

# Connecting

*Connecting to deepened wisdom and deepened relationship*

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines  
a Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
1800 Bell Ave  
Des Moines, IA 50315  
www.ucdsm.org / 515-244-8603



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## Love

### Chalice Lighting

Words of Orna Walters: “Love is not something that happens to you, it is a choice. When we make the effort to choose love in every circumstance we open our heart to receive the magic and bliss that is love.” – Orna Walters

### Check In

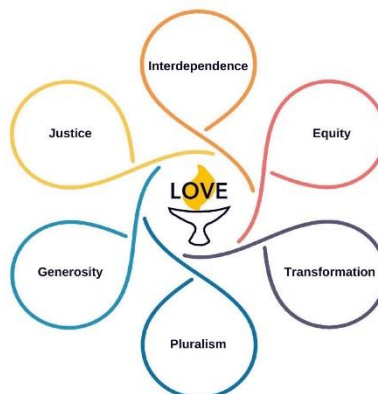
How is it with you today? How has the last month been?

### Love in the Proposed U.U.A. Article II Bylaws

“The Unitarian Universalist Association will actively engage its members in the transformation of the world through liberating Love.”

“We draw from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love. Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.”

In addition, the Pluralism section includes: “We embrace our differences and commonalities with Love, curiosity, and respect.”



## Five Loves

Rev. Meredith Garmon

The Greeks gave us names for five types of love:

**eros:** sexual and erotic attraction

**storge:** familial love, esp. between parent and child

**xenia:** stranger love – hospitality – embrace and appreciation of what is Other and different

**philia:** love of friends

**agape:** selfless, unconditional, universal spiritual love

*Eros.* The sexually-charged energy of erotic love begins to open up possibilities for us in adolescence, and it draws us toward beauty in the human form. Eros fires the creative furnaces, producing poetry, music, painting and sculpture. More than that, it opens our lenses to new possibilities and dimensions of being the particular animal that we are. In the entwining of reason and instinct, the heart opens up and opens up the mind with it. It changes us. This transformation, then, is not merely personal but social, for “when you fall in love with someone, you fall more in love with the world in such a way that beauty pervades even the most mundane” (Christopher Phillips, *Socrates in Love*, 36). The romantic connection to another person becomes a basis for connecting to the world.

*From Eros to Storge.* Out of the lovers’ connection emerges family, household: from making babies we step into having and raising them – and love sprouts a new branch: storge – familial, especially parental, love. It is a difficult thing to wrestle with the balance between supporting your child, being there for her heart and soul, loving unconditionally – yet also making judgments about what to correct, to punish; when to assist and when to step and back and let your child have the invaluable, precious, and necessary experience of failure. And, again, the love that passes through the trials of storge emerges with socially transformative power. If eros pulls us out of our individuality to connect with another person, storge pulls the couple out of obsessive coupliness and into contact with a child. Familial love brings awareness of our meaning within embedded context, preparing us to see the planet as our family.

*From Storge to Xenia.* Storge, then, paves the way for xenia – stranger love, hospitality for the foreigner – because seeing the planet as our family is going to mean taking in a lot of strangers. The ancient Greeks, apparently, extended effusive hospitality, no matter how abject or beggarly the appearance of a stranger.

The stranger also has a special place of care within the Jewish tradition which we inherit. The Hebrew God, Yahweh, declares himself to be, “God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing.” (Deuteronomy 10: 17-18, NRSV) Yahweh then commands his people: “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 10:19, NRSV)

When we reach beyond our individuality, beyond our couplehood, beyond our family, to embrace the stranger with care, we begin to manifest our most essential being. We are

thrown into this world, without asking to be born or choosing our conditions. The only way to make it less alien, more authentic, more of our own making, is through the investment of caring. To love the alien heals our own alienation.

*From Xenia to Philia.* Over time, some of the strangers become friends – and xenia becomes philia – the love of friends. The context of the couple, the family, the hospitality to the passing stranger, affords a special place for those who are none of these: not a romantic affair, not family, yet no longer a stranger either: friend. Through our friends, qualities and potentials in ourselves that would otherwise be invisible to us are reflected back to us. Our friends teach our souls the meaning of befriending – and thus make it possible to conceive of befriending everything – and thus we come to agape.

