



MINISTER'S COLUMN

APRIL 2025

The Practice of Joy

Dear CUF folks,

Every week during Sunday Services, everyone is invited to listen to and share sorrows and joys; it is one of our most tangible moments of connection, strengthening the bonds of our faith community. Even in these times of anxiety for our American democracy, economy, and identity, the joys and gratitudes shared usually outnumber the sorrows. Maybe you, too, have noticed that sometimes a person shares a joy inspired by hearing someone else's. To me, this is a welcome sign that at times when we can't see anything joyful or hopeful in our lives, hearing someone else's joy can help us to remember our own.

We are practicing joy and gratitude in that moment, at the same time we are practicing sorrow and grief. It's counter intuitive to think of emotions, especially joy and sorrow as things that need practice, but it is true both on an individual and community level that healthy, constructive ways of "doing" joy and sorrow don't come naturally. When we experience collective anxiety, even despair in the face of systems collapse, we must be able to access joy in order to sustain the work; to celebrate small victories along the long, uphill journey to justice, equity, and compassion for our most vulnerable beloveds.

We must reclaim joy outside of the artificial "cheer" it is often reduced to. There is a joy that is defiant. A portal to survival for our ancestors. A way to say, we will not be captive to despair nor abandon our belief in beauty. Joy with teeth. ~ Cole Arthur Riley

"Joy with teeth" – that is what we can practice together this month. We can take part in rallies and protests motivated by our anger, *and* we will be sustained by the joy we find in chanting, singing, laughing, and marching together. We can connect and reconnect with local organizations and faith communities to protect people and support systems under attack, and we can celebrate our interdependence.* Let us practice defiant joy together.

Peace,

*Mark your calendars for the **Taste of Faith** potluck on Tuesday, April 22, 6pm at the Carbondale Muslim Center (530 N. Wall St.) hosted by the Carbondale Interfaith Council.