

## Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective

Rev. John D. Cooper

• • •

How do we encounter the Other? Can we adapt and bridge in this time of challenging political division and change? What happens when a Chaplain encounters something different, strange or challenging?

### Program

PRELUDE "Simple Gifts" arr. Aaron Copland (1900-1990) Hymn #16 "'Tis a Gift to Be Simple" Lisi Youngberg, soprano, Ricklen Nobis, piano Congregation

WELCOME Paula Eichbauer and Mac Lund

OPENING WORDS Rev. John Cooper

\*\*\*OPENING SONG #318 "We Would Be One"

\*\*\* CHALICE LIGHTING Liz Martin

We light this chalice for the warmth of love, for the light of truth, and for the energy of action.

WHY I'M HERE Stephen Carter

STORY FOR ALL AGES

CHILDREN'S BENEDECTION

(Sung) Go now in peace, Go now in peace, May the spirit of Love surround you, Everywhere, everywhere you may go

EMBRACING MEDITATION Rev. John Cooper

HYMN #123 "Spirit of Life"

OFFERING WORDS Paula Eichbauer - We are this church; we are its hands, its heart, its voice. Together we share the wealth of this community, and sustain it with our gifts.

Our visitors are our guests. Please feel no obligation to contribute to the offering.

Our worship service offering split recipient for January and February is the Oceti Sakowin Camp, a unified encampment of Water Protectors (Announcement has more info)

OFFERTORY "You'll Never Walk Alone" Rodgers and Hammerstein ("Carousel" – 1945) Lisi Youngberg, Ricklen Nobis

RESPONSIVE READING #584 "A Network of Mutuality" Denna Wright (INCORRECT Judith Mahr)

SERMON: "Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective" Rev. John Cooper

\*\*\*CLOSING SONG #407 "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table"

BENEDECTION Rev. John Cooper

POSTLUDE "Imagine" John Lennon (1940-1980) Lisi Youngberg, Ricklen Nobis

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS Rev. John Cooper

EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE

• • •

Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective, SVUUS, Jan 29, 2017

Licensed (CC-BY-NC) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

John D. Cooper

• • •

## Sermon

Welcome. My name is Reverend John Cooper

I am a long-time member of this community

And I work as a hospital chaplain at the Huntsman Cancer Hospital

Up on the University of Utah campus

This congregation, my home, has been kind enough

To endorse my work at the Huntsman as an affiliated ministry

And to invite me, on occasion, like today, to share what I have learned in that ministry

Well, we have had quite a week haven't we people?

I find it hard not to feel hopeless after a week like this, do you?

Is anyone struggling not to feel hopeless? I know I am...

Have you seen this immigration order? Can you believe this?

Legal residents of the US, holding permanent visas

Stopped and detained at airports while trying to get home based only upon

Their nationality and potential (not even verified) belief system?

That is such a clear violation of civil and human rights.

It is hard not to be terrified and lose hope in the face of such insensitive, badly informed and poorly planned move by our leadership.

I tell you this though.

We cannot despair - We cannot let go - And we cannot give up.

We have to be engaged. We have to speak up.

And something else that I think we need to do

We have to learn to engage with our fellow citizens who voted for this government

I know, I know that seems impossible

• • •

• • •

But I think we have to do it, because even if he did not win the popular vote

This guy, who thinks its ok to ban people from coming home

Because of where they were born

Won enough of the vote that we have to learn to listen to and engage one another in new ways

One of the things that I was taught as a chaplain

Was to engage the Other, the Stranger

As a sacred guest

There is a story I like to tell at hospital orientation

There's this guy, hanging out under a tree in the desert

He's older, retired, his wife is at home, and he was under the tree

And these strangers walked up.

He could smell them first, because they have been walking for so many days

After he smelled them, he heard their feet on the sands

And when they arrive he said to them

Oh man, you guys have to come to my house

You look exhausted...and you smell...well...

We'll get you cleaned up, wash your feet, get you good food

When he got back to his house, his wife and he washed their feet

Killed the best of their livestock, and made a great feast

And the next morning, rested, fed, refreshed and clean

The travelers said to the couple

We will bless you. You will have a child.

The woman laughed, because I said they were older, she was 90 at the time

• • •

## Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective

Rev. John D. Cooper

• • •

But it came to pass. The strangers said that they would be blessed with a child

Who would found nations.

