



Soul Matters

Living Love Through The Practice of **Invitation**



Worship Research
September 2024

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About Online Permissions, Multi-Platform Support & Referencing Resources

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A Reminder About Partial Texts and “Pointing not Publishing”: To honor legal and relational standards, we do not include the full pieces of authors’ works unless we’ve received explicit permission to do so. We want all subscribers to clearly understand that our worship packets are *research* packets not *publications*, which means we focus on “*pointing*” to where you can find fair use and publicly available pieces, rather than on “*publishing*” original writings and full resources. Our main service to you is theme-based *curation* and *research*, done in the service of saving professionals time.

A Note About Author Titles: Many of the authors we refer to are ministers. Some ministers prefer to be credited with their title “Rev.”, others don’t, and still others are fine either way. Our practice is to follow whatever practice was used in the source material we reference.

Calendar Connections

View our full-year calendar [HERE](#)

September 2024

Click on the hyperlinked names of each event for more information or inspiration.

Interfaith

- [Mabon/Autumn Equinox](#) - (Pagan/Wiccan) - Sept. 22, 2024 (more [here](#))
- [Mawlid al-Nabi](#) - the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad - begins Sept. 15, 2024
- [Rumi's birthday](#) - Sept. 30 (1207)

Unitarian Universalist

- Ingathering/Water Communion Ritual - Early Sept. - date varies by congregation
- The first meeting of [the Transcendentalist Club](#) - Sept. 19 (1836) (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- Universalism Day: [John Murray](#) preaches [1st sermon](#) in US (1770) - Sept. 30 (more [here](#))

National & Cultural

- [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15)
- Suicide Prevention Month, World Suicide Prevention Day is Sept. 10
- [Labor Day](#) – Sept. 2, 2024 (*first Monday)
- International Literacy Day - Sept. 08
- [9-11 Remembrance](#) - Sept. 11
- [International Peace Day](#) Sept. 21 (more [here](#))
- [World Gratitude Day](#) - Sept. 21
- [Bisexual Pride Day](#), CBD, Bisexual Pride, and Bi Visibility Day - Sept. 23
- [Bisexual Awareness Week](#) - Week of September 23 (more [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe

- [Hobbit Day](#) - Sept. 22
- [Banned Books Week](#) - Sept. 22-28, 2024 (more [here](#))

Chalice Lightings & Opening Words

Design Note: The following pieces were chosen to support the wide variety of theme angles going on during this month of "Invitation," covering the invitation to return (for Homecoming Sunday), the invitation to share diverse sources of renewal (for Water Communion Sunday), the invitation to change (in support of our new UU values), and the invitation to embody liberating love (in celebration of our new UU core values).

You are welcome here...*

Rev. Allison Palm

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We gather this morning on the brink of a new congregational year,
Some of us come fresh from summer adventures,
 From wind and waves and sunshine.
Some of us come broken down from summer losses,
 From tears and pain and heartache.
Some of us come renewed from summer rest,
 From peace and solitude and contemplation.
Some of us come wearied from summer monotony,
 From work and heat and sameness.
Whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever gifts and needs you bring,
 You are welcome here.

We Gather to Draw a Wider Circle... *

Rev. Gretchen Haley

[Permission secured by Soul Matters](#)

In a world that feeds on moral outrage, we are here to cultivate moral courage
In a time that prizes picking sides, we gather to draw a wider circle
And in a culture that teaches us to get for what we give
And to ask "what's in it for me?"
We come to practice generosity and to remember,
We are all in this together.
In the midst of life's bitterness, we choose to sing, to give thanks,
to laugh together, and to be keepers of beauty
to offer a place of belonging for all who come,
in gladness and in pain,
to resist the push to the next moment, and the next
to slow down, to breathe more deeply, to feel a part of something greater
for this hour, and in this space
let us be the change we wish to see
come, let us worship together.

Invitation

Shel Silverstein

Full piece at <https://allpoetry.com/poem/8538893-Invitation-by-Shel-Silverstein>

If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer.
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire...

You Are Beloved and You Are Welcome Here *

Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Can be shared with two voices or one voice reading straight through

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are welcome here

Voice 2: Whether tears have fallen from your eyes this past week, or gleeful laughter has spilled out of your smiling mouth

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are welcome here

Voice 2: Whether you are feeling brave or broken-hearted, defiant, or defeated; fearsome or fearful

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are welcome here

Voice 2: Whether you have untold stories buried deep inside, or stories that have been forced beyond the edges of comfort

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are welcome here

Voice 2: Whether you have made promises, broken promises, or are renewing your promises,

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are welcome here

Voice 2: Whatever is on your heart, However it is with your soul in this moment

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are welcome here

Voice 2: In this space of welcome and acceptance, commitment, and re-commitment, of covenant & connection, Let us worship together.

Soul Fire *

anastasi birosh

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/soul-fire>

[Permission Source](#)

...In the presence of this flame,
In me, in you, in us,
is an invitation to sit at the table.

Invocation

Rev. Angela Herrera

Found in [Reaching for the Sun](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)” Book

Don't leave your broken heart at the door;
bring it to the altar of life.
Don't leave your anger behind;
it has high standards and the world needs vision.
Bring them with you,
and your joy
and your...

Who You Are Enriches Us All *

Rev. Monica Jacobson-Tennessee

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/welcome/who-you-are-enriches-us-all>

[Permission Source](#)

We say “Welcome” to your joy, your hope, your pride.
We say “Welcome” to your grief, your fear, your anger.
And the parts of you that are not yet ready to be seen and heard—
Welcome to them as well...

May our faith be renewed and reignited *

Rev. Dr. Rebekah A. Savage

[Permission secured by Soul Matters](#)

We light our flaming chalice each week with a simple spark to make holy our time together.
With this flame, may our Highest Intentions be refreshed.
With this flame, may we remember who we are and whose we are.
With this flame, may our faith be renewed and reignited to guide our journey.
Amen, and may it be so.

Affirmation

[Rev. Leonard Mason](#)

We affirm the unfailing renewal of life.
Rising from the earth, and reaching for the sun, all living creatures shall fulfill themselves.
We affirm the steady growth of human companionship.
Rising from ancient cradles and reaching for the stars, people the world over shall seek the ways of understanding. We affirm a continuing hope.
That out of every tragedy the spirits of individuals shall rise to build a better world.

Here to Transform *

Rev. Dr. David Breeden

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Welcome to this place
where certainty transforms
to questions.

This place that takes what is
and imagines what can be.

Welcome to this space
where what was fixed
begins to shift; where
rigidity embraces unfolding,
as we join in the dance
of trans-form-a-tion.

Welcome to this
moment of change,
where together, we
trans-figure and
trans-cend, together.

Love is the spirit of this church

James Vila Blake

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.

Meditations, Prayers & Blessings

Design Note Reminder: The following pieces were chosen to support the wide variety of theme angles going on during this month of “Invitation,” covering the invitation to return (for Homecoming Sunday), the invitation to share diverse sources of renewal (for Water Communion Sunday), the invitation to change (in support of our new UU values), and the invitation to embody liberating love (in celebration of our new UU core values).

All That You Need Lies Within You, Rev. Angela Herrera *

Found in [Reaching for the Sun](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)” Book
Also found [HERE](#)

Consider this an invitation
to you.
Yes—you
with all your happiness
and your burdens,
your hopes and regrets...

