

Let's make 2024 a season of love

**BY THE REV. DR.
KHARMA R. AMOS**

Spirit of Life

We are now firmly in 2024. I don't know about you, but I carry apprehension about this year for many reasons. Not least of which are war, gun violence, the climate crisis and a looming U.S. presidential election that threatens to escalate tensions and divisions across our nation. I am not a pessimistic person by nature, and while it is difficult sometimes, I choose to believe in the core goodness of humanity even when so many of us are behaving badly. That said, we have to make an effort to be the best version of ourselves, and we may need to double down on our efforts this year.

In Jonathan Larson's song "Seasons of Love" (from the hit musical "Rent" set during the AIDS crisis of the late 1980s), he asks the question of how we might best measure the value of someone's life. The song does not deny the devastation of death nor the reality of grief, but it concludes that love is what makes it all worthwhile. Love — expressed and received in simple, common, daily experiences of sunsets, laughter, cups of shared coffee and all of the little things we do in the course of a year — can liberate us to really live.

Liberating love is a theme of reflection this month for many Unitarian Universalists, and we're wrestling with this concept. This week, as we observed the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, we heard again some of his revolutionary teachings about the power of love. King was criticized by some in his day for being too naïve in his commitment to love. To his critics he said, "When I speak of love, I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am speaking of a force which all the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life." He knew that you

can love someone and still be critical of their actions, if those actions are not themselves loving or just. In fact, it is when love is paired with accountability that it has the best chance of creating the conditions within which we can all thrive.

The kind of love I'm talking about is not wishy-washy, "snowflakey," weak or naïve. For people of pretty much every faith tradition, love is a central value. And make no mistake, love's demands on us are high. For example, love will not let us look away from the humanitarian crisis in Gaza or Israel or throughout that region. Love does not remain silent in the face of such suffering, even when things are complicated and we do not know exactly what to say or do. Love does not turn a blind eye to the extinction of species or the devastation of coastlines and communities caused by climate change. Love compels a response from us, one rooted in our interdependence, one that always draws us closer together.

It's timely for us to ask ourselves: How will we use the gift of our time and energies this year? Could love be, as Dr. King asserted, the key that unlocks the door to ultimate reality and to the Beloved Community in which all are cherished, protected and empowered for life? What if each of us asked ourselves each morning, "What does love demand I do (or not do), say (or not say) today?" There are so many creative ways we can love and be loved in this world. We don't have quite 525,600 minutes left in 2024 (as the song goes) — today it's more like 498,240. Yet, that's still a pretty significant number of opportunities for us to love one another. Let's do all we can to make 2024 a season of love.

*The Rev. Dr. Kharma R. Amos
is the minister of the Unitarian
Universalist Church of Brunswick,
uubrunswick.org.*