*From Philia to Agape.* “In Hellenic Greece, agape was considered the highest form of love, self-sacrificial and unconditional love that springs from an overflowing within” (Phillips 227). Through a quirk of language, the Greek word, agape, transliterated into the Roman alphabet, comes out spelled the same as the English word, agape. With agape, the heart, the soul stands agape: wide open to whatever may come – constantly astonished by beauty. Agape is a capacity of awareness of the connectedness of all things – and since love is constituted by connection, agape is awareness of the fundamental love that makes up the structure of reality.

Love is messy and not so neat and orderly, yet this pilgrim’s progress of unfurling love sketches a kind of archetype underlying the scrambles and modifications our lives make. The different forms of love don’t have a unifying essence, but they have a unifying end. All the forms serve to connect us with life, with joy. What we are loving in all the various forms of love is ultimately life itself: life, in the form of the romantic beloved, life in the form of a child, life in the form a stranger, life in the form a friend. When we love the beach sand on our toes, or a mountain, or woods filled with snow, or the stars at night, we are loving this life, this opportunity to be aware amidst this the wondrous universe.

## Lots More Than Five

**ludus** (Latin): playful love, childish love or flirting

**yuanfen** (Chinese): A love relationship established by lot, based on Chinese culture.

**mamihlapinatapei** (Yaghan): A look that without words is shared by two people who want to initiate something, but neither start.

**cafuné** (Brazilian Portuguese): Slowly stroking your fingers through someone else’s hair.

**retrouvailles** (France): The happiness of seeing someone again after a long time.

**la douleur exquise** (France): The pain in your heart when you desire someone you cannot have.

**ya’aburnee** (Arabic): The hope that you will die earlier than the other, so you don’t need to live without the other.

**forelsket** (Nordic): The euphoria you feel when you fall in love for the first time.

**saudade** (Portugees): The feeling of longing for someone you love, but is far away.

## **Intertwining of Love and Pain**

Rev. Rebecca Parker

It is when we are joined most closely, walking on the beach in the summer sun or reading on the porch in the autumn, preparing a meal in the kitchen on a winter afternoon, or in the garden on spring mornings turning the earth together. In just these moments of intense connection and joy and love, I cannot help but feel a twinge of apprehension and pain knowing that some uncalled-for interruption, some small disagreement, a little accident of fate will pull us part. They are so close, so intertwined these experiences of joy and sorrow, of love and pain.

And similarly, no matter the petulance, the storms of anger, the harsh silence that can fall between us, I am in some part of my being buoyed up, even cheered by the knowledge that smiles and the sly touch of love will soon come, inescapable and certain, blinding and overwhelming in its power.

\* \* \*

*Question: What have you learned over the years about these rhythms of intimacy, and how have you developed tools to cope?*

## **Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places**

Rev. David Blanchard

Most of us look for love in only the most obvious places, and as a result, most of us come away disappointed. It's as if we are still grade school kids, counting valentines as a measure of what matters. The love that matters is not typically the subject of sonnets or love songs.

There can be love in being told we are wrong. There can be love in sharing a regret. There can be love in asking for help. There can be love in communicating hurt. There can be love in telling hard truths. Most of us find it painful to live at this level of love, but it can be there, even in these most unlikely places. It isn't the kind of love we've been promised in the fairy tales of princes and fairy godmothers, but it is the kind experienced by frogs and dwarfs. It's the sort of love that can bring us closer to finding the missing pieces of ourselves that we need to make us whole.

Some of the most loving things I've ever experienced, I haven't been ready for, wasn't looking for, and nearly didn't recognize. A few of them I didn't want. But all of them have changed me, transformed some part of me, filled in a place that I didn't even know was empty.

When the valentine has been tucked away in a drawer, the candy eaten, the flowers faded and gone, there will be other legacies of love that will last as long as we do, because they have brought us to know an element of life -- part feeling, part idea, part mystery -- that once known, is ours to keep.

\* \* \*

*Question: In what "wrong places" has love shown up in your life?*

## **Are You Sure Your Loving is Large Enough?**

Rev. Scott Tayler, abridged, adapted

Harkening to a larger definition of love has been a primary concern for our faith from the beginning. For our forebear American Universalists over 200 years ago, one might even say that love is what made them who they were as a religion – and thus what continues to make us who we are today as UUs. Love is what made others call us heretics. Simply put, we took the Bible seriously when it said, “God is Love.” We also took Jesus seriously when he said that God is like a loving father. When others said that God has predestined some of his children to heaven and others to hell, we just couldn’t get our minds around that. How could a loving parent or “Love itself” damn anyone to hell? For our Universalist God, there is nothing a person can do to get outside of the circle of love – no way to escape it or brush it off – and here we are, left with the challenge of making that kind of love real here on earth.

