

# Speaking Out for Justice: Words of the Rev. Thomas Starr King

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The Rev. Thomas Starr King has been described “a man of sensitive social conscience and profound ethical convictions”<sup>1</sup> He was a pastor, preacher, politician, journalist, orator, patriot, humanitarian, naturalist and a tireless worker for social justice. A colleague wrote that “He could, and sometimes did, speak scathing words against evil. But generally he won his point and his hearers by the ‘secret reason of his discourses’ and the rich, strange music of his voice ‘like an organ carrying conviction captive before its wonderful melody...’”<sup>2</sup> In his lecture on the 4th of July, 1862, Starr King declared, “We must give up the idea that the field of politics is beyond the reach and control of Christian responsibility, or we are lost.”

I’d like for you to hear Starr King’s passion for justice in his own words (though unfortunately not in his own deep, resonant voice), and in those of his contemporaries and other biographers, whose names I will not necessarily identify here, but will make available to anyone who is interested. I hope you will listen to Starr Kings words and ideas in the context of the times in which he lived, then see how they apply to ours.

The Rev. Thomas Starr King was ordained into the Universalist ministry in August 1846. It was almost 15 years before the start of the Civil War. Channing had been dead for nearly four years but had greatly influenced the teenage King. Hosea Ballou II had recently tutored King in a course of study for the ministry but had not yet become president of Tufts. It was the time of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was “quite eloquent in compliment” of Kings speaking, and Theodore Parker, who let King use his extensive library. The Transcendental movement was well under way. Starr King, then

a Universalist, probably fit under Frederic Henry Hedge's classification of himself as an "enlightened conservative."

Starr King was 21 years old, "an unimpressive, frail, homely young man with a shock of golden hair and penetrating grey eyes, less than 125 pounds in all." 3 He was highly educated but with little formal training. He did not have even a high school diploma. King had been supply preaching almost every Sunday for more than a year. In the spring of 1845, Theodore Parker recommended that King take his place as a guest preacher. "This young man," wrote Parker, "is not a regularly ordained preacher, but he has the grace of God in his heart, and the gift of tongues. He is a rare sweet spirit and I know that after you have met with him you will thank me for sending him to you."

4

After a short apprenticeship filling the pulpit at Charden Street Chapel in Boston while the minister was away, King was called to the Charlestown, Massachusetts Universalist church, where his father had been the highly respected minister until his untimely death. "I preach," he said, "to mature and aged men and women, who have seen me as a boy in my father's pew, and who can hardly conceive of me as a grown man. I necessarily cannot command in that pulpit the influence which a stranger would wield." 5

Starr King became one of the finest orators in New England. In his lectures he expressed his fervor for patriotism and demonstrated his broad knowledge of literature, science and philosophy. But in his early sermons, he stuck pretty much to explaining theology, and how "men" should live by it. His friend and biographer, Edwin Whipple, who read over 200 of King's sermons, said they were mainly "devoted to the inculcation of the principles of practical and spiritual Christianity, as they relate to the right method of building up Christian character in the individual soul." 6 In other words, morality and ethics.

After two years as minister at the Universalist Charlestown church, and a trip to the Azores to restore his always fragile health, King accepted the call to the Unitarian Hollis Street Church in Boston. He was not quite 24. He was brought in as a "forlorn hope to revive the remnants of the once thriving congregation." The conservative clergy and laity in the area looked upon his call as "a dangerous experiment; as rather an impeachment of the Unitarian clergy; as too high a compliment to another denomination; as unwise, unhealthy, unsound, unsafe." 7 But Starr King's faith had grown to include Unitarianism." 8 He became active in both denominations.

"The Hollis Street Church was a challenge to King... because the church had been torn apart by temperance and anti-slavery issues and was at the point of collapse..." 9 King described it as "disabled and well-nigh shattered by dissensions and disaster." 10

Their minister of 25 years, John Pierpont, had worked tirelessly for temperance and the abolition of slavery, but his forthrightness — or tactlessness — on both these issues earned him the enmity of a portion of his congregation, who waged a protracted struggle to dislodge him. After seven bitter years, these efforts finally succeeded, resulting in Pierpont’s resignation from Hollis Street. 11

Of the minister who succeeded Pierpont, David Fosdick, it was said, “Justice bids us say, that if he failed, he only failed to accomplish the impossible.” 12

