

# AColyte

November 3, 2020

A Journal of Faith, Doubt, and Other Things  
at Austin College



It's Election Season.

Use the brains God gave you.

Dig All Night.

Chisel for the Light.

Do Justice.

Love Kindness.

Hop Humbly.

Wear a Mask.

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN...

On pins and needles  
In America  
November 2020

*It's a hard, it's a hard,  
It's a hard, it's a hard;  
It's a hard rain's a gonna fall.*  
--Bob Dylan

*Put love above everything else  
And the rest will take care of itself.*  
--Webb Wilder

*What does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?*  
--Micah 6:8

A long time ago, I got to hang out a little with a Texas singer/songwriter named Joe Ely. I bought one of his records when I was a freshman at AC in 1980. Through a bizarre set of circumstances I ended up on an airplane with his band flying from Harlingen to Austin in 1986. Over the next several years I saw the Joe Ely Band play shows all over Texas and on one epic night in London in 1987.

I've written about him several times in the *AColyte*.

He's on my mind today because I've been thinking of one of his songs a lot recently.

As I write this, I still have no idea what will happen in the Presidential election.

I'm fairly certain that, whatever happens, some people – some of my friends – will be elated and some will be upset. And, unfortunately, I'm fairly certain that, regardless of the outcome, some people will respond in ways that are regrettable, destructive, and dangerous.

Like most Americans, I have some fairly strong opinions about the election and will likely have strong opinions about the aftermath.

That's why I've been thinking about Joe's song.

Check this out:

<https://youtu.be/8KFNplxuS6o>

That song has always seemed a bit corny to me.

But it keeps bubbling up in my brain.

*I'm  
Just sittin' here wonderin'  
The world's gone to hell*

I don't actually believe the world's gone to hell, and I'm pretty sure Joe Ely doesn't either.

If I did, I wouldn't have voted.

If I did, I wouldn't care what will happen in the election.

If I thought the world was gone to hell, I'd be doing a different job.

But I can certainly understand how, as we approach the end of 2020 – after we've all endured several months of COVID anguish and two states' worth of campaign ads around here – one might be tempted to conclude that the world has in fact gone to hell. There's abundant evidence.

*I'm  
Just sittin' here wonderin'  
The world's gone to hell  
And we blame someone else  
For the trouble we're in*

That sounds like most of the campaign ads we've seen for weeks, doesn't it?

“Vote for Candidate A because he or she is like us and will protect us from the dangerous people who are not like us and are the real causes of all our problems.”

In the broadest terms, that's the basic structure and argument of most advertisements for most candidates – regardless of their party or perspective.

*I'm  
Just sittin' here wonderin'  
The world's gone to hell  
And we blame someone else  
For the trouble we're in  
In a big easy chair  
At the T.V we stare  
While the world caves in*

Unfortunately, that also sounds pretty familiar to me.

I've tried to read as much as I can and keep myself informed.

I've given financial support to a couple candidates and a couple causes.

But most of my interaction with this political cycle has been on TV screens and computer monitors.

And I'm worried.

*And it ain't no wonder, that we don't get a break  
It's so easy to find someone else's mistakes*

It's so tempting and easy to blame lots and lots of other people for the things about the current political situation that make me anxious:

- Not enough good candidates;
- Too much money involved;
- The archaic nature of the Electoral College;
- The cumbersome and uncertain nature of the primary system;
- The undue and irresponsible influence of social media;
- The failure of mainstream media to be gatekeepers of facts and fairly represent the perspectives and positions of candidates and their parties.

I could write paragraphs about each one of those points. And you probably could as well.

I get where Joe is coming from.

But I love where he goes next.

After describing a situation of political and social discomfort and disillusionment — and doing it in terms I think many of us can identify with — Joe says (actually, sings) this:

*Give me a shovel  
I'm gonna dig all night  
Give me a hammer  
I'm gonna chisel for light*

I love that lyric move, corny as it is, for three reasons.

- a. It represents a decision to take initiative and get busy; to do more than simply sit in the easy chair, stare at the screen, and point out the ways the status quo is less than ideal.
2. It suggests long-term commitment to the digging and chiseling; and
- iii. It reminds me that, when we organized the first **Austin College Great Day of Service** in November 1995, the first song we played on the sound system as students were gathering that day was “Dig All Night.”

This is not a song about composing the most articulate Facebook post or producing the most withering meme.

Digging all night and chiseling for the light takes commitment.

It will be hard work and it will take a long time and a lot of energy.

That feels right and relevant to me right now.

I like the digging and chiseling image because it presumes that it is possible and necessary for me to do some things to help the world be a little bit more like I think it ought to be; more like I hope it can be.

No matter who is President.

Then comes the corniest, and truest, line in the whole song:

*Love is the thing  
Makes the world go round  
Come here, darlin'  
I wanna take you down*

So love is what motivates the digging and chiseling?

Pretty corny.

But also hard to argue with.

Why else would all this be worth the trouble?

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This Saturday will be the first Saturday in November.

At Austin College, since 1995, the first Saturday in November has been the **Great Day of Service**.

We can't do many of the things this year that we've done in recent Great Days of Service, because: COVID.

But it's gonna take more than some piddly-ass virus to keep #ROONation from happening to the world in a loving and generous way.

This year the Service Station Board has organized **Together We Serve**.

Together We Serve is a collection of several opportunities (more than just one day) for Austin College students to engage safely together in acts of service that can be good news for other people in the world.

Here's the official promotional material:

### **Together We Serve**

- **Saturday, November 7th:**
- **Varying shifts both ON and OFF campus**

- Help prepare meals with support from Kids Against Hunger. weed native plant beds, build wheelchair ramps to help make homes wheelchair accessible, and much more
- **Use link below to sign-up!**

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080d48aca82eaf58-together>



[Together We Serve](#)

Please review the available slots below and click on the button to sign up. For group signups only the number of people participating is needed! Thank you!

[www.signupgenius.com](http://www.signupgenius.com)

**ONGOING EVENTS**

**Can Food Drive**

- **Meals on Wheels Can Food Drive**
- **Now - November 9th**
- Bring cans to Service Station
- Competition between organizations and residence halls on who can donate the most cans by the deadline - the winning group gets free t-shirts!

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We may well have some anxious days ahead.

Knuckleheads are a fact of life.

It is likely that we will see and hear things that will upset and disturb us.

It is also likely that Austin College students will do things this week that will directly improve the lives of our neighbors – from Grayson County to Honduras and who knows where else?

The upsetting and disturbing stuff will produce energy for us.

Let's try to direct that energy some place where it can do some good for somebody else; for somebody who's having a hard time.

That's how we roll in #ROONation.

**Together We Serve** can be a way for us to dig all night and chisel for the light.

The world needs us to be who we are.

Let's do what we know how to do.

It's Election Season.

Use the brains God gave you.

Dig All Night.

Chisel for the Light.

Do Justice.

Love Kindness.

Hop Humbly.

Wear a Mask.

Until next time, I remain,  
Just Another Cowboy Preacher,  
Reaching for my Hard Hat,

JOHN WILLIAMS  
Chaplain