

# We Do What We Can Where We Are

# Quest

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2026

**T**he quote by the author of one of the most beloved children's books of all time, Charlotte's Web, encapsulates feelings I've had for most of my adult life. I have been waking up each day the past few years torn between wanting to save or savour the world. Indeed it makes it hard to plan the day.

I know that I can't singlehandedly impact global events, if I could, the genocides in Gaza, Sudan and the Congo would have ended quite a long time ago. The terror inflicted indiscriminately on people living in the United States would end immediately.

However, the grief and outrage I feel is something I still carry. I metaphorically shake my fist at the heavens and want to shout;

*WHY? Why do we continue to assert power over with brutish violence?*

The questions are rhetorical, of course. We know why, because empire is insatiable in its lust for power.

What are people of faith, people of conscience and people who want and work for liberation to do?

**AISHA HAUSER, MSW**  
Lead Ministry Team



We do what we can where we are. We have preached and written about this before and it is worth repeating. Lean into community and focus your energy on your friends and neighbors. Over the next few months, the world will feel more unstable, uncertain and chaotic. There is little any individual can do to change that. What we can do is call, write and be vocal to our representatives about opposition to war and violence.

Choose to savour the world while also working to save it where you are and however you can.

One of the heartwarming things I witnessed this past fall is at the threat of SNAP benefits ending, the response from people all over the United States was overwhelmingly that of taking care of each other. Mutual aid networks went into overdrive to find out who would need food. Local churches, food banks and other non profits let

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—E. B. WHITE

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# REFLECTIONS

## *The Glorious Morning Light*

BY ANTWON HAMILTON

Forms of life will show  
how the storms of life  
comes and goes,  
like the ocean's tide that  
ebbs and flows,  
anywhere the wind blows.

Governed by the Moon's Might,  
to keep the waters at bay,  
energized by the Sun's Light,  
to guide the ship's way.

This is the essence of her beauty,  
returning nightly to fulfill her duty,  
Waning respectfully out of sight,  
to retire for the night.  
Oh! What a plight by The Dawn,  
The Moon,  
and The Glorious Light.

## *A Seed in the Night*

BY CHRISTOPHER BLAKE

Darker Nights have come, because Brighter Days lie ahead...  
A bright mind with weak flesh, is lamp under a bed.  
Which Spirits shall be fed? Those Bright, or those dim?  
Whichever spirit you choose to feed, it will manifest through your  
every limb.

Terminated in dark...germinated in darkness, yet, sprouts towards  
the Light.

Nature teaches us the growth process begins overnight.

I can be planted in darkness, yet rise like a star

Storms they will come, but moonlight never lets those get far.

Many may be blind, but for those with sight...

Know the potencies within a seed for potential growth... So,

We are all "Seeds in the Night."



PHOTO BY DANIEL DAN ON UNSPLASH

# Redemption, Abolition, and the Places We Thought We Left Behind

**B**efore I ever stood in a pulpit, I spent years moving in and out of jails and prison. Before that, I spent seasons of my life unhoused—sleeping in cars, shelters, and borrowed spaces. I was living with trauma, addiction, and grief.

I don't share this as confession. I share it as context—coordinates. These experiences shaped how I understand grace, community, and redemption. They taught me where to look for them—and where not to.

When I first entered seminary, I carried a familiar redemption story. It was tidy and respectable: once lost, now found; broken, then healed. It was the kind of story that fits easily into applications and interviews. And it wasn't untrue—it just wasn't complete. I believed ministry required a linear narrative, one that moved steadily from chaos to clarity.

But healing refused to be linear.

Even as I worked toward my M.Div. at Starr King School for the Ministry on Berkeley's Holy Hill—reading liberation theologians and studying Unitarian Universalist history during the day—I was riding BART across the Bay and scoring heroin in the Tenderloin. I was living in two worlds at once: one that named me promising, articulate, and redeemable, and another that marked me disposable, dangerous, and failing.

At the time, I understood this as personal failure. What I see now is that power was also at work.

