



Flame on the Water

Celebrate Diversity



Question with Integrity



Build Justice

**December 2025
Choosing Hope**

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Forget Optimism — Choose Hope

**By Gilbert T. Rowe,
Distinguished Professor, Duke
Divinity School**

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

For all the talk by politicians about optimism and the bright future ahead, many of the students I teach are not buying it. A growing number among them are telling me they are not planning to have children. Their decision isn't selfish. It stems from the multiple worries they have about things like accelerating climate change, gross economic and social inequality, and the normalization of hate.

I agree with them that there isn't much reason to be optimistic about the future. But this doesn't mean they can't be hopeful. Hope and optimism are not the same thing.

I've studied social and environmental movements for three decades and am now helping lead a major research university's efforts to address climate change. This experience has taught me that optimism can actually get in the way of creating a just and hopeful future.

The problem with optimism is that it is a status quo concept. It assumes that even if present times are bad, the future will eventually and somehow turn out all

A common refrain is that some person or some new technology will come along and save us. At its core, an optimistic attitude believes that the current order is basically sound, trustworthy and deserving of our commitment.

Most of the people I talk to are not convinced of this. Some even say that optimism is dangerous, because it prevents us from correcting the conditions that create so much despair in the first place.

So how is hope different?

Hopeful people do not assume that everything is going to be all right. They see the current trouble and expect that more is on the way. That makes them honest. Hopeful people also resist efforts to predict the future, because nobody knows exactly how things are going to turn out. That makes them humble.

In addition to honesty and humility, a crucial characteristic of hopeful people is courage. Seeing the trouble, facing the pain and suffering, they do not withdraw or become bystanders who assume others will take care of the situation. Instead, they work to create a world better than the current one. It takes courage and a creative imagination to picture what by current standards appears to be an impossible future. It takes resolve not to give up when obstacles to that future come along. That makes love the essential power that inspires and animates authentic hope. Without the activation of love, hope withers and dies. I don't mean the sentimental love that, like optimism,

Forget Optimism-Choose Hope, cont.

assumes a smooth and tidy world that is easy to embrace. Rather, the love that energizes hope is often accompanied by sadness and lament; it grieves the damage done to this lovely world. It often takes the form of protest and resistance, because it demands an end to the wounding of life.

I am inspired daily by the many people I meet who want to give themselves to the creation of a just and beautiful world. They are building community gardens that invite their neighbors to share in the work and enjoy the delicious food they grow together. They are walking the southern border, looking for migrants who need help and protection. They are volunteering for relief efforts when extreme weather hits.

These people are witnesses to hope, because they are nurturing spaces and times in which love and beauty can grow. In a world saturated with suspicion and hostility, these people light a way of hope, because they are agents of hospitality. If hope has a future, it will be because people are committed to the creation of hospitable homes and communities in which all people are welcome.

But I am also chastened by the young people who tell me that my generation has been far too selfish and shortsighted. We are delinquent in our care of school buildings, neighborhood parks and watersheds.

We have not designed or invested in infrastructure – those projects that demonstrate our love for the children and grandchildren. We have lived as if the interests of future generations don't matter.

When I teach about the degradation of our lands and waters or the abuse and abandonment of many of the world's communities, it is easy to feel depressed. I am regularly asked, "What gives you hope?" My best response is to point to examples of people who are fiercely committed to nurturing and protecting the communities and places they love. When people give themselves to the care of each other, they don't only inspire others to do the same. They also cast a vision for a future that is worthy of our commitment.

Love is the power that repairs and heals our wounded world. By committing ourselves to magnifying and extending this power wherever we are, we choose hope.



Rev Tom Bozeman will be with us again from Sunday January 11 through Sunday, January 18, 2026.

Join us on
Sunday,
December 21
For a special
Winter Solstice
Service



Pot Luck
To follow!

Hope

By Frank Rycyk

I see cultivating hope as a learnable skill. "Every adversity has, within it, the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit." This approach was suggested by Success-writer, W.Clement Stone

If we find ourselves in a "bad" situation, we can ask ourselves, "what good can come from from this?"

When we learn to see such possibilities, we will be one step closer to "cultivating hope."

The UUFJC meditation
group meets every
Wednesday at 7 pm

C.U.P.P.S.

Covenant of UU Pagans

Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month

@ the Fellowship

Contact Kurt Groner for more information

573-636-0648

Chair Yoga with Alberta
Every Tuesday
@ 11 am
by donation

Drum Circle
will meet the 2nd
Monday of the month
from 7-8 pm
Next meeting is
November 10.

Our next Intergenerational
Classic Read is
Coffee Will Make You Black

by April Sinclair

Book discussion will be on

Sunday, February 8, 2026 at 2pm



Please submit your Joys & Concerns to our website:

<http://uufjc.org/joys--concerns.html> by noon on Friday or on paper forms for in-person contributions as early as possible on Sunday mornings.

Caring Committee

Contact Mary Jo LaCorte at: uufjc1@gmail.com for assistance.

If you are thinking about becoming a member of UUFJC, understand that it's a very simple and painless process. See a board member to witness you signing the book on the altar and pledge an amount you think you can give. See Bob Antweiler for pledge information.

Lunch - after services-

If you would like to join other members and friends for lunch, watch for postings and weekly announcements, or ask about each week's lunch location. If you have a particular place you'd like to recommend, please let us know.

**Contact us online on our
homepage:
UUFJC.org
or on Facebook**

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