Under Starr King, this demoralized, yet culturally and ethnically diverse, congregation became one of the fastest growing churches in the area. 13

Especially in his early years, “theologically and politically [King] was progressive without being radical. Few radicals could have had prolonged success with an established church such as the Hollis Street...” 14 In 1849, his first year there, he said,

I would insist as strongly as any one  
on the right and duty of ministers to act as reformer, to speak in Anti-Slavery meetings, and  
temperance and peace meetings,  
if they have the power of popular address.  
Let them act as Reformers in the proper sphere for such social action.  
And in the pulpit let them attack the central throne of sin  
in the private heart....  
If I can make [a man] loathe sin, and love right and goodness only,  
am I not leading him to hate slavery and drunkenness,  
which are only special forms of sin?15

A young man, ordained in a different religious tradition, comes to a church torn apart by differing views on matters of great importance – the livelihood of rich congregants. Many have left and taken their money with them. Some parishioners are insulted that a Universalist is now the minister of their Unitarian church. You are the new minister. What do you do? Do you speak forcefully from the pulpit for what you believe is right (as Pierpont did, and split the church), or do you temper your words, at least until you build trust?

At that time, King felt that his moderate style was more effective than the denunciations of the more radical abolitionists. 16 “He wished to convert uncommitted ‘timid conservatives’ rather than speak to solidly anti-slavery zealots. 17

Starr King became much loved as a pastor. “He was cheer to the despondent, hope to the despairing, comfort to the mournful, fellowship to the desolate.” 18 In the 11 years he served this church, the debts were paid and membership increased five-fold. He became a “counselor in every good local and municipal work of truth and charity.” 19

But after he had been in the Hollis Street Church for almost eight years, there were those who strongly objected to his speaking out for justice from the pulpit. In October 1856, in an unusually frank sermon to his congregation, he told them,

I hear frequently the charge that I preach politics,  
and that it will make trouble if I do not desist.  
This undoubtedly refers to the frequency of the treatment  
I have given, during the last year or so,  
to the Christian spirit and obligation of humanity,  
and the application I have often made of it  
to our responsibility as members of the American government,  
as entrusted in part with the destiny of an Empire.  
Wherever there is power there is trust and duty.  
The preacher’s business is with spiritual laws,  
and their bearing upon or their application with  
the duties and the action of common life.  
If I think and see clearly how a great spiritual principle  
may be honored by the method in which you can trade,  
or use your money or exercise your genius, or live at home,  
am I not bound to interpret that way,  
leaving it for your conscience and your insight  
to accept or refuse my interpretation?

And is there a person here who can tell me why a vote  
shall be excluded from all treatment,  
or allusion in the pulpit  
if the preacher sees a spiritual law threading that,  
just as clearly as he sees a Christian law  
running through the ledger, the workshop, the house?  
Wherever a human being has influence for good or for evil,  
Christianity is interested in him,  
and the pulpit which represents Christianity  
is bound to be interested in that expression of him...

Let us understand each other on this point, once for all.  
You certainly have the right, as well as the power,  
to choose what type of preaching this pulpit shall represent;  
as long as I stay in it, it will represent no other  
than that I have just described -  
not because I ever intend or desire to “preach politics,”  
but because I feel I must preach devotion to humanity  
as the highest outward form of the gospel  
and the obligation of doing the most good that possibly can be done  
by all of a man’s influence,  
by his ballot as well as by his money and his words. 20

You have been minister of the congregation for eight years now. Does your position about speaking out change? Where does your major responsibility lie? To your congregation? To your conscience? To your country?

Starr King fervently believed in his country in a way that is almost unknown in the United States today. A contemporary said that “With Mr. King, his religion was the central motive of his life, and his patriotism sprang directly from it as naturally as the rose from the bush or the apple from the tree.” 21

He preached patriotism from the pulpit and on the lecture circuit. “... in these days,” [King] said, “a preacher who does not find the Old and New Testaments urging him to stand up for his whole country and the cause of civilization, must own a Bible that is covered with dead and barren lava, not a living volcano of all noble and sacred truth.” 22

With the strong possibility of the secession of the South, King increased his efforts to save the Union. He was very much against slavery and wanted it abolished, but at that time his focus was on saving his country. He declared,

Rebellion sins against the Mississippi,  
it sins against the coast line;  
it sins against public and beneficent peace;  
and it sins, worse than all,  
against the corner-stone of American progress and history and hope,-  
the worth of the laborer,  
the rights of man.  
It strikes for barbarism against civilization.” 23

Your strong sympathy lies with the cause of abolition. But you fervently believe that the Union must remain together, and that abolition may break it apart. What do you say?