Your love rains down on us all, Amy Johnson *

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/your-love-rains-down-us-all>
[Permission Source](#)

Loving Creator, beyond our understanding yet closer than our breath...
Help us know, deeply and certainly, that your love transcends all labels, all categories, all words...
Everyone is invited to your table...

Love after Love, Derek Walcott

Full poem at <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/love-after-love/>
Spoken version at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=n_3QbH_aNmc

you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other’s welcome...

Suggested transition into silence after reading: “Let us now sit in silence, as we listen, as we feast, as we meet and smile again at the stranger that is ourself...”

Prayer For An Invitation, David Whyte

Full poem found [HERE](#)

I pray for you, world
to come and find me,
to see me and recognize me
and beckon me out,
to call me
even when I lose
the ability to call on
You...

Prayer of Co-Creation, Rev. Lyn Cox *

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/prayer-co-creation>

[Permission Source](#)

Thank you for the breezes of change, clearing our heads and bringing fresh ideas. May they cleanse our minds of the oppressions and isms that divide us.

Thank you for the flame of hope, the heat of righteous anger, the warmth of compassion, and the fire of commitment. May they bubble the cauldrons of transformation...

Prayer/Reading - Power Prayer, Rev. Becky Brooks *

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/power-prayer>

[Permission Source](#)

Spirit of Life, I have witnessed a loud love, an out-loud love,
that challenges me...It doesn't play nice...

This love demands...

Love's Many Shapes, Rev. Scott Tayler *

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

In this space carved out by our quiet connection,
we give thanks for the many forms of love that have formed us.

The love of family that brings us into being, allows us to bloom, and then sends us on our way with the reminder that we can return no matter what.

The love of partnered hearts that teach us to trust and help us know that who we are does not end at the barrier of our own skin.

The love of friends who help us feel seen and sing our song back to us when we cannot hear it with our ears alone.

The love of community that bathes us in belonging and calls us to see the needs of others as our own.

And the greatest love: the love that will not let us go, even in our fear, even in our failure, even when we are lonely or lost.

Love invites us home friends. If we listen, it is doing so, even today.

River Call, Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti (For Water Communion)

Found in [Voices from the Margins](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

We find ourselves here,
in community.

Each called
from many different
journeys...
onto this river road...

Welcoming Water Communion, Rev. Allison Palm (For Water Communion)*

Full piece at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dek6ia4iQJlnvO7NPO-olsfEGtaTlaNzYWnz_jH69Ko/edit?usp=sharing

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

"As you contribute your water, you are welcomed into this community.

And I also invite you to consider: how will you be welcoming this year?

Will you welcome with an open mind? ...a loving heart? ...helping hands?"

Blessed Water, Source of Life* *For Water Communion)*

Rev. Tracy Johnson

Permission Secured by Soul Matters

Blessed Water – Source of life
Of which we are wondrously made
Source of sustenance – quenching our inner thirst
Source of refreshment – cooling our bodies
Source of restoration in dry times – penetrating hardened surfaces – rejuvenating – cleansing.

Blessed Water – Source of Life
We see your power upon our earth –
Watch with awe as it pours from the heavens –
filling beyond capacity – raging over once trusted boundaries –
rising up from the low places
Filling lives not unlike our own with heartache
And yet we know it as our source and offer blessings.

Blessed Water – Source of Life
We share our water today, from home, from our favorite places –
Water that flows, clear and cool from mountaintops
Water that comes in rolling waves, caressing the shores and returning to the sea
Water that rises in springs from deep beneath the earth's surface
Water that falls gentle and warm or in sudden downpours from cloud filled skies

Blessed Water – Source of Life
We honor this collection of water today
Not because of its individual sources
but because it is gathered, here, in this place
In this act of mingling our separate lives,
our personal encounters with life giving waters,
we symbolize the coming together of this body of blessing and hope –
This body of joy and commitment
As these waters are joined, so too we join.

We offer our blessing upon this coming together of people and water –
A blessing upon our intentions as we gather in celebration
Week to week and month to month
May our connections be as these drops of water – gently held in the common space of our community home.
May we find in this place refreshment, rejuvenation, sustenance, cleansing and restoration.

Music

Suggestions For September 2024 - “The Practice of Invitation”

from Soul Matters Music Resources Coordinator, [Adam O’Dell](#)

Musical Musings of the Month – What is Invitation Really?

Hello, Soul Matters musicians, and welcome to the 2024-25 church year! I’m thrilled that the Soul Matters team has brought me on board, and I’m so thankful for their help and guidance as I enter this new role. I hope that, as we go through this new year together, you will be open to a few changes: to the format of this packet, to the timing and flow of our brainstorming sessions, and to the myriad ways we interact with and support each other as music leaders. Additionally, I hope you feel welcome to reach out to me with any thoughts, needs, criticisms, etc. that might help me offer suggestions that are truly useful and meaningful to you.

I don’t know if you noticed, but the entire first paragraph of this reflection is a series of invitations, or references to them. “Invitation” is a far more complex idea than I – and perhaps many of you – realize at first thought. As church leaders, we’re often tasked with getting people into the building and excited about our ministries so they will join the church, start managing volunteer efforts, start pledging, etc. In that respect, “invitation” can get whittled down to “hey you, get in here!” What’s easy to overlook is that invitation is only about 20% the act of inviting someone in; the other 80% is *making the space* within our communities, and within ourselves, to be truly *inviting*. This, of course, is the harder work, as it involves letting go of power, influence and our preferred way of doing things.

So, as we move together into this first month of the church year, I’m grateful that we have each other as we figure out how to carve out this invitational space musically. Let’s continue to remind each other that it’s not just about getting congregants back in the building after summer vacations, and it’s not just about getting them to invite others into our churches. It’s about inviting others into our spaces – be they physical, spiritual, mental, or emotional – not simply to increase our numbers, but to change, and to change us. When we sing on Water Communion, it’s not just about the bodies of water themselves, it’s about our own metaphorical streams meeting and merging, and expanding us all. In the Water Communion ritual, we’re called to remember that the contribution of a vial of water from the beaches of Martha’s Vineyard is no more meaningful than the water from your tap, or the runoff in the gutter near a homeless encampment. As we pour water into the communal bowl, we pour ourselves into our communities.

In that same spirit of filling our communal bowl, I invite you in the coming year to join our brainstorming sessions (2nd Tuesdays of each month at 2pm ET), look out for webinars we’re planning, join the [Soul Matters Musicians Support](#) page on Facebook, and be in touch with me via soulmattersmusic@gmail.com.

I look forward to hearing from you, learning with you, and growing with you!

Adam

Hymns

See the Key descriptions below to better understand the Singability Score column and Permissions column.

