

## **“All Kinds of Love”**

Rev. Lynn Harrison and Dallas Bergen  
First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto  
Online Service via Zoom  
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In the novel "Anna Karenina," the writer Leo Tolstoy said,

“I think...  
if it is true that there are as many minds  
as there are heads, then there are as many  
kinds of love as there are hearts.”

For many years now,  
long before I joined the First Unitarian staff team,  
there's been a tradition of celebrating love  
through poetry on the Sunday closest to Valentine's Day.

Extending the Tolstoy quote a little further:

If there are as many kinds of love as there are hearts...  
there are as many love poems as there are writers.

There are many considerations in putting together  
a balanced and inclusive selection of poetry.

We hope you find, in at least some of the poems today,  
beauty, depth and meaning that inspires you...  
and supports your ability to love...  
in all the many ways you do.

**Dallas:** We begin with a poem by Rupi Kaur:

love will come  
and when love comes  
love will hold you  
love will call your name  
and you will melt  
sometimes though  
love will hurt you but  
love will never mean to  
love will play no games  
cause love knows life  
has been hard enough already.

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**Lynn:**

...and now, "Love Is" by Nikki Giovanni

Some people forget that love is  
tucking you in and kissing you  
"Good night"  
no matter how young or old you are

Some people don't remember that love is  
listening and laughing and asking questions  
no matter what your age

Few recognize that love is  
commitment, responsibility  
no fun at all unless

Love is  
You and me

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**Dallas:** And here is another poem by Nikki Giovanni entitled "A Poem of Friendship."

### **A Poem Of Friendship - Nikki Giovanni**

We are not lovers  
because of the love we make  
but the love we have

We are not friends  
because of the laughs we spend  
but the tears we save

I don't want to be near you  
for the thoughts we share  
but the words we never have to speak

I will never miss you  
because of what we do  
but what we are together

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Lynn: Our next poem shines a light on the love we are called to extend to ourselves. Here is "Love After Love" by Derek Walcott.

### **“Love After Love” by Derek Walcott**

The time will come when, with elation,  
you will greet yourself arriving at your own door,  
in your own mirror, and each will smile at the other's welcome,

And say, sit here. Eat.

You will love again the stranger who was yourself.  
Give wine. Give bread.  
Give back your heart to itself,  
to the stranger who has loved you all your life,  
whom you ignored for another,  
who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,  
the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.

Sit. Feast on your life."



**Lynn:** Poems by the writer Marge Piercy have been used in many services here at First, and indeed several of her writings are included in the UU "Singing the Living Tradition" hymnbook.

Here is her poem, "**A New Constellation.**"

We go intertwined, him and you  
and me, her and him, you and her,  
each the center of our own circle  
of attraction and compulsion and gravity.  
What a constellation we make:  
I call it the Matrix.

I call it the dancing family.  
I call it wheels inside wheels.  
Ezekiel did not know he was seeing  
the pattern for enduring relationship  
in the late twentieth century.

All the rings shine gold as wedding bands  
but they are the hoops magicians use  
that seem solid and unbroken,  
yet can slip into chains of other rings and out.  
They are strong enough to hang houses on,  
strong enough to serve as cranes,  
yet they are open.  
We fall through each other,  
we catch each other,  
we cling, we flip on.

No one is at the center,  
but each is her own center,  
no one controls the jangling swing and bounce  
and merry-go-round lurching intertangle  
of this mobile.

We pass through each other trembling  
and we pass through each other shrieking  
and we pass through each other shimmering.

The circle is neither unbroken  
nor broken but living,  
a molecule attracting atoms  
that want to be a protein,  
complex, mortal, able to sustain life,  
able to reproduce itself inexactly,  
learn and grow.

**Dallas:**

Our next poem was written by Starhawk, a teacher in eco-feminism and neo-pagan thought.

This is from "**The Fifth Sacred Thing**"

My love, you are a river fed by many streams  
I bless all who have shaped you,

The lovers whose delights still dance patterns on your back,  
Those who carved your channels deeper, broader, wider,

Whitewater and backwater lovers,  
Swamp lovers, sun-warmed estuary lovers,

Lovers with surface tension,  
Lovers like boulders,  
Like ice forming and breaking  
Lovers that fill and spill with the tides.

