

## THE COMMON GOOD

Sermon by Ted Lilley

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Today I will talk about the common good and class. For transparency, as they say, I grew up in a working class family in England. We were a steel making family and I worked in those steel mills for five years.

What is the common good? It is a belief that everyone should share in certain fundamental aspects of life.

For example, equality of all people, participating and sharing in the financial benefits of a society, economic wellbeing. Universal education, universal health care, access to nature, the state park system, access and participation in the arts and music.

Achieving the Common Good is a continual process. It is never finished.

The list is long for The Common Good is a core ethical value. It comes from both philosophy, and religion. It is central to Unitarian Universalism.

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In our lifetimes we have seen successes like the civil rights movement and the legislation of the nineteen sixties. The disabilities act. Gay and lesbian marriage laws. The creation of the internet available to masses of people around the world.

Likewise, Wikipedia providing knowledge in numerous languages. Free public radio and television. These are great accomplishments.

However, sometimes the common good is diminished. By war, by ill intent, by selfishness, by egotism, by chaos, by ethnic divide etc. It is not static.

The common good is diminished by eliminating unity, reducing the whole. After all everyone should be able to participate. Usually divisions are created. Us and them.

It may be obvious or more subtle.

Let us consider this year in the political campaigns, starting with Bernie Sanders, the plight of the working class has become a major topic and issue.

How did we get here? For fifty years the job market has been changing largely through globalization. Both political parties and the public thought the economic market rules and will sort it all out.

But the consequences have been dire for the working class and for very poor people. Good jobs disappeared and poor paying ones replaced them. Companies found it more profitable to manufacture abroad and so companies did just that.

We have known about the working class and poor people failure to gain economically over a forty-year period. But the professional class, that is most of us, have prospered as have the 1%.

After being ignored for forty years we now have Donald Trump champion working class interests. What is going on?

It seems to me that the plight of the working class and poor has not featured strongly with UUs in this time period. We have mainly been privileged and made significant economic gains for ourselves. How should we bridge this new class divide?

Studies have been done of the sorting of America, people living near or communicating with people of their own type.

Am I still my brother's keeper?

Do you remember the flags for the US dead in Iraq outside this church? What a wonderful statement but how many soldiers do you know? For me it is none. This is a problem. Where is the unity?

Here we are talking about the majority of the population suffering economically. Not some small group.

Then there is the future.

The common good is also about the future, that the society should develop with common good gains.

Yet today, there is much anxiety about the future of work. Today the new jobs for working class and poor people are low paying if they exist at all and from what I can see the future does not look encouraging. In the past the increase in GDP has taken care of obstacles and problems, but will it be there in a future economy?

We live in anxious times.

So how should UUs respond? First we should become informed to understand the issues. Second we could retreat and find the good life for ourselves by just living in our own little private bubbles. But that would be a betrayal of our fundamental ethical principles. The only way forward is to work for the common good.

Before you leave, take a look at the quotation in the program and put it on your refrigerator.

Now it is time for you to speak up on this subject. Participation is key to the common good.