



*Soul Matters*

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# Cultivating Compassion

Worship Research  
October 2025

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**A Note About Author Titles:** Many of the authors we refer to are ministers. Some ministers prefer to be credited with their title “Rev.”, others don’t, and still others are fine either way. Our practice is to follow whatever practice was used in the source material we reference.

# Calendar Connections

View our full-year calendar [HERE](#)

## October 2025

*Click on the hyperlinked names of each event for more information or inspiration.*

### Interfaith

- [Yom Kippur](#) - Jewish Day of Atonement - Oct. 1 & 2, 2025
- [Sukkot](#): Feast of Tabernacles (Jewish) - Oct. 6 - Oct. 13, 2025
- [Ayudha Puja](#) (Hindu) - Oct. 1, 2025 (more [here](#))
- [Reformation Day](#) (Christian) - Oct. 31 (more [here](#))
- [Samhain](#) (Pagan/Wiccan) - Oct. 31 - Nov. 1 ([more](#))
- [Diwali: Festival of Lights](#) (Hindu) - Oct 20-21, 2025

### Unitarian Universalist

- [Michael Servetus](#) burned at the stake in Geneva - Oct. 27 (1553) (more [here](#))
- [UU Merger Vote](#): Unitarians and Universalists, meeting separately in Syracuse, NY, voted to proceed with consolidation - Oct. 31, 1959. (*The official consolidation, [UUA Founding Day](#), happened in 1961 on May 12. - more [here](#)*)

### National & Cultural Holidays

- [LGBTQ History Month](#)
- [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15)
- [Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#)
- [Bullying Prevention Month](#)
- [ADHD Awareness Month](#)
- Birthday of Mohandas Gandhi - Oct. 2 (1869)
- Thurgood Marshall sworn in as the 1st African American justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. - Oct. 2, 1967
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg joins the U.S. Supreme Court as its second woman Justice - Oct. 4, 1993
- [Sisters in Spirit Vigils](#) (Canada) - October 4, 2018: Honoring the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)
- [Indigenous Peoples Day](#) / Columbus Day (U.S.) - Oct. 13, 2025 (second Monday of October) - more [here](#)
- [National Coming Out Day](#) - Oct. 11 (more [here](#))
- Thanksgiving Day (Canada) - Oct. 13, 2025 (second Monday in October)
- [United Nations Day](#) - Oct. 24
- [Intersex Awareness Day](#) - Oct. 26
- Halloween, All Soul's Eve - Oct. 31

### For Fun and On the Fringe

- Country Music Month (designated Oct. 1970 [by Richard Nixon](#)) more [here](#) and [here](#)
- World Vegetarian Day - Oct. 1
- [Banned Books Week](#) - Oct. 5 - 11, 2025 (more [here](#))
- [World Smile Day](#) - Oct. 6
- [Clergy Appreciation Day](#) - Oct. 12, 2024 (second Sunday of October)

# Chalice Lightings & Opening Words

## **With Dirt on Our Hands \***

*Rev. Dr. David Breeden*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Come into this moment  
as if stepping into a garden at dawn,  
quiet, tender, open to what may grow.

Let compassion be the flower  
we bend toward.

We return as if returning to the soil,  
hands in the dirt,  
willing to tend what needs tending.

Here, today, we gather  
to remember:  
that the most delicate blooms  
require daily care.  
That attention is the water of love.  
That we are still learning how to care.

Come.  
Let us begin again in love—  
tending the garden of the heart,  
and the heart of compassion.

## **To care without drowning...\***

*Rev. Michelle Collins*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Some days the world's pain  
floods through us  
like water through a broken dam,  
every headline, every cry of distress  
becoming our own.  
We come here thirsty  
for the wisdom  
to care without drowning,  
to love without losing ourselves  
in the undertow of others' sorrow.  
Come, let us seek together  
the steady foundation  
from which true compassion flows.

## **Come Into This Circle \***

*Rev. Scott Tayler*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)  
(Edits permitted)

Come into this circle of compassion and care.  
Bring your worry and wounds,  
your longings and hopes.

With word and song,  
we rekindle the connection  
that mends what's been torn.

With stillness and the space to pause,  
we restore our strength  
for the work that must be done.

The work of love.  
The work of peace.  
The work of repair.  
The work of remembering we are not alone.  
Let us begin.

## **We Lay Down Our Burdens \***

*Kate Steinberg*

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/we-lay-down-our-burdens>  
[Permission Source](#)

We arrive in this place where all we have to do is  
breathe.  
We don't have to impress or convince or win over...  
We don't have to be anything but who we are....  
May we be filled instead with presence.  
May we feel held in the comfort of our community.  
May we discover new compassion for ourselves and  
others.  
May we meet this moment with gentleness, ease...

## **Rekindled...\***

*Albert Schweitzer*

Reading #447 in *Singing The Living Tradition*  
[Permission Source](#)

At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by  
a spark from another person. Each  
of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of  
those who have lighted the flame within us.

### **Come into This Circle of Community \***

*Rev. Andrew Pakula*

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/5193.shtml>

[Permission Source](#)

Come into this circle of community. Come into this sacred space.

Be not tentative. Bring your whole self!

Bring the joy that makes your heart sing.

Bring your kindness and your compassion...

### **Thirsty \***

*Gregory Pelley*

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/thirsty>

[Permission Source](#)

As we light this chalice

May all who gather here be filled:

Filled with joy and hope

Filled with compassion and love...

So that we may pour ourselves out  
into the world.

### **The wisdom to know...\***

*Rev. Michelle Collins*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We light this chalice as we learn to hold both tenderness and strength. May this flame illuminate the wisdom to know when compassion calls us to offer comfort and when it demands courageous action.

# Meditations & Prayers

## **Tending \***

[\*Rev. Dr. David Breeden\*](#)

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Spirit of compassion,  
named or nameless,  
within and among us,  
teach us to tend,  
tend to ourselves  
and to each other.

May we tend to tenderness  
as patiently as seeds in spring.

May our hearts be soft enough  
to feel another's ache,  
strong enough  
to hold that ache with grace.

When we fail,  
may we begin again,  
gently,  
with compassion  
for ourselves.

May this be our hope and vow:  
to practice love  
until it takes root.

## **Even This Is Enough \***

(On self-compassion)

*Rev. Vanessa Southern*

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/even-enough>

[Permission Source](#)

The world won't stop spinning on her axis if you don't  
rise to all occasions today.

Love won't cease to flow in your direction...

Rest, if you must, then, like the swimmer lying on her  
back who floats...

## **Gentleness in Living \***

*Rev. Richard S. Gilbert*

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/gentleness-living>

[Permission Source](#)

Who of us can look inside another and know what is  
there

Of hope and hurt, or promise and pain?...

Our lives are like fragile eggs.

They crack and the substance escapes.

Handle with care!

Handle with exceedingly tender care...

## **Prayer for Cultivating Compassion for Oneself \***

*Rev. Michelle Collins, Soul Matters Worship Researcher*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Source of Love, we come carrying the weight of our own harsh verdicts, guilty, insufficient, forever falling short of some impossible standard. We who would never speak to a friend the way we speak to ourselves in the dark hours before dawn.

There is a tenderness we save for others that we ration from our own souls. A forgiveness we grant freely to strangers while our own mistakes echo endlessly in memory's courtroom. We have learned to be generous with everyone but the person in the mirror.

Teach us the revolutionary act of self-befriending. When shame whispers its familiar poison, may we remember: we are not our worst moments. We are not the sum of our regrets. We are beloved, imperfect, gloriously human—worthy of the same gentle mercy we yearn to give the world.

May we learn that loving ourselves is not vanity but necessity—the deep well from which all other love must flow.



### **Prayer for Cultivating Compassion When It Feels Difficult \***

*Rev. Michelle Collins, Soul Matters Worship Researcher*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Spirit of Community, we name the truth: there are people who make love feel impossible, who push every button we didn't know we had, who seem almost designed to test the very limits of our humanity. Our hearts contract around these relationships like fists, protecting old wounds that never quite healed. We itemize their faults, build cases for our justified anger, forget that they too were once children who needed tenderness.

