



OCTOBER 2025

the **VOICE**
Cultivating Compassion

PEOPLES CHURCH
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

MINISTER MUSINGS



How Often Do You Say, “Oh Honey”?

by Rev. Carin Bringelson

When it comes to this month’s theme of Cultivating Compassion, my mind immediately jumps to the poem “Self-Compassion” written by James Crews.

(You can read it at <https://poets.org/poem/self-compassion>.) In the poem is the phrase “oh honey” – which melts me every time.

We have so much going on in our lives – and in the world around us. Why not give ourselves a reprieve every now and then with a comforting hand over our own hearts and a gentle “oh honey” reminder that we are not alone?

Nearly every week we share the mission of Peoples Church: “Living **compassionate** lives through spiritual growth and just action.” This month let’s reflect more deeply on this value of compassion. What do we *need* in order to live compassionate lives?

Perhaps it begins with some learning. Dr. Kristin Neff notes that “compassion” is derived from Latin and refers to how we are **with** (*com*) **suffering** (*passion*). In her work, Dr. Neff has identified three main elements of compassion:

1. Mindfulness (which means taking a balanced approach to suffering that neither suppresses nor exaggerates it),
2. Common humanity (which means that suffering is experienced by all humans), and

3. Kindness (which is about offering understanding, warmth, and support).

The creators of the Soul Matters network urge us into action by noting that “compassion is not just niceness and thoughtful feelings. It’s about something deeper: an impulse that drives us to action. Indeed, [compassion] is distinguished by *doing*. To feel the pain of another, empathy has that covered. But compassion ... urges us to *do* something about that pain.”

Let’s practice being compassionate – being *with suffering* – in the world together. When we practice together, one of the actions we take can be offering each other a sincere “oh honey” every now and again.

Growing in Faith,

Rev. Carin





FAITH FORMATION

Compassion — A Standard We Must Embrace

by Interim Director of Faith Formation, Bridget Laflin

Friends,

There is no getting around it—we live in a time when compassion is not popular. Our fractured society rewards anger and spite, urging us to cut people off before working through differences. Social media feeds us outrage, dividing us from the common humanity we share.

But as people of faith, we must hold ourselves to a higher standard. Our love must extend not only to the oppressed but also to the oppressors. We must demand an end to injustice without forgetting that all people are inherently worthy of love. Nothing a person does can erase that worth. If we fight hatred with hatred, the cycle never ends.

Wendy Farley, in *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, writes: “Compassion labors to make whole human beings out of broken ones.” As Unitarian Universalists, we are called to this labor. We must resist allowing righteous anger to become hatred. Instead, we keep compassion alive, remembering that even those we oppose are broken human beings who may yet be made whole through love and compassion.

Warmly, Bridget Laflin



BOARD PRESIDENT

What Does Compassion Look Like in Church Governance?

by Robyn Miessler-Kubanek

Compassion is often considered “just” a feeling—a sympathetic response to someone else’s pain. But it goes beyond emotions to how we act in the world with our families, our coworkers, and our fellow seekers. Compassion asks us to move beyond sentiment so we can listen deeply, respond with love, and make choices that reflect care for one another.

In the life of a congregation, this kind of compassion can shape not only how we treat each other, but how we govern ourselves. It can show up in the policies we write, the priorities we set, and the decisions we make together.

For example, the Board recently discussed the feasibility of extending healthcare reimbursement to our part-time employees, which could have a significant impact on our budget. On the surface, this is a straightforward policy question of the kind that boards are often tasked with weighing.

But then someone in the room shared a personal story about how a similar policy had once negatively impacted them, and that story changed the tone of the conversation. It reminded us that real people with real lives lie behind every policy and decision. In response, Rev. Carin reached out to our current employees to learn more about how this decision might affect them personally.

That moment reminded me that compassion isn’t just about acting with kindness; it’s also about learning about others’ lives and situations, allowing that knowledge to touch our hearts, and making space for it to shape what we do.