That story is from Genesis. It's the story of Sarah and Abraham

It is the story of the origin for all Abrahamic faiths – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

That is how I was taught to engage strangers as a chaplain

To try and bless them, welcome them, listen to them

And I think if we are going to mend our country

We have to learn to listen to our fellow citizens who voted for this man

Because there is something going on there that I know I do not understand!

And in the face of that misunderstanding, that unimaginable stranger

I struggle to find hope.

Now when I was in Seminary, at Iliff School of Theology

I had an opportunity to attend a small class group with the Rev. Dr. Vincent Harding

Dr. Harding was an associate of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

And drafted some of his most famous speeches

Rev. Dr. Harding came to class that day to talk about

Systems of colonization, marginalization, exploitation and empire

Ideas that I think connect to what is happening right now

Colonization is the process by which a more privileged people

Marginalizes and exploits a less privileged people to maintain their privilege

Class conversation was about the expansion of the Christian church among native Americans

But we could also look at America's foreign policy and economics today

For example, we move into middle eastern society

• • •

Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective, SVUUS, Jan 29, 2017

Licensed (CC-BY-NC) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

John D. Cooper

## Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective

Rev. John D. Cooper

• • •

Which has less financial, social and political resources than our own

Partner with a few people to withdraw the crude oil we need

Help elevate our partners above the other local people

Leverage our partners to help keep the system in place to get the cheapest crude oil

Help create tiers of privilege we can exploit to keep control

It's the same economic system that built the empires of Egypt and Rome

To help keep the system in place, over many years you have to distract the marginalized

With what the Romans used to call "Bread and Circuses"

Spread controversial stories, feed the people with base bread, entertain them with circuses

Sound at all familiar?

We were all talking about this age-old economic system of exploitation and empire

The Rev. Dr. Vincent Harding and my fellow students

Talking about how all of us contribute to it and benefit from it

How embedded into our world it is, but how it also violates human rights

The farther you get from the center of privilege, the fewer rights you have

For example, one marginalized layer in the system today is the working class

The ones who are going to be further marginalized by looser restrictions on health insurance

And one of the tricks of the system is that you get the less marginalized

To oppress the more marginalized

For example, you might get healthy blue collar workers

To advocate for less restrictions on health insurance

Because you convince them that the "sick people" are taking advantage of them

When really, it's the wealthiest people at the center of privilege

Taking advantage of everyone

• • •

Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective, SVUUS, Jan 29, 2017

Licensed (CC-BY-NC) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

John D. Cooper

• • •

Sound familiar?

During this conversation, I made a comment. Not a question. More of a statement  
I said that in the face of over 4000 years of uninterrupted oppression and exploitation  
Through such systems of empire, I felt a certain hopelessness.  
I mean how could we hope to change thousands of years of cultural inheritance?

This wizened old civil rights leader paused and looked at me  
And I will never, ever forget what he said  
Not just for the words he spoke  
But because of the gravitas, and the power, with which he said them  
He said to me  
"John, I do not believe that we have the luxury of hopelessness."

When I heard those words I realized I was talking about hopelessness  
To a man who was born in Harlem in the early 1930's  
He went to public school in New York, as a black man in the 1940's  
Who went on to become one of the movers and shakers of the civil rights movement  
That man who said to me "John, I do not believe the luxury of hopelessness"  
Had so many more reasons to feel hopeless than I would ever know

I have heard that sentence incessantly for the past week.

Here, I will repeat it for you again

"John, I do not believe that WE have the LUXURY of hopelessness"

• • •

## Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective

Rev. John D. Cooper

• • •

I tell you that although the Rev. Dr. Vincent Harding died later that year, in 2014

He has haunted me throughout this recent election and presidential transition

I heard his voice yesterday morning while reading the news

"John, I do not believe we have the luxury of hopelessness."

When I sat down to write this sermon, opened the news

And I saw that Donald Trump had issued an executive order

An order

To close our borders to people solely based on their race, culture and birthplace.

In case you are unaware of this order:

It bans people from seven Muslim-majority nations: Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Yemen and Iraq from crossing our border for the next 90 days

It makes exceptions for diplomats and members of international organizations

But it makes no exception for humanitarian purposes

The order requires the Department of Homeland Security to review other countries that maybe should be banned as well

It suspends the US refugee program for the next four months, suspending admission of all refugees for while Trump's secretary reviews procedures, breaking our commitments to refugees already in the program.

