

## Seven Suggestions for Creating Hope in Challenging Times

Copyright April 16, 2025, by Rev. Amy Kindred

- 1. Ask younger or newer folks who agree to accept a leadership position how you can support them and the decisions they will need to make to address pressing issues.** This means avoiding giving unsolicited advice. For example, in a UU congregation, a person who had been the Chair of the Caring Team for a long time called me, the minister, and said, “We have a new lead. Alex will be wonderful.” Two days later, I got a text from Alex who said, “I quit.” When I spoke with Alex in-person about the decision to withdraw from the role, they said, “I was told by the former chair I have to bring a gift anytime I visit someone. First of all, I don’t have the means to buy gifts for people and second, that is not my style.” Remember, ask, “How may I support you in this new role?” If they ask you for ideas, share them as ideas not as requirements.
- 2. Vote in local and national elections.** Our democracy is being threatened from all directions. And yet, there is still work to be done such as letting our representatives know our views on important issues. If you can’t march or wave flags in a protest, send notes to representatives. Make phone calls. Like the last snowflake that falls on a limb laden with thousands of other flakes, your phone call might be the final one to snap the branch and sway a decision.
- 3. Focus on self-care.** It’s critical right now. Read books. Rest. Seek beauty. Pause to experience a moment of joy and reflect on that moment as you close your eyes at night. Locate a personal spiritual center. Find your people. Build community.
- 4. Practice your listening skills and respond with care.** For most of us, the ability to listen deeply does not come naturally. Don’t worry. It is a cultural phenomenon. A society built on “fast and furious” is not conducive to helping any of us learn to listen in a deep and meaningful way. Put this acronym to memory and give it a try the next time someone comes at you with an audacious statement. It’s called LAER. Listen, Acknowledge, Explore, and Respond. And remember, curiosity goes a long, long way including the phrase, “Tell me more.” The listener’s role is merely to gather information and to let the other person know they have been heard. It is not about

jumping to a solution or agreement. That may or may not come with time. This is the part that builds understanding, which is the first step to finding answers.

*The last three recommendations are from Timothy Snyder's "20 Lessons on Tyranny."*

(See the Youtube link at the end of this article.)

5. **"Stand out"** – when you set an example such as voicing an unpopular view that may be outside the norm, the status quo is one step closer to being broken. In less ableist terminology, one might say, "Remain resilient or strong in your views" especially when they reflect what can seem like unpopular values tied to love, equity and inclusion.
6. **"Defend institutions"** – a court, a newspaper, laws, causes, ACLU, Planned Parenthood and more. Choose one you care about and take its side. If you have the means for financial support, set up autopay for monthly support.
7. **"Be as courageous as you can. If none of us is prepared to die for freedom, then all of us will die under tyranny."**

\*20 Lessons on Tyranny by Timothy Snyder

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXR5HLodsT8>

Always grateful to be with you on this journey,

Rev. Amy Kindred