



CLIMATE JUSTICE MONTH

Reflections, Practices, and Resources

Climate Justice Month is a month-long journey for climate justice from World Water Day through Earth Day, hosted by Commit2Respond, a climate justice collaboration led by Unitarian Universalists.

The inaugural Climate Justice Month in 2015 featured daily messages that each offered a reflection, a spiritual practice, and a resource to take it further, plus a framing message at the beginning of each themed week. This packet provides all of the daily messages so that anyone can embark on a Climate Justice Month any time of year.

Visit www.commit2respond.org/climatejusticemonth to find out what's happening this year.

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Climate Justice Month, Week 1: Rejoicing

Today marks the first day of Climate Justice Month, the day we start thinking together about changing everything.

Our current crisis requires transformation. It's less about changing a few individual behaviors and more about imagining radical new ways of living.

Our current paradigm assumes the expendability of some people and species in service to the dominant culture. In it, we willingly forgo human health and even human and non-human life on this planet as long as we can live in comfort and convenience today. In this paradigm, we willingly sacrifice the people on the margins of society—generally people of color, immigrants, and people who live with great financial instability—to maintain the industrial growth economy. This economic system assumes ecosystems, communities, cultures, and non-human beings are all externalities that are expendable in the pursuit of maximizing profit.

Today, Unitarian Universalists and other people of faith and conscience begin to think deeply together about altering social norms and creating climate justice. Climate justice is a global fight to dismantle the paradigm that disadvantages marginalized people and approaches Earth as supply source and sewer rather than a system of interdependent life, a single, beloved community. Climate justice pays deep attention to those most affected by climate change to find transformative solutions grounded in profound connections with Earth and each other.

Today, we begin to shift the way we understand and approach the world.

The month before us offers the opportunity to begin, continue, and support the necessary work of transformation.

Week One: Rejoicing and Celebrating in Our Natural World

Week Two: Reckoning with and Grieving the Loss We are Confronting

Week Three: Reconnecting with Front-Line Communities and Earth in All Her Glory

Week Four: Committing to A New Way

Each day will offer a spiritual reflection on the topic of the week. And each week will focus on an element of the Earth to ground that reflection.

Week One: Water

Week Two: Fire

Week Three: Air

Week Four: Earth

Our hope for you, and for us all, is that we lean into the process, allowing the reflections to become catalysts for the day and the week and the month. And our hope for you, and for us all, is that we connect

with Earth and our desire for greater life, deeper life, more sustainable and healthy and even exciting life, and that we can enter this new stage in faith, together.

Your Commit2Respond Resource Team,

Rev. Sofia Betancourt
Rev. Peggy Clarke
Tim DeChristopher
Kat Liu
Jennifer Nordstrom



Day 1: Celebrating

Reflection

Universalist and Unitarian minister Rev. Thomas Starr King shared, in an 1863 sermon entitled “Lessons from the Sierra Nevada,”

I believe that if, on every Sunday morning before going to church, we could be lifted to a mountain-peak and see a horizon line of six hundred miles enfolding the copious splendor of the light on such a varied expanse; or if we could look upon a square mile of flowers representing all the species with which the Creative Spirit embroiders a zone; or if we could be made to realize the distance of the earth from the sun, the light of which travels every morning twelve millions of miles a minute to feed and bless us, and which the force of gravitation pervades without intermission to hold our globe calmly in its orbit and on its poise; if we could fairly perceive, through our outward senses, one or two features of the constant order and glory of nature, our materialistic dullness would be broken, surprise and joy would be awakened, we should feel that we live amid the play of Infinite thought; and the devout spirit would be stimulated so potently that our hearts would naturally mount in praise and prayer.

What beauty of the world do you take in with your senses today? May it move you to praise and prayer.

Rev. Sheri Prud'homme is a Ph.D. candidate at the Graduate Theological Union and Co-Director of Chalice Camp in San Francisco's East Bay.

Practice

Today's practice is to notice the beauty of the world. Take the time to seek out beauty and connection to the natural world, and reflect on it. Consider photographing one particular instance of nature-made beauty and sharing it on social media with the hashtag #commit2respond.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message are the photographs of famed landscape photographer and environmentalist Ansel Adams (1902–1984). Explore moments of nature-made beauty that Adams captured in film in this [online gallery](#) from the Philadelphia Museum of Art or the book [Ansel Adams: 400 Photographs](#).



Day 2: The Elixir of Life

Reflection

I read somewhere that at least half of all the poems that have appeared in *The New Yorker* contain some image related to water. It's true of the most recent issue I'm looking at: two poems are published in it, one of which is entitled "An Essay on Clouds."

For a while I found this peculiar. But the more I thought about the plethora of water images, the more sense it made. Much of the known universe exists without water. But life can't. Not just human life but any form of life as we know it. There's nothing more fundamental to life than water. And that's why water has always been such a sacred religious symbol—of breath, of purity, of abundance.

We know this deep inside ourselves. We know that up to sixty percent of our bodies are water. We know that all that is naturally green around us is green because of water. We know that when we thirst, we thirst at the most basic level for water. We know that we and the earth will die without it.

But we forget all that because in the developed world it usually appears before us so effortlessly. We hardly sense how at risk it—and we—are. The very elixir of life at enormous risk of scarcity, toxicity. Time to reclaim the fundamentals. Time to wash ourselves of our indolence. Time to refresh our devotion. Time to cherish that without which little we love would be.

Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz is President of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

Practice

Today's practice is to consider how water sustains your life. Engage in a [Water Appreciation](#) (from wizdUUm.net) or find some other way to cultivate mindfulness and gratitude for water.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the [Blue Buckets campaign](#) from the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, part of Climate Justice Sunday.



