

## Who we are

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Marblehead is a beacon of liberal religious thought and practice. Amid the challenges and changes of a chaotic world, we aspire to proclaim and embody the possibilities of meaning in human life, of freedom in human thought, and of peace and justice in human community.

Sunday services are held at 10:30 am mid September through mid June – Child care is available for infants and toddlers – religious exploration classes for kindergarten through high school.

## Contact Us

We are located on Mugford Street in Old Town Marblehead.

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# Bringing It!



## REVEREND WENDY VON COURTER

Unitarian Universalist Church of Marblehead



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# Bringing It!

Audre Lorde once said "When I dare to be powerful - to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid"

Today, in week three of our series on Love, we must ask ourselves if we are willing to dare. Are we willing to use our love toward the service of our values?

Three weeks ago today, when we began this journey, I told you that on this day we would dare to unleash the power of our love upon an unsuspecting world! But that we had a bit of work to do first. Together we faced the challenge of loving ourselves. Of accepting ourselves, flawed, beautiful and worthy creatures that we are. Of looking in the mirror each morning and greeting ourselves with the affirmation of "Good morning beautiful. You are amazing. I love you. And today, you can change the world by sharing that love."

Week two called us to examine closely our relationship to 'other.' We were urged to extend our love even when it was difficult. To do so, we had to open ourselves to people who move through the world in manners that seem so different than our own and even in opposition of our ways of being. This was not light weight lifting. We know we are drawn to what is like us and despite best efforts to embrace diversity, it's not always easy. Change is difficult and challenges to our own way of being can be painful. But we are strong and committed to the idea of diversity so we know we must stretch and lean into difference, not as a way to suppress it but as a way to learn more. And if we can do that, over and over and over again, our ability to suspend judgment about people who have fallen so far from their best selves and remember that they, too, are due respect and if we are able .... Love.

# About Rev. Wendy

Reverend Wendy von Courter is a third and fifth generation Unitarian Universalist. She was raised in the Winchester, MA Unitarian Society where she returned to serve as Assistant Minister to Families & Children in 2005. Ministry was a second vocation for her but one that united activities that engaged her throughout her life. An IT professional with a degree in B.S in Business Management from Northeastern University and professional training in the computer and information field, she followed the call into ministry in the late 90s..

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*Known national as a social activist in Unitarian Universalism.*

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Reverend von Courter was a leader in relief efforts in the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina and more recently in our response to anti-immigration and anti-racism efforts. She has served on the UUA Accessibilities Committee, as founding member and president of UU Allies for Racial Equity (ARE), as member of the UUA Council on Cross Cultural Engagement, as founding member of the UUA General Assembly Right Relationship Team, Right Relationship Chair for the International UU Women's Convocation and UUMA Convocation and as member of the UU Urban Ministry Board. She currently serves as Co-Chair of the UUA Journey Towards Wholeness Transformation Committee.

Because the question of what should we do isn't hard.

Because the question of can we really make a difference isn't hard.

The only hard question. The ONLY hard question is will we do it?

Will we do it? Not do we think it's a good idea to do it? Not might we consider doing it? Not will we do it someday? Will we do it? Will we do it now?

In about 5 minutes, this service will be over.

Is 'love' enough as a response to the call from humanity/goddess/god/spirit of love? I believe so. But only if we take it and strive to live it out loud and each moment in our world. Not an easy thing at all, but we are not alone on the journey ~

Finally, this morning, we were called to the service of love itself. Bell Hooks talks about living into a love ethic ..... believing that the underlying values of a people inform the way we speak and act. This is the key to unlocking the full power of love in our souls. The absolute key to the questions "Why religion? Why church? Why me?" It is here that we are called to hone our ability to move through the world with confidence that our words and actions are for good rather than evil. Or, if you prefer, greater good for all creation rather than self-gain at the expense of others. Or right rather than wrong.

This is the absolute key to those seeking a conversation with God or goddess or seeking to be in right relationship with humanity or all of creation. If our inner cores are rooted in love and our outer actions are not only informed by that core but CONTROLLED --- DRIVEN ---- AND CALLED by that core, we will be in right relationship with the universe and part of making it a better tomorrow. And our everyday acts, large and small will be courageous and admirable ..... and these things are good and fine but what is most important, is that they will be effective.

If we dare. Three words that acknowledge a world that would just as soon we did not. Three small words calling us out knowing that on the other side of the equation are the well-oiled voices of a lifetime saying 'why bother' and 'someone else will do it' and 'it won't make a difference' and 'hey - you are a good person, you don't need to do more' and for some the more strident voices saying 'that's not your problem' or even 'hey - they get what they deserve' or 'I don't need anyone or anything so why should I even engage with others.'

Consider these words from the Sufi poet, Hafiz, for he too spoke of love

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### **Tired of Speaking Sweetly**

*Love wants to reach out and manhandle us,  
Break all our teacup talk of God.*

*If you had the courage and  
Could give the Beloved His choice, some nights,  
He would just drag you around the room  
By your hair,  
Ripping from your grip all those toys in the world  
That bring you no joy.*

*Love sometimes gets tired of speaking sweetly  
And wants to rip to shreds  
All of your erroneous notions of truth*

*That make you fight within yourself, dear one,  
And with others,*

*Causing the world to weep  
On too many fine days.  
God wants to manhandle us,  
Lock us inside of a tiny room with Himself  
And practice His dropkick.*

*The Beloved sometimes wants  
To do us a great favor:*

*Hold us upside down  
And shake all the nonsense out.*

*But when we hear  
He is in such a "playful drunken mood"  
Most everyone I know  
Quickly packs their bags and hightails it  
Out of town.*

As a religious humanist, this poem speaks to my belief that we are all called to work during our lifetime for a better tomorrow for all humankind and all creation. It is far too easy to 'hightail it out of town' when the calls to action arrive. When evidence makes clear how much work is required to achieve the goal of justice for all; for peace; for equality. Yet, if we profess to share such beliefs, we lack authenticity if we do not show up to act accordingly.

I mentioned earlier that the world was unsuspecting. That our love would be unleashed upon an unsuspecting world. But not un-needing. Our world begs for our attention. Each of us privy to different cries. Some hear the cries of loneliness, others of war. If we hear all the cries of the world, we feel the kick Hafiz speaks to and oh, the call to pull the covers over our head and hide is seductive. Nearly an equal to the love Hafiz calls us to serve. But there is another answer. Accept that the one small thing you do is as powerful as the act of the great heroics of those whom you admire most. Be it Mandela, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Pete Seeger or young MA-LA-LA YOU-SAF-ZAI, where "saf" sounds like the first part of the word "soft" (minus the "t") and "zai" rhymes with "sigh." Agree to believe that the small things you do will be as powerful in changing our world for the better as the largest acts of bravery, compassion and leadership you have ever witnessed. This is the pathway toward unleashing the full potential, the full power of your love. And it will make a difference. If only you believe.

Others ask 'are UUs believers' and I say 'oh yes' 'oh yes we are.' We believe, you see, we believe in the power of living our values. And today I invite each of you to do so with courage and conviction and ... plenty of company.

Grounded now the only question that remains is do we mean what we say? Do we really mean what we say?