

Dear Friends,

I write this a day before Inauguration Day.

I am not a 'glass half full' kind of guy, but more a 'cup runneth over' sort of fellow, yet the past election cycle has tested my accustomed optimism about life in general and about America in particular. Fears prompted by recalcitrant Tea Party politicians in 2010 began the slide away from my usual 'it will all work out in the end' stance. The lack of good will that colored the last Congress, fueled by manufactured 'news' and the general distrust of all political institutions and processes, threatened to send me into an 'empty glass' position for the first time. Fortunately, congregant members, Michael and Jaime Mandel, threw me a life preserver when they spent time with me in anticipation of their daughter, Sadie, becoming bat mitsva. I share this life preserver with you as we enter into the administration of our nation's forty-fifth president. It was written by Howard Zinn, an American historian, playwright and social activist. I hope it will be a beacon for you in this time of uncertainty.

"To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places – and there are so many – where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however a small way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."

Wishing you resilience and strength in the months and years to come.

Warmly,  
*Lee*