I was more likely to be seen as redeemable because I could speak the language of power. I am white. I was articulate. I had some education. I could tell my story in ways



Eli Poore,  
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institutions recognized as resilience instead of risk. Doors stayed open for me that slammed shut for others—people who were no less worthy of care, no less capable of change, but far less legible to systems built on respectability.

This is not incidental. It is structural.

Ultimately, I learned that places I thought I was supposed to leave behind were not a detour from ministry. They were the lifeblood of it. The streets, the shelters, the jail pods, the people surviving without guarantees—these spaces taught me what care looks like when there is no safety net and no illusion of control.

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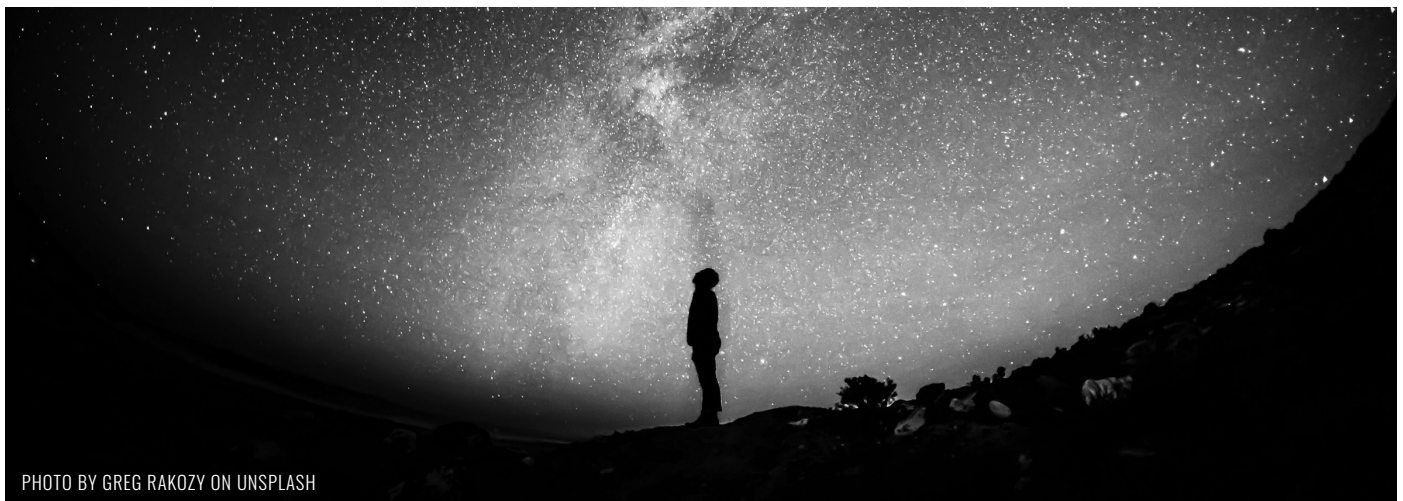


PHOTO BY GREG RAKOZY ON UNSPLASH

## Redemption, Abolition, and the Places We Thought We Left Behind *continued*

They formed in me a theology rooted not in abstraction, but in proximity.

You don't need to have lived this story to recognize it. All of us live in some kind of in-between.

Between who we are and who we hope to be.

Between our public selves and our private ache.

Between belonging and exile.

Between harm done and repair not yet complete.

Between the story we tell and the one our bodies remember.

Redemption, in this sense, is not a dramatic turning point. It is the practice of learning how to live compassionately inside what is unfinished. It is the courage to

return—to ourselves, to one another, to community—again and again.

I learned to recognize grace not in moments of triumph, but in the places power forgets to look.

Grace shows up when someone quietly asks, "Are you okay?" and waits for the real answer. Grace lives in jail pods and shelter hallways—wherever people with very little still find ways to care for one another.

Here is why grace and transformation show up most clearly in these places: when people are removed from systems of power, they cannot rely on status, reputation, money, or punishment to organize their lives. There is no illusion of control. What remains is relationship. Survival depends on mutual care, attentiveness, and honesty. Grace becomes visible because it is necessary.

