

Letter from the Minister

March 2025

I once taught first graders seven and a half hours a day, five days a week, for the duration of one full year. As I recall, there were 26 wiggly children and only one of me. It was an exciting but exhausting year! The children and I got along in glorious fashion. However, the administration had other ideas. You know, they expected us all to take off our coats when we entered the building in the cold months and stuff. I was never good at reminding the little ones to put their coats on hooks and particulars like that. Thankfully, the principal realized I was better at focusing on details in lessons involving line, color, form, etc. so I spent the rest of my career, all 12 years, as an art teacher for grades K through 6.

But here's the thing, during that first year of teaching, I discovered so much. As overwhelmed as I might have been on most occasions, I never lost sight of how a teacher learns as much from a child as a child does from a teacher. That year, we were all growing from our mistakes and celebrating our successes. And this fact was especially apparent: there was no shame in making numerous blunders. The entire room became a safe haven of acceptance.

At the time, a teaching method called "Whole Language" was incorporated. For example, one approach to reading instruction involved having youngsters outline the letters of words. Take the word *trust*. The first and last letters are bookends for the letters in between them. Aside from sight recognition, the shape of the word is a great analogy for the meaning. That is, to trust means to hold one another in a net of safety. Like the letters, all persons are held together in a net of compassion.

The shape of trust is far superior to the messiness of the word *imperfection*. Trust says, "I got you." Imperfection says, "What's wrong with you? Why aren't you flawless?"

Maya Angelou said, "Have enough courage to trust love one more time and always, one more time."

While our society is running rampant with the cultivation of lies and mistrust, may we in our community of faith here at UUC develop more empathy for each other. May the words "I forgive you." roll as easily off our tongues as "I am sorry."

Learning to trust is as fundamental as learning to breathe-meaning it's a basic and essential skill for developing healthy relationships and for creating a safe haven to learn and grow.

- Rev. Amy Kindred