

# Give me a little Compassion

A service by Laurie Stuart

Upper Delaware Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

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## Welcome:

I welcome you to the Upper Delaware Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on this first Sunday in February. This is the first of a series of services on Compassion and will serve as an introduction to the topic. Our month will unfold as follows:

1. This first service will set the stage of compassion, and we will understand that compassion, which has often been confused with pity or concern for others, especially those that suffer, actually means to experience with, to walk in the other's shoes; to follow the golden rule and treat others as you wish to be treated.

2. The service next week will be a service of shared readings, where you are invited to bring in your favorite quote or reading on compassion, which holds within its core, the experience of love.

3. In our service on February 19, we will more fully delve into the work of religious scholar Karen Armstrong and her book 12 steps to compassionate living, and learn more about the "Charter for Compassion," a world-wide movement to encourage compassion as an anti-dote of violence and disharmony.

4. Finally on February 26, Mort Malkin and Christine San Jose will present a service which will explore the topic of compassion as it relates to what they call "the disunited states."

So it will be an exciting month – with a timely and important topic. We begin:

## Opening words:

Give me a little compassion

Let my heart be open

Let me understand that I

am not so different than the next

That I crave and deserve to be loved.

Give us a little compassion

to appreciate ourselves as unique beings

Who are invited, each and every moment

to use our uniqueness to bless the world.

Grant us a little compassion,

a calmness of heart

A fortitude of soul

So that we always remember  
Our compassion is a common thread  
That binds up our beautiful and broken world.

### **Chalice Lighting:**

May we notice the blessings of the day, the array of colors, the ever-changing sky, the miracle of human invention and may they flow together like life giving water, feeding and nourishing all.

### **Song: This little light of mine:**

Building up a world  
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine  
Walking in your shoes, I begin to understand  
Understanding you helps me understand myself  
When I help you, I help myself too

### **Candles of Joy Sorrow and Concern**

#### **Reading #1: Children's Charter for Compassion**

Compassion means to feel what others are feeling – especially when they are feeling pain or sadness. Compassion is inside of all of us. It doesn't matter if you are a girl or a boy, how old you are, what country you live in, where or if you worship, or the color of your skin. We can all show compassion for others.

When we act with compassion, we treat others as we wish to be treated. We show kindness. We show understanding. We try to make others feel better. We put others before ourselves.

If we want the world to be a caring, respectful, and happy place to live, we must all practice compassion. Who are those others? Family, friends, classmates, teachers, neighbors, teammates, coaches, and even those we do not like or see as our enemies. We must also treat ourselves with love, kindness, and respect. When we are happy, we can make others feel happy.

When we act with compassion, we get a warm feeling in our hearts. That feeling guides us to keep doing whatever we can to make sure all people are treated equally and fairly. We must never hurt others with nasty words, unkind facial expressions, or physical force. When we act with compassion, we let others be themselves. We welcome and embrace the chance to learn from others and to respect and celebrate our differences.

From this moment on, we have a great responsibility:

- We must begin and end each day with compassion.
- We must always treat others as we would like to be treated.

- We must begin and end each day with a kind heart towards others and ourselves. Kindness leads to kindness and others will follow.
- We must respect each other's differences in behavior, intelligence, religion, and tradition.

A compassionate, unselfish, and understanding world begins with you. Make this promise to yourself. Promise to try to show compassion to everyone you see every day, and help make the world peaceful and happy for us all.

## **Offering: Love is something when you give it away**

### **Homily:**

I always like to work on services. It gives me a chance to look at things and think about a topic in a different way; I become an explorer. I have to seek out information from all different angles and challenge what I know about the topic at hand. I know that I am not alone in this experience; each of us who prepares a service goes through a similar process. In the end, the presenter has the opportunity to learn more than the person who is the listener. That's funny because we think it's the other way around.

And while I always thought that compassion was a good thing, I didn't understand that it might be at the root of total personal and global transformation. I know that we all know this but to illustrate the point, think about a situation where you have having an argument with someone. They are saying one thing and you are saying another. When you try to explain yourself, they say something that is opposite or add something to the conversation that just doesn't fit.

You say to yourself, "I really don't like that person right now" or more pointedly, "Why are they being SO stupid?" Now think of the space that opens when we stop ourselves and think about what THEY might be feeling in that moment. If it's your best friend, your mother, father, sister, brother or spouse, you can imagine how they are probably not happy about having an argument. And as long as you're thinking about them, you might think, I wonder if they're tired. Did they have a hard day? And as you were thinking of them, whether they were sad that you two were fighting or whether they had a challenging day, I bet that you might find that you too are sad that you're fighting or that you might discover something in your day that was really hard for you. If nothing else, you have added a new thought to "why are they being SO stupid, and the situation would be transformed.

That's the funny thing about compassion, when we give compassion to another person, it benefits ourselves as well as the other person.

In working on this service, I found a few quotes from the Dalai Lama, the head of state and the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. In accordance with Tibetan tradition, His Holiness was recognized at the age of two, as the reincarnation of his predecessor the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lamas are the manifestations of the Buddha of Compassion who chose to take rebirth for the purpose of service other human beings.

Here are a few quotes:

“If you shift your focus from yourself to others, and think more about other’s well-being and welfare, it has an immediate liberating effect.

“If you utilize compassion, it will bring you tranquility and strength.

“The spiritual actions we undertake which are motivated not by narrow self-interest but out of our concern for others actually benefit ourselves.

“The more we focus on others, the more we have a concern for others, it seems to bring an inner strength.

And while every religion has at its core some form of compassion – which is actually thought of as the Golden Rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Religious scholar Karen Armstrong, who was Ware Lecturer at General Assembly this past June, said that at the core of all religious belief is compassion and connection. In her book, *12 Steps to a Compassionate Life*, she writes: “The first person to formulate the Golden Rule as far as we now, was the Chinese sage Confucius (551-479 BCE) who when asked which of his teaching his disciples could practice “all day and every day” replied: “Perhaps the saying about shu (‘consideration’). Never do to others what you would not lie them to do to you.” This he said, was the thread that ran right through the spiritual method he called the Way (dao) and pulled all ifs teachings together.

I liked this idea of a thread that ran through everything and pulled all its teaching together. I imagined a large sheet in the center of our circle, in which placed all of the details of our lives. I imagined holes in the sheet and that we could take weave this thread of compassion around the top and pull the whole sheet together. How would our world be transformed if we thought of it as engulfed, made whole by, contained within, held together, blessed and imbibed by compassion.

### **Final reading:**

*[On February 28, 2008 Karen Armstrong won the TED Prize and made a wish: for help creating, launching and propagating a Charter for Compassion. Since that day, thousands of people have contributed to the process so that on November 12, 2009 the Charter was unveiled to the world. The text is below.]*

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honor the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others - even our enemies - is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings, even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

## **Congregational Feedback**

## **Closing Video**