Most of what we know about Starr King's personal feelings are recorded in his 25-year correspondence with his dear friend, Randolph Ryer, a New York exporter, and in the words of the day, a "free Negro." 24 In June 1849, he wrote his friend,

The most moving address I heard  
during the whole [anniversary] week  
was made by the black man who escaped from Richmond, Virginia  
in a box 3 feet long, 2 wide and 2 deep.  
It was simply told but had immense effect upon the whole audience.  
I thought, while listening to it,  
how much more powerful our anti- slavery societies would be  
if they would confine their efforts more  
to bringing such men and such cases before the community,  
and so try to make our northern conscience  
feel the barbarity of slavery,  
than they are by the insane methods of denunciation,  
virulent attacks upon clergy and the church,  
and desperate hostility to the constitution and the Union.  
Let them direct their efforts to exhibiting the curse of Negro bondage  
and their ranks will soon be swelled by double the number of adherents  
which they possess at present.  
Why can't our reformers learn to have more confidence in truth,  
and less in human passion... 25

However, in 1850, incensed by the fugitive slave law which required that runaway slaves be returned to their masters, he wrote his friend Randolph,

Yesterday morning I preached on  
Consecration to God's will...  
In it reference was made to the fugitive slave law as  
"a hideous deification of what is base and wrong,  
and an open defeat in the heart of a Christian people  
of mercy and Jesus by injustice and Satan." 26

Conditions are getting worse. The government's laws concerning the treatment of people of color becomes, in your view, more unjust. Do you change your actions?

King spoke out for the needs of the poor. In 1851, his third year at Hollis Street Church, he wrote,

The question of absorbing interest to society itself is this—  
how shall the Church,  
which contains the regenerative principles of truth,  
be brought from its serene and comfortable elevation  
into redeeming contact with the streets, lanes,  
and cellars of the world....  
If we will not take up this problem of pauperism and ignorance  
in the spirit of Christian duty and love,  
and consider, through some constructive methods  
the rights of the poor,  
it will be pressed upon our self interest  
as involving the existence, or at least the health of society. 27

He continued to speak out for social justice.

In whatever way the spirit of social justice  
can be made to enter more deeply into our policy,  
or domesticate itself in new features of our code  
without disruption of order—  
in plans of land reform—  
in adjustments of the relations of labor,  
so that the laborer may be more efficiently a man—  
in the projection of schemes for the safety and nurture  
of the perishing classes—  
we are called on cautiously to make the experiment;  
and to show how far and with what results  
the forces of society may shoot out into regions  
that have hitherto been abandoned to the...laws of competition and the caprices of "private  
charity." 28

He spoke out for community and right relationship.

We are not intended to be separate, private persons,  
but rather fibres, fingers and limbs.  
The aim of religion is not to perfect us as persons,  
looking at each of us apart from others.  
The creator does not propose to polish souls like so many pins —  
each one dropping off clean and shiny,  
with no more organic relations to each other  
than pins of a card...  
There can be no such thing as justice,  
until men, in large masses,  
are rightly related to each other... 29

He spoke out from the lecture platform. In July of 1851, he told his friend,

A word of Eastport.  
I found the people there Hunkers to the back-bone,  
in favor of slavery as a grand American institution,  
and determined not to have anything on the anniversary  
that smacked of the new ideas.  
I was in a fright.  
However, I put the matter through,  
praised our country for its grand political institutions —  
for white men, and then spoke of the duties [?] we owed to the oppressed,  
as holders in trust of the principles of the Revolution.  
Much to my surprise, everybody was satisfied  
and they paid me \$100, with good will.  
I breathe deep every time I think of my escape,  
for after I got there I didn't think I should get out of the place  
without being mobbed..." 30

There were times when Starr King was discouraged and severely depressed. In 1854, he wrote,

My dear Randolph,  
It is a very fine morning. How do you do?  
I am poorly. I thank you. What with a cold in the skin and bones,  
a sore throat, the fatigue of preaching yesterday,

one or two annoying difficulties  
and the passage of the Nebraska bill through the Senate,  
I feel sick, discouraged, used up.  
What are we coming to?  
If slavery goes into Nebraska, I want to die,  
or emigrate to Russia where I can get brutalism and servitude  
Simon pure from the genuine Nick.  
I have not preached on Nebraska yet for fear of apoplexy..." 31

Does this feel relevant today? You are a person of deep conscience. You dislike the government's policies. How can you keep from becoming discouraged?

