



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

A Letter from the War on Civil Service

I received this letter from a friend I know from our work for Friends of the Middle River. He is asking his friends to share it with their churches so that others may learn of the perspective of those who work for FEMA and other federal agencies targeted by the new administration. He has not yet found another job, so please do not share the letter on social media. My hope is that this letter will increase your resolve to do something to stand up to those who want to wreak havoc on our government and social structure.

Wayne Nolde

Friends and Family,

It's been a long week for all of us. I know that many of you see the headlines on the news about Federal agencies, OPM directives, implementation of Executive Orders, and the like. FEMA was established in 1979 via Executive Order by President Jimmy Carter. The Stafford Act, signed in 1988, is the legislation that drives the work that FEMA does. FEMA's mission is to "protect people before, during, and after disasters." While the different congressional twists and turns has amended the Stafford Act in a lot of ways, making it a cumbersome piece of legislation to enact, it has served an incredible mission.

FEMA has managed an ever-increasing number and magnitude of natural disasters, most recently in 2024 delivering over \$41 billion in the public assistance program

alone. Now we are hearing rumblings of dismantling the agency and leaving disasters to the state emergency management agencies. States vary widely in their capacity and capability to manage disasters. This in itself will be a disaster for many rural, poor, and otherwise underserved communities.

We have thousands of staff who work around the country away from family and life to assist in the recovery of others. They take calls at all hours and on the weekends from survivors who needed information and aid. Recently, those who were physically deployed got shot at, were made to shelter in place while marauding 'militias' drove by the Joint Field Offices "hunting FEMA," and were spit on and screamed at when attempting to enroll local folks in financial assistance programs to get them under roof. These are people with names, with families and who look nothing like a "Deep State," whatever that might be.

People feel powerless in the face of a changing world, in the face of a gigantic government that has complicated rules from the distillation of many congressional amendments and meanderings, and especially in the face of disasters and a world where weather is not as dependable as maybe it once was. And now, the new administration is using all of those misgivings and that powerlessness in an attempt to burn the whole social contract down. My staff, who are on "Reasonable

Accommodations” through the Office of Civil Rights, are being questioned and their agreements reviewed repeatedly. FEMA employees are receiving emails threatening penalties if Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs are not rooted out. Workplace “affinity groups” like a Peace Corps group of friends that I am on, have been terminated immediately, cutting ties across our agency. Union protections are being eviscerated.

“The only thing necessary for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing.” That quote resonates at this moment more than ever—more than in the first Trump administration, when I walked out of another agency to wait out that storm while trying to find a new path. If we are to *do something*, what exactly is that *something*? That’s my question.

The platitude sounds wise, but I am left wondering how best to effectuate it. My hope is that the public wakes up to the cruelties that are being exacted on all of the civil servants right now and, by extension, those they serve. I think they will. Yet my very real fear is that by the time the constituency does wake up—when the farm and small business loans slow to a trickle, when state conservation programs lose funding (the Department of Wildlife Resources is funded by the Federal government), when state agencies’ Federal partners aren’t available and when disaster victims in the poor and rural areas don’t see help coming after tornadoes, hurricanes and fires—it will be too late. And we will have forgotten the extreme privilege to have had these critical, albeit flawed institutions once upon a time.

Thanks for all of the ways that you do *something*. Please keep our public servants in your thoughts and prayers.

A current FEMA program manager

News from the UUA

The president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Sofia Betancourt, has posted a call to action on the UUA website in response to the new administration’s challenges to the rights and human dignity of trans people, immigrants and others, and the right of citizenship to everyone born in this country. She reminds us that we are bound together by love. “May that love take the form of courageous and faithful resistance and renewed commitment, today and in the days and years to come.” This [press release](#) includes resources for taking action.



Over fifty members, friends and neighbors enjoyed an evening of good food, fun and fellowship at WinterFest, our UUFW fundraiser on January 25. We ate, sang, cut snowflakes, mixed, mingled and played a game of winter trivia. Thank you members of the Stewardship Committee, chefs and everyone who came and helped. We raised a little more than \$1000!!

