

March 9, 2023

Pastoral Reflection: Revolutionary Love

I am inspired by the work of Valarie Kaur, author of “See No Stranger”. One of my favorite quotes of hers is: “Love is sweet labor—fierce, bloody, imperfect, and life-giving. When we labor in love in a time of rage, love becomes revolutionary.”



One of her primary concepts is about the importance of stories. Stories can help us see no stranger and turn those we may be inclined to call strangers into siblings. She says that meeting a stranger is an invitation to welcome the part of us we do not yet know.

Hate crimes in our country are at an all-time high. State-sanctioned violence against Black and Brown people and hate crimes against Asian Americans are just two examples. There appears to be a “freedom” that some people feel to attack (physically and emotionally) another person because of the clothing they wear, the religion they follow, the people they love, the color of their skin, the language they speak—and so much more.

Valarie says forgiveness is freedom from hate. Those who hate are speaking from their own words—their own insecurity that causes them to try to dictate the “right” and “wrong” of how the world should look. “We love our opponents when we tend the wound in them,” Valarie says. “Tending to the wound is not healing them—only they can do that. Tending the wound allows us to see how our opponents have been radicalized by cultures and policies that we together can change.”

We first have to tend to our own rage and grief and love ourselves before we can engage in revolutionary love. This two-part way forward, to me, is what is so crucial. Tend the wounds in ourselves—do our own work—and then join with others in the movement for Revolutionary Love. This recipe, I believe, can change the cultures and policies that are destroying our society.

Valarie reminds us that “loving only ourselves is good but is narcissism; loving only our opponents is self-loathing; loving only others is ineffective. To engage in Revolutionary Love requires us to do all three.”

Revolutionary Love Warriors, I hope you will join me in this work to tend our wounds, see the wounds in others, and, then, commit to seeing no stranger in the work we do together, despite our differences, despite the pain we are experiencing in these moments, despite the longing we all have for us to move to a unified community in this space that is our faith community.

Conference Events and News

• Annual Gathering Registration Now Live

As you read in the Monday's Call to Annual Celebration, we are working hard to prepare for our Conference gathering in Grand Junction June 15-17, 2023. Registration is now open and can be found [here](#). Deadline to register is 6/12/2023. Hotel reservations can be made directly by use the Online Group Booking Codes if you plan to book your room online click [here](#) otherwise booking over the phone 970-241-8888, be sure to ask for the Rocky Mountain Conference UCC rate when making your reservation. Make your reservation by May 24, to receive our special rate of \$129.95. Business meeting information as well as other details about the gathering will be posted [here](#) so please check back often.

• Tributary Fund Reminder

The purpose of the Rocky Mountain Conference is to inspire, challenge, and empower generous faith and justice communities across the West. One way we do this is by supporting people – both ministers and laypersons – who are called to work on behalf of the ministry of Christ in the greater Rocky Mountain area. The Tributary Fund is just one of the tools we use to do this.

The fund is accepting applications starting on February 1, 2023. All applications should be submitted by April 28, 2023. For more information and an application [visit our website](#).



Congregations Alive 5 was held at First Plymouth Congregational Church in February. This event originated back in 2011 by the UCC Christian Educators. We have had different themes for each of the 5 conferences, This year's theme was the very timely Climate Justice. Our keynoters were the Rev. Jim Antal from Vermont and Rev. Peter Sawtell from Denver. Rev. Lee Ann Bryce was the conference's Worship leader. The YouTube links are of the events that took place in the sanctuary, including the keynote addresses.

2/23/2023 Thursday 1:30 PM - Opening worship and meet the keynoters

- 2/23/2023 Thursday 1:30 PM - [Opening worship and meet the keynoters](#)
 - 2/24/2023 Friday 9:00 AM - [Morning Opening Worship and Keynote with Jim Antal](#)
 - 2/24/2023 Friday 3:30 PM - [Afternoon Keynote Address by Peter Sawtell](#)
 - 2/24/2023 Friday 6:45 PM [HOT TOPICS with KEYNOTERS](#)
 - 2/25/2023 Saturday 8:30 AM [Morning Gathering Worship and Keynoters Wrap-up](#)
 - 2/25/2023 Saturday 1:00 PM [Afternoon Wrap Up and Closing Worship](#)
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From the Conference Wide Committee on Ministry

• **Covenanting Service**



Marking a significant milestone in the life of Community United Church of Christ in Boulder, a joyous Covenanting Service was held to formally install Rev. Jackie Hibbard as the Associate Pastor on March 5, 2023. The service was filled with heartfelt prayers, uplifting hymns, and inspiring messages that reflected the deep sense of community and faith shared by all in attendance. With Rev. Hibbard's remarkable skills and unwavering dedication, the church is poised to thrive and grow in new and exciting ways.