Love is tough stuff, often leading to the opposite of comfort. It wants to keep pushing our affections out into wider and wider circles. UUism gets this. And so it asks us over and over, “Are you sure your loving is large enough?!”

And here’s another: Have you placed your “true loves” at the center of your life? That too is a question UUism won’t let you escape. Do you know what fills your heart? And what breaks it? Are you living from your loves and passions? Or are you letting others dictate the path of your days?

Putting love and our “true loves” first. Is that not what our lives are about?

## **That Worn, Smudged, Grubby, Smelly, Slimy Word**

Rev. Meredith Garmon

*“Of all the worn, smudged, dog’s-eared words in our vocabulary, ‘love’ is surely the grubbiest, smelliest, slimiest. Bawled from a million pulpits, lasciviously crooned through hundreds of millions of loud-speakers, it has become an outrage to good taste and decent feeling, an obscenity which one hesitates to pronounce. And yet it has to be pronounced, for, after all, Love is the last word.” – Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)*

Love. Such an over-used, misused, and abused notion. To speak the word is to risk mushy sentimentality or perhaps even endorsing a device of emotional or sexual manipulation. Yet there is no way around it. Love can be dangerous because it is so very powerful – and it is powerful because it is so necessary.

Eros, in particular, goes often disastrously, traumatically astray. As the great wit, Dorothy Parker (1893-1967), penned:

*“Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song,  
a medley of extemporanea,  
And love is a thing that can never go wrong,  
and I am Marie of Romania.”*

Still, we are built with, as Walt Whitman put it:

*“Urge and urge and urge,  
Always the procreant urge of the world.”*

When paired with reciprocity and mutual respect, autonomy, and deep caring, that procreant urge becomes a path of union: a communion that is the more spiritual for being embodied and the more embodied for being spiritual. Sex is then a sacred act – sacramental, in the sense of revealing the divine, the holy.

The urge, however, may arise without reciprocity, respect, or care. The Me Too movement that started in 2017 shined a bright light on stories of men’s urges, forlorn of respect or consent, inflicting painful abuse and harassment on women. Eros is a gift with which we may connect, commit, and transcend our aloneness, but it can be abused, and people hurt and traumatized.

Love has to be pronounced, for we must speak and learn together love’s truth, know love’s wholeness, recognize her fragmentary imposters.

Henry David Thoreau wrote:

*“There is no remedy for love but to love more.”*

Fortunately, there is more. It is, in fact, all around. Beginning with those words from Huxley, I arrive at another favorite passage, and my mind’s ear hears Hugh Grant speaking the voiceover for the opening montage of the 2003 movie, *Love Actually*.

*“Whenever I get gloomy with the state of the world, I think about the arrivals gate at Heathrow Airport. General opinion's starting to make out that we live in a world of hatred and greed, but I don't see that. It seems to me that love is everywhere. Often, it's not particularly dignified or newsworthy, but it's always there - fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, old friends. When the planes hit the Twin Towers, as far as I know, none of the phone calls from the people on board were messages of hate or revenge - they were all messages of love. If you look for it, I've got a sneaky feeling that you'll find love actually is all around.”*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAD2\\_MVMUIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAD2_MVMUIE)

Whether in the thrilling flutter of the heart or in the patient years of small acts of care – whether in the sweeping away of rational faculties or in the employment of our most careful thought in service of a high ideal – whether in dedication to a mate, or to children, or to parents, or to a tribe of friends – love is our name for what connects us to something outside of ourselves. Worn and smudged; grubby, smelly, and slimy; love remains the last word.

