

primarily through lowering spending. For the latter and other positions on issues seen as “conservative” I am deemed a crazy conservative by my UU church friends. The difference is: at church it hurts.

**Questions:**

- Have you ever been hurt in your Unitarian Universalist congregation by a comment (from the pulpit, in a class, or in a social situation) that made you feel that you were not fully welcome? Please share your story.
- Are those unlike you politically, “as fully human and as worthy of respect” as you are? Why or why not?
- Is partisan division made more acute by the “unholy authority we give our partisan labels, to speak for us and separate us, one from another.”
- How does a partisan atmosphere carve division in your life - splitting you off from those you do or might otherwise love? How can this loss be remedied?

**Invitation to Active Listening:** Each person is granted the space to share as they are moved without interruption or cross-talk. Should time be a factor, individual sharing can be timed and 5 or 10 minutes can be allotted per person.

**Closing Words:** (*Reprise, Bowens-Wheatley*)

If we join spirits as brothers and sisters, the pain of our aloneness will be lessened, and that does matter.

In this spirit, we build community and move toward restoration.

## “Will it Matter? - Considering Partisan Bias in Congregational Life”

### *A Covenant Group Gathering*

**Chalice Lighting:** #576 *A Litany of Restoration* by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley (Shared Responsively)

If, recognizing the interdependence of all life, we strive to build community, the strength we gather will be our salvation. If you are black and I am white,

It will not matter.

If you are female and I am male,

It will not matter.

If you are older and I am younger,

It will not matter.

If you are progressive and I am conservative,

It will not matter.

If you are straight and I am gay,

It will not matter.

If you are Christian and I am Jewish,

It will not matter.

If we join spirits as brothers and sisters, the pain of our aloneness will be lessened, and that does matter.

(Together) In this spirit, we build community and move toward restoration.

**Check-In:** How goes it with your spirit?

**Centering:** Find a stillness, hold a stillness, let this moment of silence ease your soul.

## Readings

### **Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael:**

When I aged into the youth group, in my home Unitarian Universalist congregation my parents lessened then ceased their participation. My parents politically associate as Republicans.

They loved our Unitarian Universalist home congregation. They grew wise in the embrace of the members and ministers, but overtime, began to feel more and more estranged and uncomfortable. I learned, long after they ceased participating, that they no longer felt welcome, that they could no longer bring their full selves to the altar of worship or the circle of fellowship.

I bring up the topic of partisan division and bias in congregational life not to place blame, or dwell on the tedious and tenuous issues, but to announce my wholehearted belief that Unitarian Universalism is the faith for our time, a time that needs us to cross borders and break through barriers. I reflect often on this bias in my ministry, because I believe that we are not separated by the labels of our chosen party but by the unholy authority we give those labels, to speak for us and to split us one from another.

### **Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd:**

Other churches can say that their ecclesiology involves obedience. Other groups can say that they exist for the promulgation of a specific worldview or political perspective. Other places can be the sole haven of liberalism in your county, but only our congregations

can be an actual home for the spirit not in spite of, but because of, our diversity. The church exists so that we might make promises to one another, and one of those promises is that I will get myself out of the way long enough to make some room here for you as well.

In spite of all of our incompleteness, our fraying goodwill, we are made whole by the wide-open welcome to which we all are called and by the promises we must continually make. The purpose of the church is to make and live out a promise which says that those unlike me, politically or otherwise, are fully as human and as worthy of respect as I am. That's the kind of community we are called to create, one in which we may not only tolerate, but indeed grow to deeply love those we might otherwise never have chosen as friends.

### **Paul Roche:**

I am one of the founders of Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling VA. I grew up an Irish-Catholic in Boston.

When I stumbled across Emerson's writings I was shocked to find how they resonated in me and then sought out a UU church. The concept of a free and responsible search for truth and meaning was wonderful and the fact that I could join others in a church setting to do so I found nothing short of amazing. I saw enough that I settled in as a UU.

I am a believer, supporter, and fighter for human rights – most especially gay rights, women's reproductive rights, and immigration rights. I have held signs and engaged in conversations at my neighborhood polling places trying to prevent the VA anti-gay constitutional amendment. For these things, my non-church friends and neighbors around the Washington DC beltway think I am a crazy liberal.

But I also believe that the greatest issue facing the US is the impending collapse of our economy – and that the way to fix it is