#	Title	Style Notes	Singability		Permissions
34	Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire	Traditional, Flowing, Reflective	5	H	One License
89	Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life	Traditional, Meditative, The Call	4	H	Public Domain
100	I've Got Peace Like a River	Spiritual, Upbeat, Water Comm.	5	R/SL	One License
117	O Light of Life	Prayerful, Supplication, Action	2	H/SL	UUA permissions granted
121	We'll Build a Land	Folksy, Uplifting, Contemporary	4	R/SL	UUA permissions granted
145	As Tranquil Streams	Resilient, Traditional	3	H/SL	Public Domain
188	Come, Come, Whoever You Are	Folksy, Welcoming, In the Round	4	SL	L: Public Domain M: Permissions granted
299	Make Channels for the Streams of Love	Swaying, Simple, Prayerful	5	H/SL	L: Public Domain M: One License
323	Break Not the Circle	Aspirational, Driving	3	H/SL	L: One License M: UUA permissions granted
346	Come, Sing a Song with Me	Folksy, Welcoming, In the Round	4	SL	Permissions granted
360	Here We Have Gathered		4	H	permission granted if written credit is given as follows: "Lyrics by Alicia S. Carpenter, © 1979; used with permission of the Estate of Alicia Carpenter."
361	Enter, Rejoice, and Come In	Jaunty, Folksy, Fun	5	H/R/SL	L & M: Public Domain Arr: UUA Permissioned Granted
406	Let Us Break Bread Together	Prayerful, Christian, Spiritual	5	H/R/SL	Public Domain
407	We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table	Persistence, Justice, Spiritual	5	R/SL	L & M: Public Domain Arr: UUA Permissioned Granted
1018	Come and Go with Me	Resilience, Anticipation, Spiritual	5	R/SL	L & M: Public Domain Arr: UUA Permissioned Granted
1023	Building Bridges	Simple, Resilient, In the Round	4	SL	Public Domain
1029	Love Knocks and Waits for Us to Hear	Neo-traditional, haunting	3	H/SL	One License
1039	Be Thou with Us	Simple, Intimate, Welcoming	4	H/R/SL	Permissions granted
1046	Shall We Gather at the River	Simple, Christian, Water Comm.	4	H/R/SL	Public Domain

Singability Score Key

All congregations are different, but this score is intended to provide basic, subjective guidance on hymn selection and leadership, especially for hymns you or the congregation are less familiar with.

5 - Very Easy	4 - Easy	3 - Average	2 - Hard	1 - Very Hard	H	R	SL
Little to no help needed	Weak singers may need help (usually because of range)	Average singers may need some help	Guidance recommended	Best for soloist or small group	Use Hymnal	Teach by Rote	Use Song Leader

Permissions Key

Hymns where the permissions column is highlighted in GREEN typically do NOT require additional copyright for the average UU congregation.		
Hymns labeled “Public Domain” require no licensing or other further action to use for in-person worship, live streaming, or online recording/archiving.	Hymns labeled “UUA permissions granted” may be used for in-person worship, live streaming, and online recording/archiving, assuming you have legally obtained copies of the UU hymnals.	Hymns labeled “Permissions granted” may be used for in-person worship, live streaming, and online recording/archive. The copyright owner may request an additional donation.
Hymns where the permissions column is highlighted in YELLOW require a copyright license, typically One License or CCS. It is your responsibility to obtain the appropriate license for in person worship, live streaming, and/or online recording/archiving.		Hymns where the permissions column is highlighted in RED require separate copyright permissions for use. Information for securing the copyright will be made available in this packet, but it is your responsibility to obtain permission from the holder.

For more information on permissions and licensing, please consult the [UUA Hymn and Reading Permissions](#).

Choral/Vocal Suggestions

Title	Composer	Voicing	Keywords
Will the Circle Be Unbroken	arr. J. David Moore	SATB, SSAA, TTBB	Gospel, Bluegrass, a cappella
Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life	Gordon Young	SATB	Simple, Flowing, Prayerful
Draw the Circle Wide	Mark A. Miller	SATB	Uplifting, Contemporary, Stirring
The Invitation by Ethan McGrath	Ethan McGrath	SATB	Serene, Flowing, Comforting
Do Not Leave Your Cares at the Door	Elizabeth Alexander	SATB, TBB	Gospel, Driving, a cappella
All Are Welcome Here	Lea Morris	SATB	Soul/Folk, Rhythmic, a cappella
The Road Home	Stephen Paulus	SATB, SSAA, TTBB	Prayerful, Poetic, a cappella

Instrumental Suggestions

Title	Composer	Instrumentation	Keywords
Let Us Break Bread Together	Michael Larkin	Piano	Prayerful, Christian, Spiritual
Come, Ye Thankful People, Come	Mark Hayes	Piano	Old & New, Uplifting
Levee Dance	Florence Price	Piano	Jaunty, Americana
4 Preludes	Anton Bruckner	Organ (sub piano)	Traditional, Grand, Processional
Coming Home	Alexis Ffrench	Piano	Ballad, Comforting, Inspiring

Contemporary Suggestions

If you are streaming your services or hybrid, note that all copyright permissions are your responsibility to obtain.

- “Won’t You Be My Neighbor” by Fred Rogers
- “Be Our Guest” from *Beauty and the Beast*
- “Consider Yourself at Home” from *Oliver*
- “Dancing in the Street” by Martha & The Vandellas
- “You’ve Got a Friend in Me” by Randy Newman

Important Note: The artists listed above generally are the performers of the works and not always/necessarily the songwriters, please do your due diligence in seeking out crediting info. Many of the above songs can be found on JWPepper, MusicNotes.com and the Chords/Tabs for most of the above can be found here:

[Ultimate Guitar - Ukulele Chords/Tabs - Free to Transpose - Chordify](#)

Another Note About Contemporary Music: For our small group packets, we put together a contemporary music playlist for each month. While these playlists are designed as personal musical meditations on the themes, some of the songs on these playlists could be used in worship.

You can explore these playlists on our website, by clicking [HERE](#).

Additional Resources

Music for Online Worship from UUA

<https://www.uua.org/worship/music/online>

These videos may be used in online and recorded worship services by Unitarian Universalist congregations. The music that follows does not require additional permission for online use. However, be sure to provide full attribution to the composers and lyricists on your screens, not just verbally, for each piece that you incorporate into worship.

These videos are intended to lighten the burdens imposed by online worship. They should not be used to justify decreasing the wages or positions of professional music staff.

- ["I've Got Peace Like a River" \(Vimeo\)](#) (by Marvin V. Frey; #100 in *Singing the Living Tradition*) led and accompanied on guitar by Mark David Buckles.
- ["Come, Sing a Song with Me" \(YouTube\)](#) as an animal puppet video (#346 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; music and words by Carolyn McDade). Created by MaryJane Wagner for an intergenerational service.
- ["The Tide Is Rising" \(YouTube\)](#) by Rabbi Shoshona Meira Friedman & Yotam Schachter © 2015, recorded by Sandi E. Permission to use if not-for-profit. [PDF of sheet music available here](#). Please make a pay-what-you-can donation via [PayPal](#).

Music From the AUUMM (Association for UU Music Ministries) Online Database

<https://www.auumm.org/page/database>

The wonderful leadership of the AUUMM have added our monthly themes to the AUUMM music database. It's a great way to get music suggestions from UUs all around the country.

Soul Matters Music Leader Support

In addition to monthly music suggestions in our worship packets, we support subscribing music leaders with a monthly brainstorm call and Facebook group:

Monthly Online Musicians' Brainstorming Group

On the **second Tuesday of every month at 2pm ET/1pm CT/noon MT/11am PT**, Soul Matters musicians meet for an hour-long Zoom call to share additional music ideas and help each other with advanced planning. The discussions focus on music for 2 and 3 months ahead to allow lead time for music purchase and rehearsals.

Recordings of these monthly music brainstorming calls are available [HERE](#).