Grant us eyes to see past the armor to the wounds beneath. Help us recognize that cruelty is often just pain that has nowhere else to go, that the hardest people to love are frequently those who most desperately need it. This does not mean accepting harm or abandoning boundaries. But may we find the fierce grace to hold both protection and compassion, remembering that even the most difficult souls are traveling their own mysterious journey toward healing.

When love feels impossible, help us choose dignity anyway. When understanding fails, let kindness remain.

### **Prayer for Cultivating Compassion for the World \***

*Rev. Michelle Collins, Soul Matters Worship Researcher*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Ground of Being, we witness a world on fire, literally and metaphorically. Headlines scream of cruelty and division. Children go hungry while others feast. The earth herself groans under the weight of our carelessness and our selfishness.

Some days the suffering feels too vast, the darkness too deep. We are tempted to close our hearts rather than let them break again and again. To choose cynicism over hope, numbness over feeling, despair over the vulnerable act of caring.

Yet here we gather, proof that love persists. In every city, on every continent, hearts like ours beat with stubborn compassion. Strangers comfort strangers. Neighbors feed neighbors. People choose justice when injustice would be easier.

Remind us that we are part of something larger than our individual capacity to heal. That every act of kindness creates ripples we'll never see. That the light of compassion, however small our flame, joins with countless others to push back the darkness.

May we trust that love is stronger than fear, that justice is more powerful than oppression, that ordinary people choosing extraordinary kindness can and will transform this world.

### **Midrash on Psalm 23 \***

*Tess Baumberger*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Oh Protector, you who guide me,  
you provide everything my spirit needs.  
You help me rest my weariness  
in green places of the earth.  
You bring me to shining waters  
which replenish my spirit.  
You show me the way of justice  
for the sake of the suffering.

Even when this path seems dangerous,  
and death canyons all around me,  
I am not afraid because you walk with me,

your courage and your strength  
reassure me, my heart walks at ease.

You shower me with abundance,  
challenging me to share it  
even with those who may wish to harm me.

Your faith in me helps me trust  
myself, others, this world of mystery.  
The vessel of my being cannot possibly  
hold your grace and my gratitude.

I trust that goodness and compassion  
will permeate my every day,  
and I will live within your loving presence  
for all eternity.

## **A Prayer For Those Who Are Losing Our Shit Right Now**

*Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber*

Full prayer at <https://thecorners.substack.com/p/a-prayer-for-those-who-are-losing>

Dear God,

Please forgive me for how I acted when that Amazon truck was blocking my driveway the other day.

In your endless compassion you know my rage was really about every form of fear I am trying to keep at bay right now – how it all sort of broke through my exhausted defenses because I was coming home from the gym and was really hungry...

When I see others not being the best version of themselves, guide me to compassion for them, that in doing so I might also have compassion for myself.

You know how fragile we are...

And when, O God, I inevitably try to control everything and everyone in my life, please have mercy upon me – for you know that what I am really doing is responding to how powerless I feel over every single thing in the news cycle every single day...

## **Guided Visualization: Desert's Tenderness \***

*Rev. Michelle Collins, Soul Matters Worship Researcher*

Permission Secured by Soul Matters

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XaFBludlo9NjqAxwZzOs1AP4pEG5X0gatyHtadeROqQ/edit?usp=sharing>

Imagine yourself as a tiny seed that has just cracked open in the desert.

Feel the harsh sun beating down on your tender shoot.

The ground beneath you is hard, unforgiving.

But notice... there is shade where you are.

A mature creosote (KREE-uh-sote) bush stands nearby, her branches reaching over you.

Feel the blessed coolness of her shadow...

## **Poems That Can Serve As Meditations On Compassion**

### **Self-Compassion**

*James Crews*

Full poem at

<https://www.guideforconscioushealing.com/wild-words-poetry-blog/self-compassion>

My friend and I snickered the first time  
we heard the meditation teacher, a grown man,  
call himself honey, with a hand placed  
over his heart to illustrate how we too  
might become more gentle with ourselves  
and our runaway minds. It's been years  
since we sat with legs twisted on cushions,  
holding back our laughter, but today  
I found myself crouched on the floor again,  
not meditating exactly, just agreeing  
to be still, saying honey to myself each time  
I thought about my husband splayed  
on the couch with aching joints and fever...

### **Breathing Compassion**

*Steve Garnaas-Holmes*

Full piece at

<https://unfoldinglight.net/2022/06/19/breathing-compassion/>

Breathe in love.

It is love, all this that surrounds you...

holds you, contains you, fills you perfectly...

It is given, breathed into you...

from divine lungs

that breathe everything...

Breathe it in deeply, this love.

Let it fill you,

enliven you,

change you.

And breathe out.



# Music

## Suggestions For October 2025 - “Cultivating Compassion”

from Soul Matters Music Resources Coordinator, [Adam O'Dell](#)

### Musical Musings of the Month: Cultivating – not Conjuring – Compassion

*“A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”*

— Albert Einstein

If you're like me (and in this case, I maybe recommend you not be), you've been keeping up with the news around the country and the world so much that you've hardly looked away from whichever screen the news is appearing on. The ICE raids across our cities, the ongoing genocide in Gaza, and the defunding of several important domestic social programs are just a few of the things catching my attention and not letting go. On one end of things, I'm left wondering how human beings can be compelled to inflict such pain on other human beings in the first place. On the other, I am wondering if I will be able to keep the energy necessary to not look away, to continue speaking out, and to continue doing what I can to prevent further suffering.

The unfortunate reality is that it's much harder to grow and create than it is to destroy. It takes months or even years to build a building, but only seconds to knock it down. It takes a season to grow a field of crops, but only minutes to burn it. This is the kind of thought that overwhelms me if I'm not careful. Thankfully, I've had the right communities around me to remind me that this isn't all there is to the story.

I recently returned from the AUUMM conference in Atlanta, and it's a common thing to talk about how inspiring and renewing it is each year, but this year was something special for me. I really needed the refresh, and I felt *refreshed* after the first day, and full to bursting by the time we extinguished the chalice at closing worship. I met with our niche community of music directors and other UU professionals and laity, and I'm taking what I gained back with me to my small community. I'm preparing for another year of ministering to my congregation as we go out and do the work of justice and peace in our community and in our world.

It's inspiring work, but it's also constant and slow. Sometimes, it's hard to hold onto how important that slow work is. It can feel like nothing against the immediate, wanton destruction inflicted by damaged and self-interested people. But the truth is, though the destruction cannot be fully and truly undone, it is precisely this kind of work that heals our communities, and strengthens them against the fear, hatred, and isolationism that seeks to divide us. It is compassion that slows the tide of authoritarianism and isolationism, and reminds us we are part of a community that can flourish together. Being a sower of compassion is hard. It's hard to wake up each morning and water what looks like bare ground, but we do it anyway because we know the sprouts will come.

- Adam

## Hymns

| #   | Title   | Style Notes                       | Singability |      | Permissions   |
|-----|---|-----------------------------------|-------------|------|---|
| 6   | Just as Long as I Have Breath   | Traditional, Stately              | 4           | H    | L: Print credit below<br>M: Public Domain                   |
|     | "Lyrics by Alicia S. Carpenter, © 1981; used with permission of the Estate" |                                   |             |      |   |
| 10  | Immortal Love   | Flowing, Irish, Call to Action    | 4           | H/SL | Public Domain   |
| 17  | Every Night and Every Morn  | Haunting, Centering, The Call     | 5           | H    | Public Domain   |
| 34  | Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire  | Traditional, Flowing, Reflective  | 5           | H    | One License   |
| 89  | Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life   | Traditional, Meditative, The Call | 4           | H    | Public Domain   |
| 93  | To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love   | Aspirational, Chorale             | 4           | H/SL | Public Domain   |
| 95  | There Is More Love Somewhere  | Spiritual, Centering              | 5           | R/SL | Public Domain   |
| 101 | Abide with Me   | Traditional, Comforting           | 5           | H    | Public Domain   |
| 117 | O Light of Life   | Prayerful, Supplication, Action   | 3           | H/SL | UUA permissions granted                                     |
| 127 | Can I See Another's Woe?  | Lamentful, Chorale                | 5           | H    | Public Domain   |
| 131 | Love Will Guide Us  | Rocking, Sweet                    | 5           | H/SL | Permissions Granted   |
| 134 | Our World is One World  | Ballad, Contemporary              | 4           | SL   | One License or CCS  |
| 142 | Let There Be Light  | Simple, Traditional, Comforting   | 5           | H/SL | Public Domain   |
| 159 | This Is My Song   | Flowing, Prayerful                | 5           | H    | L/M: Public Domain<br>Arr.: One License                     |
| 186 | Grieve Not Your Heart   | Compassion, Folksy                | 5           | H/SL | L: Permissions Granted<br>M: Public Domain                  |
| 196 | Singer of Life  | Indigenous, Introspective         | 5           | H/SL | One License   |
| 292 | If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking                                       | Haunting, Meditative              | 2           | H/SL | Music: No known copyright<br>Lyrics: Public Domain          |
| 299 | Make Channels for the Streams of Love                                       | Swaying, Simple, Prayerful        | 5           | H/SL | L: Public Domain<br>M: One License                          |
| 318 | We Would Be One   | Traditional, Aspirational         | 5           | H    | Music and Lyrics: Public Domain<br>Arrangement: One License |

