

# Inaugurate this!

**BY THE REV. DR.  
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*Spirit of Life*

It is a new year, and next week marks the beginning of a new presidential administration. Amid the hullabaloo of the inauguration, let's not miss our opportunity to inaugurate a new level of commitment to the values of love, peace and justice. I'm talking about the choices we ordinary citizens get to make every single day about where we focus our energy and attention, and the fact that we're always wiser, stronger, braver and more powerful together. I'm talking about the ways we operationalize our values and make them real — or not. These daily choices are where the rubber meets the road, and in the grand scheme, they matter immensely.

Like many of you, I'm overcome with sympathy for people in Los Angeles watching their beloved homes, community institutions and natural resources destroyed by fires. The decisions they must make (often in an instant) about what they choose to preserve and what they leave behind are heart wrenching. Those decisions don't leave much time for deliberation or for certainty about the future because so many variables are changing at once. There are too many other situations in the world that feel like they are at wildfire status. Wars, humanitarian crises and climate-related disasters may top our collective lists; while individually, we may be holding concerns related to health, economics, work, grief, etc. With so much at stake, what are we do to? Who are we to be? If we aren't well grounded, these questions can quickly overwhelm.

I'm reminded of an African proverb: Two people fleeing a burning house should not stop to argue. Many lessons are wrapped up in that,

but what jumps out at me is the fact that we cannot afford to waste time in petty arguments when people are in danger, and compassion requires us to do what we can to help. This is true in California (and Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, etc.) as it is in the smaller circles of our own influence. When things are on fire, we must choose what is worth saving and what we must leave behind. And make no mistake, not choosing (or delaying our decision) is itself a choice.

As things become more complicated in the world, we might find comfort, confidence and clarity in keeping things simple. For example, Unitarian Universalism is a faith tradition that centers love, so we might benefit from continually asking ourselves, "How can we center love in this moment/context?" Others may articulate the core of their spiritual tradition otherwise, so their questions may take a different form. However, all of us (religious or not) will benefit from being crystal clear about our priorities and non-negotiables (e.g. love, peace, justice) so that we can lean into them when things get dicey in the year ahead.

At the beginning of 2025, we all have an opportunity to inaugurate our commitments/re-commitments to that which matters most to us. The choices we make will determine quite a lot about our experience this year. Therefore, let us choose wisely and well in whom and in what we invest the precious resources of our physical, emotional and mental energies. And may our daily choices to align with those commitments help us build the world we dream about.

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