This is where abolition matters.

Abolition is not only about dismantling prisons or policing, though that work is essential. At its core, abolition is a refusal of systems that decide in advance who is worth saving. It is a moral and spiritual claim that punishment, exile, and isolation do not produce transformation—they interrupt it.

Carceral systems promise safety through separation. But transformation does not happen in isolation. It happens in relationship. It happens when people are allowed to remain human, even when harm has occurred, even when lives are messy, even when the story is unresolved.

Abolition asks a deeper question than "How do we punish?" It asks, "What do people need in order to change?" And again and again, the answer is the same: safety, dignity,

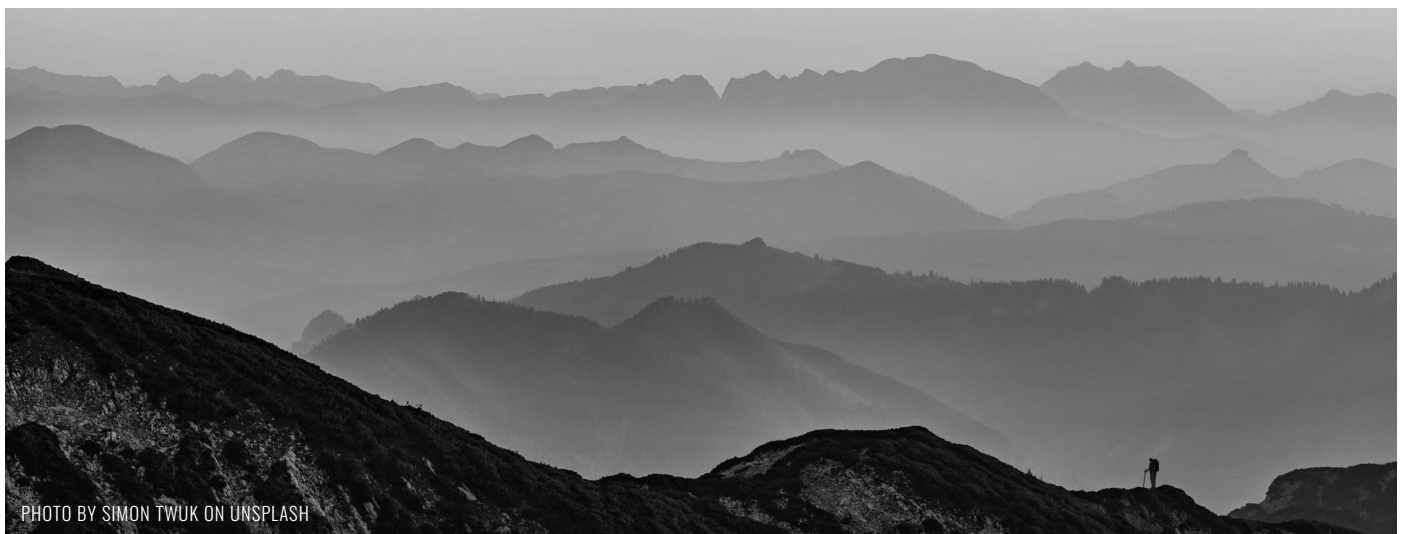


PHOTO BY SIMON TWUK ON UNSPLASH

## Redemption, Abolition, and the Places We Thought We Left Behind *continued*

accountability held within belonging, and the possibility of return.

What I learned on what power calls the margins is that transformation already lives there—not because suffering is redemptive, but because people who have been cut out of power have had to practice care without guarantees. From unhoused and incarcerated communities, to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, to Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, when institutions withheld care or made belonging conditional, they relied on themselves and one another—building networks of support simply to survive. There is deep mutuality in these spaces.

This brings me to Unitarian Universalism.

We do not have a traditional doctrine of sin—and that can be a gift. We do not begin with the assumption that people are broken beyond

repair. But that also means we must be intentional about how we understand harm, accountability, and return. We will break trust. We will misunderstand one another. We will fail to show up. Not because we are bad, but because we are human.