Day 3: Bless the World

Reflection

April, just around the corner, is planting month in my backyard garden—time to transplant the kale and broccoli seedlings that sprouted indoors, back when the snow outside reached almost to the top of the

fence. (I live near Boston!) This is both a spiritual and an ecological practice, a time to remind myself of how deeply symbiotic I am, not only with the kale and broccoli but also with the earthworms that bring air into the soil, the bacteria that fix nitrogen in it, and the birds that will share the garden's bounty throughout the year ahead. Gardening is also a reminder of my own power, as Rebecca Parker puts it, to bless or to curse the world.

Just as every breath I take emits carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, every plant that I nurture absorbs that carbon back into its own substance and eventually—if I compost it properly!—returns it to the soil. On a larger scale, agriculture currently accounts for one third of all greenhouse emissions, largely because of the depletion of topsoil, the use of fossil-fuel powered machinery, and the emission of methane by livestock. But agriculture can also be a place of earth healing when farmers see renewed topsoil as their primary crop, when they welcome wild plants and animals as full citizens of the farm community, when they plant windmills amid their cornfields and harvest methane as well as milk from their herds. Those of us who are not farmers can participate in this healing by purchasing local and organic food, by advocating for farm policies that support climate-friendly practices, and by blessing our own backyard or community gardens, one seed at a time.

Dan McKannan is Ralph Waldo Emerson Professor of Unitarian Universalism at Harvard Divinity School.

Practice

Today's practice is to plant some seeds or seedlings. Start some herbs growing in your kitchen or a container garden. Rejoice in the magic of a single seed.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the story of the [UU Church of Akron, OH](#), and their food justice ministry combining ethical eating, community gardening, food education, and addressing hunger. Part of shifting to a low carbon future is increasing everyone's access to healthy, local produce, particularly within low-income communities. Get inspired by stories from Akron, OH, and also groups like [Shining Light Garden Foundation](#).



Day 4: The Common Good

Reflection

We breathe the common wind of the earth
no matter where we live, who we love,
what language we speak.

We drink the common water of the earth
no matter our skin color, how long we live,
the coverings we drape on our forms.

We follow the common paths of the earth
no matter our beliefs, how far we move from home,
the gold that we carry, or its lack.

May we live from these truths:
our hearts open to the holiness all around us,
and our hands turned always toward the common good.

Rev. Kathleen McTigue is the Director of the UU College of Social Justice and serves on the Commit2Respond Steering Committee.

Practice

Today's practice is to reflect on what "the common good" means to you as a person of faith and/or conscience. How are you called by your beliefs or by that which is greater than yourself to act on the common good, and what does that call require of you?

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the brief [history of environmental justice](#) recounted by the UU Environmental Justice Collaboratory on their new website. "Environmental justice" is a specific framework for working for change, grounded in "the common good." Learn more from Robert Bullard in the 3-minute video "[The Genesis of Environmental Justice](#)".



Day 5: The Pond

Reflection

I live in the woods on a pond with my husband and young son and two dogs and dozens of other species above and below and all around us.

More than 100 years ago, a group of wealthy white men started a pit mine in these ancient woods. They dug for months, pulling stones rich in iron ore out of vulnerable Earth. Once they left, our Mother began to heal herself, to transform destruction into an opportunity for life-giving, filling the vacant space with rain. With the water came the deer who drink and the turtles who swim and the groundhogs who dig and the birds who hunt. There are fish in our pond now and wild blue heron who stand as still as the ancient trees who have survived too many violations, the trees who bear witness to the fragility and the regeneration of the forest.

And in the woods is my family, living gently on the edge of the pond, grateful to Earth that we can be part of this living body and knowing our job now is to be lovers and fierce protectors of all the life that blossoms here.

As we enter Climate Justice Month, may we all be lovers and protectors of life.

Rev. Peggy Clarke is the Minister at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester in Hastings, NY. She is also the Racial and Social Justice Consultant for the UUA Metro New York District and on the Steering Committees for the Green Sanctuary Program, UU Environmental Justice Collaboratory, and Commit2Respond, as well as the chair of Food Justice Ministry. She is also a Senior GreenFaith Fellow.

Practice

Today's practice is to talk with a loved one about how you are a lover and protector of the Earth, or share on the Commit2Respond [Facebook page](#) or elsewhere on social media using the hashtag #commit2respond how you have acted to love and protect the Earth.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message are two powerful short videos from Sustainable Human that show how wolves and whales, respectively, are "ecosystem engineers." Rejoice in the truly awesome power of all creation's interdependence as breathtakingly showcased by the Earth's ecosystems: "[Wolves Change Rivers](#)" and "[How Whales Change Climate](#)."



Day 6: Our Creation Story Speaks of Climate Change

Reflection

Long ago, the Great Spirit looked for a home for people, the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe), and for all they would ever need. Out of nothing, that All Loving Spirit created the universe and solar system, including Mother Earth. When She was a cold, lifeless rock, the All Loving Spirit blew life into Her, causing Her to spin and support life.

From that time on, the All Loving Spirit sent spirit helpers to help get Earth ready for Anishinaabeg. Many parts of our Creation Story tell of the deeds accomplished by these spirit helpers. Ojibwe pre-Christian spirituality's belief is in a singular Higher Power and many smaller spirits. It is with the smaller Spirits that much of the day to day spiritual work gets done. These smaller Spirits brought the gifts that make life possible, though all the gifts originate with the Great Spirit.

When Anishinaabe got here, they were given instructions to live by, including Honesty, Respect, Wisdom, Love, Humility, Bravery, and Truth. For thousands of generations, the Anishinaabeg kept it going.

