

OCTOBER MONTHLY THEME: CULTIVATING RELATIONSHIP

We are learning so many things about relationships during this time of pandemic. It's clarifying that there is no real replacement for in-person connection. And, we have certainly been reminded how precious human touch really is. Many friendships have been weeded out and realigned, inviting us to now prioritize those that are essential over those that are instrumental. The promise and precariousness of the common good has been placed center stage, reminding us that when people aren't willing to make small sacrifices for the larger whole, pandemics don't end.

We've learned and are learning all this because Covid brought so much to a halt. It put on the brakes and made us pause. We've had time to look around. To notice. And maybe that's the most important thing we've learned about cultivating relationships, the central thing we need to remember: to go slow. Simply put, relationships are really hard to build and care for when we are running. May this month help us hold on to the insights of going slower, of paying closer attention to the relationships that connect us to others, and of choosing to cultivate the relationships that are important to us.

Which question is calling to you? Where is it leading you?

1. What was the most nourishing *new* relationship you cultivated during the pandemic time? Was it with an unexpected person? A new habit? A new part of yourself? And what's your plan to intentionally nourish that relationship moving forward?
2. When did you first realize there was something called "a chosen family"?
3. What relationship in your life needs restored? What connection have you ignored for too long?
4. Is it time to *stop* cultivating a relationship and instead walk away from it?
5. What's the wisest thing you were ever taught about cultivating relationships?

Wise Words:

The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us, and the light goes out. *James Baldwin*

Building community is to the collective as spiritual practice is to the individual. *Grace Lee Boggs*

We are like aspen trees – who have mistakenly thought that since we look like many trees that is the truth – but under the ground, our root system is one – we are fully alive when we are connected because we are, we were always, part of one another. *Rev. Hilary Krivchenia*

Rarely, if ever, are any of us healed in isolation. Healing is an act of communion. *bell hooks*

Real family does not come from your blood. It is the people standing beside you when no one else is. *Nishan Panwar*

What do we live for if it is not to make life less difficult for each other? *George Eliot*

Whether you put it theologically or biologically, we are created for community. Without community, we struggle. It's as if we didn't have oxygen to breathe. *Parker Palmer*

Out of a great need
we are all holding hands and climbing.
Not loving is a letting go.
Listen, the terrain around here
Is far too dangerous for that.

Hafiz

Themes and resources from Soul Matters, a network of UU congregations.