

Answering the Call of Love



The Families pages are adapted from Tapestry of Faith lifespan faith development programs.

www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith



By Elisa Davy Pearmain

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On the first day of junior high, Pham was nervous. A seventh grader, he knew he was one of the youngest kids in school. He wore his favorite pink T-shirt for good luck.

As Pham followed signs to his new homeroom, Room 205, he realized how big the seventh and eighth graders were. He didn't see any of his friends. Suddenly he felt himself being slammed into the lockers in the hall. At least five older kids looked down on him.

"Hey, girly boy," the tallest one scowled. "Boys don't wear pink in this school. You hear?"

"Yeah," said another. "If you do it again you're gonna get a beating." Another kid grabbed him by the back pack and lifted him off the ground.

A teacher's voice called, "Break it up!"

The gang of kids moved off. Pham looked up. It didn't seem as if the teacher had seen him in the middle of

that. But some other students had, and two of them came over. Pham started to walk away but one put out their hand. "Hey, it's okay. I'm Tracy."

"I'm David," said the other kid. "We saw what happened. What did those kids say to you?"

Pham told them.

"That's ridiculous," said Tracy. "You can wear whatever you want to this school."

Tracy and David walked Pham to homeroom. "We'll keep an eye out for you," they promised.

After school, Tracy and David went to David's house. "It makes me so mad that a few bullies tell everyone what they can and can't wear," said David.

"Yeah, but what can we do?" asked

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Tracy.

“We could tell the teachers,” David suggested.

“But they’d still do it, after school,” said Tracy.

“We need to take it to the people!” David suggested.

A look of excitement grew on Tracy’s face. “Hey, let’s ask our friends to all wear pink on Monday.”

“Yeah,” smiled David, “but not just our friends. Everyone.”

Tracy grinned. “I can see it now, a sea of pink!”

David and Tracy asked their friends to help them buy 75 T-shirts for kids who didn’t have pink. Then they sent out the word on social media to everyone.

The next Monday, David and Tracy were at school early with their boxes of pink T-shirts. Many kids arrived with pink shirts on and kids who didn’t could take one from the boxes. Some kids used pink fabric to make armbands. One kid brought a pink basketball to recess. At least 400 of the students—over half—wore pink.

That day in school, the bullies gave the kids in pink dirty looks. One of them even kicked over a chair in the cafeteria, but people paid no attention. David and Tracy’s message had been sent, and received—a message about bullying and people looking out for each other. It made almost everyone in the school feel happier.

Pham wore his favorite pink T-shirt that day, under a sweatshirt. When he saw how many kids wore pink, he took off his sweatshirt and wore his “good luck” T-shirt proudly.

This story was inspired by real-life events. Two high school boys in Nova Scotia, Canada created a “sea of pink” in 2007 after a younger student wearing a pink shirt was bullied.

EXPLORING TOGETHER

Sometimes we feel we **MUST** do something to make our world better. People who have felt this call to action sometimes “just know” who, where, and how they want to help.

Our Unitarian Universalist religion gives us a lens through which we can observe the world around us and notice the places where love is missing and justice needed.



How do you use your UU lens?

What’s the way YOU are called to act for love or justice right now?

Words Can Hurt. Can You Help?

When we say, “I see,” to show that we understand or we ask people to “walk tall,” we aren’t literally talking about eyesight or the use of one’s legs. Yet, those words can make people who cannot see or cannot walk feel they are not part of the group.

Jason Shelton, a UU musician, wrote a song, “Standing on the Side of Love.” The song had been popular for a few years when it was sung in a large worship service at a UUA General Assembly. Yet, this time, some people said they felt excluded or angry. They said that the lyrics implied that “standing” is something everyone’s body should be able to do. Jason felt called to fix the situation. He wanted his song to help, not hurt. He came up with new lyrics and a new title, “Answering the Call of Love.”

When have you been hurt by words?

What did you do?



Can you remember a time you noticed words hurting someone else?

What did you do?

Listen with Your Body

A call to bring some love probably won’t come by telephone. You may need to sit quietly and “listen” to what the world is asking for. Try this: Sit comfortably as you become aware of your surroundings. Now, close your eyes and imagine a circle around you, then around your home, growing bigger and bigger around your neighborhood and beyond. As the circle expands, it includes more people, with different lives.

**KEEP ALERT! SOME OF THEM ARE HURTING.
HOW CAN YOU FIND OUT WHAT THEY NEED?
HOW DO THEIR NEEDS MATCH
UP WITH YOUR TALENTS?**

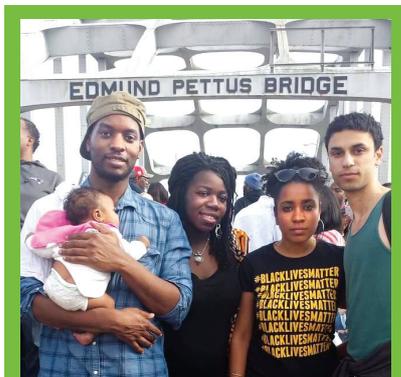




Photo by Ted Resnikoff

Art Answers the Call!