At different times throughout the creation story, there are times of great change. There is mention of visitors coming to our homeland. More recently, Elders have spoken of a fire that will take many gifts of the creation from us. Early on, many thought it was nuclear weapons, others spoke of pollution. Others spoke of the life-giving ceremonial fire that has brought us through good times and bad, and of corruption of that life-giving fire. The Elders, and more, now realize our creation story was speaking of climate change.

The plants are confused, the animals are confused, the Anishinaabeg life ways are becoming increasingly endangered. There are no easy answers for any of this. Perhaps that time of great change is upon us.

Robert Shimek RRI is the Executive Director of the White Earth Land Recovery Project.

Practice

Today's practice is to participate in [Earth Hour](#), a global event of switching off all lights for one hour to focus attention on climate change (check out the inspiring [official video](#)). Earth Hour is TONIGHT from 8:30-9:30pm local time. Use the [Earth Hour tracker](#) to find an event near you or add your own to the map.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the [White Earth Land Recovery Project](#), an organization founded by Winona LaDuke that aims to reclaim the original land base of the White Earth Indian Reservation and preserve original land practices and stewardship. Explore their website and [Native Harvest](#), their online store.

p.s. If you are not American Indian or First Nations, educate yourself and your loved ones about how Indigenous peoples around the globe are at the frontlines of climate change and are leading struggles for climate justice. Two great places to start are the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#) and [Idle No More](#).



Climate Justice Month, Week 2: Reckoning

Dear ones,

Today begins our week-long journey into grieving and reckoning with the losses we are facing as an Earth Community. We are reminded not only of our own mortality, but also of the mortality of the planet. We are asked to face boldly into the knowledge of what humankind has brought to pass in very short time as measured on a geological scale.

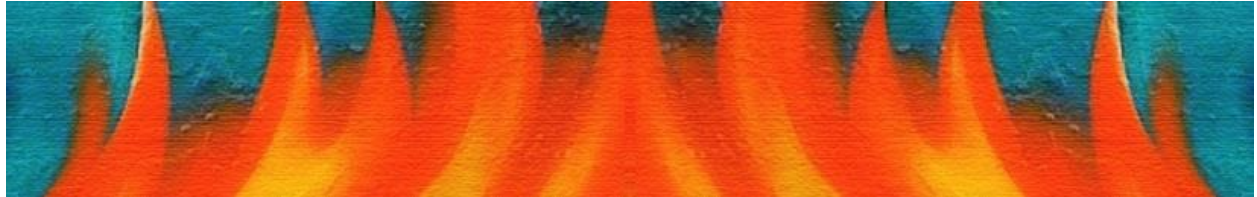
We are reminded to be attentive to the fact that some, by virtue of the many and various markers of a privileged socioeconomic status, can make the temporary choice of distancing themselves from the suffering born of environmental devastation. Let us choose instead to lean into our grief.

We are called to interrupt social norms that designate some species and peoples as disposable and to instead make life choices that promote climate justice. In this week of fire—an element of immediacy and urgency, whose spirit is considered both creator and destroyer of life—let us embrace our grief so that we might deepen the work of transformation.

Let us be bold truth tellers and passionate grieverers, together.

Your Commit2Respond Resource Team,

Rev. Sofia Betancourt
Rev. Peggy Clarke
Tim DeChristopher
Kat Liu
Jennifer Nordstrom



Day 8: Confronting Our Reality

Reflection

What may strike most of us as a frightening proposition is the fact that we mere mortals have the capacity now to decide not only our own life paths, but also the fate of the earth replete with all its luscious complex ecosystems of which we are a part.

The notion of earth as an interconnected web is finally dawning on the stubborn belief of human exceptionalism. We are but a trifling part of global existence, but find ourselves in the unique position of imagining its future. Keeping the earth sustainable for future life, a home to innumerable species in decades to come rests now with our own construct of meaning.

In pursuit of quenching the thirst of our greed, we have looked away from the values that shape meaning in our practical lives. We are blessed with the freedom to mold new paradigms in which the real world is no longer defined by the consumption of things. But we are also free to avoid that freedom which has chained us to addictions of insatiable appetites.

If religion is now understood in these contemporary times as shaping meaning in our practical lives, then surely we must stop looking away from the issues that demand our involvement. Protecting unlimited numbers of species and securing a future for our children emerge as the quintessential religious questions of this era.

How do we honor our habitat? What values do we bring to bear in order to sustain the natural world teeming with life? If we pretend to be religious, we can no longer pretend to have values that take precedence over sustaining the earth. Values are not the province of convenience. Values test our mettle, and we can only pray that we meet the challenge quickly.

Rev. Tom Goldsmith is the senior minister at First Unitarian Church, Salt Lake City.

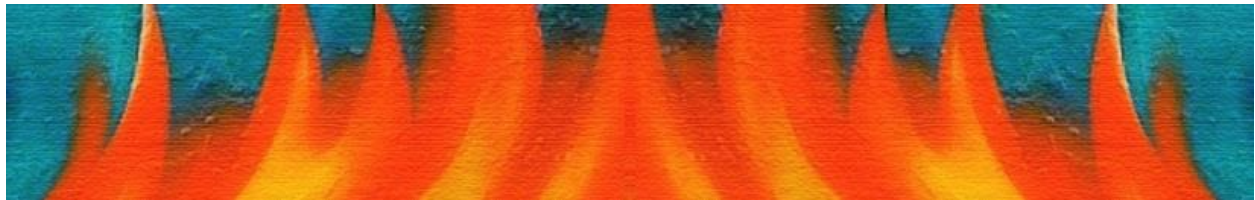
Practice

Today's practice is to reflect on the values you hold and that you bring to bear "in order to sustain the natural world." Each of us as a person of faith or conscience brings our own unique take on the values that shape meaning in our practical lives. Take the time to write down your core values and do something meaningful with the words—for example, add them to a personal altar, share them with a loved one, bury or burn them, post them on a physical or virtual wall.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is Julia Butterfly Hill's [series of 7-10 minute videos on Spiritual Activism](#). In 1997 at the age of 24, Hill began a 2-year act of civil disobedience when she took up residence in a 1,000-year-old redwood tree to save it from destruction and raise awareness of deforestation practices. She has since co-founded the organization [What's Your Tree](#) and grounds her work in the spiritual practice of yoga.

