

MTM Strategic Courage _ Courageous Strategy

📅 Wed, Jun 24, 2026 12:06PM ⌚ 8:29

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Meet the Moment framework, shared discernment, strategic courage, courageous strategy, UU values, ministry reimagination, direct action, fundraising reinvention, faithfulness, transformation, resisting authoritarianism, religious communities, strategic planning, covenantal trust, spiritual task.

SPEAKERS

Rev. Ashley Horan, Rev. Kierstin Homblette Allen, Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd, Nicole Pressley, Rev. Sofia Betancourt, Carey McDonald

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Rev. Kierstin Homblette Allen 00:09

If you've engaged the first phase of the Meet the Moment framework, then you've done the work of shared discernment about the moment that we are in and about what our UU values call us to do to collectively meet it. Maybe your congregation now knows that you need to reimagine your ministry with children and youth, or your local multi-faith coalition is clear that you feel called to direct action and witness to oppose ice in your community, or your stewardship team has decided to reinvent the ways that you do fundraising once your group has faithfully engaged with the first phase, building shared understanding, identifying needs and opportunities, and discerning what our shared values are calling you to do. Then you can dig into the work of figuring out how you're going to do it together. The next phase of the work is planning your strategy. We know strategy is kind of a jargony word that means different things to different people, but in the Meet the Moment framework, we use strategy to simply mean clearly naming where you want to go, identifying barriers you might encounter along the way, and then mapping each next move along the best path towards your destination. As we enter the second phase of the Meet the Moment framework, we've asked some of the UUH senior leadership, whose work it is to create and define collective strategy for the faith to help us understand more about this next turn in the meet the moment praxis cycle: strategic courage and courageous strategy

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Rev. Ashley Horan 01:59

To me courageous strategy is taking ourselves seriously enough to imagine what is possible if we really tried

C Carey McDonald 02:08

and strategy - all it really means is a plan to succeed. It means thinking about all the obstacles, the opportunities, about taking risks that matter, that help advance the goals, the mission, the values that you set out

N Nicole Pressley 02:22

To me strategic courage is really about faithfulness, the willing to give oneself over to one's values and the promise of transformation.

R Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd 02:32

Strategic courage is about mustering up that bravery to go in a new direction.

N Nicole Pressley 02:39

Without strategy, we miss the mark and betray our values by being careless about our impact. Without courage, we shy away from our own power and relinquish our agency in shaping our world and our future.

R Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd 02:54

And what we're looking for here in this time in the UUA is an ability to ground ourselves not only in this fiery hope and this courage to resist, but also in the thoughtfulness that it takes to be unsurprised and ready to act, not just react,

R Rev. Ashley Horan 03:17

and so we need to understand what is our lane? What are the things that we are specifically equipped to do because of who we are, what we believe, the relationships we have, the people who we are,

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Rev. Sofia Betancourt 03:29

and when times are this difficult, being strategic about how we show up, and then supporting each other to do that courageously. All of this requires us to lean into what we believe, into who we know we are, and to our commitment to making a difference together.

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Carey McDonald 03:52

I don't need to tell anyone how high the stakes are today. I think we all know, we see it on our phones, we read it in the newspaper, we know it personally from ourselves and our loved ones who are under direct threat

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Rev. Ashley Horan 04:04

to the disasters of this moment, to fascism, to authoritarianism, to climate collapse, to criminalization, and the dehumanization of people across the globe,

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Nicole Pressley 04:15

the impacts of Covid 19, rising authoritarianism, war, and deep cuts to the social safety net.

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Rev. Sofia Betancourt 04:23

This is a moment when resisting the pull of white Christian nationalism, resisting the lies that we are told about how inclusion, diversity, equity, justice, so many of the values that we hold dear are somehow no longer considered relevant or important,

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Nicole Pressley 04:43

and it is precisely that kind of moment when religious communities matter the most,

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Rev. Ashley Horan 04:49

and our values give us the invitation to imagine a different kind of world, but that imagination alone, those values alone are not enough.

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Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd 05:00

It's very important in times of rapid change and times of stress to think strategically, so that the waves of change don't just happen to us, but we ourselves can become waves of change.

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Nicole Pressley 05:13

It helps us steward our resources with purpose, design experiences that may deepen engagement and mobilize people in ways that are not only responsive but transformative.

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Carey McDonald 05:26

Having a strategy and being bold and courageous about it is essential for figuring out what to do when we come to those crossroads, and we need to make decisions, and we need to make trade-offs.

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Rev. Sofia Betancourt 05:38

And how we strategize together, how we sequence our responses, how we make sure to attend to our surrounding communities, so we know who most needs support, what is most urgent, what the timeline really is. All of these things are aspects to how we organize our work, how we respond together, and how we make a difference.

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Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd 06:06

Our work of strategy planning to me is deeply sacred, because I see it as empowering all of that, which then can move quickly and effectively, and with courage.

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Rev. Sofia Betancourt 06:20

It keeps us connected to our faith. It keeps us accountable to what we believe in, and it keeps us in right relationship with our partners and one another.

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Rev. Ashley Horan 06:30

For us, the idea is not just how we want to show up and be together, it's about the world that we want to build by embodying our principles, our faith, our beliefs in the world,

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Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd 06:45

If the institutional structures and practices and the strategic direction are not sound, we are then not as fully free to improvise, to invent, to work on the forming edge of new ideas in our congregations and in our communities.

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Rev. Sofia Betancourt 07:03

I know that most of us don't first think of strategy when we think about living our values every day. The reason why it is so important, regardless, is that it is about an investment of trust.

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Rev. Ashley Horan 07:17

It's covenantal in the sense that we agree to be in it together, that we are going to journey together, that we want these shared things to exist in the world, and it's covenantal, because it says that when we mess up, which we will, when a particular strategy fails, which it will, when we encounter unanticipated barriers, which we will, we agree to come back together,

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Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd 07:41

so doing the structural strategic work that that lies just beneath the surface of all of our worshiping and our laughing and our dancing and our justice, our protest and our praise is an enormously spiritual and religious task, because I know that it equips Unitarian Universalists to be more effective and more transformative in the world.

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Rev. Sofia Betancourt 08:11

Strategy work is faith work, and it makes us better than we were alone.