

**April 2025**

**Letter from the Minister**

**Rev. Amy Kindred**

**Solidarity**

It is a typical Tuesday afternoon at Scissor Me Timbers Hair Salon. A woman sits, wrapped in a cape with tiny hair dryers printed all over it. The stylist behind her turns on the razor and begins to shave the woman's head. A tear emerges and slides down her cheek. Another stylist in the next booth over, who holds a pair of scissors in their left hand, is trimming the bangs of a person seated in front of them. They snip and chat, snip and chat.

Soon the clipping stops, and the chattering ceases as the stylist looks over and the half-shaven head of the woman who quietly sniffles.

The stylist with the razor behind the softly weeping woman catches the eye of the other stylist. The two nod "yes" to each other as the stylist with the scissors sets them down and picks up the razor at their station. The razor buzzes at the click of a button. In tandem fashion, instead of tending to the women in the chairs, the two stylists begin to shave their own heads and dance with a flare to the overhead music, dramatically running the razors through their own hair and brushing the strands to the floor.

The woman with the half-shaven head begins to grin. The woman with the half-trimmed bangs begins to laugh. She gets up, steps over and squeezes the hand of the other woman and gestures to the stylist to remove her hair as well.

Talk about having fun while displaying solidarity! These four strangers became connected by their empathy for the woman with cancer. If one person was going to walk out of the salon that day with a newly shaved head, the three others made sure she knew her journey was not going unnoticed and that people cared. Demonstrating an act of solidarity is one of humanity's best traits.

Solidarity provides a sense of mutual support, compassion, and collective responsibility. People who express solidarity express validation for one another.

Unitarian Universalists are keenly concerned with honoring the humanity of one another which sometimes includes overcoming personal discomfort such as deciding to shave one's own head to honor a stranger's struggle with an illness.

Other examples of discomfort that might arise from a show of solidarity includes the challenges involved in changing one's personal language patterns to become more inclusive of others such as non-binary and trans individuals.

The Trans Day of Visibility (which really should be everyday) just passed. And yet, we have the chance to show solidarity every day. For example, we can let our friends, family members and complete strangers know that we recognize and respect them. Essentially we have the opportunity to honor others by using the pronouns they have asked us to use. We can show solidarity by wearing pins with our preferred pronouns.

These are pretty clear-cut examples of showing solidarity. However, I invite all of us to consider other ways of showing solidarity. For example, consider accessibility. Even if it is only one person who cannot climb stairs or is in a wheelchair or scooter and unable to access the upper floor of a building, shouldn't it matter? I realize showing solidarity can be complex and often costly, but that should not dissuade deep exploration for creative ways to be more inclusive.

Solidarity is expressing the importance of unity and inclusiveness. In all areas of UUC congregational life, I wonder if there is more we can do to show solidarity?

The Music Director and I were talking this week about how challenging it is to be radically inclusive during a service on a Sunday morning. We determined that everything from the readings we choose, the images we project, and the music we select needs to express our interest in making sure all people feel welcome, not just the majority of individuals in the

seats. To show solidarity includes serving and nurturing people with a diverse array of cherished personal beliefs. It is not easy.

For example, we discussed the difficulty of choosing music that remains true to the composer's intent and yet can be relevant to our UU heritage, to our UU commitment to refraining from using gendered references to a divine or holy source.

Years ago I said to a colleague, "I personally have no qualms with changing words in songs and in ancient texts, but I get a lot of push back when I suggest it." The colleague I was talking to replied, "In this country, we would be singing *God Save the Queen* if the lyrics hadn't been changed in the song *My Country Tis of Thee!* We all need to note the discomfort, do our best to identify service elements that includes others and move on!"

We are welcome to note the discomfort in making change and pursue it anyway as best we can. Because on any given Sunday or at any UU event, upon experiencing total inclusion, someone somewhere seated in the room that day will sigh and say a prayer of gratitude for a congregation that actually expresses solidarity when the rest of the world appears to be saying, "Your presence doesn't matter enough to make changes or accommodations."

With you on this journey,

Rev. Amy