In the six short Spiritual Activism videos Hill covers (1) introduction, (2) spiritual activism and the power of breath, (3) making one's life a legacy, practicing embodied presence, and facing "the disease of disconnect," (4) living so fully and presently in love that there is no room for anything else to exist, (5) making choices that create and model the world we envision, and (6) rejoicing, and the power of extending our definition of community.



Day 9: Reckoning with Fire

Reflection

Fire is "too much with us; late and soon...."

Of late, terrorists made spectacle of massacre, setting ablaze a living man, in a cage.

Of late, 9/11, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Dachau and Auschwitz,

Fiery crosses and lynching trees—hate's infernos.

....

Soon (and now) fossils afire, we warm the oceans, parch the soil, turn trees to kindling.

Of late and soon, self-immolating, we set this world, our home, ablaze.

We make spectacle of massacre.

"For this, for everything, we are out of tune...."

....

But let us never forget, never again—fire "changes everything."

In the beginning was fire, and fire's the seed of stars—

Ex ignis, we come from fire.

Fire, our first tool, warmed and gathered us.

Fire, need not and cannot and will not be, our blazing cage.

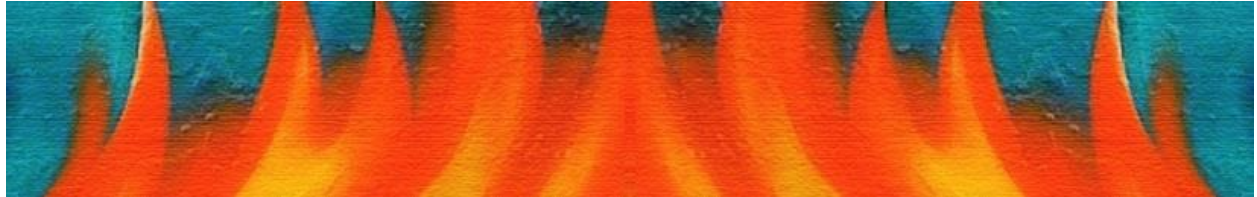
Dr. Michael Hogue is Professor of Theology at Meadville Lombard Theological School and teaches and writes at the interface of religion and ecology.

Practice

Today's practice is to light a flame and reflect on the power and symbolism of fire for you. Dr. Michael Hogue writes of fire's many meanings. What does fire symbolize for you? Honor the complexities and contradictions of fire and consider how to tend the flames of inspiration, resistance, and justice without allowing fire to become "our blazing cage."

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the free movie [Disruption](#). This 52-minute film created by the organizers of the People's Climate March provides a powerful encapsulation of where we are now and how we got to our current social, moral, and ecological crossroads, as well as a behind-the-scenes look at the organizing of the largest climate rally ever. (This 3-minute ["tipping points" excerpt](#) is a great shareable clip.)



Day 10: Broken Hearts, Wake the Town

Reflection

Turn my head from suffering and I miss life, too.
Crack me open
bring me back alive, and
show me truth.

Turn toward suffering and claim life,
Present to hurt and lies.

Our anguished hearts
honor the beauty and necessity
of lives beyond our own.

Let our broken hearts ignite
the warning fires.
Rouse the town to suffering,
to goodness, and to life.

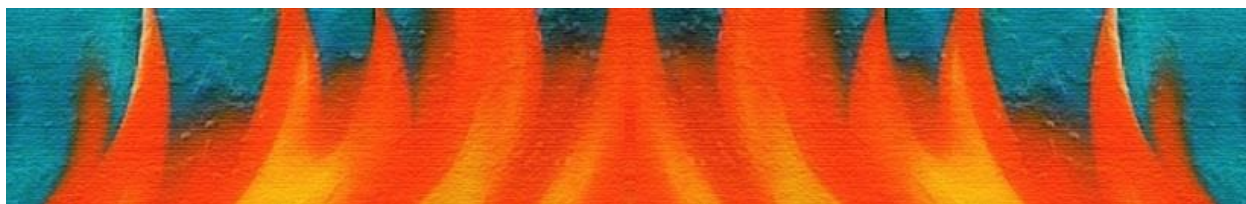
Rev. Karen Brammer is the UUA's Green Sanctuary Manager and Minister at the Fourth Unitarian Society of Westchester in Mohegan Lake, NY.

Practice

Today's practice is to participate in the [Climate Ribbon](#) arts ritual, a project that grew out of the People's Climate March to grieve what each of us stands to lose to "climate chaos" and affirm our solidarity as we unite to fight against it. [Join the Climate Ribbon](#) by adding your voice to the project and/or organizing a ritual for a group of loved ones or fellow people of faith and conscience.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is [this collection of worship resources](#) from Commit2Respond, which has been growing throughout Climate Justice Month. Helping each other grieve is essential in our communities of faith. You can add your own most meaningful worship resources by commenting on the page; resources from all traditions are welcome.



Day 11: Radical Hope

Reflection

Preventing climate change is impossible. The forces our folly has unleashed can no longer be called back. Our tasks now are to slow climate change, eventually to reverse it, and to save what can be saved—including our souls.