In addition to preaching on "Free Soil Movement," and "The Fugitive Slave Law," in 1857 he preached on "The Dread Scott Decision," which declared that slaves were not citizens and the country could not limit slavery in its territories. He called it a "deliberate creation of wrong and oppression."

"Of political methods of resistance this is not the place to speak.  
I agree with his excellency that ministers  
should not mix with political discussions.  
It is when civilization is at stake,  
and Christianity is impeached in high places,  
that they have the call to speak,  
and then not for party, but for religious ends.

And so I will pass over political methods to say that,  
if we are honest in our denunciation of this decision,  
we must respect the back man, recognize him as a brother,  
be ready to help him elevate himself in Northern society,  
plead against the disabilities that fetter him,  
pay reverence to him which is due to the victim  
of arrogant tyranny..." 32

In 1860, Starr King took a leave of absence from Hollis Street Church and moved to California to become the pastor of the First Unitarian Society of San Francisco. He was exhausted, afraid he would die. He needed a place where he would earn enough money that he did not have to give orations almost every night. He hoped he would not be so looked down upon because he had no

earned academic degree. "I do desire," he wrote Henry Bellows, "to be in a position where my labor would be of greater worth to the general cause than it can be in Boston." Whipple put it this way, "An attempt for him to assume the position of leader of public opinion in Boston would have been crushed by the superciliousness of the educated and fashionable classes."

In 1860, California had been a state for 10 years. There was no transcontinental trains or telegraph. San Francisco was a city of 56,000-80,000 (depending on who you asked), about 4,000 of them Chinese. It was the richest urban city in the country. Although Starr King loved the California wilderness, he didn't much like San Francisco. His wife liked it even less. His heart was in his blessed Boston. When he first arrived, he wrote his mother-in-law,

We drove to the Oriental Hotel, a forlorn looking wooden building  
in a wretched part of the city, but the best kept house in the place.  
We have a sitting room with two bad-smelling bedrooms leading from it....  
In half an hour Julia [his wife] caught a flea on herself,  
so she felt acclimated at once.

This morning I drove out before breakfast  
to see the country within a few miles -  
the flowers in the fields are wonderful in their mass, color and variety,  
but it is all that impressed me favorably as yet.  
The city is very queer and very uninteresting at first - to Eastern eyes -  
it is a vast straggle of homes over half a dozen sand hills  
and the streets are bilious with China men -  
but I can't tell as yet how or what I shall like.

(I think the word "bilious" was meant to be a color description, not demeaning of people he at first found quaint, but certainly among the children of God. He later spoke out for the rights of the Chinese.)

By fall of that year, he wrote Randolph, "They say my preaching, even two years ago, would have utterly wrecked the parish here. Now I give the slavery sentiment with impunity and success." 33  
"His new sermons and lectures.... were ethical discourses pointed toward the issues of the hour."34

"At a time when some Union men were paralyzed with dread, and others undecided which way to turn, Thomas Starr King traveled over the state bolstering up the weak hearted, and urging loyal men to stand firmly for the Union. In his lectures...in unanswerable arguments and matchless eloquence

he kindled the patriotism of the people into a glowing flame.  
It is conceded that no individual did more to keep California in the Union  
than did Thomas Starr King.” 35

After war was declared in 1861, Starr King supported it “to the full expenditure of his strength.” 36  
He wrote to Randolph,

Anyway, we shall try to keep California with the North.  
This week I shall write my address on Washington for the 22nd  
and I mean to manufacture a little thunder for our Southern brethren.  
They are beginning to talk Pacific Republic here,  
and we mean to squelch the idiots. 37

Thomas Starr King’s lecture on “The Life and Character of Washington,” together with his lecture on  
“The Union,” had much to do with knitting together the sentiment against secession during the  
crucial, early months of 1861.” 38 Keeping California in the Union was crucial. “It was the gold of  
California which struck the fatal blow to the institution of slavery in the United States.” 39