No need to sign up in advance, just join as you are able using this Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Soul Matters Music Leader Support Facebook Group

We also have a Soul Matters Musicians Facebook group. This is for on-going sharing among Soul Matters musicians, as well as a place where we share announcements about packets, new music resources and music-related webinars. Click [HERE](#) to view and join.

Stories For All Ages

Wisdom Stories

The below six wisdom tales are used and recommended in our RE Curriculum Packet (Upper TFAA). So be sure to coordinate your choices of these tales with your RE Leader.

A Lamp in Every Corner

Found here: <https://www.amazon.com/Lamp-Every-Corner-Unitarian-Universalist/dp/1558964738>

Higgins - A Drop With a Dream

For Water Communion

Found here: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/higgins>

The Cracked Pot

For Water Communion

Found here: <http://amazingwomenrock.com/the-story-of-the-cracked-pot-for-anyone-whos-not-quite-perfect>

The Scratched Diamond

Based on a tale from the 1700s by Jacob ben Wolf Kranz, Maggid of Dubno

Video telling: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=p9Z4Rt8Jkww&autoplay=1&rel=0&showinfo=0>

Text: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/loveguide/session5/168619.shtml>

How The Flaming Chalice Came To Be

See the RE Packet ("Upper TFAA") for the script

Philemon and Baucis

Adapted from Roman Mythology for easier storytelling.

Found here: <https://www.thoughtco.com/philemon-and-baucis-112315>

Additional Suggestions

The Big Umbrella

by Amy June Bates, co-written with Juniper Bates

In this story, an umbrella makes room for everyone, no matter how tall, how hairy, or how many legs.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7JZ9rRIZ3w>

Book: [HERE](#)

We are Water Protectors

by Carole Lindstrom (Author), Michaela Goade (Illustrator)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CD8shbwrK40>

Book: [HERE](#)

Sermon Seeds

Angles, Ideas & Twists To Get Your Sermon Started!

Don't forget to explore the small group packet for additional sermon seeds. It contains quotes and poems to enhance your sermon, as well as numerous sermon angles in the questions and the spiritual exercises.

Permissions Notes: In addition to the pieces we've noted as permissioned for online use (marked with an asterisk*), you can use the fair use sized quotes and fair use sized portions of longer pieces in your sermons/services. Pay attention to the hyperlinks we include within titles and authors' names; these hyperlinks provide the source material and direction for you to hunt down permissions on your own.

On Inviting Love into the Center!

Sermon Excerpt - Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt: "A Love That Frees"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I79HWBp-eE&t=8s>

"There is a love that sets us free period not free as in having the power to do whatever we want but free as in not weighed down or Bound by the patterns of hatred and control that get passed from generation to generation right free as in Restless called to solidarity wherever we witness Injustice free as in knowing without a doubt that we are worthy and that it is ours to invite others into the same wisdom for themselves free to imagine a world where children are never In Harm's Way where the violence and Desperation of generations has served instead as a sight of sacred repair interrupting the cycles of war and dehumanization free to express our highest values and what we believe in as many poetic forms as there are people in the room free enough to build communities that love us so deeply that we are held when we falter and invited back into sacred Covenant when we fail..."

Article - Love: An essential spiritual and moral value, Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/essential-spiritual-moral-value>

It is this understanding of love that formed one of the most precious gifts Unitarian Universalism has given me: the gift of a religion that teaches that the work of justice is inseparable from a faith rooted in love... It was reinforced by the stories and theology of Unitarian Universalism—that no one is outside the circle of love.

Quote/Reading - Rev. Tracy Johnson, on the [flower graphic](#) for our new core values centered in liberating love

Full piece found [HERE](#)

The botanical nature of it seems to say that these values are rooted in and grow out of that center of love. And they are flourishing, my guess is that their grounding is the reason. They fill the spaces that surround them, and in each case, there is an opening for them to expand beyond their walls. And the blossoms, too, unfurl themselves, shouting out their messages; values steeped in love...

Book - Love at the Center: Unitarian Universalist Theologies

<https://www.uuabookstore.org/Love-at-the-Center-P20036.aspx>

Quote - Rev. Kathleen McTigue

Fear's pronoun is singular: I've got to watch out for me and mine. Love's pronoun is plural: we're in this together, and together we can grow things that will blossom even in a time of drought.

Quote - Eric Fromm

Love isn't something natural. Rather it requires discipline, concentration, patience, faith, and the overcoming of narcissism. It isn't a feeling, it is a practice.

Quote - Marianne Williamson

Until we see love as the meaning of life, life seems to have no meaning at all. The sense of meaninglessness produces chaos, and the chaos produces fear. There is only one way out of this, and that is to see every moment and every situation as an invitation to love.

Quote - James Baldwin

Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.

Poem/Reading - To Invoke Love, Rev. Sean Parker Dennison

Found in [Breaking and Blessing](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

To invoke Love is... to consider yourself worthy to be made whole,
willing to encounter Love that will never
let us let each other go.

Quote - Cole Arthur Riley

Find those who tell you Do not be afraid, yet stay close enough to tremble with you. This is a love.

Poem/Reading - Jess Reynolds, Love is Calling

Full piece found in [Love Like Thunder](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book.
Also found [HERE](#).

Love is calling for liberation
love is hoarse from calling,
her voice raw from the decades
she has spent chanting at protests
and speaking from pulpits...
This is where Love shows up...
She is tugging at our hands and our sleeves...

Quote - adrienne maree brown

If love were the central practice of a new generation of organizers and spiritual leaders, it would have a massive impact on what was considered organizing. If the goal was to increase the love, rather than winning or dominating a constant opponent, I think we could actually imagine liberation from constant oppression. We would suddenly be seeing everything we do, everyone we meet, not through the tactical eyes of war, but through eyes of love. We would see that there's no such thing as a blank canvas, an empty land or a new idea—but everywhere there is complex, ancient, fertile ground full of potential. We would organize with the perspective that there is wisdom and experience and amazing story in the communities we love, and instead of starting up new ideas/organizations all the time, we would want to listen, support, collaborate, merge, and grow through fusion, not competition.

Quote - Martin Luther King Jr.

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

Quote - Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson

Pre-emptive Radical Inclusion is a practice, a habit, of learning, in advance, what will produce a feeling of inclusion, of belonging and worth, and taking steps to make that more real, and it is particularly interested to make sure that those often overlooked or excluded are centered and included.

Preemptive Radical Inclusion, a concept articulated among Unitarian Universalists by the religious educator CB Beal, is not an outcome, but, as CB says, it is a doorway to justice. By taking actions in advance which center the needs of those marginalized, you move toward the beloved community... ***It really is about putting love into practice: if justice is what love looks like in public, then inclusion is what love looks like among groups...***

Quote - [Valarie Kaur](#)

Love is more than a feeling. Love is a form of sweet labor: fierce, bloody, imperfect, and life-giving – a choice we make over and over again. If love is sweet labor, love can be taught, modeled, and practiced. This labor engages all our emotions. Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger protects that which is loved. And when we think we have reached our limit, wonder is the act that returns us to love.

Quote - Shai Held, from [Judaism is About Love](#)

The God of Judaism is a God of Love and Justice. To speak of justice without compassion is to miss out on love and potentially to forget the crucial urgency of being present with people in their suffering. But to speak of compassion without justice is to focus on people who are suffering without asking why they are suffering.