We might call this a kind of compassion audit for our policies as well as the everyday decisions we make as a church. What would it look like to ask, regularly and intentionally:

- Who is most affected by this decision?
- Have we heard their stories?
- Are we responding with care, not just efficiency?
- Does this reflect the values we say we hold?

We’ve already seen what it can mean to live into this. When members of the congregation shared in the board’s listening sessions that accessibility was a top priority, that opened the door to investing in a new ADA-compliant ramp, an automatic door, and a chancel ramp. These commitments reflect both our values and our compassion for one another.

We can also revisit our End Statements through this lens. What if we made compassion more explicit in the way we describe our purpose? What if we named it not just as a value, but as a way of being together?

Compassion isn’t soft or sentimental. It’s a commitment to actively listen to and care for each other. When we build that into the bones of our governance, we build a system that doesn’t just strengthen our church—it reminds us who we are.

SOCIAL JUSTICE



How Does Our Social Justice Work Cultivate Compassion?

by Laura McGraw and Clarice Krippner

Perhaps the concept that most easily leads us to compassion is Beloved Community. That community is not just on the street where we live, or for the people whose lives are just like our own, or come from the same culture, or hold the same beliefs, values or lifestyle. It really means everyone, absolutely everyone.

That means we work to help people meet their basic needs for safe shelter, food, work, education, health, and healthy relationships. We learn to treat those we help with kindness even when they are not likely to return it to us. We also need to listen to what they say they need-- and not forge ahead with what we think they should do or have.

Compassion means we work to break down barriers caused by perceived differences like race, immigration status, economic status, and education. At Peoples we have a long history of supporting those who are marginalized and unwelcome in many other spaces. For example, we have long been a “Welcoming Congregation” for members of the LGBTQ+ community. We show that welcome in many ways and will soon be adding a sign to the front of our building with the flag that proudly

demonstrates our commitment to a group of people who are among those currently being scapegoated.

There is much work to be done in our fight for a more just world. As our new church year gets under way, please consider joining our team, attending Sunday Forums, and joining into church initiatives. It takes all of us to make the world a better place.



SACRED LISTENING



Why Is Listening the First Step Toward Compassion?

by Laura McGraw

We are living in a time of sound bites, fast food, and rushing from one activity to another. We worry about our productivity and not wasting time. People become easily impatient if they have to wait for anything. Taking time to have a deep conversation with another person is often not in the schedule.

- ✓ During Phase 1 of our Sacred Listening Project, our listeners did schedule time to sit with fellow congregants, one-on-one, and hear their stories. They didn't judge, give advice, or jump in to add their own stories. They gave the gift of their time to just listen. When we gift our time to another person we are showing them compassion. Being able to share our life stories, our passions, our sorrows and disappointments, and our dreams brings us closer to each other. It shows that we value what others have to say. It allows us to share our humanity.
- ✓ Phase 2, the discernment part of this project, will be beginning soon. It will further allow us to show compassion to our fellow congregants by honoring what we learned from their stories as we discern how best to move our congregation forward.

CARE TEAM



How Does the Care Team at Peoples Church Cultivate Compassion?

by Kris Davis

Every week we recite these words of affirmation in our worship service: To dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another. Thus we express our wish to cultivate compassion.

How do we cultivate compassion? One way is just taking a small step with an act of kindness. What we discover is that in helping another person, we benefit ourselves. We get to know another person or deepen our relationship with someone we know. We take a step outside our routine. We reinforce our sense of worth and connection. We feel part of a larger community.

Many of us help one another every week behind the scenes, but the Care Team helps us connect helpers with those who need help. How? By reaching out with a card, a phone call or a hospital visit. By providing a meal when needed, a ride to church or an appointment, or helping with an occasional household task.

SERVICES & FORUMS

Sunday, October 5, 2025

- ✓ “Oh Honey” at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary — Led by Rev. Carin Bringelson — Cultivating compassion for ourselves is a spiritual practice. As we ask “What is Love calling us to do?,” let’s explore how we might embrace our UU values in a culture that shames mistakes while venerating perfectionism.