What we need, then, are practices of repair.

A Unitarian Universalist theology of redemption—shaped by abolition—might say this:

Redemption is not about purity. It is about relationship. It is not about erasing harm, but about repairing it. It is not about punishment, but about accountability held within belonging.

Repair does not mean avoiding hard truths. It means telling them without exile. It means staying long enough for something new to become possible. It means widening the circle instead of shrinking it.

The redemption that has saved me, and that I see saving communities again and again, is not loud. It does not arrive with certainty or closure. It looks like staying. It looks like returning after you've been gone. It looks like a community that says, "We will not let you disappear."

And if I'm honest, I still need that promise. I still need places where I can bring the parts of myself that are unfinished, ashamed, or afraid and not be sent away. I still need communities willing to practice repair instead of retreat, accountability instead of exile, care instead of control.

Redemption is not a finish line. It is a shared practice. And grace, I have learned—sometimes slowly, sometimes the hard way—is already there, waiting for us in the very places we thought we were supposed to leave behind. ■



PHOTO BY FRANK MCKENNA ON UNSPLASH

# Church of the Larger Fellowship Delegate Application 2026

**W**e are seeking delegates for the virtual General Assembly this year. We are excited to welcome both new and experienced delegates and will offer a GA/delegate orientation for those who need it. You must be a member of the CLF to apply to be a delegate. As a delegate, you

will agree to attend the business meetings of the Association during the General Assembly in June. The business meeting is free to attend for delegates. If you are selected, please attend the orientation as this will answer any and all questions you may have.

Applications are due 4/15. We will notify applicants if they have been selected by April 30. ■

<http://clfuu.org/delegate-application>

## An Equal and Opposite Reaction

**T**his month at the CLF, we are going deeper into our shared Unitarian Universalist value of generosity. The covenant in which this value lives describes it with these words: "We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope."

We are called, then, to a generosity that goes far beyond donations. We are called to a generosity of spirit that moves us into the future we want to build.

The practices of gratitude and hope ask us to face the future with a certain disposition. As bleak as things look around us, we are called to work to make them better. We are called by an understanding that the liberation of all people is actually possible, even when it seems far, far away.

It is important not to understand the practice of hope in the passive sense of waiting for something better to come along. We are called to an active hope, in which we articulate what it is we are building as we move society towards it. This practice is harder when things are tough around us—in our lives, in our families, in our communities, in our nations, and in our world. And at those times, it is also more important.

I like to describe it as the spiritual version of Newton's Third Law of Motion, which states that for every force exerted by or on an object there is an equal and opposite reaction. [\*Science Moment!\*] This law helps us understand how a rocket expelling gas backwards is thrust forward, or how a swimmer pushes against water to move their body.

Rev. Dr. Michael Tino,  
Lead Ministry Team



Similarly, we are called right now to push back against what is harming us in order to propel humanity forward. Right now, pushing back against evil will move us all toward good, and it is of paramount importance. The more we can do this in solidarity with others, the more force there will be to move things.

It is our generosity that fuels this movement. We practice it together so that we are strong enough to keep going until we have arrived at the place we all want to be. ■

## We Do What We Can Where We Are *continued from page 1*

people know they can find assistance through them. We the people would not let our neighbors starve.

This is the energy we need to keep at the center in 2026. We will keep love, care, and working for liberation at the center of how we show up. We

can control how we love and how we care.

I am grateful for all of you and for the CLF. This community has demonstrated what it means to love and care for each other and our world. I wish I could offer assurances for the

future. I can't and no one can. What I can do is let you know that you are not alone. There are far more people who want peace and stability in this world.

We have to take heart in that knowing and live each day leaning into love. ■



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## SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH US

To share your thoughts, tear off your answer and mail it back to us using the envelope included in the middle of this issue, or mail a separate piece of paper with your writing.

**What are the ways you enjoy the world around you, even when there is seemingly nothing to enjoy?  
What are the ways you improve the world in the ways you are able?**



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