It is as if we were passengers on the great ship *Titanic* on its maiden crossing of the North Atlantic. Suddenly the huge vessel shudders. Gradually, with agonizing slowness, we come to realize first that the ship has been struck, then that it has been breached, then (can it be possible?) that it is in trouble, and finally that it is sinking.

Eventually some of us cross the threshold from shock, disbelief, and outrage into an acceptance of our circumstance. Not an acceptance that it is acceptable or just or fair, but an acceptance that *it is*. And then, if we are wise enough and brave enough, we turn from complaint to commitment:

How do I live my life for the rest of my life?
To what purpose am I faithful?
How courageously and creatively can I respond to this catastrophe?
How can I serve?
How can I sacrifice?

And in that turning, there is a moment when we find ourselves standing on the tilting deck lashed by wind and spray and gripped by a wild, extravagant, even fearless joy.

It is sometimes complained of Unitarian Universalists that we celebrate Easter while ignoring Good Friday—that we want the sweetness and light without the suffering and darkness.

Whether that charge is true or not, it will no longer be possible. Good Friday is coming. Good Friday is upon us. But Easter, too, is coming. Easter, too, will come.

Against our will but with our faith, we are called into a future beyond our dreams, beyond our nightmares, beyond our comprehension. We are called to devotion and sacrifice and imagination.

We are called to radical hope.

Rev. Fred Small is the Senior Minister, First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist. Note: This reflection is adapted from the sermon "Radical Hope," preached at First Parish in Cambridge on April 10, 2011.

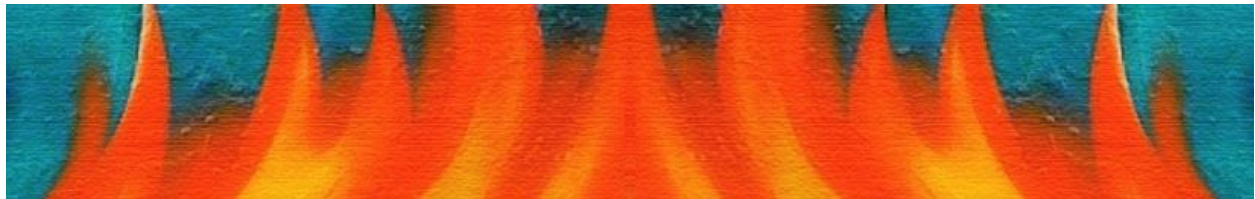
Practice

Today's practice is to be present with the emotions that arise in you as you consider the crisis of climate change already upon us and the values and practices that continue to lead humanity down the path of destruction, by way of doing a movement meditation. Either walk in a spiral of concentric circles or trace your finger in a spiral on a flat surface.

Notice each emotion come up in you, allow yourself to fully feel it, and then notice as it moves through you and other emotions arise. If you find yourself getting distracted by thoughts of your to-do list or other things, simply take a breath and put the thoughts aside. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, focus on your breath and your movement and allow the emotions to simply pass through you.

Resource

Today's resource is "[Working through Environmental Despair](#)," an excerpt of a piece by Joanna Macy made available via both audio and text by Quest for Meaning.



Day 12: Honoring Our Grief

Reflection

Living on this planet at this time of crisis and change, it's hard not feel a sense of pain and grief. But how often do we open ourselves up to this painful reality, to sit with those difficult emotions, instead of turning away and going back to business as usual?

"We are caught between two fears," say Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone: "The fear that if we do nothing our world will fall into crisis and the fear of acknowledging how bad things are because of the fear it brings up." So many of us deal with this conflict by trying to push the crisis out of view. But we aren't really free of it; it's just sitting there like a pit in our stomach. We may try to numb the pain, but it numbs the joy as well. Our energy starts to sag, and we feel less alive. And as we become dependent on the temporary escape provided the numbness, as a society we become unable to deal with the deepening crisis unfolding around us.

What if, rather than dragging us down into a bottomless pit of despair, getting in touch with that pain, that sadness, that anger, that fear, is in itself liberating? By honoring our emotions, we begin to transform them. We recognize that our sadness and grief are manifestations of our deep love for the world. We recognize that our anger arises from our passion for justice. And we can then begin to use those emotions in service to helping heal our world.

Matthew McHale works with the UU Environmental Justice Collaboratory, UU Ministry for Earth, and Allies for Racial Equity. Matthew is a recent graduate of Starr King School for the Ministry and lives in Oakland, CA.

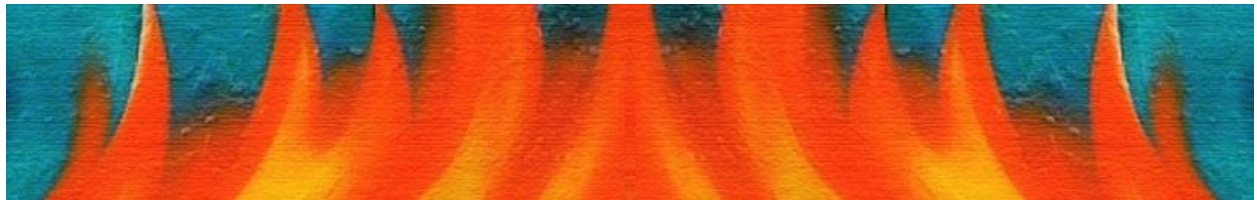
Practice

Today's practice is to answer the following open sentences through journaling and reflecting:

- "When I imagine the world we will leave our children, it looks like...."
- "One of my worst fears about the future is..."
- "The feelings about this that I carry around with me are..."
- "Ways I avoid these feelings are..."
- "Some ways I can use these feelings are..."

