

Letter from the Minister

March, 2026

“The first seven years of February are always the hardest,” noted a meme on social media. It showed a Barbie doll smoking an illegal substance. For me, this feels so very spot on!

Between trying to attend doctors’ appointments to address my own health issues, keep up with work at a UU congregation that I cherish, and concern for two close family members who went into the hospital in the month of February, I just want to yell, “I give up. Everyone just leave me here on the ground, curled up in a ball like a sulking dog who growls at butterflies.” I am not going to lie. Even my own inner “you got this” mantra has failed.

Peering at me from her bed in rehab, my mother said, “Your brother is a drill sergeant! He keeps saying, ‘Your physical therapy is hard, and you have got to do it.’” I said, “Yes, and I am your cheerleader, Mom. You need both. Also, you need your daughter, our youngest sister because she makes you laugh. This is good for you now since it is ten days after you fell and it doesn’t hurt you to laugh anymore.”

In times of challenge, I think any person’s spiritual practice is tested. No matter whether you pray, meditate, run, sing, recite mantras or poetry, pace or rock in a chair, (all of these I have done at one or many times in my life) that anxious energy persists. The master teacher of Buddhism, Thich Nhat Hanh said, “When these thoughts and feelings pop up, notice them and let them go like a leaf on a river.” Lately, I am positive the leaf that I am noticing is stuck on a limb, waving at me as if to say, “Still here. Still here. Not going anywhere!”

This month’s theme is “Paying Attention.” How pertinent for me personally! How about you? Although I tend to panic when I notice how I desperately I want to “fix” things so I and others are no longer suffering, I think our goal might well be to breathe one breath at a time, and watch for the sweet, gentle moments that arise even in the midst of scary ones.

Tee, my mother’s nurse in rehab, told me, “I treat each patient as if it is myself or a loved one in rehab because I know someday it might well occur. No one knows if and when one will need care and support.” As I looked at the bruised face of my mother, I thought, “Probably most of us feels at one time or other on this inside like she looks on the outside. Nothing to do but take one careful breath after another until the hardship passes.”

Also, like my mother, we each need the voice of the drill sergeant, the cheerleader and the one who makes you laugh.

With gratitude for the UU journey we share, Rev. Amy Kindred