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New Horizons – June 2020

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Kindness

“My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness.”

— Dalai Lama XIV

Life is made up of moments and experiences that come and go. Yet kindness has an enduring quality that can seem to increase in value over time. Even the smallest act of kindness can have immeasurably positive effects, some of which may last a lifetime. Simply noticing the importance of kindness in our lives can remind us to extend kindness to others, especially during times of challenge.

A few years ago, I thanked a woman for a kindness she extended to me, when I was going through time of personal transition. To my surprise, she had no idea how much her thoughtful action had influenced the course of my life. In some ways, her generosity was a very simple and ordinary act—and yet it had profound effects. This is the way kindness works. It may seem small and simple, yet over time its significance grows.

We may never know how our acts of kindness influence others (and, of course, they are never done for praise or applause). Yet because of our own experience of kindness, we can trust that it will do its quiet and important work in ways that ripple out into the world. The smile, the gentle word, the attentive listening. The timely gift, the act of service, the sought-for guidance. There are so many ways that kindness can be given and received.

Also, it's essential that we extend kindness to ourselves. It can be easy to focus on the world around us and the needs of others without recognizing our own needs for gentleness, nurturing and unconditional love. We can extend kindness to ourselves by making space for rest, for beauty and for

joy. We can be kind to ourselves when we fall short of our expectations, and when we notice feelings of anxiety, sadness or irritation.

No matter what our circumstance, kindness can smooth out life's rough edges—which can be helpful today and as time goes on. May each day enable each of us to give and receive the enduring gifts of kindness.

Love,
Lynn

Questions to Live With



1. Has your life been touched by a moment of unexpected kindness? How did it affect you? How did you respond?
2. Is kindness something you have wanted to add to the world? How have you done so?
3. Kindness is not always comfortable. Sometimes kindness means making hard decisions or saying no. When have you chosen or experienced a kindness that, on its surface, felt less than comforting?

For Inspiration

“Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind.”

— Henry James

I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet, strange, I am ungrateful to those teachers.

-- Khalil Gibran

No one is more worthy of your kindness and compassion than you are.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

“You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

“I hope you will have a wonderful year, that you'll dream dangerously and outrageously, that you'll make something that didn't exist before you made it, that you will be loved and that you will be liked, and that you will have people to love and to like in return. And, most importantly (because I think there should be more kindness and more wisdom in the world right now), that you will, when you need to be, be wise, and that you will always be kind.”

— Neil Gaiman

“I would rather make mistakes in kindness and compassion than work miracles in unkindness and hardness.”

— Mother Teresa

“I feel no need for any other faith than my faith in the kindness of human beings. I am so absorbed in the wonder of earth and the life upon it that I cannot think of heaven and angels.”

— Pearl S. Buck

“The simplest acts of kindness are by far more powerful than a thousand heads bowing in prayer.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

“We all are so deeply interconnected; we have no option but to love all. Be kind and do good for any one and that will be reflected. The ripples of the kind heart are the highest blessings of the Universe.”

— Amit Ray, Yoga and Vipassana: An Integrated Life Style

Kindness in words creates confidence.
Kindness in thinking creates
profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.
-Lao Tzu, philosopher (6th century B.C.)

It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community - a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the earth.

— Thich Nhat Hanh



Why I Wake Early

Mary Oliver

Hello, sun in my face.
Hello, you who make the morning
and spread it over the fields
and into the faces of the tulips
and the nodding morning glories,
and into the windows of, even, the
miserable and crotchety—
best preacher that ever was,
dear star, that just happens
to be where you are in the universe
to keep us from ever-darkness,
to ease us with warm touching,
to hold us in the great hands of light—
good morning, good morning, good morning.
Watch, now, how I start the day
in happiness, in kindness.



Buddhist Lovingkindness Meditation

May I be filled with loving kindness
May I be well
May I be peaceful and at ease
May I be happy

May you be filled with loving kindness
May you be well
May you be peaceful and at ease
May you be happy

May all beings be filled with loving kindness
May they be well
May all beings be peaceful and at ease
May they be happy

Today, small kindnesses will matter.
The setting aside of differences and personal complaints.
The understanding of what isn't important and what truly is.

Today we are, simply, bodies.
Tender and susceptible.
Aware, en masse, of our fragility.
Compromised by dread.

And yet there will be sustaining graces today.
Particles of wonder that arrive unannounced.
Moments of nourishment here for us.
Let us never distance ourselves from these.

The caring word you offer and the one you receive.
The light in the morning sky.
The healing embrace of melody.
The awareness of stars.

Breathe them in. Keep breathing.
Let these medicines enter you today.

Let them sink deeply into your blood, your bones,
That they may work their healing on your mind
and heart.

Let the absence of everything unnecessary
make way for the presence of love.

— Lynn Harrison (3/18/20)



Upcoming Services

Every Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. our worship services will be held online, via both Zoom and YouTube.

An evening Vespers service is also held Wednesdays at 7:45pm and an online drop-in on Thursday evenings at 7:45pm.

Visit the First Unitarian Toronto website (www.firstunitariantoronto.org) for links to join any of these online gatherings, and to find out more about our ongoing Journey Group programs of small groups that discuss our monthly themes.

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First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto



Seek • Connect • Serve

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