|      |                                    |                                 |   |        |  |
|------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--------|--|
| 346  | Come, Sing a Song with Me          | Folksy, Welcoming, In the Round | 4 | SL     | Permissions granted  |
| 348  | Guide My Feet                      | Strength, Compassion, Spiritual | 5 | R/SL   | Public Domain  |
| 403  | Spirit of Truth, of Life, of Power | Simple, Chorale, Togetherness   | 5 | H      | Public Domain  |
| 1002 | Comfort Me                         | Meditative, Comforting          | 4 | SL     | Permissions Granted  |
| 1009 | Meditation on Breathing            | Meditative, In the Round        | 5 | R/SL   | Permissions Granted  |
| 1012 | When I Am Frightened               | Lullaby, Warm, Comforting       | 4 | H/SL   | Words & Music: Donate to Heritage UU Church in Cincinnati, choir or children's music program             |
| 1013 | Open My Heart                      | Simple, Prayerful, In the Round | 4 | R/SL   | Permissions Granted. Email <a href="mailto:flurry@henryflurry.com">flurry@henryflurry.com</a> when used. |
| 1014 | Answering the Call of Love         | Pop, Uplifting                  | 2 | SL     | Permissions Granted. Please use new title "Answering the Call of Love"                                   |
| 1021 | Lean on Me                         | Support, Covenant, R&B/Soul     | 5 | R/SL   | CCS  |
| 1022 | Open the Window                    | Upbeat, Calypso, Percussive     | 2 | R/SL   | CCS  |
| 1027 | Cuando el Pobre                    | Lament, Ballad, Simple          | 3 | SL     | One License  |
| 1031 | Filled with Loving Kindness        | Slow, Simple, Meditative        | 4 | H/R/SL | Permissions granted  |
| 1048 | Ubi Caritas                        | Chant, Latin, Simple            | 4 | H/R/SL | One License or CCS if showing printed music on screen  |

## Singability Score Key

*All congregations are different, but this score is intended to provide basic, subjective guidance on hymn selection and leadership, especially for hymns you or the congregation are less familiar with.*

| 5 - Very Easy            | 4 - Easy  | 3 - Average                        | 2 - Hard             | 1 - Very Hard                   | H                 | R                    | SL                     |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Little to no help needed | Weak singers may need help (usually because of range) | Average singers may need some help | Guidance recommended | Best for soloist or small group | Use <b>Hymnal</b> | Teach by <b>Rote</b> | Use <b>Song Leader</b> |

## Permissions Key

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Hymns where the permissions column is highlighted in GREEN typically do NOT require additional copyright for the average UU congregation.  |   |  |
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| Hymns where the permissions column is highlighted in YELLOW require a copyright license, typically One License or CCS. It is your responsibility to obtain the appropriate license for in person worship, live streaming, and/or online recording/archiving. |   | Hymns where the permissions column is highlighted in RED require separate copyright permissions for use. Information for securing the copyright will be made available in this packet, but it is your responsibility to obtain permission from the holder. |

For more information on permissions and licensing, please consult the [UUA Hymn and Reading Permissions](#).

## Choral/Vocal Suggestions

| Title   | Composer                              | Voicing                       | Keywords                        |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Walk a Mile</a>                     | Pepper Choplin arr.<br>Mark Hayes     | SATB divisi                   | Jazzy, Uplifting, a cappella    |
| <a href="#">Love is Welcome Here</a>            | Catherine Dalton                      | SATB                          | Prayerful, Touching, a cappella |
| <a href="#">I Shall Pass Through This World</a> | Margaret Bonds                        | SATB                          | Haunting, Moving, a cappella    |
| <a href="#">A Bridge of Peace</a>               | Gwyneth Walker                        | SATB                          | Flowing, Prayer, Resolute       |
| <a href="#">Hands are Knockin'</a>              | Kyle Pederson                         | SATB, SAB, SSAA,<br>Two voice | Rhythmic, Rousing, Inspiring    |
| <a href="#">United, We Are!</a>                 | Brandon A. Boyd and<br>Jermaine Manor | SATB                          | Upbeat, Gospel, Uplifting       |
| <a href="#">Open Our Hearts</a>                 | Rev. Michael<br>Leuchtenberger        | SATB                          | Simple, Chorale, One Page       |

## Instrumental Suggestions

| Title                                     | Composer          | Instrumentation | Keywords                    |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <a href="#">The Velocity of Love</a>      | Suzanne Ciani     | Piano           | Simple, Melodic, Meditative |
| <a href="#">My Lady Love</a>              | R. Nathaniel Dett | Piano           | Jaunty, Rhythmic, Fun       |
| <a href="#">There is a Balm in Gilead</a> | Clif Hardin       | Piano           | Simple, Melodic             |
| <a href="#">To A Wild Rose</a>            | Edward MacDowell  | Piano           | Simple, Melodic, Sweet      |
|   |                   |                 |                             |

## Contemporary Suggestions

*If you are streaming your services/are hybrid, please note that all copyright permissions are your responsibility to obtain*

- “You’ve Got a Friend” by Carole King
- “Better People” by India.Arie
- “All You Need is Love” by The Beatles
- “I’ll Stand by You” by The Pretenders
- “True Colors” by Cyndi Lauper

**Important Note:** *The artists listed above generally are the performers of the works and not always/necessarily the songwriters, please do your due diligence in seeking out crediting info. Many of the above songs can be found on JWPepper, MusicNotes.com and the Chords/Tabs for most of the above can be found here:*

[Ultimate Guitar](#) - [Ukulele Chords/Tabs](#) - [Free to Transpose](#) - [Chordify](#)

**Another Note About Contemporary Music:** *For our small group packets, we put together a contemporary music playlist for each month. While these playlists are designed as personal musical meditations on the themes, some of the songs on these playlists could be used in worship.*

*You can explore these playlists on our website, by clicking [HERE](#).*

## Additional Resources

### Music for Online Worship from UUA

*These videos may be used in online and recorded worship services by Unitarian Universalist congregations. The music that follows does not require additional permission for online use. However, be sure to provide full attribution to the composers and lyricists on your screens, not just verbally, for each piece that you incorporate into worship.*

*These videos are intended to lighten the burdens imposed by online worship. They should not be used to justify decreasing the wages or positions of professional music staff.*

- [“Filled with Loving Kindness,” \(Vimeo\)](#) a version of the Buddhist Metta (lovingkindness) prayer, as taught, sung, and accompanied by Mark David Buckles. “May I (\*you, we, all) be filled with loving kindness; may I\* be well. May I\* be peaceful and at ease; and may I\* be happy.”
- [“Shine On Me,” \(Vimeo\)](#) taught and led, in three parts, by [Melanie DeMore](#).
- [“Abide with Me” \(Vimeo\)](#) (#101 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; music by William Henry Monk, verses 1-2 by Henry Francis Lyre, verse 3 by Rev. Erika Hewitt). Guitar and singing by [Lea Morris](#). [Pay-what-you-can to Lea](#).
- [“Come, Sing a Song with Me” \(YouTube\)](#) as an animal puppet video (#346 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; music and words by Carolyn McDade). Created by MaryJane Wagner for an intergenerational service.
- [“Dona Nobis Pacem” \(YouTube\)](#) (#388 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; traditional Latin canon). Singing by the Washington Ethical Society (Washington, D.C.), produced by Lea Morris. [Pay-what-you-can to Lea](#).
- [“Meditation on Breathing \(Vimeo\)”](#) (words & music by Sarah Dan Jones; #1009 in *Singing the Journey*). Performed by Mary Pratt and Rev. Jim Magaw, UU Church of the South Hills, Pittsburgh PA. [Pay-what-you-can](#); choose “non-pledge collections” and leave a note in the comments section.