The order bans all Syrian refugees indefinitely

It calls for new immigration screening procedures

(<http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/27/politics/donald-trump-refugees-executive-order/index.html>,

Accessed Jan 28, 2017)

Trump also called for religious testing, and established priority for Christian refugees

([https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/27/us/politics/trump-syrian-refugees.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/27/us/politics/trump-syrian-refugees.html?_r=0), Accessed

Jan 28, 2017)

• • •

Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective, SVUUS, Jan 29, 2017

Licensed (CC-BY-NC) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

John D. Cooper

## Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective

Rev. John D. Cooper

• • •

After reading carefully, I have a simple, but passionate response to this order  
As a nation, as a people, we cannot bankrupt our goodness to try to buy our safety.  
And I believe that this order, which breaks commitments to vulnerable refugees  
And has detained people who held legal and permanent visas  
Bankrupts our goodness to try to buy our safety.

I admit, that when I face an administration that could even imagine  
That such an order would be morally, ethically and politically viable  
That I feel a certain hopelessness  
But I hear that voice before I can even get to that point  
"John, I do not believe we have the luxury of hopelessness."  
And I realize that I must stay engaged  
That I really do not have the luxury of being hopeless  
And when I realize that I wonder  
How do I engage with people who thought this leadership  
Was going to be ok for us?  
As a Chaplain, I am supposed to be good at welcoming the Stranger  
But this is a Stranger that I struggle to know how to welcome

Trying to escape hopelessness, this week, I tried to turn to someone wiser than me.  
Someone who walked longer, worked harder,  
Welcomed more strangers than I can even imagine

Did you know that when Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King was in the Birmingham Jail

• • •



• • •

He developed the unusual practice of dialoguing with his white jailers?

Yes he did. His white jailers would come by

To explain why segregation was right and intermarriage wrong.

To tell him why he should not resist, not march, why he should not organize.

When his white jailers did that, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King would engage with them

He talked about it in his famous sermon, "The Drum Major Instinct"

Which he gave on February 4, 1968

King said that when he was in jail, he would always try to do a little converting:

"...the white wardens and all enjoyed coming around the cell to talk about the race problem. And they were showing us where we were so wrong demonstrating. And they were showing us where segregation was so right. And they were showing us where intermarriage was so wrong. So I would get to preaching, and we would get to talking—calmly, because they wanted to talk about it. And then we got down one day to the point—that was the second or third day—to talk about where they lived, and how much they were earning."

You hear that?

They were talking.

King was in dialogue with his white jailers

Not just preaching to them

He said he would get to preaching, but then he said

"We would get to talking," he went on to say:

"And when those brothers told me what they were earning, I said, "Now, you know what? You ought to be marching with us. [laughter] You're just as poor as Negroes." And I said, "You are put in the position of supporting your oppressor, because through prejudice and blindness, you fail to see that the same forces that oppress Negroes in American society oppress poor white people. (Yes) And all you are living on is the satisfaction of your skin being white, and the drum major instinct of thinking that you are somebody big because you are white. And you're so poor you can't send your children to school. You ought to be out here marching with every one of us every time we have a march."

• • •

• • •

What I noticed listening to and reading his sermon, The Drum Major Instinct

Was that King found common ground with his white jailers

When he listened to them; that was when he learned about the common economic ground they shared.

Now King's sermon, the Drum Major Instinct

Is based on scripture, like much of his work as a preacher

The scripture the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 10, verses 35 to 45

### The Request of James and John

<sup>35</sup> Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

<sup>36</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

<sup>37</sup> They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

<sup>38</sup> "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

<sup>39</sup> "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

<sup>41</sup> When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup> Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(NIV, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2010:35-45>, Accessed Jan 28, 2017)

King's point about this Drum Major Instinct is that all of us have it

We all have this urge, this impulse to be a little out in front of others

• • •

Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective

Rev. John D. Cooper

• • •

Have a little more than them, be a little bit better than them

I think that Donald Trump is like, a poster boy or something, for this Drum Major Instinct

King goes on to say, and this is relevant to what I see going on this week:

“And not only does this thing go into the racial struggle, it goes into the struggle between nations. And I would submit to you this morning that what is wrong in the world today is that the nations of the world are engaged in a bitter, colossal contest for supremacy. And if something doesn't happen to stop this trend, I'm sorely afraid that we won't be here to talk about Jesus Christ and about God and about brotherhood too many more years.”