Quote - Shai Held, from [Judaism is About Love](#)

The struggle for justice derives its energy from love. We care about the world so deeply that we are willing to fight for it

Poem - Unending Love, Rabbi Rami Shapiro

Full poem at <https://billjohnsononline.com/unending-love/>

We are embraced by arms that find us
even when we are hidden from ourselves...
We are counseled by voices that guide us
even when we are too embittered to hear.
We are loved by an unending love...

Embraced, touched, soothed, and counseled,
Ours are the arms, the fingers, the voices...

Quote - [Vanessa Machado de Oliveira Andreotti](#)

“Love” is a very loaded word, especially in Western societies, because of all these layers of meaning: when we say it, people understand something else. Love for me would be an inquiry into the depths of this compass that we need for emotional sobriety, relational maturity, intellectual discernment, and intergenerational accountability. It’s a kind of love that is not necessarily about elation, a love through which we can collectively manifest the sobriety we need once we interrupt the harmful impulses of the ego, and our addictions and neuroses. Sometimes we can interrupt those delusions and forms of escapism to be present with what’s happening, and that is what we mean by sobriety. Maturity is doing what is needed, rather than what you want to do—figuring out how to offer yourself in service to what is needed, even though it’s not what your ego would have chosen to do. Discernment is about being able to hold the weight and depth of all these paradoxes and layers of complexity and tensions; it’s about moving things towards being accountable to the debt we owe to what has kept us alive, to the future and to those who are yet to come. Once we can manifest these things, then that word, “love,” has an enriched meaning, one that is not trivialized as it generally is within normal conversations. So love, for me, is depth.

On The Invitation to Change

Quote - [Anaïs Nin](#)

Life is a process of becoming, a combination of states we have to go through. Where people fail is that they wish to elect a state and remain in it. This is a kind of death.

Quote - **Adrienne Rich**

Change is not a threat to your life, but an invitation to live.

Quote - [Dan Gilbert](#)

Human beings are works in progress that mistakenly think they're finished.

Quote - [John O'Donohue](#)

Beginnings often frighten us because they seem like lonely voyages into the unknown. Yet, in truth, no beginning is empty or isolated. We seem to think that beginning is setting out from a lonely point along some line of direction into the unknown. This is not the case. Shelter and energy come alive when a beginning is embraced... We are never as alone in our beginnings as it might seem at the time. *A beginning is ultimately an invitation to open toward the gifts and growth that are stored up for us.* To refuse to begin can be an act of great self-neglect.

Short Talk - **The Invitation to Change Must Include Empathy, Simon Sinek**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCJOM8WBe5c>

Quote - [John O'Donohue](#)

To live a truly creative life, we always need to cast a critical look at where we presently are, attempting always to discern where we have become stagnant and where a new beginning might be ripening. There can be no growth if we do not remain open and vulnerable to what is new and different. I have never seen anyone take a risk for growth that was not rewarded a thousand times over.

Wisdom Tale - **The Stream and The Desert**

A Sufi wisdom tale about transformation, letting go and becoming a brand-new thing while still being you.

<http://www.wisdompillars.com/2016/04/08/story-stream-desert/>

<http://www.wizduum.net/tale-journeying-stream>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNasXE5_OTI

TFAA Picture Book - **Change Sings; A Children's Anthem, Amanda Gorman**

[*Change Sings: A Children's Anthem by Amanda Gorman and Loren Long*](#)

Use as a song!: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7WhXUj9SPs>

Poem - **You Start Dying Slowly, Martha Medeiros**

Full poem at <https://maidastouch.com/2016/03/15/you-start-dying-slowly/>

...You start dying slowly
If you do not change your life
when you are not satisfied with your job, or with your love,
If you do not risk what is safe for the uncertain,
If you do not go after a dream,
If you do not allow yourself, ^[1]_[SEP]
At least once in your lifetime, ^[1]_[SEP]
To run away from sensible advice.

Quote - Phoebe Eng

The day comes when remaining the same becomes more painful than the risk to grow. And when that happens there are many goodbyes. We leave old patterns, old friends, old lovers, old ideas, and some cherished beliefs. Loss and growth are so often one and the same.

Poem - Invitation, Mary Oliver

Full poem at <https://readalittlepoetry.com/2023/12/24/invitation-by-mary-oliver/>

Oh do you have time
to linger
for just a little while
out of your busy
and very important day
for the goldfinches...

It could mean everything.
It could be what Rilke meant, when he wrote:
You must change your life.

Reflection on Mary Oliver's poem: Invitation, Fay Adams

There is an urgency in this poem. Mary begs us not to miss out on what is offered up to us. She says that especially here, especially now, especially when much of what we see and hear about is brokenness, we must not forget the feast that is offered up to us already. Simply by virtue of our being alive and being in the magnificent company of Life's abundance it is offered... This could be the moment of revolution. Albeit a quiet and personal one. Here is the question I will take with me from this poem: even in my 'busy and very important day' (which every day tends to be!) can I let the wonders of Life change me?

Poem/Reading - Sometimes, David Whyte

<https://www.pottersinn.com/moment-to-breathe-1/jkz956c5dafjamxf456x42kbpbcy6y>

Related essay found at <https://www.themarginalian.org/2020/08/19/david-whyte-sometimes/>

Sometimes
if you move carefully
through the forest...
you come to a place
whose only task
is to trouble you
with tiny
but frightening requests...
Requests to stop what
you are doing right now,
and
to stop what you
are becoming...

Anecdote - Everything, from The Daily Buddha

Suzuki Roshi, I've been listening to your lectures for years, a student said during the question-and-answer time following a lecture, "but I just don't understand. Could you just please put it in a nutshell? Can you reduce Buddhism to one phrase? Everyone laughed. Suzuki laughed. Everything changes, he said. Then he asked for another question.

On a Faith that Invites Change

Article - New UU Statement of Values Passes after Momentous General Assembly

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/uaa-article-ii-passes-general-assembly-result-unitarian-universalism-bylaws-vote-values-statement>

Quote - James Luther Adams

Nothing is complete and thus nothing is exempt from criticism.

Quote - [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)

Nothing is secure but life, transition, the energizing spirit... People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them.

Reading/Speech Excerpt - From [I Call That Church Free](#), James Luther Adams

I call that church free which enters into covenant with the ground of freedom, that sustaining..., transforming power not made with hands. It protests against the idolatry of any human claim to absolute truth or authority...

I call that church free which liberates from bondage to the principalities and powers of the world, whether churchly or secular, and which promotes the continuing reformation of its own and other institutions. It protests against routine conformity or thoughtless nonconformity that lead to deformity of mind and heart and community...

I call that church free which in charity promotes freedom in fellowship, seeking unity in diversity....

I call that church free which responds in responsibility to the Spirit that bloweth where it listeth. The tide of the Spirit finds utterance ever and again through a minority. It invites and engenders liberation from repression and exploitation, whether of nation or economic system, of race or sex or class. It bursts through rigid, cramping inheritance, giving rise to new language, to new forms of cooperation, to new and broader fellowship. The church of the Spirit is a pilgrim church on adventure.

I call that church free which is not bound to the present, which cowers not before the vaunted spirit of the times. It earns and creates a tradition binding together past, present, and future in a living tether, in a continuing covenant and identity, bringing forth treasures both new and old...

Quote - Lewis Fisher

Universalists are often asked to tell where they stand. The only true answer to give to this question is that we do not stand at all, we move.