In 1965, Martin Luther King Jr.'s call to Selma, Alabama, drew thousands to nonviolently protest the racism of the Jim Crow South. Fifty years later, many came to Alabama to commemorate the Selma march, including cousins Lehna Huie and Jova Lynne Johnson.



Lehna and Jova work on public art projects with their partners, Divad Durant and Reuben Telushkin, as Team WOA (With Our Ancestors Hands).

Lehna and Jova grew up in Unitarian Universalism and now work as artists and teachers, each on their own and sometimes together. They brought a video camera and supplies for a mural to the 2015 events to make artwork but with others who, like them, had felt the call to Selma. A videotaping booth invited people to talk about why they had come (this time, or in the 1960s). An unfinished mural offered room for people to write or draw about their love, sadness, remembrance, and activism. "The practice was healing for

me, and I think for other people, whether or not they were active in the Civil Rights movement," said Lehna. "It was interesting how some people would do a video interview, then come back later to see what others were writing." Lehna believes that art is a powerful way to resist injustice, celebrate love, and bring people together. "People must cross boundaries when they create something together," she said.

Do a Mural That Makes a Difference

Are you part of a community that has some healing to do? Involve others to make a big, beautiful, and meaningful display together.

YOU'LL NEED:

- an idea for what your art will look like
- partners with a wall where they want artwork
- materials for painting and clean-up



That Time When I... A Very Short Graphic Novel

We all know what happens with comic strip superheroes: a cry for help reaches them, and away they go. But why do they go? Perhaps the superhero's call to action comes from inside them as well as from the person in need.

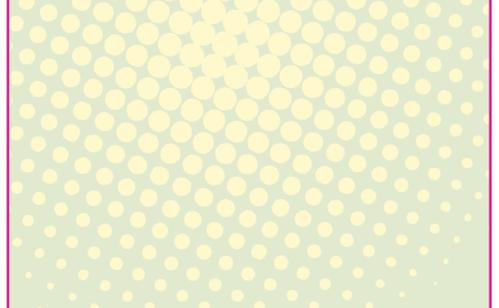
You, too, have the power to respond to a call for justice or compassion.

CAST YOURSELF IN A SHORT GRAPHIC NOVEL.

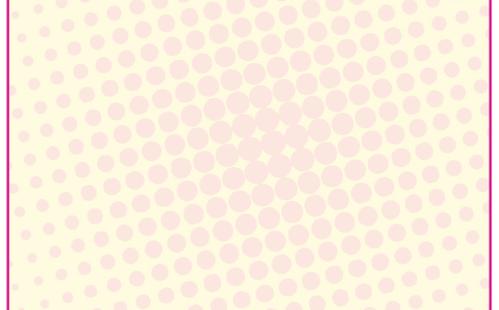
Frame #1: Where is love or justice needed?



Frame #2: What happens inside you when this "call" reaches you?



Frame #3: How do you act to answer the call?



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PARENT REFLECTION



Photography by Megan Pincus Kajitani

Bringing Up Solutionaries

by Megan Pincus Kajitani

My 11-year-old, Senna's, call came when she found two malnourished sea lion pups on a local beach. My 8-year-old, Kal's, call came from news about Syrian refugees. Another child, Harrison, felt a call when he learned about factory farms. Meghan's call came when she discovered her friends' anaphylactic food allergies.

Each child took actions, large and small: Senna made a book, Meghan gave a speech, Kal donated to UURISE, and Harrison went vegetarian.

When I asked friends on Facebook to share their children's stories of acting for compassion and justice, the anecdotes that poured in brought me to tears: children moved to act for gender and marriage equality, other children's feelings, wild cats.



For Native American water protectors, polar bears, siblings in foster care. These young people wrote letters; made donations; spoke up in stores, lunchrooms, and school buses; fed the hungry; marched in protests—on and on.

As a humane educator, I love to introduce the term “solutionary”: someone who helps solve problems of people, animals, and the planet. When I ask children if they think they are solutionaries, many shake their heads or shrug. But, when I ask them to describe a time they did something to help

another person, an animal, or the environment, the kids begin to smile, bounce, and raise their hands. Every one of them has a story to tell.

Children are inherently called to compassion and justice. We grown-ups don't need to teach our kids the values already deep in their bones. We simply need to provide them with the tools and opportunities to use these values well and keep them alive.

We can encourage our children by reminding them that they are already solutionaries—with the power to answer their own unique calls with meaningful actions.



The author is a writer/editor, an educator, and a member of Palomar UUA Fellowship in Vista, CA.

FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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**Go outside yourself and know the needs of the world.
Go within and discover your Life-given gifts.
Then arch yourself like a rainbow bridge between
the two and create a more beautiful world.**

—Jan Taddeo, from the UUA Worship Web