I bless those who have taught you and those who  
have pleased you and those who have hurt you.

All those who have made you who you are.

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**Lynn:**

And here is "The Longly-Weds Know" by Leah Furnas.

The Longly Weds Know

That it isn't about the Golden Anniversary at all,  
But about all the unremarkable years

that Hallmark doesn't even make a card for.

It's about the 2nd anniversary when they were surprised to find they cared for each other more than last year

And the 4th when both kids had chickenpox and she threw her shoe at him for no real reason

And the 6th when he accidentally got drunk on the way home from work because being a husband and father was so damn hard

It's about the 11th and 12th and 13th years when they discovered they could survive crisis

And the 22nd anniversary when they looked at each other across the empty nest, and found it good.

It's about the 37th year when she finally decided she could never change him

And the 38th when he decided a little change wasn't that bad

It's about the 46th anniversary when they both bought cards, and forgot to give them to each other

But most of all it's about the end of the 49th year when they discovered you don't have to be old

to have your 50th anniversary.

Dallas: **"Married Love"**

by **Kuan Tao-Sheng,**  
translated by **Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung**

You and I  
Have so much love,  
That it  
Burns like a fire,  
In which we bake a lump of clay  
Molded into a figure of you  
And a figure of me.  
Then we take both of them,  
And break them into pieces,  
And mix the pieces with water,  
And mold again a figure of you,  
And a figure of me.  
I am in your clay.  
You are in my clay.  
In life we share a single quilt.  
In death we will share one bed.

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**Lynn:**

Danna Faulds is a poet and yoga instructor,  
whose book "Go In and In" refers to love  
through a deeply embodied and also spiritual lens.

Here is her poem, "Who You Are."

Who you are is so much more  
than what you do. The essence,  
shining through heart, soul, and  
center, the bare and bold truth  
of you does not lie in your  
to-do list. You are not just  
at the surface of your skin, not  
just the impulse to arrange the  
muscles of your face into a smile  
or a frown, not just boundless  
energy, or bone wearying fatigue.  
Delve deeper. You are divinity:  
the vast and open sky of Spirit.  
It's the light of God, the ember  
at your core, the passion and the  
presence, the timeless, deathless  
essence of you that reaches out  
and touches me. Who you are  
transcends fear and turns  
suffering into liberation.  
Who you are is love.

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### **Dallas "The Facts of Life" by Padraig O'Tuama**

That you were born  
and you will die.

That you will sometimes love enough  
and sometimes not.

That you will lie  
if only to yourself.

That you will get tired.

That you will learn most from the situations  
you did not choose.

That there will be some things that move you  
more than you can say.

That you will live  
that you must be loved.

That you will avoid questions most urgently in need of  
your attention.

That you began as the fusion of a sperm and an egg  
of two people who once were strangers  
and may well still be.

That life isn't fair.  
That life is sometimes good  
and sometimes better than good.

That life is often not so good.

That life is real  
and if you can survive it, well,  
survive it well  
with love  
and art  
and meaning given  
where meaning's scarce.

That you will learn to live with regret.  
That you will learn to live with respect.

That the structures that constrict you

may not be permanently constraining.

That you will probably be okay.

That you must accept change  
before you die  
but you will die anyway.

So you might as well live  
and you might as well love.  
You might as well love.  
You might as well love.

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**Lynn:**

And we end our selection of love poems today  
with one we've heard before in past years.

Here's "Touched by an Angel" by Maya Angelou.

We, unaccustomed to courage  
exiles from delight  
live coiled in shells of loneliness  
until love leaves its high holy temple  
and comes into our sight  
to liberate us into life.

Love arrives  
and in its train come ecstasies

old memories of pleasure  
ancient histories of pain.  
Yet if we are bold,

love strikes away the chains of fear  
from our souls.

We are weaned from our timidity

In the flush of love's light  
we dare be brave

And suddenly we see  
that love costs all we are  
and will ever be.

Yet it is only love  
which sets us free.

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