Chalice Lighting - May our faith be renewed and reignited..., Rev. Dr. Rebekah A. Savage *

[Permission secured by Soul Matters](#)

We light our flaming chalice each week with a simple spark to make holy our time together.

With this flame, may our Highest Intentions be refreshed.

With this flame, may we remember who we are and whose we are.

With this flame, may our faith be renewed and reignited to guide our journey.

Amen, and may it be so.

Sermon - Toward Our Metamorphosis into Who Knows What, Rev. Chris Buice

<https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2023/slt> (begins at minute 1:40:40)

Sermon - Revelation is Not Sealed, Rev. Sophia Lyons

<https://fpwatertown.org/revelation-is-not-sealed-november-13-2022/>

Quote/Sermon on Changing Our Article II Statement - Rev. Walter Clark, from his sermon, [This is Not a Pipe](#)
How many of you are familiar with this image? This is surrealist [Rene Magritte's The Treachery of Images](#). Who can translate the text under this? It says, "This is not a pipe." Well, if this isn't a pipe, then what the heck is it? It's a painting. Or in our case, it is a LED display of a jpg inserted into a Google slide document. The point is that we often think of the image of something as the thing itself and not as a symbol of the thing. The painting contains the idea of a pipe and allows us to access that idea. ***In the same way, the principles are not what we as Unitarian Universalists believe, nor are they what our faith is about. Instead the principles are an attempt to point us to what our faith truly is.*** The principles are a way for us to articulate our faith and as history has shown us, there will be times we need to re-examine the words we use to try and describe that ineffable center to our denomination, that thing that we all hold in common. And since we are a faith that believes in re-examining ourselves and the world around us, it only makes sense that eventually these principles will change.

On Life's Invitation to a New Day

Quote - Ralph Waldo Emerson

This day is all that is good and fair. It is too dear, with its hopes and invitations, to waste a moment on the yesterdays.

Poem - White Dove, Danna Faulds

Full poem found at <https://mindfulness.emmanuelle-dalpra.com/white-dove-by-danna-faulds/>

In the shared quiet, an
invitation arises like a
white dove lifting from
a limb and taking flight.

Come and live in truth...
Draw aside the veil you thought
would always separate
your heart from love...

Poem - Prayer For an Invitation, David Whyte

Full poem at <https://www.facebook.com/PoetDavidWhyte/posts/prayer-for-an-invitationi-pray-for-you-worldto-come-and-find-meto-see-me-and-rec/2437266759632646/>

I pray for you, world
to come and find me,
to see me and recognize me
and beckon me out,
to call me
even when I lose
the ability to call on
you who have searched
so long for me.

Quote - [Advashanti](#)

The role of spiritual practice is basically to exhaust the seeker. If the practice does what it's supposed to do, it exhausts our energy for seeking, and then reality has a chance to present itself.

Poem - September Is An Invitation, Robert Lavett Smith (resident poet of 1st UU Society of San Francisco)*
[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Think of September as an invitation.
Along the Northern California coast
Summer refuses to give up the ghost:
Abundant leaves go golden with persuasion.
The scrub pines have a sense of the occasion.
They knelt before hard turbulence, supposed
Tenacity could bear what wind imposed,
And now have hunkered down for the duration.
Golden October, waiting in the wings,
Reminds us of kind seasons in the East
That seemed to promise, oh, so many things.
We have the ravens' word on this, at least—
September is a month for offerings,
That sees the year's munificence increased.

On the Invitation of a Wider Welcome

Quote - Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson

Pre-emptive Radical Inclusion is a practice, a habit, of learning, in advance, what will produce a feeling of inclusion, of belonging and worth, and taking steps to make that more real, and it is particularly interested to make sure that those often overlooked or excluded are centered and included.

Preemptive Radical Inclusion, a concept articulated among Unitarian Universalists by the religious educator CB Beal, is not an outcome, but, as CB says, it is a doorway to justice. By taking actions in advance which center the needs of those marginalized, you move toward the beloved community... ***It really is about putting love into practice: if justice is what love looks like in public, then inclusion is what love looks like among groups...***

Quote - Joan D. Chittister

Hospitality is simply love on the loose.

Quote - Shauna Niequist

True hospitality is when someone leaves your home feeling better about themselves, not better about you.

Quote - [Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt](#)

When we speak of hospitality we are always addressing issues of inclusion and exclusion... Issues of inclusion and exclusion, while personal, are not just personal. Our entire culture excludes many people. If you are in a wheelchair, for example, you are excluded because there are places you can't go. If you are very young, if you are very old, you are excluded... Hospitality has an inescapable moral dimension to it... It is an issue involving what it means to be human. All of our talk about hospitable openness doesn't mean anything as long as some people continue to be tossed aside...

Note: Be sure to check out the UU General Assembly Worship rooted in this quote:
<https://www.uua.org/ga/past/2007/radical-spiritual-hospitality>

Video/Reflection - [Natashia Deón on Seeing Color](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuKE5oYRRr0>

There is a short space between "I don't see color" and "I don't see you." ...

Reflection - Putting on Armor, Shannon Lang

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/putting-armor>

“I love my congregation, but as a Black Woman, before I enter the doors of my church or a committee meeting, I often feel like I have to put on my armor...”

Poem - Invitation, Rev. Terri Echelbarger *

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Sometimes they don't want to know you.
Comfortable with long held stereotypes.
A person who moves easily from car
must be cheating.
A same-sex couple disordered.
It goes on and on and on.
Individual change doesn't happen
at the shout of protest.
It happens by invitation.
Here I am, see me. I will let you see me.
Enough seeing turns to believing,
We are all more alike than not,
the key is to love one another.

Quote - Rebekah Taussig, from [Sitting Pretty: The View from My Ordinary Resilient Disabled Body](#)

When I was small and just learning how to do life in my body, I didn't hesitate, didn't hold back, didn't worry how it would look, didn't look for cues or ask for a line... I was entirely free to be, driven by the innovation my body inspired. This is the wild emancipation I wish for all of us—a world where we are all free to be, to move, to exist in our bodies without shame; a world that isn't interested in making all of its humans operate in the exact same way; a world that instead strives to *invite more, include more, imagine more*. That world sees the humans existing on the margins and says, You have what we want! What barriers can we remove so we can have you around? What do you need? How can we make that happen?

Quote - [angel Kyodo williams Sensei](#)

It's the community's job to figure out how we can stretch into the so-called margins to broaden our understanding and the ability to be inclusive. Inclusivity is not 'How do we make you a part of what we are?' but 'How do we become more of what you are?'

Quote - [Cole Arthur Riley](#)

Exclusion operates by the same rule of mutuality as welcome, for it harms both the excluded and the excluder. If you are the hands of exclusion for long enough, you learn acceptance only at the hands of someone else's exile. You learn belonging as competition, not restoration. It is also a kind of restlessness, for the energy you expend forbidding others to walk through the door of community is only matched by the energy you expend competing to stay inside yourself. This is maybe more dangerous; no one ever perceives the doorkeeper as needing an invitation themselves.

On Inviting In “The Stranger”

Scripture - Paul’s letter to the Hebrews

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Poem - Red Brocade, Naomi Shihab Nye

Full poem at <https://poets.org/poem/red-brocade>

The Arabs used to say,
When a stranger appears at your door,
feed him for three days
before asking who he is,
where he’s come from,
where he’s headed.
That way, he’ll have strength
enough to answer.
Or, by then you’ll be
such good friends
you don’t care...