([http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documententry/doc\\_the\\_drum\\_major\\_instinct/](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documententry/doc_the_drum_major_instinct/), Accessed Jan 28, 2017)

Yes

I think we could say something similar about our latest immigration policy

Our latest immigration policy puts “Us” ahead of “Them”

It does not welcome the Stranger the way all Abrahamic faiths command

I want to encourage you to read this immigration policy directly.

Both the New York Times and CNN have published the full text

You can go to the sacred oracle at Google and type “Full Text of Trump's Immigration”

And it will show you the full text of the executive order

(<http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/28/politics/text-of-trump-executive-order-nation-ban-refugees/>, Accessed Jan 28, 2017)

I tell you that reading it, I did not find the arguments in the policy adequate

To justify closing our borders categorically to people because of their identity

Reading it is what made me recognize, that it bankrupts our goodness

To try to buy our safety.

• • •

Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective, SVUUS, Jan 29, 2017

Licensed (CC-BY-NC) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

John D. Cooper

• • •

And to me, it clearly seemed to say, following that Drum Major Instinct

“But we should be first.”

I encourage you to read it for yourself.

And do you know what Rev. King said about his government in the Drum Major Instinct?

“...we are drifting there because nations are caught up with the drum major instinct. "I must be first." "I must be supreme." "Our nation must rule the world." (Preach it) And I am sad to say that the nation in which we live is the supreme culprit. And I'm going to continue to say it to America, because I love this country too much to see the drift that it has taken.”

“God didn't call America to do what she's doing in the world now. God didn't call America to engage in a senseless, unjust war as the war in Vietnam. And we are criminals in that war. We've committed more war crimes almost than any nation in the world, and I'm going to continue to say it. And we won't stop it because of our pride and our arrogance as a nation.”

([http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc\\_the\\_drum\\_major\\_instinct/](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_the_drum_major_instinct/), Accessed Jan 28, 2017)

That was nearly 50 years ago

But I think it deeply appropriate to what we face today.

So where do we go from here?

How do we get from this despair to hope?

Do you know how King found hope in his sermon?

He went back to the scripture.

He returned to the last few lines of the passage 10 Mark, 42 to 45

<sup>42</sup> “Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever

• • •

## Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective

Rev. John D. Cooper

• • •

wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(NIV, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2010:35-45>, Accessed Jan 28, 2017)

In that phrase, Jesus redefines what it means to be great

Did you know that Jesus was so subversive, that he redefined things?

He was. Jesus was an activist.

If he were alive today.

I do not believe that Jesus would support this immigration order.

When they ask him "Hey teacher, how do we get to be great and powerful?"

Jesus said to his disciples, "You learn to serve others. The greatest among you will be the servant of all."

King preached that Jesus did not just turn the world around on that statement

He turned one of our most fundamental instincts into a tool for goodness

That Drum Major Instinct, that desire to be first.

Yes, hold onto that. Keep that desire to be first Jesus said. Keep it strong

But be first in service, in generosity, be first in taking care of others.

And now I find that maybe I have a way of encountering the other that I can handle

I can be curious, very curious. And I can ask.

The way King asked his white jailers about their home, their income.

I can ask how we can be a Christian nation

• • •

Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective, SVUUS, Jan 29, 2017

Licensed (CC-BY-NC) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

John D. Cooper

• • •

When we pervert this Christian understanding of the Drum Major Instinct

From being great in service, to being great in protecting ourselves

I admit I am curious about how we make America great again

By closing our borders to refugees, to women and children

Who desperately need our service

When right there in scripture, pointed out by the leader of a civil rights movement

Of whom we are so proud of we made his birthday a national holiday

Right there,

It says that the way we become great is by serving those among us who are most in need.

How does this policy embody that definition of greatness?

Because I just can't see how that works.

And I know, that since people have voted for this, have endorsed it

Somebody out there sees something I don't.

I am intensely, passionately even deadly curious about that.