- [“When I Am Frightened \(MP4\)”](#) (words & music by Shelly Jackson Denham; #1012 in *Singing the Journey*). Created by the Minnesota Valley UU Fellowship. Shelley’s daughters ask that you please donate, as you’re able, to [Heritage UU Church in Cincinnati](#), choir or children’s music program.
- [“Open My Heart” \(YouTube\)](#) (words & music by Henry S. Flurry; #1013 in *Singing the Journey*). Performed by Susan T. Mashiyama. If you use this song, [please share that info with Henry Flurry](#) as a form of connection and affirmation.
- [“Woyaya” \(YouTube\)](#) (words & music by Loughy Amoa, Solomon Amarfio, Robert M. Bailey, Roy Bedeau, Francis T. Osei, Whendell K. Richardson, and Mac Tontoh; #1020 in *Singing the Journey*). Created by Paul Thompson (Music Director at the UU Church of the Palouse, Moscow ID). Please make a pay-what-you-can [donation](#).
- [“Lean on Me \(MP4\)”](#) (words & music by Bill Withers; #1021 in *Singing the Journey*). Created by the Minnesota Valley UU Fellowship.
- [“Blue Boat Home” \(YouTube\)](#) (words by Peter Mayer; #1064 in *Singing the Journey*). Created by Paul Thompson (Music Director at the UU Church of the Palouse, Moscow ID). Please make a pay-what-you-can [donation](#).
- [“Count on Me” \(YouTube\)](#) by Bruno Mars, covered by musicians from First Unitarian Brooklyn Choir; Adam Podd, Director of Music. Adam’s PayPal ID: [adampodd@gmail.com](mailto:adampodd@gmail.com)/Venmo: @adampodd. This is an ASCAP song, requiring a WorshipCast or other applicable license.
- [“Lifted in Love \(Vimeo\)”](#), written by Carl Karush and Lea Morris, and performed by Lea Morris. [Pay-what-you-can to Lea](#).
- [“We Will Not Stop Singing” \(YouTube\)](#) written by The Chapin Sisters (Lily & Abigail). Song copyright The Chapin Sisters, published by sad pony music and foggy mountain music (ASCAP). Arranged by Adam Podd, featuring the First Unitarian Brooklyn Choir (w/ Dennis Wees, Kiena Williams, Brandon Hornsby-Selvin, and Candice Helfand-Rogers). Adam’s PayPal ID: [adampodd@gmail.com](mailto:adampodd@gmail.com)/Venmo: @adampodd
- [“Heart Is Wide Open” \(YouTube\)](#), a song to calm and open your heart by Danya River. You can also use the [audio-only file](#). Make a donation to [Danya’s recording fund](#) so she can continue making meaningful music to share with the world.
- [“Good Intentions” \(YouTube\)](#), a chant created by Sandi E (UU Fellowship of Franklin, NC). [Make a pay-what-you-can-donation](#).

## Music From the AUUMM [\(Association for UU Music Ministries\)](#) Online Database:

The wonderful leadership of the AUUMM have added our monthly themes to the AUUMM music database. It’s a great way to get music suggestions from UUs all around the country.

## Music Resources from the Soul Matters Community **NEW!**

This section is dedicated to showcasing the work of musicians within our community who have created resources based on Soul Matters themes. Check back frequently to see if new resources have been made available, and support the work of your fellow UU musicians! If you’d like to submit your resource, email [soulmattersmusic@gmail.com](mailto:soulmattersmusic@gmail.com)

- Sharon Sholl has created a number of songs based on each year’s Soul Matters themes. You can download them for free at [freepintmusic.com](http://freepintmusic.com)



## Soul Matters Music Leader Support

*In addition to monthly music suggestions in our worship packets, we support subscribing music leaders with a number of other means of support:*

### **Monthly Online “Music Matters Collaborative Coaching Calls”**

These calls meet on the **second Tuesday of every month at 2pm ET/1pm CT/noon MT/11am PT.**

Whereas our monthly music zoom calls used to focus on sharing music ideas and repertoire, now they will focus on the higher-level issues involved in running music ministries. Adam O’Dell, our Soul Matters Music Coordinator, facilitates the calls and brings resources and ideas as needed, but this is primarily intended as a time for the Soul Matters music community to discuss common challenges and share/generate meaningful solutions!

We hope that this transition will be more in line with the needs of our community, and that the introduction of our new [Music Suggestion Google Form](#) will allow our community to share repertoire selections quickly and easily, and without the barrier of needing to attend live calls which may conflict with other work obligations.

**Recordings** of these monthly music collaborative coaching calls will be available [HERE](#).

No need to sign up in advance, just join as you are able using this Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5857099120>

### **Quarterly Music Packets *NEW!***

To help those of you who do significantly advanced music planning, we are creating what we are calling Quarterly Music packets. Each Quarterly Music packet will contain 3-4 months of music suggestions, allowing you to plan much farther in advance. As they are completed, they will be posted to your online archive labeled as *2025-26 Quarterly Music Packets*.

### **Soul Matters Music Leader Support Facebook Group**

We also have a Soul Matters Musicians Facebook group. This is for on-going sharing among Soul Matters musicians, as well as a place where we share announcements about packets, new music resources and music-related webinars. Click [HERE](#) to view and join.

# Stories For All Ages

*The below wisdom tale and story book recommendations come from our October Lower and Upper Elementary RE Packets. So be sure to coordinate your use of them with your RE Leader. The wisdom tales are hyperlinked because we've given each tale its own downloadable document. This makes it easier for you to download that story and hand it out to leaders and easier for leaders to use as script.*

## Wisdom Tales (from the upper elementary packets)

- [The Lion and The Mouse](#)
- [The Mustard Seed: A Story About Compassion](#)
- [Dorothea's Big Heart: A True Story About Compassion and Dignity](#)
- [The Monk and the Scorpion](#)
- [The Jobless Umbrella](#)
- [Clara's Big Brave Heart](#)
- [Magic Cauldron Soup: A Halloween Tale](#)
- [The Tale of Stingy Jack... Reimagined with Compassion](#)

## Story Books (from the lower elementary packet)

- Because Amelia Smiled by David Ezra Stein
- Miles of Smiles by Karen Kaufman Orloff
- Be Kind by Pat Zietlow Miller
- Whoever You Are by Mem Fox
- Nila's Perfect Coat by Norene Paulson
- Sharing Is The New Cool By: Jacqueline Crann
- The Legend of Spookley the Square Pumpkin by Joe Troiano
- Room on the Broom by Julia Donaldson

## Story Books (from the one room school house packet)

- When I Smile: A Book of Kindness by Jo Witek
- Horton Hears a Who! by Dr. Seuss
- Clara Barton, Angel of the Battlefield by Tamara Hollingsworth
- Bonaparte Falls Apart by Margery Cuyler

# Sermon Seeds

## *Angles, Ideas & Twists To Get Your Sermon Started!*

Don't forget to explore our small group packet for additional sermon seeds. It contains quotes and poems to enhance your sermon, as well as numerous sermon angles in the questions and the spiritual exercises.

**Permissions Notes:** In addition to the pieces we've noted as permissioned for online use (marked with an asterisk\*), you can use the fair use sized quotes and fair use sized portions of longer pieces in your sermons/services. Pay attention to the hyperlinks we include within titles and authors' names; these hyperlinks provide the source material and direction for you to hunt down permissions on your own.

## On Self-Compassion

### **Quote - Unknown**

Imagine if we obsessed about the things we loved about ourselves.

### **Quote - [Andrea Gibson](#)**

Those who do the most growing in this life are those who offer the most compassion to the parts of themselves that have not yet grown.