Story – Baucis and Philemon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXiDBuMf7kl>

<https://madelinemiller.com/myth-of-the-week-baucis-and-philemon/>

Commentary/Sermon Related to the story - Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern, from [Setting a Place for Elijah](#)

The story is told in many lands and many times. The god, the prince, the prophet travels in disguise. He or she can bring gifts of good fortune and happiness. Whether we receive these gifts depends on whether we welcome the unwelcome. The gifts will seldom come from the source we expect. They will come from experiences we would rather have avoided. They will be given to us by people we imagine have nothing at all we want. And so this story, wherever it is told, gives the same advice: prepare a place for the unwelcome, welcome them in, because they will bring you gifts beyond your wildest dreams.

Reflection/Sermon Anecdote - Rev. Vanessa Rush Southern *

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Father Daniel Homan is a Benedictine Monk. Benedict, in the rules he set out for his monks, made welcoming the stranger a mandate, something to keep them open to the world and the work that welcoming such folks would require. At Father Homan’s monastery in Oxford, Michigan they lived rather too cloistered for decades. Then, one year, they welcomed back a brother who had done work in youth ministry in Chicago and who proposed they turn an old barn into a center for youth.

It was 1975 and the barn was old and had no infrastructure. Turning the barn into a place where youth could come for retreats meant lots of changes and sacrifices. First, the barn had to be made into a habitable place with showers and bathrooms and rooms for sleeping. Just as challenging was that these Monks who were, for the most part, self-proclaimed introverts, had to prepare to welcome the youth. They had to prepare to share meals with them, to have them present on the grounds, breaking the silence with the sounds of laughter and conversation, and open to all the struggles these youth would bring with them to this place.

Benedict knew that when you prepare a place for people at your table, even just that begins to change you. Then when you sit and eat with them, again you are changed. He was right, and the monks in the Oxford monastery were about to be changed.

“It is always easier to care for the world, to care for all the others,” writes Homan and his co-author, an active laywoman who serves at the monastery too. *“It is always easier to care for the world, to care for all the others from a distance. We can even feel good about our prayers for them as long as the people are not in our space and are not taking up emotional space in our hearts. They become harder to handle when they show up and expect something from us.”* (p.84)

But show up they did. By 2002, 80,000 youth had crossed through the gates into the monastery. There they had been welcomed, tended to, and listened to in the way the monks are trained to attentively listen – to see and attend to the divinity in each child. So, it isn’t surprising that some of the youth would show up on the grounds during times of trouble, with households exploding beneath them.

“Not long ago,” the monks recalled, “[we] found a young woman in the chapel who had been on retreat at the monastery in her teens. It turned out that she had gone into the dark, empty retreat house the night before and slept. Like many adults she had gone home for the holidays. But the difference with her was that her mother didn’t want her home.” Over the years, she told them, unbeknownst to the monks, this young girl would come and sit on the rocks by the gates to the entrance to the grounds when things got bad, and in her family they got bad a lot. So, when things fell apart, she went to the one place she knew would welcome her.

Other youth returned to have their weddings performed by the fathers and later their babies blessed. Looking for cloistered lives, the fathers opened the monastery and a world of turmoil, searching, beauty and deep connection took hold of them; 80,000 lives invited to change their own. Father Homan writes: *“Merely being nice to people does not fulfill the deep requirements of Benedictine hospitality. We must let the person stir us; we must connect. Benedictine hospitality will extract a cost from us, and it will tumble us into the magical realm of personal transformation.”*

On the Invitations Found in Failures, Stumbles & Troubled Times

Quote - [John O'Donohue](#)

Our lives would be immeasurably enriched if we could but bring the same hospitality in meeting the negative as we bring to the joyful and pleasurable... The negative threatens us so powerfully precisely because it is an invitation to an art of compassion

Quote - [John O'Donohue](#)

One encouraging aspect of the negative is its truthfulness. The negative does not lie. It will tell you clearly where you court absence rather than inhabit presence... Nietzsche said that one of the best days in his life was the day that he baptized all his negative qualities as his best qualities. In this kind of baptism, rather than banishing what is at first glimpse unwelcome, you bring it home to unity with your life. This is the slow and difficult work of self-retrieval... This is probably the uneasy territory of which Jesus spoke when he exhorted: 'Love your enemies.'

Quote - [Christine Valters Paintner](#)

Carl Jung once said in a BBC interview that he began calling God all those "things which cross my willful path violently and recklessly, all things which upset my subjective views, plans and intentions, and change the course of my life for better or for worse." The divine is that power which disrupts everything.

What if our practice were to court a holy disruption? To welcome in everything which challenges my perspective on how the world works, which upsets all the plans I have for myself, and turns them on their heads?

What if when life started falling apart, I opened my heart to welcome in the grief and fear that arrived as well and considered them as holy guides and windows into the immensity of God? What if all the painful feelings of loss and disorientation were invited in for tea and tenderness? What if everything that turns our preconceived ideas inside out is precisely where we find God?

Quote - [Joseph Campbell](#)

Mythology tells us that where you stumble, there your treasure is... where it seems most challenging lies the greatest invitation to find deeper and greater power in ourselves.

Quote - [Rachel Naomi Remen](#)

But it's our very wounds that enable us to make a difference... For example... Without my suffering, I wouldn't understand the suffering of others or be able to connect to them. My loneliness enables me to recognize the loneliness in other people, even when it's covered over; to find them where they have become lost in the dark and sit with them; and to know that just by sitting with them, eventually they will find what they need in order to move forward.

Poem - *If You Are*, Laura Martin

Full poem found [HERE](#)

If you are angry, let your anger be fire
So it can warm someone chilly.
If you are grieving, let your grief be a river
So someone thirsty can drink.
If you are numb, let your numbness give you capacity
To walk in hard places and not feel hurt.
If you are broken, let your brokenness
Be what makes space for a new thing to enter...

Quote/Reading - [adrienne maree brown](#) on her principle: "Never a failure, always a lesson"

People are like, "But sometimes I do fail." And I'm like, "No, we are failing all the time but the framework that we have on it determines whether it is a waste of our lives or a component that helps us to learn." And I, in my own life, I'll have a moment where I lose my temper or I knock something over, the things that can feel like minor failures in life. And even at that small scale, I have been teaching myself to slow down in that moment and be like, "What am I learning right now? What is the lesson of this for me?"... "Why am I moving urgently?" Usually it's because I'm trying to avoid an emotion... Or I lost my temper. "What can I learn from this?" I've been repressing the truth. I've been repressing something I needed to say, and I repressed it long enough for it to build up into a problem and now it's coming out of this way...

In group process, this becomes the difference between groups that feel like they are succeeding and actually can make a change and groups that constantly feel like they're failing regardless of what they're actually doing in the world. I see a lot of social justice groups that constantly feel like they're failing, are behind the curve, and it's like, we're actually up against insurmountable odds. We have to pull off miracles if we're going to save human life on this planet at this point. So, we could feel like failures all the time but that's not going to save our lives. We have to be learning from everything that we're doing, how to keep improving and how to keep growing.

