Expressing Love

Some people thought it was a bit of a disappointment. A couple folks told me that the March 4th rally to protect democracy felt like a bunch of like-minded old people calling across the street at each other. I can't say that I disagree, but I will also say that the great thing about it, as is the case with so many protests, is that the 500 or so people there reminded me that I'm not alone.

The experience was so immediately empowering for me that I carried over my head two of our UUCSC social justice signs reading "truth" (one of our core values) and "loving" (part of our mission statement.) I smiled as I walked through the crowd.

Somebody got a black and white picture of me, which found its way to Mary Alice, who got permission from the photographer to forward it to me. Then it showed up in *The Narragansett Times* last Friday.

It's been described to me as the *only* sign of love amidst all the hatred, despite Adria being right behind me, hidden by the sign she carries reading "honor." That comment makes me wonder: What "hate" are you talking about? The discord in our nation? The threats, name-calling, vilifying, and revenge-seeking that are part of the news every day?

Or the hatred present that day in that crowd? Because I didn't see any hatred. I saw fear, and some anger. Mostly I saw concern, laced with a feeling I can only describe as relief that none of us is alone.

That remark got me wondering: are protestors, especially those resisting the authoritarianism of the White House, really seen as hateful? If so, we who stand for peace, love, compassion, justice and the representative democracy this nation was founded on are doing a poor job of getting our message across.

As a congregation, I feel like most of the time we are living into our mission that we summarize as welcoming, loving, growing spiritually and seeking justice. It works for liberal theology, I think.

But how can a message of love and broad inclusiveness sound authentic when the people who despise us sign executive orders saying "I love you" to the very people being hurt the most? Like farmers, who seem to have mostly accepted his statements at face value.

This feels like the existential struggle of our time right now, for religious liberals. I don't know if I will figure out an answer. All I can do is keep showing up with those signs. And all of you.

In Peace,
Rev Denis