



BLESSING

The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.

What does it mean to bless and be blessed in a pandemic replete with loss that has or will come to us all? It is not, as some might suggest, a matter of sweetening the undeniably sour taste of these days, making lemonade when life gives us lemons.

Blessing is much more powerful than that. It is less about what we make from what has been given or taken from us, than it is about noticing the wholeness that is always ours beneath and beyond whatever comes our way. Blessing names and evokes that wholeness, clears a view by which we might glimpse it, opens a relationship by which we might know it.

Of the many challenges we face in this pandemic, one of the more existentially difficult experiences is the sense of isolation underscored by social distancing and wearing masks. In any time, when illness, trauma or death enter our lives, the comforts of human touch and nearness are often what we depend on to make it through. Or when those we love are suffering and words fall short, that same touch and nearness can feel like all we have to give our hurting dear ones. What is left to offer now, when touch and proximity are not allowed? What balm still permitted can heal the hollowing distances within us when facing our own fears and anxieties alone, without the trusted companionship we typically rely on to soothe and encourage us?

Thankfully, blessing remains, powerful and permissible, an activity as old as human history and in this pandemic time still effective, essential, and capable of being shared without transmitting the virus. It might be words, spoken or written, either your own or borrowed

from others. It might be a candle given or lit. It could be a sign wishing wellbeing, held up to a window. Or hands held in the shape of heart in a screen-time meeting. The practice of blessing and being blessed can tether us across the distances we now must maintain. It offers comfort and awakens healing, with or without touch. Blessing, as John O'Donohue put it, "converts all distance into spiritual space," and in that spiritual space, we can rediscover and reclaim our wholeness, both inside us and between us.

Think of the moon's tidal pull, invisibly yet resolutely tugging across a quarter million miles of space to move the oceans' waters here on earth. Think of a word or phrase that once similarly moved your heart, letting you know you had been seen and loved for who you really are. Or think of a gesture or ritual that acknowledged who you wanted to become — and were already becoming. Think of a time when your eyes met those of another, spanning the distance between any two separate lives, drawing your heart into relationship across difference, large or small. A blessing — whether word or gesture, ritual or act of kindness, literal or symbolic — brushes off the dust of the day so we can see the shine of wholeness connecting us across any distance, physical or otherwise.

Blessings, given and received, are not only connective across space but also across time. Their invocation of wholeness and healing is an open door between our present desires and intentions and the future where those longings can become real. Think of the biblical creation story, when God's naming of light and nighttime, sky and land and sea called each of these into

being. So too, what we name in our blessings summons forth a future more inclined toward that christening.

In this time of necessary physical distancing, can we let the practice of blessing draw us nearer to our own sacred source and to one another? Might our willingness to bless and be blessed in the chaos of these days begin to call forth new and more just ways of being together? It seems worth a try.

*May the distance now stretched
between us
draw us nearer in heart and spirit.*

*May the longing awakened by
separation
open our hearts to a larger love
holding us close through fear and loss.*

*May the kindness stirred in troubled
times
move in heart and deed
long after the troubles subside.*

*May the world that emerges then
be shaped by the tug of true
relationship
that survives all distance and time.*

By Karen Hering on behalf of this
month's theme team:
Ahmed Anzaldúa, Drew Danielson,
Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rob Eller-Isaacs,
Lisa Friedman, Ray Hommeyer,
and KP Hong.

BLESSING THEME RESOURCES

For further reflection on this theme, a variety of resources including books, poems, videos and audios, are listed in this month's Chalice Circle packet available online at www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html.