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the book [*Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy*](#) by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone. McHale says: "Thanks to Joanna, whose grief work, as part of 'the work that reconnects,' has been transformative for my own justice work, and serves as significant inspiration for this reflection. More can be found at www.joannamacy.net."



Day 13: Transforming Seeds

Reflection

For the past two years I have been living in Fresno, California, blessed to be sheltering at the foot of three national parks. Giant Sequoias are but one species in the glorious landscapes of Yosemite, King's Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks, yet their towering forms and ecosystem sensitivity make them a larger than life presence in our area. This week I am reminded that these iconic trees grow from the tiniest of seeds, and that their very existence is dependent on the transformation of fire.

On this Holy Saturday, as we are counseled to embrace our despair as a staging ground for the resurgence of life, let us look for tiny seeds of great transformation. What in your life is calling to you as part of your commitment to slowing climate change? Where are the indications that your community is ready to engage environmental concerns through the lens of justice?

Unitarian Universalism reminds us to examine our faith commitments, build coalitions, prioritize voices pushed to the margins, and honor the outcry of a suffering planet. This day, and every day, let us commit to an honest engagement with environmental destruction so that we might clearly identify and nurture small seeds with a mighty potential to transform the future.

The Rev. Sofia Betancourt is pursuing a Ph.D. in Environmental Ethics and African American Studies while serving as Interim Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno, CA.

Practice

Today's practice is to seek out seeds of great transformation in your community or region. Learn something new about who—particularly among frontline communities—is taking action to make collective

shifts toward a low carbon future, advance the human rights of impacted communities, and grow the movement. Explore how you might be able to help.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the [Our Power Campaign](#), a mobilization to end the era of extreme energy and implement a just transition to local living economies. Get inspired: check out their six [Our Power Communities](#) for amazing stories going on right now of building coalitions and community resilience. Check out this 8-minute [video](#) to learn about one of their pilots and what it means to work toward a just transition.



Climate Justice Month, Week 3: Reconnecting

Dear ones,

Today we begin our week-long journey to reconnect with love, earth, our community, and our neighbors in order to restore our souls for the work ahead.

We just spent a week honoring our grief over the wanton destruction of the earth and its human communities, but we cannot stay in despair. Being truly honest about the crisis we are facing returns us to our deep love for this world, for love is at the root of our sense of loss.

Today, we reconnect with that love and remember why we entered this process: because we love and are inextricably interconnected with all the beings of this earth and the earth itself. Hope lives in these connections. By reaching out to reconnect with our community, our neighbors, and our allies in this struggle to reclaim life for all, we re-source our souls for the work ahead. Reaching out reconnects us to our own well of inspiration and to relationships that make us resilient.

We know power is everywhere and can be used for good and for ill. The power of human connection can strengthen us. But power is not evenly distributed in our society. We carry this awareness in our connections, and commit to an awareness of our own power in relationship, the power of others, and different patterns of power in society. We choose to source our work with power that nourishes and works for justice—power that serves solidarity—and work against power that harms some and privileges others.

We will routinely return to a practice of awareness so that our work for climate justice truly nourishes all. We commit to working in ways that share power, that redistribute power more fairly, and that use power to create a more beautiful world.

Your Commit2Respond Resource Team,

Rev. Sofía Betancourt
Rev. Peggy Clarke

Tim DeChristopher
Kat Liu
Jennifer Nordstrom



Day 15: Wake Me!

Reflection

Oh wake me!
Out from behind whatever great stone.

Stub my toe on beauty.
Knock my shin on the hard edge of covenant.

Do not let me believe everything I think.
Weak kneed, I will cross the bridge to learn.

Wake me to witness and honor complexity.
Hand to hand we will move in a new way.

Let me give myself to the community of all beings.
By day I will sing praises to kindness.

At night my body will absorb life's impulse to carry on
Through air, through ethos
Through us, through all.

Rev. Karen Brammer is the UUA's Green Sanctuary Manager and the Minister at the Fourth Unitarian Society of Westchester in Mohegan Lake, NY.

Practice

Today's practice is to awaken your body and mind through the practice of mindful breathing. Engage in this [Air Appreciation](#) meditation from WzdUUm.net and/or this [Facing Climate Change with Heart](#) guided meditation from One Earth Sangha. Reflect on what air means to you, on the power of breath, on the fact that the very atoms contained in each breath you draw have passed through other beings and elements of creation throughout millennia.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is [Breathe: A Thich Nhat Hanh Journal](#) and [Breathe: You Are Alive!](#) The Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing is considered one of the three most essential teachings of the Buddha, and these two books by internationally renowned Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh provide an introduction to this powerful spiritual practice.



Day 16: Generate Abundance and Hope

Reflection

Where do you find hope?
In the people around you?
Those with whom you share a covenant, or a hope,
or a determination that evil will not have the last word?

In this and every moment, our faith reminds us
that although there is hardship and also evil,
there is far more good in the world;
that we can and must come together
across the ways in which we understand the universe
to make that good available to all;
and that we are the hands and eyes and tongues
of God—of *good*. It is ours to live
that goodness into lively, vibrant, ecstatic being.

I challenge you to create justice and save this world:
figure out one new way in which you can
resist greed and consumption,
generate abundance and hope.
Toss wildflower seeds in empty lots
and plant trees in desolated areas.
Work to have a polluted place restored.
Join with those who advocate for this earth.

You may not solve it all.
You will not solve it all.
Yet if we each take up our part in making change,
change will come; if we each live
as the embodiment of good,
good will live in this world.

Rev. Adam Robersmith is a spiritual director, an aspiring permaculturist, and the Parish Minister at Second Unitarian Church, Chicago IL.

