent a letter, kicking off our stewardship campaign using the mantra: *Now, more than ever. Now, more than ever*, I said, All Souls was needed in this community. *Now, more than ever*, I said, we needed to put our money, and our time, and our talents where are values are.

And we did.

Like many of you, last year, at this time, I was filled with trepidation about the future. Who knew what would happen under this new regime? But this year I have hope. I have hope because, throughout this past year, people across this nation have been speaking up for human rights and justice for all, including here in Colorado Springs. Never in my 24 years of activism here in the Springs, have I seen people step up in the ways we have: hundreds at rallies, thousands writing postcards to lawmakers.

Here at All Souls we've stepped up in a big way to be a host Sanctuary Congregation; to say it is not enough to decry unjust laws; we must take action. We have discovered our secret power and it is my new mantra:

Together we can.

Together we can enact change; ***together we can*** make a difference; ***together we can*** change our world; ***together we can*** hold back the forces of darkness that threaten to consume us, and be the light that shines brightly for justice. For equity. For hope.

Together we can be a beacon of hope.

Of course, the operative word is together. In fact, for over 125 years All Souls has been proclaiming ***Together we can***. This togetherness we share is powerful because it's gritty and loving and determined and reflective.

And it's costly. It takes our time and our dedication; and it takes our financial support. This kind of togetherness requires commitment; it requires us to thoughtfully looking at our datebook and our checkbook to determine what is the *best* We can give to All Souls, because it's that important to us.

Just think of all that we provide:

- Sanctuary for people who are traditionally vulnerable. People in the LGBTQ communities who are worried that their basic rights—many of them newly gained—will be taken away, parents with special needs children who fear their access to a quality education will be denied with the rolling back of ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act, which guarantees a place in school for children with mental and physical disabilities), people of color who worry that the tenuous security that have will be stripped away. Not to mention refugees, Muslims, Jews—all of whom have experienced a shockingly high level of hate crimes since November 8, 2016.
- A fellowship for action and a location for organizing. With what is happening at the highest levels of government, it is clear that grassroots work is needed. As it did in the early 90s when Amendment 2 was approved in Colorado, All Souls is once again becoming a meeting place for action. Our Social Justice Action Team keeps us in the know regarding the issues of the day and ways to get involved, including hosting the 2nd Annual Women's March, hosting someone in

Sanctuary, and sponsoring several postcard-writing campaigns and participating in countless rallies.

- Sustenance for justice workers. Our congregation is full of citizens who are taking an active part in the social justice causes that have sprung up with greater urgency. Every week, members and friends of All Souls have participated in rallies, protests, postcard writing, calling elected officials and meetings with other justice-based organizations to figure out next steps. The work is seemingly endless and stressful. We provide a place for them to rest and be fed by a supportive community. We provide uplifting worship services that reminds folks we're not alone, music that gives hope and inspires us to act, religious exploration for children that helps the youngest among us find their own center, religious education opportunities for adults that create deep community ties and helps us all feel the interconnected web of existence of which we are a part.

Add to all of that the quality programming and care that have always been a hallmark of our congregation and you can see why now, more than ever, we are called to rise up, to speak out, to show up, to reach out, to be the voice of liberal religion, to be the voice for those who are being silenced, to be the voice for our planet.

This week, we'll be beginning our annual Stewardship Drive. With your generous contribution to continue the work, to safeguard human rights and to harbor those in need I am confident that together we can continue to be a force for justice and wholeness in our families, our communities, our nation, and our world. I encourage you to carefully reflect on your giving, using the Fair Giving Guide to consider whether you can maintain or increase your pledge. When we all rise to the challenge, *together, we can* change our world

Thank you for your steadfast commitment in both action and giving. You are the heart of All Souls. I deeply appreciate your involvement.

With much love,

(the) Rev. Dr. Nori J Rost
Settled Minister