

Letter from the Minister, September 2024

“nothing changes one’s
life as much as does love or
the absence thereof”

-Haiku by Kalamu ya Salaam of New Orleans

How do you feel about the word “love?” Some say it’s too squishy or not specific enough. “Love” is one of those concepts that a person who experiences it knows it when they feel it.

Hopefully, most of us in our younger years have experienced familial love-that is, the form expressed by parents, grandparents, siblings, or folks in the wider neighborhood. Psychologists explain that the presence or absence of love in a person’s childhood makes a huge difference. This is why it is so important to smile or speak gently to little strangers, the ones we pass who ride in strollers or toddle with an adult in the grocery store. Every person, young and old, benefits from a kind word or gesture. What was that old song Dionne Warwick used to sing? “What the world needs now is love sweet love...”

Here on the campus of Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater, I see expressions of love *everywhere*. Last Sunday, during the coffee hour, I walked around the room noticing the wonderful mix of persons of all ages. Some find it easy to talk with one another, their heads often thrown back in laughter. Others, who are more on the shy side, prefer to be simply present rather than engaged in a conversation. For example, I noticed a teenager pacing from one side of the room to the other until an adult began talking with them.

On that same Sunday morning, I saw a woman seated at a table. Her head was turned to her right side. She was face to face with a child who stood next to her. The two were peering intently at one another. The woman squinched up her nose and waited as the child did the same. The woman made her cheeks pop out as though they were filled with jawbreakers. The child followed with a matching expression. And still, not a word. The entire time I watched them, there was no talking. The “funny faced” expressions of love shared between them was palpable and so genuine.

This month, our theme touches on “The practice of Invitation.” I hope as your week, your month, your days ensue, you will invite a kind interaction through a genuine expression of love for a stranger or a friend.

– Rev. Amy Kindred