Quote - [Octavia Butler](#)

A victim of God may,
Through learning adaption,
Become a partner of God,
A victim of God may,
Through forethought and planning,
Become a shaper of God.
Or a victim of God may,
Through shortsightedness and fear,
Remain God's victim,
God's plaything,
God's prey.

Find Additional Worship Resources In Our Specialty Worship Packets

In addition to our “regular” monthly themed packets, we make specialty packets for a number of special Sundays and observances. You can check out all of those specialty packets on our website at:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/special-worship-packets.html>

For this month, you might want to check out the following specialty packets:

- **Water Communion Worship Research Packet**

Found on our website at <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/special-worship-packets.html>

- **Our January Worship Packet from last year on “The Gift of Liberating Love”
(Our new UU core value.)**

Found on our [Individual Packets Page](#).

Here is the direct link: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/individual-packets/liberating-love>

Recommended Sermons

Notes about 2024-25 Sermon Recommendations:

- **We mostly list written scripts:** In order not to undermine UU preachers who depend on live and online guest preaching income for their livelihood, we mainly focus on sharing sermon texts (and sometimes audio clips), but not videos. When, on occasion, we include a video sermon, it will be from congregations that share those as part of their mission.
- **Permissions Secured:** All of the sermons below have received permission for your online use. Unless otherwise noted, they can be used for both live streaming and recorded services that are posted on YouTube or a podcast. **However, to be extra cautious and in good relationship, we ask that you reach out to the minister to let them know you are planning to use their sermon, also asking if they have any particular requests or guidance for how to do that.**
- **An Important Note About Editing:** If you want to make changes to the sermon for brevity or context, **you need to reach out to the preachers directly for such editing permission.** Contact information of each of the referenced preachers is listed after the list of sermons.
- **Note about hiring preachers for online guest preaching:** All of the texts listed below can be used and read in your worship services for free. And, in some cases, the preachers of these sermons are glad to be hired to guest preach and give these sermons at your congregation either by zooming into your service or sending you a video recording of them giving it. When this is the case, there is a note under the sermon title/link with the preacher's contact information.

Putting Love at the Center

Rev. Dana Worsnop

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1diX3zfFhI_vlBrzLI1T1PbRTGE1FdPNP/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

"Putting, keeping, holding love at the center of our lives, of our faith, in the world. That is our human quest. And it's really hard..."

I really believe that the love available in the world is ample, even abundant. Possible, even probable. Yet, anyone who has loved – which is all of us – knows it's so much more complicated..."

Note: Rev. Worsnop is available to offer this sermon as a recording or by Zooming into your service for a fee. If you are interested, you can contact Rev. Worsnop at rev.dana.worsnop@uuventura.org.

Love and Belonging

Rev. Eileen Wiviott

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NzYE6fQL8Gg4pqbZP6d1sqYxKmUVq6JM/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true>

On what we mean by a spiritual discipline of liberating love

"This kind of love is demanding and powerful. It calls us to show up again and again, through discomfort as well as grief and rage and disappointment and despair. It demands that we understand ourselves to be one family, to never close our hearts to each other or give up on the possibility of redemption and repair, though our pain be sharp and sadness deep..."

Setting a Place for Elijah

Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T91wPI2TYd6OGsWmvUcA-VEPHCNhuchr/view?usp=sharing>

“We Unitarian Universalists pride ourselves on welcoming everyone. We affirm that people of all races and orientations are welcome here; we state it on our website and hang it in front of our church in the rainbow symbol of pride and celebration. We have no requirements for membership but a desire to join and the pledge of a dollar. But it’s not enough not to have bouncers at the door. Even the most conservative churches employ more subtle ways than that to keep unwanted people out, and they’re just as effective, which is why the United Church of Christ ads touched a nerve. To really be a place of welcome means not only to refrain from turning people away, and not only to refrain from preaching against them and the things they hold dear; it means to prepare a place for them at the table...”

Sharing the Good News: On Inviting Others to Our Faith

Rev. Kaaren Anderson

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qEwtSPFIZSmuGTz4dKCEfHAc5Kn6ifzt/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Note: Rev. Anderson is available to offer this sermon as a video recording or by Zooming into your service as a guest preacher for a fee. If you are interested, you can contact Rev. Anderson at uurevkaaren@gmail.com

Featured Preacher Bios & Contact Information

- Rev. Dana Worsnop: <https://unitarianuniversalistventura.org/about-uu-ventura/minister-and-staff/>
- Rev. Eileen Wiviott: <https://ucevanston.org/ministers-staff/>
- Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern: <https://www.uucpa.org/about-us/our-minister-and-staff/>
- Rev. Kaaren Anderson: uurevkaaren@gmail.com & <https://fpbuu.org/about-us/staff/>

Closing & Chalice Extinguishing Words

Design Note Reminder: The following pieces were chosen to support the wide variety of theme angles going on during this month of "Invitation," covering the invitation to return (for Homecoming Sunday), the invitation to share diverse sources of renewal (for Water Communion Sunday), the invitation to change (in support of our new UU values), and the invitation to embody liberating love (in celebration of our new UU core values).

Fitted for This Day *

Rev. Kimberly Quinn Johnson

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/benediction/promise-and-practice-benediction-3>

On inviting change in

[Permission Source](#)

May we be bold and courageous to chart that new future

May we have faith in a future that is not known...

A First Step Faith *

Rev. Scott Tayler

On inviting change in

[Permission secured by Soul Matters](#)

Go with faith,
not the kind that is called to move mountains,
but the quieter sort
that calls us to take [the first step](#)
even when the whole staircase sits beyond our
view.

And as we move toward the unseen
may we notice that the way unfolds only as we risk
traveling it

and may we remember and trust

that on this journey

we are never alone.

Amen

May You Be Changed *

Emily Richards

Full piece found at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/benediction/may-you-be-changed>

[Permission Source](#)

On inviting change in

May you leave this time together changed...

May you share that feeling of transformation
wherever you go.

May it spread into every word, deed, thought, and
interaction...

A Theology of Welcome *

Rev. Dr. David Breeden

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

On inviting in a wider welcome

Let's be the welcome
we crave—
open hearts,
arms outstretched.

Let's embody
radical welcome,
unquestioning love.

Let's be the welcome
we crave—
deeply hearing
voices and hearts.

Let's be the welcome
we crave—
enriching,
understanding.

Let us embody
the community
we crave.

May the love that overcomes all differences *

Frederick E Gillis

Full piece found at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/5990.shtml>

[Permission Source](#)

On inviting in liberating love

May the love that overcomes all differences,
that reconciles all who are separated,
Be in us and among us...

A love that seeps into everything...

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

On inviting in liberating love

I wish you the peace that comes when we trust
ourselves to meet whatever life brings.

I wish you love beyond happy endings—
the kind of love that seeps into everything
no matter where the story goes.

Worship Leader Support

Join the Soul Matters Worship Leader Support Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Join the Soul Matters Ministers' Support Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/719788338192570/>

Attend one of our two monthly online ministers' brainstorming groups:

First Tuesdays and First Thursdays of each month at 1pm eastern time

with this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Attend our monthly online musicians' brainstorming group:

On the second Tuesday of every month at 2pm eastern time

with this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Inspiration

Our Facebook Inspiration Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Our Instagram Page:

Find us as "soul_matters_circle"

Music Playlists:

Click [here](#) for links to the [Spotify playlists](#) for each month.

Click [here](#) to check out the [YouTube playlists](#).



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Learn how to join at <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com>