### **Quote - Jennifer Healey**

Self-compassion isn't about escaping your darkness but learning to love yourself there. The willingness to accept painful truths about ourselves is a seed of self-compassion. Self-compassion is the seed of a deeper connection with the wonder of being alive.

Jennifer Healey

### **Quote - Dr. Kristin Neff**

Self-compassion involves being kind to oneself when confronting personal inadequacies or situational difficulties, framing the imperfections of life in terms of common humanity, and being mindful of negative emotions so that one neither suppresses nor ruminates on them.

*Related Video:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11U0h0DPu7k>

### **Podcast - Being Kind to Yourself, Hidden Brain interview with Dr. Kristin Neff**

<https://hiddenbrain.org/podcast/being-kind-to-yourself/>

### **Blog Post - [Andrea Gibson](#)**

How did I change so much, and so quickly? I learned to love the me who hadn't changed at all. The me who worshiped worry. The me who made a complaint department of my mind. The me who turned my wounds into microscopes through which I saw the worst in people, especially myself. The me who got it all wrong...

This I now know for certain: I do all of growing during the times in my life when I am offering compassion to the parts of myself that have not yet grown... Sweet community, I hope as you read this today, you can scan yourself, look deep within, and decide every part of you is good news...

### **Quote - The Buddha**

Hold yourself as a mother holds her beloved child.

### **Quote - [Jack Kornfield](#)**

If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.

**Quote - [Jack Kornfield](#)**

You can search the tenfold universe as the Buddha and not find a single person more worthy of love and care than the one seated right here in your own body.

**Video - Make a commitment to yourself, Dr. Kristin Neff (*Great angle and challenge for a sermon!*)**

<https://self-compassion.org/blog/make-a-commitment-to-yourself/>

"We need to make a commitment to self-compassion because it doesn't come naturally for most of us. Our culture doesn't support it. Our brains have a negativity bias which means that we tend to see the bad rather than the good in ourselves. So we need to really resolve show up for ourselves in this good supportive way..."

**Video/Sermon Angle - Elizabeth Gilbert on the secret to compassionately forgiving yourself**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jA0FUkJFNZM>

**Short Written Reflection & Video - No more fear of self-compassion, Elizabeth Gilbert**

<https://elizabethgilbert.substack.com/p/letters-from-love-with-special-guest-9b3>

On how and why we find self-compassion so threatening.

*(This is addressed in both the initial written introduction and the first video)*

**Quote/Reading - [Andrea Gibson](#)**

The more we change, the more we must commit to loving the people we were before we changed. The most transformative moment in my journey these past years was realizing that New Me wasn't extending love to Old Me. This realization hit me in the middle of the night. I woke up and saw that I didn't just dislike Old Me—I was terrified of Old Me. I feared returning to being anxious, blaming, defensive and closed off. . . That night, I began to understand something profoundly powerful: in rejecting who I had been, in pushing that person away, I was caught in a resistance that would do nothing but recreate Old Me. The harder I tried to sever ties with the person I had been, the more I found myself embodying that self. Only when I began to offer Old Me compassion, kindness and love did a more permeating sense of freedom begin to emerge. When we hate ourselves, we suck all of the air and light out of the room of our being. And nothing can grow without air and light... As I reflect on this journey, I see that true healing requires integration, not rejection. The path to becoming more open doesn't lie in casting aside the versions of ourselves we no longer wish to be. It lies in honoring them, thanking them, and embracing them with tenderness. Each version of us is a stepping stone, a necessary chapter in the unfolding story of who we are.

**Quote/Reading - [Nadia Bolz-Weber](#) (*On offering yourself compassion for not being able to address the tragedy and injustice of the world in all the ways you wish you could*)**

It's enough to do the thing that's yours to do. I have this teacher, Suzanne Stabile, and she taught me these discernment questions, and I use them every day, which is what's mine to do and what's not mine to do, what's mine to say and what's not mine to say. And then the third one's harder because it feels callous. But what's mine to care about and what's not mine to care about. That's not to say it's not worthy to be cared about by someone, but that we have to acknowledge the limits of our ability to care and respond about everything that happens throughout the world. And to me, if I'm in my lane and I'm doing what's mine to do and resting in that, then the next step is to assure myself it actually is enough and to assure myself that there are others in the world who are doing work I'm not equipped to or called for, and to celebrate them, to point to them, to be grateful for them, but to not feel like I have to also be them.

**Anecdote - from Rev. Brigitte Bechtold**

On the challenges of wishing ourselves self-love in a culture of ego.

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i8aE2zFgIBQK35w\\_e8pA75xo8f-AeAh0jn7HBBTGtDE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i8aE2zFgIBQK35w_e8pA75xo8f-AeAh0jn7HBBTGtDE/edit?usp=sharing)

### Quote - Henri J.M. Nouwen

We are not what we do, we are not what we have, we are not what others think of us. Coming home is claiming the truth. I am the beloved child of a loving creator.

### List - Henri Nouwen's [Five Lies of Identity](#)

- 1) I am what I have.
- 2) I am what I do.
- 3) I am what other people say or think of me.
- 4) I am nothing more than my worst moment.
- 5) I am nothing less than my best moment.

### Quote - [John O'Donohue](#)

It takes great courage and grace to feel the call to awaken, and it takes greater courage and more grace still to actually submit to the call, to risk yourself into these interior spaces where there is very often little protection. It takes a great person to creatively inhabit her own mind and not turn her mind into a destructive force that can ransack her life. You need compassion for yourself, particularly in American society, because many people in America identify themselves through the models and modules of psychology that inevitably categorize them as a syndrome. Lovely people feel that their real identity is working on themselves, and some work on themselves with such harshness. Like a demented gardener who won't let the soil settle for anything to grow, they keep raking, tearing away the nurturing clay from their own heart, then they're surprised that they feel so empty and vacant. Self-compassion is paramount. When you are compassionate with yourself, you trust in your soul, which you let guide your life. Your soul knows the geography of your destiny better than you do.

### Poem/Reading - Sometimes When I Catch Myself, Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Full poem at <https://ahundredfallingveils.com/2022/07/17/12218/>

In that moment, it is easy to be alive.  
Easy to notice my annoyance  
and be gentle with the self who gets annoyed...

## On Yom Kippur and Self-Compassion

### Sermon Excerpt: From [The Power to Choose: Embracing Self-Compassion](#), Rabbi Lauren Grabelle Herrmann

And as the inauguration of the ten days of turning/repentance, Rosh HaShanah invites a critical eye and self-judgment, as we consider the ways in which we have missed the mark and how we can do better in the coming year. Yet, according to Jewish tradition, Rosh HaShanah is in its essence a day of rachamim, compassion. A midrash (rabbinic teaching) teaches:

*"On Rosh HaShanah, When the Holy Blessed One ascends to sit on the throne of judgment on Rosh Hashanah, God ascends for judgment. Once the people of Israel take their shofarot and blow them, what does the Holy Blessed One do? God rises from the throne of judgement and sits on the throne of compassion, and is filled with compassion for the people and transforms the quality of justice into the quality of compassion." (Vayikra Rabbah 29:3)*

...This text teaches us what our seat or vantage point should be on Rosh HaShanah [the beginning of the days of judgement]. Self-judgment may be necessary, but it is neither helpful or productive to dwell there forever, to criticize or beat ourselves up. Bringing compassion to our imperfect and painful places, our mistakes and wrongdoings, is equally and perhaps even more important. And as the midrash states- it is our actions that determine this shift: the power to choose between judgment and compassion is in our hands... May we remember that the power to choose between harsh self-scrutiny and self-compassion is always in our hands.

# On How Compassion Asks Us to Do More than Feel

## (also, On the Temptation to Reduce Compassion to a Feeling)

### Quote - [Krishna Kumar](#)

Compassion is what happens when you encounter another person suffering, go beyond your feelings of empathy or altruism, and step forward to help alleviate that suffering.

### Quote - [Rabbi Esther Adler](#) (Video [here](#))

There is a hierarchy of responses when we encounter suffering. Pity says, “I see your pain.” Sympathy says, “I understand your pain.” Empathy says, “I feel your pain.” Compassion says, “I am with you in your pain and I will help.”