# Love Quotations

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.  
– Jesus of Nazareth, Matt 22: 37-40, NRSV

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. – St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 13

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. – 1 John 4:18, NRSV

May I be an instrument of peace. Where there is hatred let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. And where there is sadness, joy. may I not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; To be loved as to love  
– Prayer of St. Francis (adapted)

We can do no great things; only small things with great love. – Mother Teresa

Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we must be saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore, we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness.  
– Reinhold Niebuhr

Love is not shared pleasure. It is shared pain.  
– attr. to “a professional athlete” by Charlotte Joko Beck

Pain withheld, becomes hate. Pain shared, becomes love.  
– Rohan Rathore

Deep communion and dear compassion is formed much more by shared pain than by shared pleasure. I do not know why that is true. – Richard Rohr

Compassion, then, involves the recognition and clear seeing of suffering... feelings of kindness for people who are suffering... involves recognizing our shared human condition, flawed and fragile as it is. – Kristin Neff

What does open us is sharing our vulnerabilities. Sometimes we see a couple who has done this difficult work over a lifetime. We can sense the enormous comfort, the shared quality of ease between these people. It's beautiful and very rare. Without this quality of openness and vulnerability, partners don't really know each other; they are one image living with another image.  
– Charlotte Joko Beck

We ourselves shall be loved for a while and forgotten. But the love will have been enough; all those impulses of love return the love that made them. Even memory is not

necessary for love. There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning. – Thornton Wilder

What else is love but understanding and rejoicing in the fact that another person lives, acts, and experiences otherwise than we do? – Friedrich Nietzsche

To love deeply in one direction makes us more loving in all others. – Anne-Sophie Swetchine

Falling in love has little to do with purposively nurturing one's spiritual development. If we have any purpose in mind when we fall in love it is to terminate our own loneliness and perhaps insure this result through marriage. Actual love is an action, an activity. Love is not a feeling.  
– M. Scott Peck

Frequently people think compassion and love are merely sentimental. No! They are very demanding. If you are going to be compassionate, be prepared for action.  
– Desmond Tutu

People don't care about how much you know until they know about how much you care. – Author unknown

A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you. – Elbert Hubbard

Love always brings difficulties, that is true, but the good side of it is that it gives energy. – Vincent van Gogh

Yes, we are created in and for community, to be there, in love, for one another. But community cuts both ways: when we reach the limits of our own capacity to love, community means trusting that someone else will be available to the person in need. – Parker Palmer

Love is not something that happens to you, it is a choice. When we make the effort to choose love in every circumstance we open our heart to receive the magic and bliss that is love. – Orna Walters

We accept the love we think we deserve.  
– Stephen Chbosky

Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place.  
– Zora Neale Hurston

To love a person is to learn the song /That is in their heart,  
/And to sing it to them /When they have forgotten.  
– Anonymous

Even after all this time, the sun never says to the earth, “You owe me.” Look what happens with a love like that. It lights the whole sky. – Hafiz

If you don't break your ropes while you're alive, do you think ghosts will do it after? If you make love with the divine now, in the next life you will have the face of satisfied desire. – Kabir

Love is the triumph of imagination over intelligence.  
– H. L. Mencken

## Spiritual Exercise

**Option A: A Love Meditation.** Set aside about 10 minutes of undisturbed quiet.

Finding a posture of stillness, breathe so that your inhalations and exhalations are about the same length. (Inhaling speeds up the heart rate and exhaling slows it down.) The heart has more than a metaphorical link to love; the cardiovascular and nervous systems lace together in your body like lovers' fingers. Practices like these will nurture wholehearted well-being in you and greater warmth for others.

Begin by calling to mind the sense of being with people who care about you. Open yourself to feeling cared for. Let this feeling fill you, warming your heart, softening your face. Sink into this experience. It's okay if opposite thoughts arise (e.g., rejection). Observe them for a moment, and then return to feeling cared about—which will warm up the neural circuits of being loving yourself.

Sense into the area around your heart, and think of things that evoke heartfelt feelings, such as gratitude, compassion, or kindness. Strengthen these loving feelings with soft thoughts toward others, such as, “I wish you well. May you not be in pain. May you be at peace. May you live with ease.” If you feel upset with someone, you can include these reactions in your awareness while also extending loving thoughts like, “I'm angry with you and won't let you hurt me again—and I still hope you find true happiness, and I still wish you well.”

Come to your Connection Circle prepared to describe what this experience was like for you.

**Option B: Re-embrace a Love That's Fallen Away** Who of us doesn't have something, someone or some activity that's been an old friend? Old friend people drift out of contact; favorite things wear out or break; favorite activities get neglected. This month is for noticing an old friend that we've allowed to come apart, to dry up, to fall from the center of our attention and the core of our living. Then take a couple concrete steps to bring it back to life—to bring it back to your life.

(a) Find an object or take a picture that represents a “love” you've let slip from your life. (b) Place that object or picture in a prominent -- some place you will see it every day. (c) Commit yourself to doing TWO things this month that will reconnect you with that love. Use that object or picture to hold you accountable.

