"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."  
Mahatma Gandhi

Harmony in music can be simply described as “a combination of different musical notes played or sung at the same time to produce a pleasing sound.” (There are way more technical definitions, but I like this for its simplicity!)

Creating musical harmony requires work! Individuals, perhaps disparate in other ways, come together in an agreement to make music. Singing in a choir or playing in an orchestra is the epitome of teamwork! It takes time and effort. Whatever is happening in an outside life is put aside in the service of learning and performing a musical work.

The great thing about creating harmony in music is that, mostly, there’s an established road map to follow – a finished composition, literally in black and white - and a director to help and guide. Even improvisations come back to the home theme. Sometimes, the harmony is soft and beautiful, and sometimes includes purposeful dissonance – a seemingly “wrong” combination of notes producing delicious “crunchy” chords. When the work and the journey is done, the joy and spiritual satisfaction in being “in harmony” with fellow music makers is hard to beat.

In life, as in music, creating harmony takes work. But in life, there’s no “harmony” template ready and waiting. There’s no handout to sing or play to, no director to bring us together and lead us to the finish line. Instead, each individual is faced with his or her own quest for harmony, without a road map, in a world full of discord, cacophony and chaos. Why doesn’t the world understand what Buddhist Bokar Rinpoche says, “Like birds landing on a tree top together, and then dispersing, we are together for a very short time, so it makes sense to live in harmony, in unconditional friendship.”?

In our UU covenant we promise “to dwell together in peace and to help one another”. But in order to be able to help another, we need to be in harmony with ourselves. This has been challenging for all of us as we’ve been continually bombarded by ugly politics, conflicts and a pandemic – as well as dealing with our own personal challenges. Many of us haven’t felt in harmony with ourselves since the beginning of COVID! But we can acknowledge our losses and remember to be gentle with ourselves (always) and recognize the vitality of connecting with one another.

It’s true that most humans want to be in harmony with one another. Reaching out to someone else can restore our own inner harmony and increase our compassion for others. It feels good
to help. We can choose to think of creating harmony as an act of working toward understanding, which, like purposeful dissonant notes in music, allows us to appreciate people whose ideas differ from our own. We may not like the “sound”, but we can try to understand it. And harmony doesn’t have to be perfect – we aren’t and life isn’t. We only have one life to live, and as author Kate Bowler remarks, “There are some things we can change, and some things we can’t. And it’s okay that life isn’t always getting better. We can have beauty and meaning, community and love, and we will need each other if we are going to tell the truth: life is a chronic condition, and there’s no cure for being human.” So, as we strive for harmony, let’s just ring the bells that still can ring, and forget a perfect offering!

**Harmony in Pain and Suffering: A Personal Experience:**
As a young RN working in an intensive care unit, I cared for an eminent physician who was deeply humiliated by his loss of control of bodily functions. I explained to him that his physical problems didn’t affect “who” he was, and we reached a rapport - an understanding, often joking, and working together to keep him physically and mentally comfortable. He told to his family that “this red headed witch” had saved him! I’ll never forget this experience of creating a kind of harmony with him in an otherwise sad and painful situation.

**Questions**
What does “inner harmony” mean to you?

How do you create harmony at home?

What gives you a sense of harmony?

When do you feel most in harmony with life?

**QUOTES TO CONSIDER**

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."

**Mahatma Gandhi**
To put everything in balance is good, to put everything in harmony is better.

**Victor Hugo**
He who lives in harmony with himself lives in harmony with the universe.

**Marcus Aurelius**
If only the whole world could feel the power of harmony.
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Where there is discord may we bring harmony. Where there is error, may we bring truth. Where there is doubt, may we bring faith. Where there is despair, may we bring hope.

Francis of Assisi
Harmony can not thrive in a climate of mistrust, cheating, bullying; mean-spirited competition.

Dalai Lama
Music, to create harmony, must investigate discord.

Plutarch
I see the necessity of sacrificing our opinions sometimes to the opinions of others for the sake of harmony

Thomas Jefferson
Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace is accord. Harmony.

Laini Taylor
In the end we shall have had enough of cynicism, skepticism and humbug, and we shall want to live more musically.

Vincent Van Gogh
Music is an agreeable harmony for the honor of God and the permissible delights of the soul.

Johann Sebastian Bach
Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony.

Heraclitus
The universe is not required to be in perfect harmony with human ambition.

Carl Sagan
Faith and love are apt to be spasmodic in the best minds: Men live on the brink of mysteries and harmonies into which yet they never enter, and with their hand on the door latch they die outside.

Ralph Waldo Emerson
As long as people will shed the blood of innocent creatures there can be no peace, no liberty, no harmony between people. Slaughter and justice cannot dwell together.

Isaac Bashevis Singer
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