

Letter from the Minister for June, 2025

Rev. Amy Kindred

“We exist temporarily through what we take, but we live forever through what we give”
– Vernon Jordan

Summer of ~~-Sin-~~ Service

The “sin of empathy” is a new catch phrase highlighting the absurd idea that caring about others makes one weak. Where did this topic recently emerge? The day after the inauguration, Bishop Marion Budde delivered a powerful sermon at the Washington Cathedral. She specifically asked the president to have mercy on others, especially for marginalized groups such as immigrants and the LGBTQ+ community. A protestant deacon immediately denounced her message and advised Christians to refrain from the “sin of empathy.”

Look, there are days when I am overwhelmed with the idiocy exhibited by a few individuals. In absolute despair, I often whisper to myself, “WTF.” (WTF means, “Where’s The Fudge.” My go-to comfort food is chocolate. Wait. Did you think I was referencing some other meaning of the acronym??) And then, I come across an article, a quote or a piece of poetry and I have renewed faith in humanity.

For example, a few years ago, I participated in a workshop by John Roedel. John is a contemporary poet who freely offers his poetry to the world. He said his poetry is his service to others. It is what he has to offer to humanity for free. Here is an excerpt of a recent piece he shared on social media. It’s titled,

“Teach me how to sin like this.”

To the angels of empathy—

where have you been?!

How long is your vacation going to last?

While you’ve been off

surfing on comets and

toasting marshmallows on

the burning edge of the universe

we’ve been down here,

knee-deep in the wreckage,

*of a world where politics
now trumps tenderness.
We are addicted to shouting into echo chambers;
mistaking dueling monologues for conversation.
It's been a real mess—since you took
your extended holiday,
~ hearts have calcified like gum stuck
We've forgotten how to look each
other in the eye without turning it into a contest.
We are transactionally kind to each other
—just as long as the camera crews are there.
And when we show actual compassion for our neighbor,
we are told we have committed
“the sin of empathy.”
What does that even mean?
Sin of empathy?
—those three words make for the worst roommates...*

To show “actual compassion for our neighbor” means to be of service, to be helpful, to be generous. Unitarian Universalists embrace generosity in all forms, including expressing mercy and compassion for others by sharing time, talent and/or treasure.

The Rev. Fred Rogers said, “Great Acts Are Made Up of Small Deeds.” This summer, UUC has scheduled many activities that include ways to support others including and especially supporting the needs of complete strangers.

For example, our youth program is focused on providing a “Summer of Service” this year. They are asking people in the UUC community to provide financial assistance in June so that they may purchase backpacks for children who can’t afford them when class resumes in the fall. In July, folks will be asked to bring school supplies to fill the backpacks. In August, a request will be made for people to bring in non-perishable food that we will donate to Hope Villages which is the pantry UUC normally supports.

Additionally, throughout the month of June, the Social Justice community is partnering with the Interfaith community, to ask for items to be included in toiletry bags for

hurricane victims. The bags will be filled at UUC at noon on Sunday, July 6. Talk about a great way to celebrate our country's 149th birthday! The packets will then be donated to Sister Catherine of Sienna Catholic Church in Clearwater. This group housed 40 families after last year's storms.

So here is the thing: if you have the financial resources, set a little something aside for the UUC "Summer of Service" efforts. I understand we are all being asked to give a little more than usual in these anything other than usual times. Maybe your budget allows you to help? Maybe not. Please know that a little or a lot is a gift. A kind supportive word to our youth for their efforts is helpful. A note with the words, "Go for it UUC Youth!" is a sweet gesture. And a volunteer hand would not be turned away.

In our *UU Singing the Living Tradition* hymnal, we have a hymn with the following words, "From you I receive, to you I give. Together we share. And from this we live." Let's make kindness, compassion, generosity and empathy great again.

-With you on this journey, Rev. Amy Kindred