An “old friend” might be: favorite hiking boots – calling to you to get lost in the woods; a piano book encouraging you to set up piano lessons again—for the first time in 40 years; a photo of your spouse that holds you accountable to weekly date nights; an order of service from church that reminds you that regular attendance at church ends up making you feel as good (maybe even better) as regular visits to the gym; that old tie dyed T-shirt or black beatnik turtleneck that pushes you to go at least one protest event; a type of coffee, or wine, or cheese that you haven't had in a while and that you really enjoy.

Bring your object/picture with you to your group!



# Your Question

*Which question calls to you? Find the question that “hooks” you most and let it lead you wherever you need to go. Come to your Connection Circle meeting prepared to share that journey with your group.*

1. What is “love”? Which, if any, of the definitions on p. 1 – or the words for different kinds of love on p. 2 – seem helpful or worth remembering?
2. Philia, eros, agape, storge, xenia: which of these is most prominent in your life these days? Is that the way you want it?
3. Recall a time when you saw a public demonstration of love between two people you didn’t know. How did it make you feel?
4. (From "Are You Sure Your Loving is Large Enough?") Is your love large enough? Have you placed your “true loves” at the center of your life? Do you know what fills your heart? And what breaks it? Are you living from your loves and passions? Or are you letting others dictate the path of your days?
5. (From “Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places”) In what “wrong places” has love shown up in your life?
6. (From “Intertwining of Love and Pain”) What have you learned over the years about these rhythms of intimacy, and how have you developed tools to cope?
7. What’s the difference between being "in love" and loving someone?
8. What does, "God is Love" mean?
9. Jesus enjoined, “love your enemies.” Who are your enemies? Do you love them? Would you like to? What would loving your enemies look like for for?
10. Why do we love? What do we learn from other species that sheds light on why and how love operates in humans?
11. What have you found or seen to be blocks to love, compassion, and empathy?
12. A song by Gene Keller asks, “How much love do you need? How much love can you see? How much love will set you free? And how much love can you be?” How would you answer?
13. What is unconditional love? Should love have limits or conditions?
14. Former UUA President William Sinkford has said, “I have no systematic theology. But I believe there is a spirit of life, a presence. That night, I had the experience of being held by God. I had the sense that we don’t have to walk this path alone, that there is a love that has never broken faith with us.” What is this “love that has never broken faith with us”?
15. “Love is never wrong.” True or false?
16. Is there a question other than the above that is niggling you about love?

## TED Talks about Love

Helen Fisher (anthropologist), “The Brain in Love” (2008). Why do we crave love so much, even to the point that we would die for it? MRIs of people in love – and those who had just been dumped – reveal details of our need for romantic love.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/helen\\_fisher\\_studies\\_the\\_brain\\_in\\_love](https://www.ted.com/talks/helen_fisher_studies_the_brain_in_love)

Shannon Odell (educator), “The Science of Falling in Love” (2022). Love is often described as heartwarming, heart-wrenching, or even heartbreaking— and your brain is responsible for all these feelings. The journey from first spark to the last tear is guided by a symphony of neurochemicals and brain systems. Shannon Odell explores what happens in your brain when you fall in love, how it responds to a relationship, and how it reacts to a breakup.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/shannon\\_odell\\_the\\_science\\_of\\_falling\\_in\\_love](https://www.ted.com/talks/shannon_odell_the_science_of_falling_in_love)

Mandy Len Catron (writer), “Falling in Love is the Easy Part” (2015). You can fall in love with anyone just by asking them 36 questions? But is that real love? Does it last? And what’s the difference between falling in love and staying in love?

[https://www.ted.com/talks/mandy\\_len\\_catron\\_falling\\_in\\_love\\_is\\_the\\_easy\\_part](https://www.ted.com/talks/mandy_len_catron_falling_in_love_is_the_easy_part)

Esther Perel (psychotherapist), “The Secret to Desire in a Long-Term Relationship” (2013). Good and committed sex draws on two conflicting needs: for security and for surprise. We want our beloved to be both best friend and erotic partner. Pulling this off requires erotic intelligence.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/esther\\_perel\\_the\\_secret\\_to\\_desire\\_in\\_a\\_long\\_term\\_relationship](https://www.ted.com/talks/esther_perel_the_secret_to_desire_in_a_long_term_relationship)