Practice

Today's practice is to reflect on what brings you hope. Robersmith asks, "where do you find hope?" Spend time today answering that question. You might journal on it, create art about it, talk with one or more people about it, or share on social media about it.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the inspiring, hope-filled story of [Evergreen Cooperatives](#). Evergreen works to create "green" living wage jobs for residents in six low-income Cleveland neighborhoods. Their community-based enterprises include Evergreen Laundry, Evergreen Energy Solutions, and Green City Growers. Learn more by reading "[Hope: One Head of Lettuce at a Time](#)" by Pamela Sparr or watching [this 7-minute video](#).



Day 17: Experience Connection

Reflection

What does deep spirituality *feel* like to you? Spirituality is impossible to define and difficult to describe.

For me, it feels like *connection*—connection to myself, to others around me, to the earth and all of creation. Connection to myself feels like deep peace, awareness, calm, authenticity. Connection to others feels like compassion, community, acceptance, and enduring love.

Spirituality is not an idea; it is an *experience*.

When I experience connection, dividing lines disappear. Inner conflict gives way to integrity. The line that separates my individuality from others fades; we become one. I find connections with my deepest self in times of solitary practice and reflection. I find connection with others in community, often in worship. All the great spiritual traditions teach this.

Today the connection with creation, with the earth and the cosmos, may be the most difficult. We live in artificial, controlled environments that separate us from the natural world. More than humans in any other time, we live separated from the natural world, the world from which we emerged and that sustains our lives.

We so very much need to experience our world. We need to let go of controlling our world and allow ourselves to become one with it. We find ourselves when we lose our selves.

May we connect, really connect. When we do, it changes everything.

Rev. Peter Morales is the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Practice

Today's practice is to experience connection. Connection to yourself, to others around you, to the earth and all of creation. How do you experience connection? Take time for it today. It might be a walk in the woods, or a visit to a waterfall. It might be lighting candles, praying, or visiting a sanctuary. It might be a yoga practice or a lovingkindness meditation. It might be being of service to a community organization. Experience connection in your own way.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the movie [I AM](#), a 2010 documentary by a filmmaker who set out to answer the question of what's wrong with the world but ultimately ended up discovering what's right—exploring the deep connections among all life by way of conversations with some of the world's leading scientists, environmentalists, religious leaders, and philosophers, including Bishop Desmond Tutu, Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and Coleman Banks. Be inspired by this [7-minute clip of the film](#) that talks about deep connections that defy logic.



Day 18: Interconnectedness

Reflection

Interconnectedness. A concept that unites us with one another and all that exists.
A concept that calls us to a deeper sense of ourselves.

What does it mean when our personal comfort and well-being
exists side-by-side
with environmental devastation, racial inequity, ever-increasing income gaps, persistent gender
inequality, cruelty towards other species... and on and on...
...the list goes on, of all the ways in which we have separated ourselves from one another and the world
around us.

In the midst of relative comfort
it's easy
to get lost in our day-in, day-out worries:
no one's life is perfect,
we each have "stuff" that we're dealing with.
And, in dealing with our stuff,
we often forget
that we may be living blessed lives—our basic daily needs are met.
Perhaps more so, we may even have abundance.

The world can no longer wait
for us to find more time,
or be in a better space,
to engage in the issues that need us.
There will always be personal concerns to deal with;
there will always be good excuses that can be found.
Interconnectedness calls us to transcend
that part of ourselves that seeks to keep us small:
that voice
that tells us that we cannot make an impact,
that the problems before us are too large.

Despite inconvenience,
despite personal worries or concerns,

despite knowing with certainty what impact will be made,
there are those who try,
against great odds,
to make this world a better place.
Why not you? Why not me?

Be the change our planet needs.
The interconnectedness of our world rests in each of our hands.

Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti is Senior Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Cherry Hill, NJ, and, along with Jennifer Nordstrom, co-editor of a forthcoming Skinner House book on environmental justice.

Practice

Today's practice is to explore interconnectedness by tracing the origins of one or more elements of "relative comfort" in your life. Part of reducing separateness between ourselves and the world around us is knowing where our [energy](#), [water](#), clothing, [food](#), phones, and other elements we depend on come from and whose lives they have impacted along the way. Start by tracing the origins of just one thing.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is "[The Story of Stuff](#)," a 20-minute video that exposes the connections between a huge number of environmental and social issues, and calls us together to create a more sustainable and just world. You might also be interested in the book [Confessions of an Eco-Sinner](#), in which author Fred Pearce tells the story of tracking down the sources of his stuff and the people touched by everyday items in his life.



Day 19: Fighting for Air

Reflection

In Denver, we talk a lot about air—mostly because there's less of it here, up at a mile high. It's a reality I confront during a long, exhausting ultimate frisbee game.

I think there's value in feeling the fatigue, in really experiencing it. When I gasp for breath after chasing down a receiver or defending a pass, I feel acutely air's vital importance. Each sprint renews my commitment to protecting this invaluable resource, for my lungs find themselves fighting for air.

A few weeks ago in New Orleans—a city with thick, humid air—a group of UUs in which I was a part committed to pursuing climate justice. I was reminded by brilliant fellow Unitarians and Universalists that climate justice connects with other forms of justice work. People are impacted disproportionately by the exponentially growing climate crisis based on region, economic status, location, and so much more.

With similar urgency to the feeling in my lungs after an intense game, people and other beings are fighting for air, fighting for our Earth, fighting for life. President John F. Kennedy said, “Our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.”

May we feel the urgency to fight for our air and fight for our future—together.

