



TRUST

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.

Years ago, visiting Lake Superior with a college friend, we walked out on the glassy landscape of that frozen Great Lake. Enjoying the March sunlight already warm on our faces, we stood still, taking in the scene with appreciation and wonder until a loud crack thundered through the ice beneath our feet. My friend Tom, possibly drawing from old boy scout training or engineering concepts he was then studying in college, swiftly and gently spread his body flat across the ice, distributing his weight. I, on the other hand, could not have tried harder to crack the ice myself, jumping straight up in the air and coming down hard with all my weight focused on two feet tightly held together as if to pack a greater punch.

Fortunately, the ice held. We slithered safely back to shore. But the unnerving experience comes back to me now in this time when so much of the ground beneath our feet is thunderously cracking and shifting dramatically, impacted by a worldwide pandemic as well as the significant effects of both climate change and long-term systemic racism. Where do we find a trustworthy place to perch and shelter when so many foundations are deeply cracked and unreliable?

I find wisdom in Tom's approach — the inclination to widen what we trust, to increase our points of contact, to distribute our awareness beyond the smallest sense of self to a larger wholeness. This is, isn't it, the wisdom of the safety net, tied and stretched

across space to catch and hold us when we fall? Each of us — across all time — is born into a net of relationship and connection, an ecology of being, that will not let us go. Can we remember this, in the throes of upheaval we are experiencing now? Can we widen what we trust to include others, whose wellbeing is — always — inextricably bound up with our own?

J. Ruth Gendler, offering a personification of Trust, begins with its lineage: "Trust is the daughter of Truth," she notes. To which one might well ask: how do we trust the many truths being delivered today that are uncomfortable or painful, rife with uncertainty and loss, both anticipated and already experienced? What do we trust when, now and historically, our systems and institutions fail to deliver justice, when our society fails to preserve peace, when our communities fail to offer shelter, when our best efforts fail to extinguish the flames raging both literally and metaphorically?

Some will answer by mistrusting truth itself; but we've seen where that leads. Undermining truth, also known as denial, creates the most untrustworthy ground of all. What if, instead, we look compassionately into the painful truths of history and the present day to notice another truth embedded with them in the nature of life itself — the truth of connectedness and the promises offered by countless efforts by many people, years ago and again today, mending the nets of relationship so long and badly torn?

Fittingly, Gendler's brief passage personifying Trust ends by looking forward. Following its lineage into the future, she notices what Trust begets. And this is why trust matters, not just for us, but for the longer arc of time and life. Trust, Gendler writes, "is the mother of Love."

If we each pick up one torn thread in the net that holds us all, our work of mending can reconnect us to the larger truths of love. And so we find our place in the longest lineage of Trust that both supports and depends on us.

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Trust Theme Resources

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