### Quote - [Rabbi Esther Adler](#) (Video [here](#))

Compassion in Hebrew is Rachamim. Rachamim is a plural form of the word Rechem, meaning womb... [And so] Our sages say that compassion is like a mother’s love for her child. But I think that is completely missing the point. First, Rechem is “womb,” not “mother.” The womb does not love; the womb sustains and protects the unborn baby, simply because that is what it does. Also, the womb connects the baby to the mother in a most intimate way - perhaps the most intimate connection two separate beings can have. The relationship is not symbiotic though, the womb gives, the baby receives. From this perspective, then, Rachamim, or being womb-like, means being connected to another being in an intimate, sustaining way, without expectation of anything in return. Rachamim is not a feeling, like sympathy or empathy; it is a deep connection to another human being that moves us to act in ways that are sustaining to that person... Rachamim - compassion - is not a feeling; it is a choice. It is the choice to acknowledge our shared humanity, no matter how I may feel about you.

### Quote & Article - [Paul Gilbert](#)

Compassion isn’t always easy. I take a fairly simple general view of compassion, which is that it is ‘a sensitivity to suffering with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent that suffering.’

### Interview - **Compassion Rewires Your Brain**, Paul Gilbert

*A wide-ranging discussion about how compassion changes us and how compassion involves courageous action not just kind action or empathetic feeling.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQcIE9Vv72Q>

“Compassion is the determination to address suffering where it arises and not to be the cause of it. That's why courage and wisdom are at the heart of compassion not softness and submissiveness...”

### Quote - [Joanna Macy](#)

Compassion boils down to not being afraid of the suffering of your world or of yourself. It involves being open to what you’re feeling about that suffering (grief, fear, rage, overwhelm) and brave enough to experience it... You can’t heal something you’re afraid to get near. Compassion is what impels you to act for the sake of the larger whole—or put more accurately, it is the whole acting through you.

### Video - **Sympathy, Empathy, and Compassion: How do they Differ**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXb2awAbmUA>

### Video - **The Five Levels of Compassion**, Dr Gabor Maté

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzrqbrWLBaM>

## **Video Interview - Why Compassion is the Ultimate Life Hack**

*Full of great stories and examples for sermons.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSAzyOokLaY>

Excerpt: “We often misidentify compassion to be just looking at suffering... but from the Buddhist perspective, that's really just the start of compassion. Because compassion is actually a wish for others to be free from suffering or a wish to protect them from their pain. So I think sometimes when people feel overwhelmed, it's because they're just looking at the suffering... they're just seeing it, but they're not actually taking that next step to think about others' potential freedom from it. And I think if we take that next step, it's a little bit easier to not feel that compassion is a depressing state of mind, or it's not so overwhelming...”

## **Poem - After Second Shift, Lowell Jaeger**

Full poem found at <http://www.songsoferetz.com/2018/08/after-second-shift-by-lowell-jaeger.html>

Don't come with lights  
and sirens, she tells the 911  
dispatcher. You'll scare him.  
They stand together. The checker  
brings him a cup of coffee.  
They talk about the snow.

## **Poem - Compassion Needs Weather, [Rev. Dr. David Breeden](#) \***

Compassion is not a hothouse flower.  
Compassion needs weather:  
the frost of failure,  
the storm of anger,  
the flood of regret,  
the drought that says  
there's nothing left to say.  
  
Compassion loves rough soil,  
the stones, weeds, the cracks between  
our best intentions.

Compassion does not bloom quickly.  
It leans toward light  
but does not fear shadow.  
  
Compassion is not a hothouse flower.  
It is a tough, persistent wildflower  
growing between the cracks  
of the hottest, hardest days.  
Compassion loves the rough soil  
of humanity.

## **Book - Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion, Paul Bloom**

Bloom challenges the common belief that empathy (feeling what others feel) is the best moral guide. He distinguishes empathy (emotional mirroring) from compassion (caring concern without necessarily feeling the other person's emotions), and then argues that “rational compassion”—rooted in reason, fairness, and perspective—is a better foundation for moral action because it moves us beyond empathy's narrow focus on those we can easily relate to and allows us to care for strangers, future generations, and even non-human life more fairly.

## **Interview - The Case Against Empathy: Why this Yale psychologist thinks you should be compassionate, not empathetic**

<https://www.vox.com/conversations/2017/1/19/14266230/empathy-morality-ethics-psychology-compassion-paul-bloom>



# On How Compassion Offers Gifts to the Giver and the Receiver

## Quote - [Maria Popova](#)

There is no greater remedy for helplessness than helping someone else, no greater salve for sorrow than according gladness to another. What makes life livable despite the cruelties of chance — the accident, the wildfire, the random intracellular mutation — are these little acts of mercy, of tenderness, the small clear voice rising over the cacophony of the quarrelsome, over the complaint choir of the cynics, to insist again and again that the world is beautiful and full of kindness.

## Poem/Reading - **Generous Assumptions**, Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Full poem at <https://ahundredfallingveils.com/2024/12/09/generous-assumptions/>

sometimes all it takes is a glance...  
or a serrated word, and instantly the heart  
puts on its armor, which is something like  
a coat of porcupine quills, only  
the quills go inward, too...  
What if I believed you are doing the best you can...  
What if I listened past your words, looked through  
your actions to see how you, too, feel threatened?  
...Already, just thinking about it being possible,  
I notice a softening, a...  
gift to myself.

## Quote - [Ingrid Mattson](#) (*On how compassion for others leads us back home*)

It is in compassion that we feel most at home and feel most whole. We feel that we are where we should be.

# On Compassion Arising from Our Shared Humanity

(also, On how compassion as a relationship between equals)

(also, On how we must fight the temptation to turn compassion into pity)

## Quote/Reading - Mark Nepo

My soul tells me, we were all broken from the same nameless heart, and every living thing wakes with a piece of that original heart aching its way into blossom. This is why we know each other below our strangeness, why when we fall, we lift each other, or when in pain, we hold each other, why when sudden with joy, we dance together. Life is the many pieces of that great heart loving itself back together.

## Quote - [Pema Chödrön](#)

Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.

## Quote - [Nadia Bolz Weber](#)

In my mind, pity isn't even analogous to compassion. Pity is just the paternalistic cousin of contempt. It allows us to see others as "those less fortunate than ourselves" (a term I loathe). Pity keeps the other person at a distance and me in a rarified state of satisfaction. I struggle to think of who would ever truly want it from another person. Compassion, on the other hand, draws us close.

**Quote - Elizabeth Gilbert**

I have more compassion than if I had never been wounded or if I had never been betrayed or I had never been harmed... those disappointments have made me gentler with other people and their disappointments, the stuff that they have to carry around and endure.

**Quote - [Bryan Stevenson](#)**

We are all broken by something. We have all hurt someone and have been hurt. We all share the condition of brokenness even if our brokenness is not equivalent... Sometimes we're fractured by the choices we make; sometimes we're shattered by things we would never have chosen. But our brokenness is also the source of our common humanity, the basis for our shared search for comfort, meaning, and healing. Our shared vulnerability and imperfection nurtures and sustains our capacity for compassion.

**Video/Sermon Story - Bryan Stevenson on The Gift of Shared Brokenness**

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DLSQsbKhQc6/>

**Book Excerpt - From The Book of Joy by the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

Read the full excerpt at

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Urm4MgRZwBIAU7SwOx8TXyiShqawA2goWXnR7Y1pLI0/edit?usp=sharing>

**Talk - The Heart of Compassion, Cynthia Bourgeault**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl8qaVRiK5U>

**Quote - [Iain](#)**

Hurt people, hurt people. But, they help them too.

## On Compassion's Dependence on Boundaries

**Quote - [Brené Brown](#)**

Compassionate people ask for what they need. They say no when they need to, and when they say yes, they mean it. They're compassionate because their boundaries keep them out of resentment.

**Quote - [Brene Brown](#)**

The heart of compassion is really acceptance. The better we are at accepting ourselves and others, the more compassionate we become. Well, it's difficult to accept people when they are hurting us or taking advantage of us or walking all over us.

**Quote - [Cheryl Richardson](#)**

When you avoid conflict to make peace with other people, you start a war within.

**Quote - Unknown**

You are not required to set yourself on fire to keep others warm.

