

To Be Alive Today
Unitarian Universalist Church of Vancouver
January 4, 2026

Reflection on the Theme - Emily Layfield

Knowing I had a reflection to write about this month's theme of "practicing resistance" has led to a lot of soul searching over the last month or so. I do partake in some resistance here and there, but on the whole, I would generally rate my own efforts as insufficient and minor, definitely not at the level where I feel like I have grounds to ask people to listen to me talk about them. It's a weird time, when the level of agitation and discontent feels higher than I can remember in my lifetime, but I simultaneously feel pulled in too many directions and often jaded about what might actually help. I find myself second guessing and hesitating and talking myself out of as many actions as I actually join in on. So "resistance" has been fraught. But that other word, "practicing" has been sticking out to me more and more.

I love practicing. I've spent a lot of my life doing a lot of theater and music in various forms, and rehearsals have always been my favorite part. Sure, performance can be exciting and often rewarding, but rehearsal is what's *interesting*, where you're experimenting and learning new things, where there is spaciousness for really digging in and figuring something out, or even where the stakes might be low enough for some play or silliness. When I'm in rehearsal, especially for something that's a stretch, I expect to have a bunch of attempts that don't go where I was hoping before I figure it out.

I've been wondering if part of what gets me stuck when it comes to political resistance is that it feels high stakes, emotionally how my body treats a performance. As though people are counting on me to get everything right, and there's pressure for it to mean or be worth something, and where there's a right way to do it that has been predetermined somehow. And don't get me wrong, many of the situations we are in politically *are* very high stakes. But there isn't actually a clear, predetermined set of action steps we have figured out already, and people aren't counting on me in particular. There might actually be a lot of space for trying things out and not having it all figured out already.

That line of thinking has got me wondering what *practicing* resistance could look like. Resistance where you can experiment, where you can fail, where you can maybe have fun, where you can iterate and really figure something out. This moment seems to call for experimentation, as lots of the methods that have been effective in the past are landing differently in the current climate. And it seems to call for sustained effort without knowing for sure where that effort will lead. I think I've been treating those as disheartening, as reasons to not bother, but in other contexts, those very traits let me approach with curiosity and a sense of adventure. A given attempt may not lead where we hope, and we might end up in a different place than we have imagined, but showing up and practicing leads somewhere, and is often worth doing for its own sake too. I'm looking forward to seeing what can shift when curiosity and adventure are brought to bear in practicing resistance.

The sermon, ***To Be Alive Today***, by Rev. Mitra Rahnema, is not available in printed form.