Not everyone thought that King’s political sermons were appropriate. Newspaper columnist William  
Rhodes denounced King as a “clerical abolitionist,” who was spreading a “gospel of blood” and  
“despotism” by profaning the holy Sabbath with “the most damnable doctrines of political fanati-  
cism.” 40

How ardently King longed for the liberation of the Blacks is seen in this passage which probably  
was addressed more to the President of the United States than to the people:

O that the President would soon speak that electric sentence,-inspiration to the loyal North,  
doom to the traitorous aristocracy whose cup of guilt is full!  
Let him say-that it is a war of mass against class,  
of America against feudalism,  
of the schoolmaster against the slave-master,  
of workmen against the barons,  
of the ballot-box against the barracoon.  
This is what the struggle means.

Proclaim it so, and what a light breaks through our leaden sky!  
The war-wave rolls then with the impetus and weight of an idea.” 41

He spoke not only to Californians of European origin, but also to people of color. He told a gathering of African Americans:

Wherever we find many races brought together,  
here God has his greatest work to do—  
there is room for the noblest work of Christianity ...  
The Almighty has a great mission for this nation—  
here the Church is to proclaim the equality of the races.  
Wherever the oppressed are congregated, there Christ is present—  
and not on the side of power. 42

One of his biographers, William Simonds tells us, “The forlorn condition of the Chinese — as men without rights of citizenship — stirred his sympathy and he made earnest effort to secure for them such civic rights as belong to industry.

King spoke out for the cause of labor. Simonds continues, “The cause of labor, seldom thought in those days to come within the scope of a minister’s interest or duty, commanded his eager attention, and he improved every opportunity to declare his reverence for the world’s workers in earth, and stone, and iron.” 43

He spoke out for humanitarian causes. Through his orations and lectures, his was the principal voice in raising well over a million dollars for the Sanitary Fund, the forerunner of the American Red Cross. This was about one fourth of all the donations in the country.

It is interesting to ask, “What did Starr King not speak out about?”

He did not speak out for women’s rights. Although he recognized and valued intelligence in women, he once quipped, “Our feminine reformers insist that things will not go right till the ladies are elected partially to represent the nation, which would relieve us about as pouring oil on a fire would soothe a conflagration.” 44 It has been suggested that this attitude was strongly influenced by his wife Julia, who “often broke out in a storm of wrath.”

At a time when there were still some hostile Native Americans near Yosemite when he visited there, he did not often mention the rights of Native Americans, though he strongly urged that Lake Bigler, named for California’s first governor, a Southern sympathizer, be renamed Lake Tahoe, an Indian name, and that the waterfalls in Yosemite retain their Native American names. Of course, his preaching on the worth of all people included Native Americans and Chinese, as well as Blacks.

While he was very much enamored with the beauty of the natural world and its relation to the Divine, as far as I know, he did not speak out about the environmental devastation caused by mining for gold. While he spoke of the beauty of the mountains, the lakes and the trees, he rarely mentioned the wildlife.

In March 1864, King died of the complications of diphtheria and pneumonia. He was barely 39 years old. He had been in California less than four years. “Condemned to the slow suicide of overwork, he gave his life, a conscious offering to freedom.” 45

I would like to end by telling you what I see as the differences Starr King made by speaking out for what he believed, by his efforts to bring his Universalist and Unitarian values to life.

He was a builder of Unitarian churches in the East and in the West. In his 11 years at Hollis Street Church, the membership increased five-fold. In San Francisco, under his leadership, his parishioners paid off their \$20,000 debt and built a beautiful Gothic-style church seating 1,500 people, which they dedicated “to the worship of God and the service of man.” At the time, it was the largest church building in San Francisco.

He spread the word about Unitarianism (and Universalism), and helped Unitarians see the need for strong churches. He preached and spoke not only in the greater Boston area, but places as far away as Chicago and St. Louis. When he came to San Francisco, he spoke in the gold mining towns of California, and in Portland and Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia, before there were established Unitarian Churches anywhere on the West Coast, except in San Francisco. He loved to call himself “one of the picket guards on the outposts of Unitarian civilization.” 46

Through his book, newspaper articles, orations and sermons, he helped people to see — to really see and appreciate the beauty of the natural environment. Starr King’s book, “The White Hills, Their Legends, Poetry and Landscape,” which came out five years after Thoreau’s “Walden,” was much more widely read. It was called “the most elaborate attempt to picture to the mind’s eye the grandeur and beauty of natural scenery which has graced our native literature.” 47 When Starr King came to California, he wrote articles for the Boston Evening Transcript on his travels to such places as Yosemite, Lake Tahoe, Mt. Diablo and the gold mining camps. This writing helped the people of this country to understand the beauty of Yosemite and the importance of preserving it. His was one important voice in convincing Lincoln to designate Yosemite and Mariposa Grove (big trees) as the country’s first major environmental preserve — given first to the State of California for public use, resort and recreation... inalienable for all time.