• **Ecclesiastical Council**

Mandy Todd was granted an overwhelming endorsement for ordination, pending a call, at an Ecclesiastical Council held via Zoom on March 8, 2023. She currently serves as a compassionate and dedicated chaplain at Bethany Village in Lindsborg, KS. In addition, she co-hosts the thought-provoking and inspiring podcast "Jesus has Left the Building" with Rev. Marta Fioriti. Mandy's deep commitment to her faith and her tireless efforts to promote healing and understanding make her an exceptional candidate for ordination.



• **Up Coming Events**

Ecclesiastical Council for Terri Bowen, March 29, in person at Park Hill and online via zoom. Register [here](#). Review the ordination paper [here](#).

From the National Setting

• Prayer for Ukraine

As the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has passed, the United Church of Christ calls on our clergy, our lay leaders, our churches, and all people of faith to pray for peace, to pray for an end to the hostilities that are ravaging the people and land of Ukraine, and to pray for a de-escalation of rhetoric that threatens nuclear options. The war has caused the displacement of 16 million people – Ukrainians and others living or working there; put additional strain on communities in Ukraine and in neighboring countries which have graciously welcomed those who have fled their homes; and severely reduced the ability of people in countries farther away to access daily needs such as food and fuel – effects which are less obvious. All the while, more weapons are infused, and the threat of greater devastation increases. The UCC has supported people and partners affected by the invasion from the beginning, and a UCC delegation recently visited the region to express solidarity with and encouragement to partners, and to witness the work we have supported.

We offer this prayer and invite you to join us in sharing it as a part of your personal prayer time this weekend, or in an act of public worship when you gather with your community of faith.

Creator God, maker of all that is good.

Comforter God, restorer of peace between all peoples.

Redeemer God, healer of wounds that inflict trauma and chaos:

We turn to you this day crying out for an end to a war that rages across the land of Ukraine, threatens the lives of its inhabitants, and displaces millions of children no longer able to sleep in their beds, attend their schools, or play with their friends.

May your Spirit of peace soften the hearts of the politicians who rattle their sabers and threaten nuclear annihilation.

May your vision of a just world thwart the ambitions of dictators who are thirsty for conquer and lusting for lands over which to rule.

May your hope of shalom engender within our own hearts the call to let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with us.

Help us find the pathway to peace, a Just Peace, built on human rights and equity not just in Ukraine but in every land where bombs and guns are the sounds to which children fall asleep and from which families flee.

You are the source of our peace.

You are the horizon of our hope.

You are the author of our love.

May the promise of your enduring peace, your abiding hope, and your everlasting love sustain us all and bring the promise of a new and better day to the people of Ukraine.

Amen

The Elected Officers of the United Church of Christ

The Rev. John C. Dorhauer, General Minister and President
The Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister and Vice President
The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, Associate General Minister and Vice President
AND
The Council of Conference Ministers, United Church of Christ

- **Board Affirms Nomination of Next GMP**

The United Church of Christ is poised to make a historic choice.

After a year-long process, the UCC Board voted March 4 to nominate Associate General Minister, the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, for General Minister and President. If elected by the General Synod this summer, Thompson would be the first woman – and the first woman of African descent – to lead the denomination.

“We couldn’t have more faith in Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson,” said the Rev. Cameron Barr, UCCB chair. “She has articulated our shared values on a global stage as Ecumenical Officer and Associate General Minister, and now, provided that she is elected by General Synod, she will be our spiritual leader.”

“We sought a leader who will champion the UCC’s mission and values both within the church and externally; embody an adaptive, resilient leader who can guide the UCC through rapidly changing times; and provide a foundation for the church’s future stability and growth,” said the Rev. Emma Brewer-Wallin, chair of the Search Committee that recommended Thompson. “And the Search Committee is clear that we have found such a leader in Rev. Thompson.”

Thompson’s vision for the future of the UCC embodies the values at the heart of her work: religious multiplicity and diversity, justice for marginalized communities world-wide and broader affirmation of spiritual practices beyond mainline Christianity.

“My hope is that we, the UCC, will begin to live more fully into what it means to be a church that proclaims to be God-centered and Spirit-filled,” Thompson said after the vote. “It’s not just about the head, but also about the heart. How do we become mission-minded? How do we show up? How do we be present for communities that are on the margins – not just here, but globally?”

Upcoming Events and Important Links

March 9: Ecclesiastical Council for Terri Bowen

April 27: RMC Board of Directors Meeting

June 15-17: Annual Celebration [Learn more.](#) [Register](#)