**Quote - Prentis Hemphill**

Boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously.

**Quote - Brianna West**

Each time you break your boundaries in order to ensure someone else likes you, you end up liking yourself that much less.

### Podcast - Interview with Brene Brown

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM1ckkGwqZI&t=1s> (Minute 44:18 - 1:06:20)

Stories and research that led to Brown's understanding of the relationship between compassion and boundaries.

### Quote - [Ann Sheerin](#)

Brown defines boundaries as "what's okay and what is not okay." She believes boundaries are about respect for yourself, and the other person. Without boundaries, the healthy lines in a relationship will become blurred, and you may begin taking responsibility for what someone else should be responsible for. Over time, these blurred lines can cause distress, affecting your ability to be compassionate.

### Reading/Poem - Because - Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Full poem at <https://braidedway.org/because/>

So I can't save the world—  
can't save even myself...  
And sometimes, daunted by a task too big,  
I ask myself, What's the use of trying?  
But today, the invitation is clear:  
to be ridiculously courageous in love.  
To open the heart like a lilac in May,  
knowing freeze is possible  
and opening anyway.  
To take love seriously.  
To give love wildly...  
To feel the shock of indifference,  
of anger, of cruelty, of fear,  
and stay open. To love as if it matters,  
as if the world depends on it.

### Video - There Is No Compassion Fatigue, Dr Gabor Maté

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dI5hq5ZQ-W0&list=PLskHqn-oiOLCWQ5EWyBsbFUmC7sfV8AMU&index=11>

## On Fierce Compassion and a Kind "No"

### Quote - [Jack Kornfield](#)

Compassion is not foolish. It doesn't just go along with what others want so they don't feel bad. There is a yes in compassion, and there is also a no, said with the same courage of heart... Buddhists call this the fierce sword of compassion. It is the powerful no of leaving a destructive family, the agonizing no of allowing an addict to experience the consequences of his acts.

### Quote - [Willia B. Miller](#)

Fierce compassion is not mild. It is courageous and active. It upholds others in their deepest goodness, but challenges them when they fall away from it. Compassion of this sort implies that we can love others enough to tell them the truth.

### Story - Brene Brown on a time when she used a compassionate "no"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM1ckkGwqZI&t=1s> (Minute 59:00 - 1:06)

**Book - [Fierce Self-Compassion](#): How Women Can Harness Kindness [to Speak Up](#), Claim Their Power, and Thrive, Dr. Kristin Neff**

Related video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CP5ddwWayf4>

**Video/meditation - Guarding Ourselves with Love, Dr. Kristin Neff**  
<https://self-compassion.org/blog/guarding-ourselves-with-love/>

**Quote - [Dr. Kristin Neff](#)**

In order to draw healthy boundaries, we need to stop simply going along with whatever the people our lives are doing – a partner who is inconsiderate, a colleague who says something offensive, a friend who make excessive demands on our time, for instance – and firmly assert that this behavior isn't acceptable to us. It means that when others ask for our help or assistance, we pause to truly consider:

- Is this something I want to do?
- Do I feel comfortable with this?
- Will this cause me undue stress?
- Do I need more space or time for myself?

## On Compassion for Those Who Cause Harm

**Anecdote - Truly in Danger**

<https://www.lionsroar.com/she-who-hears-the-cries-of-the-world/>

A few years ago, an elderly monk arrived in India after fleeing from prison in Tibet. Meeting with the Dalai Lama, he recounted the years he had been imprisoned, the hardship and beatings he had endured, the hunger and loneliness he had lived with, and the torture he had faced.

At one point the Dalai Lama asked him, “Was there ever a time you felt your life was truly in danger?” The old monk answered, “In truth, the only time I truly felt at risk was when I felt in danger of losing compassion for my jailers.”

**Quote - Thich Nhat Hanh**

When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers deeply within himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment; [he needs help](#). That's the message he is sending.

**Quote - Thich Nhat Hanh**

To look deeply into the suffering of those who have caused us to suffer is a miraculous gift. Thanks to our observation, we now know that the person is suffering. He may think that his suffering will be lessened if he can cause us to suffer. Once we are in touch with his suffering, our enmity and bitterness towards him will vanish, and we will long for him to suffer less.

**Quote/Reading - [Krista Tippett](#)**

I think the incredible side effect or ripple effect of being at home, being at peace, with our vulnerability in any situation is that it means that you have to develop compassion for yourself. This just becomes basic spiritual growth, basic spiritual discipline and knowledge, that you start to understand that this doesn't make you special; that everybody else is struggling with this too. You start to get curious and aware that what other people present as strength, or what feels like resistance or aggressiveness, is also a reflection of the struggle they're having. It very organically allows you to start to take in the complexity of others — including what they're not saying; including, maybe, when you can start to really imagine and understand, that what they're expressing or how they're behaving may even be the opposite of how they're feeling.

# On the Connection Between Compassion and Justice

## (also, On compassion as a call to action)

### Quote - [Jack Kornfield](#)

Compassion is not foolish. It doesn't just go along with what others want so they don't feel bad. There is a yes in compassion, and there is also a no, said with the same courage of heart. No to abuse, no to racism, no to violence, both personal and worldwide. The no is said not out of hate but out of an unwavering care. Buddhists call this the fierce sword of compassion.

### Quote - Martin Luther King Jr.

True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it understands that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring.

### Quote - [Paul Gilbert](#)

Compassion is a sensitivity to suffering with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent that suffering.

### Quote - [Amanda Beam](#)

But compassion is much more than a thought process or feeling pity for a poor and destitute soul. It's action, trying to remedy the underlying causes of suffering while internalizing the heartache as your own.

### Video - Joanna Macy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uc42aNYo8vw>

On the need for *both* compassion and insight into interconnection if we are going to change/save the world.

### Reflection/Reading - [When the World Numbs, Stay Tender](#), Rev. Cameron Trimble

We are being conditioned to shut down—slowly, steadily, and almost imperceptibly. The barrage of cruelty, confusion, spectacle, and spin has a cumulative effect. It wears on our capacity to feel, to care, to respond with presence rather than reflex. We are being trained, through repetition, to expect harm, and then to normalize it. That is the danger of this moment—not just political collapse or climate unraveling or the erosion of public trust—but the numbing of our souls... Tenderness, then, is not weakness—it is resistance in its most radiant form...

### Poem - Write My Name, Zeina Azzam

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWpJiV7oIvk>

Text: <https://rizay12.medium.com/write-my-name-by-zeina-azzam-poem-appreciation-1ca425ff5952>

### Quote - [Dr. Kristin Neff](#)

Self-compassion isn't just an inside job. It's not just about achieving personal health and well-being. We really have to offer and aim it outward. In other words, social justice, environmental activism, gender equality, all of the difficulties in our world, because we are part of the world, we can't think of it just as compassion aimed inward. We also need to be active and try to make the world a better place, not only for us but for everyone... So it's really important that we move beyond ourselves. It's important to keep in mind that it's really about integrating self and others. It's not self to the exclusion of others.

### TED Talk - The Importance of Compassion in Creating a Just Society, Bryan Stevenson

<https://optionb.org/build-resilience/video/we-need-to-talk-about-an-injustice>

# On What Gets in The Way of Compassion

**Article - The Near and Far Enemies of Fierce Compassion**

<https://centerformsc.org/blogs/blog/the-near-and-far-enemies-of-fierce-compassion>

**Podcast - The Near and Far Enemies of Fierce Compassion**

<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/the-near-and-far-enemies-of-fierce-compassion-part-1-of-2/>

<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/the-near-and-far-enemies-of-fierce-compassion-part-2-of-2/>

**Video - On One of the Surprising Enemies of Compassion: Our busy and important lives!**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxtQXLezlvA>

**Quote - [Dominique Browning](#)**

Slow living, I have come to understand, opens up the prospect of slow love, the most sustaining sort of love I have ever known - a love that comes of an unhurried and focused attention to the simplest things, available to all of us, at any time, should we choose to engage: family, friendship, food, music, art, books, our bodies, our minds, our souls, and the life that blooms and buzzes all around us.

Perhaps even more importantly, slow love comes out of the quiet hours, out of learning from the silence that is always there when we want it.