Tiq and Kim Katrin Milan, “A Queer Vision of Love and Marriage” (2016). The marriage of Tiq, a trans-man, and Kim, a cis-woman, model the revolutionary possibility of love. With infectious joy, they question our misconceptions and offer a vision of an inclusive, challenging ever-deepening love.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/tiq\\_milan\\_and\\_kim\\_katrin\\_milan\\_a\\_queer\\_vision\\_of\\_love\\_and\\_marriage](https://www.ted.com/talks/tiq_milan_and_kim_katrin_milan_a_queer_vision_of_love_and_marriage)

Hannah Fry (mathematician), “The Mathematics of Love” (2014). Finding the right mate is no cakewalk – but is it even mathematically likely? This charming talk, shows patterns in how we look for love, and gives three tips (verified by math!) for finding that special someone.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/hannah\\_fry\\_the\\_mathematics\\_of\\_love](https://www.ted.com/talks/hannah_fry_the_mathematics_of_love)

Stacey Baker (photo editor) & Alec Soth (photographer), “What Enduring Love Looks Like” (2015). Photos of speed-dating couples who just met – and photos of long-married couples. What do you notice about the difference? What do you see of what enduring love looks like?

[https://www.ted.com/talks/alec\\_soth\\_stacey\\_baker\\_this\\_is\\_what\\_enduring\\_love\\_looks\\_like](https://www.ted.com/talks/alec_soth_stacey_baker_this_is_what_enduring_love_looks_like)

Sebastian Junger (journalist), “Why Veterans Miss War” (2014). War teaches soldiers a deeply powerful and profoundly meaningful love.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/sebastian\\_junger\\_why\\_veterans\\_miss\\_war](https://www.ted.com/talks/sebastian_junger_why_veterans_miss_war)

Brené Brown (vulnerability researcher), “The Power of Vulnerability” (2010). This poignant, funny talk shares an insight from Brown’s research that sent her on a personal quest to know herself as well as to understand humanity.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability)

## For Families

Birch Spick

Faith Formation & Congregational Life Coordinator

One Sunday, I must have been eleven or twelve, our parish priest told a story during his homily, where his mother shared a piece of wisdom with him: “You don’t have to like everybody, but you do have to love them.” And being of an age where I wanted to question everything (especially unsolicited advice), I rolled my eyes so hard at hearing this. “What does this even mean?” I thought. “How is liking any different from loving? Do I even have to love the people who act like they don’t love me?”

But as I’ve grown in age (and maybe wisdom) I have become so grateful for this piece of advice I heard so many years ago. This principle has particularly guided how I live in community with others. Love this church community as much as I may – or that friend group or family-member – there are so many times where our life together tries my patience, fills me with disappointment, and cracks my rose-colored glasses. I don’t always like what the people around me do, and they probably don’t like all the things I do either.

But love calls us back from dislike of one another’s behavior. Love deeper-than-like reminds me to stay present with the people in my life, to practice patience with them, and to remember our shared dignity when we call each other back into principled living – even when we annoy and disappoint each other. Annoyance and disappointment are inevitable when we spend so much time around each other. That’s OK, and very human. It’s what we do after feeling annoyed and disappointed that matters. That, I believe, is where love guides us to what’s next.

This month, we will read these stories in our Sunday services. Our children will explore them and their lessons more through games and crafts during class. Consider exploring these stories and their lessons at home with these accompanying questions.

- Alan Rabinowitz, *A Boy and a Jaguar*. This is a story about a boy with a special love for animals who uses this love to protect them when he grows up. What do you do for the people you love?
- Janeen K. Grohsmeyer, “Muddy Children: Hosea Ballou,” in *A Lamp in Every Corner*. This is a story about one of our Universalist ancestors, whose father’s unconditional love taught him to believe in God’s universal love and salvation. Who has taught you about love?
- Lynne Cherry, *The Great Kapok Tree*. In this story, a man cutting down a kapok tree learns to love all the creatures whose lives depend on the tree, and so decides to leave the forest. How do we show people in our community we love and care about them?
- Anika Stafford, “The Sea Creatures,” in *Aisha’s Moonlit Walk*. In this story, a Pagan family celebrates Beltane and all the different ways we can show people we love them. What are some ways you show people you love them?



## Check Out

What overall message stands out for you?

## Chalice Extinguishing

Words of Rumi: “Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.”



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