Ironically King ends his sermon talking about his own eulogy

It was only about a month later that he was shot, on April 4, 1968

I think that his call remains a call we need to hear today

King said that he wanted people to say that he tried to give his life serving others

That he tried to love people

That he tried to be right on the war question

That he tried to feed the hungry, clothe those who are naked

And That he tried to love and serve humanity.

King said, "Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. (*Amen*) Say that I was a drum major for peace. (*Yes*) I was a drum major for

• • •

• • •

righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter. (*Yes*) I won't have any money to leave behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind. (*Amen*) And that's all I want to say."

([http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documententry/doc\\_the\\_drum\\_major\\_in\\_stinct/](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documententry/doc_the_drum_major_in_stinct/), Accessed Jan 28, 2017)

Wow, I want people to say those things about me too

Don't you?

Because if you do

Then I do not believe we have the luxury of hopelessness

And I do not believe we have the privilege of disengaging

I do not believe we get to close our ears

To those Americans who voted for this regime

I think that like King, we need to learn to engage our jailers

We need to figure out where we share common ground

Because I know that right now, I don't know where that ground is

And that is on me. I have mocked them, made fun of them, dismissed them

I have not behaved like the chaplain that I want to be

And welcomed them in as blessed Strangers, to hear what they see

To understand where they are.

You know that King never abandoned his principles inviting his jailers to tell him

What things were like for them, he found a way to engage in polite disagreement

And I am feeling called to figure out how to do that too

• • •

## Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective

Rev. John D. Cooper

• • •

Now, I want to close by sharing two things with you.

First, is that while I was writing about struggling not to lose hope

I saw a publication by the ACLU that it had gone to a court

To prevent the deportation of detainees impacted by the new executive immigration order

And the court had stayed the deportation

Maybe, just maybe, that can offer you a glimmer of hope

The hope that when rights are threatened, even by the executive branch, our court system can work to protect those rights

The second closing thought is this

And I promise to you I have no idea what this means

But I offer that burning curiosity

I shared the link to King's Drum Major Instinct sermon on Facebook this week

And to my amazement, the first people to like my link

Were the Trump supporters

That I have been arguing with

All week

"John, I do not believe we have the luxury of hopelessness."

Thank you.

## *Benediction*

Do we have the letter box?

Because we have a new practice in this congregation.

Letter writing

So, if you want a way to engage

• • •

Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective, SVUUS, Jan 29, 2017

Licensed (CC-BY-NC) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

John D. Cooper



Encountering Change: A Chaplain's Perspective

Rev. John D. Cooper

•••

Somewhere around here, there are pens and paper

And you can write Donald Trump. Do you know his address? I think its like 1600 Pennsylvania avenue or something.

Donald Trump

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20500

You can write a letter today asking for a repeal of this immigration policy.

You can also write an email at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

Of course, the Trump White House has shut down the citizen's comment phone line

So you can't call that – but do suggest maybe you send a Twitter or Facebook message

Or, perhaps if you are feeling Christlike, and subversive, and wanna turn something on its hear

Then I understand that the people who did the Bearnie Sanders campaign

Have started a website <https://whitehouseinc.org/> that will connect you with reservation lines at Trump's businesses, the ones that he's being investigated for not divesting from. Their argument is that if Trump's not fully divesting from his businesses, then it is reasonable to talk to his employees about public policy. I don't know if I agree, but I leave that to you. Just, please, be civil to anyone who answers, they have to wrok one of Trump's businesses.

But seriously no matter how you reach out – be polite and respectful. Make Dr. King proud. It has the benefit of making you more likely to be heard.

Now people of peace, go forth in action today.

•••

• • •

### *Websites Used in Research*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/28/us/refugees-detained-at-us-airports-prompting-legal-challenges-to-trumps-immigration-order.html>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent\\_Harding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_Harding)

<http://www.newsweek.com/trump-immigration-order-banned-policy-changes-549506>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/28/us/refugees-detained-at-us-airports-prompting-legal-challenges-to-trumps-immigration-order.html>

<https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2016/11/why-we-cant-afford-to-forgive-the-trump-voters.html>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/an-open-letter-to-my-friends-who-voted-for-trump\\_us\\_58231ad6e4b0102262411f09](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/an-open-letter-to-my-friends-who-voted-for-trump_us_58231ad6e4b0102262411f09)

• • •