His orations, sermons and other efforts to keep California in the Union and to raise money for humanitarian causes, such as the Sanitary Commission to help the sick and wounded soldiers, not only helped the Civil War effort, but also helped gold miners and other pioneers who flocked to California to look beyond their Western frontier me-first attitude to helping others, to considering the common good.

He...came to stand in the minds of Californians as the very symbol of religion, culture, and the greater scene beyond the Far West.

Franciscans were proud of King's eloquence, his ties with literary Boston, his line of ministerial descent in the church of Emerson, Edward Everett, William Ellery Channing, and Theodore Parker.

The very fact that King seemed to be thriving in California was a comforting sign of provincial maturity. That he was self-educated, that he has risen in the learned Unitarian ministry without benefit of an earned degree, reinforced the assumption that talent, not birth or background, was what counted.

In four short years King became California's man for all seasons, a hero and prophet of the Pacific commonwealth. 48

He brought culture to people from all walks of life. As a platform speaker Starr King rapidly became popular. He traveled throughout New England and as far west as Chicago and St. Louis. He spoke on a wide range of subjects.

He was a historian discussing "Hildebrande," a classical scholar dealing with "Goethe" a social commentator reflecting on "Daniel Webster," and a philosopher coping with "The Ideal and the Real." Many of these lectures he was to repeat in California..." 49

He helped found the education system in California. He served on the board of the forerunner of the University of California and spoke at the opening of the first high school in San Francisco.

He recognized that alcoholism was a disease, that abusers of alcohol should be treated, rather than punished.

He recognized worth and dignity of all persons. He was a friend to the poor and the oppressed. Although, when asked if he could pray for Jefferson Davis, he replied Jefferson Davis "is a representative, to my soul and conscience, of a force of evil... I could pray for him as one man... in his private relations to Heaven. But as president of the seceding states...pray for him!... Never!" 50 "King had the rare capacity to make men understand the potential for good that lay within them, and

to persuade them that this sublime side of human nature was worth cultivating. He accomplished this not so much with his words as with his personality, and by the example of his life.” 51

Thomas Starr King was passionate about his beliefs and his need to embody them and to publicize them. He told a friend, “I may weigh only 120 pounds. But when I am mad, I weigh a ton.” As Horace Davis, who later married his daughter, put it, “In the struggle for the life of the nation he knew no fear, and his blows were sledgehammer. 52 The high enthusiasm and devotion to his ideals gave him power on the platform, in the church, and in the rough stump-speaking of his patriotic campaigns, and made him singularly successful in whatever he did. 53 Davis continued, “Back of all his brilliancy as a writer and his eloquence as a preacher was the man. The preacher was admired, but the man was loved.” 54

As we consider the role of promoting social justice in our lives, perhaps we once again need a Starr King to tell us:

Make a principle a guest in your heart,—  
by denying the worldly side of your nature,  
by fettering passion, conquering pride,  
living for something other than luxury,  
using money for good,  
drilling the will to loyalty,—  
and it will become thus an immeasurable gain as a resource to your soul.  
God bends a boundless and sparkling sky over our heads;  
but he offers a deeper heaven,  
filled with more glorious lights and diviner promise,  
to all souls that will welcome a principle,  
go out and pitch their tent in the moral universe,  
and live here for him. 55

Rep. Christopher Cox, Republican congressman from nearby Newport Beach has recently proposed that Thomas Starr King’s statue in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C., be removed from its place of honor as one of the two statues representing California, and be replaced with one of Ronald Reagan. If you were a member of the legislature, how would you vote?

Fortunately, at this time, the proposal does not seem to be gaining momentum, but our Unitarian Universalist California Legislative Mission is watching carefully.

May the words and deeds of the Rev. Thomas Starr King strengthen within you a commitment to work for justice.

May it be so.