## On Compassion found in UU Theology & History

*Concise connections between the monthly theme and our UU history and theology put together by the Soul Matters Team.*

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Pd39q3PLoUZWnZ9dDr2EpX3L7UE9f7EPcdJu\\_-CZE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Pd39q3PLoUZWnZ9dDr2EpX3L7UE9f7EPcdJu_-CZE/edit?usp=sharing)

# Recommended Sermons

## Notes about these recommended sermons:

- **Permissions Secured:** All of the sermons below have received permission for your online use. Unless otherwise noted, they can be used/read in both live streaming and recorded services that are posted on YouTube or a podcast. ***However, to be extra cautious and in good relationship, we ask that you reach out to the minister to let them know you are planning to use their sermon. Also be sure to ask if they have any particular requests or guidance for how to do that.***
- **An Important Note About Editing:** If you want to make changes to the sermon for brevity or context, **you must reach out to the preachers directly for such editing permission.** Contact information of each of the referenced preachers is listed after the list of sermons.
- **We mostly list written scripts:** In order not to undermine UU preachers who depend on live and online guest preaching income for their livelihood, we mainly focus on sharing sermon texts (and sometimes audio clips), but not videos.
- **Note about hiring preachers for online guest preaching:** All of the texts listed below can be used and read in your worship services for free. If you are interested in hiring these preachers to give the recommended sermons as a virtual guest preacher or through sending you a video recording of them preaching the sermon, we've listed their contact information below the sermon section so you can contact them directly.

## Compassion

*Julie (Jullan) Stoneberg*

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MdoXEhIVPERSBvm2dTIPNANp5yyb-f3/view?usp=sharing>

"We are shown countless examples of heroically compassionate people, who dedicate their lives to the unfortunate and marginalized, who give until they seemingly have no more... I mean no disrespect for such heroes, I'm thankful they exist and do what they do, but it's really important that we see that such examples create unreasonable standards... The truth is that compassion can be central to any life, no matter where we live or what work we do or how ordinary our circumstances or how unnoticed our acts of compassion may be..."

## Finding the Courage to Love

*Rev. Tess Baumberger*

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VvOuSnffQGFbtwgPAF8idNW1CccCk5Ne/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VvOuSnffQGFbtwgPAF8idNW1CccCk5Ne/view?usp=drive_link)

"As human beings we are perhaps prone to fundamentalist thinking. It seems to me that this need to be right, and the need for others to be wrong, is part of human nature. Universalism calls us to counter that tendency with compassion whenever we find it in ourselves or in others..."

## Breathe Out Peace

*Chad Snyder*

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AihOr1tYE\\_Z5Lc39j4IbFgytB1bN7Ffp/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AihOr1tYE_Z5Lc39j4IbFgytB1bN7Ffp/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true)

"To reduce suffering, we first have to see it... Seeing the way our own pain holds back our compassion can open us up to seeing the same pain in others. We can use our own "stuckness as a stepping stone to understanding what people are up against all over the world..."



## **The Call to Compassion**

*Rev. Sandra Fees*

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UJAfQz8F3qbyUIMHqoYmLRskfazXEI4E6lLhavQoPy4/edit?usp=sharing>

“Compassion demands a lot of us. It means “doing unto others as I would have done unto me.” As much as we aspire to be compassionate, it’s sometimes – actually often - hard to do. Despite an agreement that it’s important, things seem to get in the way. So what is it that gets in the way? What prevents us from acting compassionately? For one thing, our egos...”

*Note: Rev. Fees is available to offer this sermon by Zooming into your service as a virtual guest preacher for a fee. If you are interested, you can contact Rev. Fees at [sandrarfees@gmail.com](mailto:sandrarfees@gmail.com)*

## **Do I Have To?**

*Rev Kaaren Anderson*

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1J17SgdtfpvexbRvwJD4LLV\\_3iVLWz8Sq/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1J17SgdtfpvexbRvwJD4LLV_3iVLWz8Sq/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true)

“And he said to me, “I see ministry as a commitment to my congregation to live into Jesus’s dictum to love your neighbor as yourself. I don’t always have to like my parishioners, and in truth I don’t like some of them that much, but I do have to love them...”

*Note: Rev. Anderson is available to offer this sermon as a video recording or by Zooming into your service as a virtual guest preacher for a fee. If you are interested, you can contact Rev. Anderson at [uurevkaaren@gmail.com](mailto:uurevkaaren@gmail.com)*

## **Featured Preacher Bios & Contact Information**

- Rev. Julie (Jullan) Stoneberg: <https://firstunitarian.org/about/team/>
- Rev. Tess Baumberger: <https://uuessex.org/about-us/our-minister/>
- Chad Snyder: <https://www.mergingwatersuu.org/staff>
- Rev. Sandra Fees: [sandrarfees@gmail.com](mailto:sandrarfees@gmail.com)
- Rev. Kaaren Anderson: [uurevkaaren@gmail.com](mailto:uurevkaaren@gmail.com)

# Closing & Chalice Extinguishing Words

## **When all is quiet and we are small and the night is dark \***

*Rev. Jane Ranney Rzepka*

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/5387.shtml>

[Permission Source](#)

may we hear the tender breathing  
of all who lie awake with us in fear...

## **May your heart open wide... \***

*Rev. Sandra Fees*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

May your heart open wide  
to family and friends.

May you radiate friendliness  
toward strangers and difficult people too.

May you see those who suffer  
with the eyes of compassion.

May you offer a sincere wish of kindness  
to all creatures in existence,  
even yourself.

May you know the tenderness  
of turning your attention  
in the direction of love,  
over and over again.

## **May love always be at your center... \***

*Rev. Linda Barnes*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

May you embrace your growing with compassion.  
May courage be yours as you answer your heart's  
calling.

May beauty and wonder be yours even when the  
going gets rough.

And may love always be at your center.

May it be so.

## **Practice the Growing \***

[Rev. Dr. David Breeden](#)

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Go out into the world,  
not to be perfect,  
but to practice,

to be a practitioner  
of compassion.

Wherever you go today,  
may you seed compassion.

May your hands remember how to tend,  
and your heart how to return  
when compassion is hard.

For no garden grows in a day.  
But they grow.

Go in peace  
and practice . . . growing.

## **The Tenderness that Makes Us Fierce \***

*Rev. Scott Tayler*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

May compassion lead us closer to the broken and  
brokenhearted.

May that proximity prove, once again, that we all  
suffer as equals.

And may those shared struggles give us the courage  
to act, not just feel,

to confront the cruelty, not be numbed by it,  
to protest, not just offer prayers.

May the tenderness of our hearts, friends,  
make us fierce about fixing the world.

## **The work continues...\***

*Rev. Michelle Collins*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

This flame ends, but the work continues. May our  
hearts remain open as our practice of compassion  
grows stronger with each passing day.

### **Expanding Beyond These Walls \***

*Rev. Michelle Collins*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Go forth knowing you are beloved and called to love boldly. May the compassion you've cultivated here expand beyond these walls, embracing strangers and difference with the same warmth you offer your dearest friends.

### **Your Gentle Choices \***

*Rev. Michelle Collins*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Our time together ends, but compassion's work continues. May you carry forward the courage to choose kindness over convenience, remembering that your gentle choices ripple outward, healing our broken world one encounter at a time.

### **St. Francis of Assisi's [Prayer for Peace](#), adapted**

May we be instruments of peace:  
where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.

### **When the world numbs...**

[Rev. Cameron Trimble](#)

Spirit of Breath,  
When the world numbs, soften us.  
Melt the armor we've built around our own tenderness.  
Guard us not with distance, but with discernment.  
Help us feel deeply without drowning.  
Let us carry pain without being consumed by it.  
Let us keep loving without illusion.  
May our hearts of flesh remain responsive, vulnerable, and true.

## **Worship Leader Support**

**Join the Soul Matters Worship Leader Support Facebook Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

**Join the Soul Matters Ministers' Support Facebook Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/719788338192570/>

**Attend one of our two monthly online ministers' brainstorming groups:**

First Tuesdays and First Thursdays of each month at 1pm eastern time  
with this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>

**Attend our monthly online Music Matters coaching call:**

On the second Tuesday of every month at 2pm eastern time  
with this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>



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