



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Extra Grace

By Elizabeth Stevens

For many years, I served on a healthy congregations team in the Pacific Northwest District. Our task was to support congregations in engaging conflict in a healthy way. Because I'm someone who tends to see patterns, it didn't take long for me to realize that when hard and heartbreaking things were happening in the wider world, conflicts erupted more often and people were less able to be creative and compassionate as they sought reconciliation and resolution.

I developed a theory: when we feel distressed and powerless in the face of current events, some people tend to turn toward spheres where we *do* have power—and exert it in unhealthy ways. Other folks, already harboring raw nerves and bruised hearts, find themselves more sensitive than usual and prone to reaction, rather than thoughtful and caring response. It's a recipe for disaster!

When I floated my theory to leaders embroiled in conflict, a lot of heads nodded. More importantly, shoulders relaxed and stances softened. Just realizing that the energy behind the conflict is distress rather than aggression or dislike made a lot of difference. In these times where so many hard and horrible things are happening in our nation, I'm reminded of this pattern. My heart echoes a refrain gifted to me by a wise leader in my own

congregation, one who died several years ago: "Sometimes, some people need a little extra grace."

It seems to me that right now, we all need a little extra grace. We need to offer ourselves extra grace, and tend to our own ragged nerves and bruised hearts. We need to offer each other extra grace: pausing before reacting; offering and receiving apologies liberally.

Most importantly, we need to remember that we're all in this together. It's a waste of energy to engage in fruitless conflict, and now is a time when every iota of love we have is needed to soothe the many hurts in our broken and beautiful world.

This essay was posted in April to [Braver/Wiser](#), the weekly reflection by members of the Unitarian Universalist community on the UUA website.



Last Sunday, the UUFW congregation officially welcomed six of our nine new members. From left they are Annie Garrison, Andrew Jones, Elizabeth Jones, Steven Woodruff, Jed Baul and Gareth Bartholomew.