Sunday, October 12, 2025

- ✓ Forum: Social Change Now at 9:45 a.m. in the Ely Room — Led by Interim Director of Faith Formation, Bridget Laflin — Are you feeling called to deepen your commitment to justice, but unsure where to begin — or how to sustain your spirit along the way? Join us for a discussion series on the Unitarian Universalist Association’s common read for 2025-2026, *Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Connection*, by activist and strategist Deepa Iyer.
- ✓ “Cultivating Compassion for Migrants” at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary — Led by Rev. Carin Bringelson — It’s often said that this country is “a nation of immigrants.” On this Sunday before Indigenous Peoples Day, we’ll explore migration stories – and the lands that hold them. What does it take to cultivate compassion for our global community?

Sunday, October 19, 2025

- ✓ “The Power of Stories” at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary — Led by PCUU Member, Cate Sheller — The stories we tell, listen to, read, and resonate with are key to our understanding of, and feeling for, our fellow humans. Let’s explore some stories together.

Sunday, October 26, 2025

- ✓ Forum: Iowa Water Quality at 9:45 a.m. in the Ely Room
- ✓ “Monsters and Me” at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary — Led by Rev. Carin Bringelson — Halloween is often a time of mask-wearing. What are we hiding behind our masks? Can we cultivate compassion for the monsters within and among us by leaning into our shared humanity?

October 2025

- 5 Faith Formation at 9:45 a.m.
Peoples Church Worship at 11:00 a.m.
CUUPS Full Moon Ritual at 6:30 p.m.
- 8 Shared Ministry Team at 10:00 a.m.
Choir Practice at 6:00 p.m.
- 9 Worship Arts at 6:30 p.m.
- 10 Game Night at 6:00 p.m.
- 12 Forum: Social Change Now at 9:45 a.m.
Peoples Church Worship at 11:00 a.m.
CUUPS at 12:20 p.m.
- 14 Archives Committee at 10:00 a.m.
Social Justice Team at 7:00 p.m.
- 15 Choir Practice at 6:00 p.m.
- 19 Faith Formation at 9:45 a.m.
Peoples Church Worship at 11:00 a.m.
- 21 Finance Team at 7:00 p.m.
- 22 Choir Practice
- 23 PCUU Board Meeting at 6:30 p.m.
- 25 Saturday Journey Circle at 9:30 a.m.
- 26 Choir Practice at 9:45 a.m.
Faith Formation at 9:45 a.m.
Forum: Water Quality at 9:45 a.m.
Peoples Church Worship at 11:00 a.m.
Costume Contest at 12:00 pm.
- 27 Monday Journey Circle at 6:00 p.m.
- 28 Tuesday Journey Circle at 6:00 p.m.

PEOPLES CHURCH

MISSION STATEMENT

“Leading compassionate lives through spiritual growth and just action.”

BOARD of TRUSTEES

President

Robyn Miessler-Kubaneck

Bob Butikofer
Emily Hoselton
Linda Levy
Josh Wagner
Lu Wilcox

Ex Officio

Rev. Carin Bringelson
Gary McGraw, Treasurer



OUR STAFF

Minister

Rev. Carin Bringelson (she/hers)
minister@peoplesuu.org

Congregational Administrator

David Kind (he/his)
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Office Hours

Tuesday through Thursday
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Interim Director of Faith Formation

Bridget Laflin, M.Div. (she/hers)
faithformation@peoplesuu.org

Office Hours

Tuesday & Thursday
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
(and by appointment)

Social Media / IT Outreach Technician

Matthew Wilde

CIRCLE of LIFE

As a reminder, Peoples Church will be the location for a Celebration of Life in honor of Susie Hauter.

All are invited to attend in person on Saturday, November 1, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. – or online. A Zoom link will be emailed out on the Friday before.

Read more at: <https://www.pcuu.org/announcements/circle-of-life-celebration-of-life-for-audrey-susie-louise-hauter-november-1-2025-at-200-pm>