Kenny Wiley, a UU World senior editor based in Denver, works for Prairie Unitarian Universalist Church as its director of religious education.

Practice

Today's practice is to engage deeply with the disproportionate impacts of our environmental crisis, particularly along lines of class and race. Take time today to explore new learning and share with others.

Hear from Dr. Beverly Wright on [growing up in “cancer alley”](#) in Louisiana, and from Deirdre Smith of 350.org on the [connections between Hurricane Katrina and Ferguson](#), environmental destruction and racial injustice—words that attain new power as the United States reels this week from [yet another](#) devastating shooting of an unarmed black man by a white police officer in North Charleston, NC.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the powerful [story of Kimberly Wasserman](#), a community organizer from a Mexican American neighborhood on the southwest side of Chicago who successfully organized her community to fight for their air and get two aging, polluting coal-fired power plants shut down (see the [3-minute video](#)).

For more resources, check out the “Air of Injustice” series on the disproportionate impacts of coal-fired power plants on [African Americans](#) and [Latina/o and Hispanic Americans](#). You might also be interested in this [comprehensive collection](#) of environmental justice and environmental racism resources from the Energy Justice Network.



Day 20: A Just and Vibrant Future

Reflection

Our Unitarian Universalist faith calls on us to confront the crisis of climate change that plagues our world and narrows the possibilities for our collective future.

Our primary challenge isn't convincing people of its devastating impacts. It's helping people truly believe that we can win and create the profound changes necessary for a better world. As people of faith we have the responsibility and opportunity to bring forward our spiritual traditions, rituals, and practices to help people meet these times with courage.

We look to, learn from, and join forces with front line working class communities and communities of color in the United States and around the world confronting the worst of climate chaos. Climate chaos unleashed by economic systems that turn the earth and people into resources to exploit and commodities to sell and by political systems that concentrate wealth and power for the few at the expense of the majority.

We look to, learn from, and join forces with front line communities generating resilient community strategies for sustainability, cooperative economics for a new way of being with each other and the planet, and resistance movements that can bring about the systemic change we need.

Let us pray, sing, march, and take direct action; let us look into the face of oblivion and choose to believe that we can ensure a just and vibrant future. With the courage of our ancestors, the power of global solidarity, and the commitment and community of our faith, may it be so.

Chris Crass is a longtime social justice organizer and the author of Towards Collective Liberation: Anti-Racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis, and Movement Building Strategy published by PM Press; learn more at www.chriscrass.org.

Practice

Today's practice is to reflect on the resources—material, spiritual, relational—that you have at your disposal that can help you make change and deepen your impact, as we move toward the final week of Climate Justice Month, focused on grounded commitment. Where do you draw strength, what resources are available to you, and who are you connected to that can support you in making new commitments to action for climate justice? Make a list in writing, in a journal or elsewhere, of these vital resources.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the incredible [Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project](#), an Oakland-based group that inspires and engages in transformative action towards the liberation and restoration of land, labor, and culture. Movement Generation is rooted in vibrant social movements led by low-income communities and communities of color committed to a Just Transition away from profit and pollution and towards healthy, resilient and life-affirming local economies. Find out more about [their work](#).



Climate Justice Month, Week 4: Commitment

Dear ones,

Today it is time to get to work. Today we begin our fourth week together, after celebrating our Earth's abundance in week one, grieving and reckoning with loss in week two, and reconnecting with the sources of joy and love that sustain us in week three.

It is time to (re)commit to building a different way of being, with each other and with Mother Earth. It is time to (re)commit to co-creating the Beloved Community. Instead of “sacrifice zones” where people suffer so that the rest of us can have cheaper energy and goods, we will build communities where people share equally in both burdens and benefits. Instead of treating workers and animals alike as expendable resources to be used for profit, we will value all lives, and relate to each other, as Martin Buber taught us, as I and Thou.

In committing to building the Beloved Community, we're not just talking about changing laws and policies, although changes in laws and policies are urgently needed. But changes in policies alone will not ultimately work unless we transform the dominant culture and way of being.

As people of faith, we are uniquely situated to help bring this about, by keeping our actions grounded in our principles and values, by a spiritual practice of reflecting on the effects of our actions, and by intentionally, faithfully looking to the voices and leadership of those marginalized by the current dominant paradigm.

So let us create the stories, songs, prayers, and rituals that inform our vision; and let us work in our communities to make it reality.

Your Commit2Respond Resource Team,

Rev. Sofia Betancourt
Rev. Peggy Clarke
Tim DeChristopher
Kat Liu
Jennifer Nordstrom



Day 22: Roots

Reflection

We are told that we were made in God's image. Sometimes I think that means that we started out as trees.

We are told that God is nearer to us than our breath. Sometimes I think that means that God was the soil that cradled our roots and the rain that showered upon our leaves and the sun toward which we turned our branches.

As trees, we rested in the Earth's embrace. We talked with God in great rustling sighs and soft raspy whispers and swayed in the wind and delighted together with her in the movement.

But one day, we longed to move more freely. Especially when the autumn came and our leaves began to fall and tumble away from us. We wanted nothing more than to go with them.

One of us figured it out first—that we could pull ourselves up, roots first, and move as we wished. One by one, those who would become human gently eased our roots from the soil. We delighted in walking and leaping and swimming and running and God delighted in watching us.

But when we rested, roots and tendrils would begin growing from our feet back down into the ground, and we would be afraid of getting stuck; afraid of watching our leaves drift away again year after year, unable to follow.

So we made shoes and carpets and cars and planes to shield us from the soil. We wandered the sky and the seas and the earth, as lonely as clouds. We forgot what it was to be held by the Earth, cradled in God's embrace.

Only sometimes... babies remember, when they eat the dirt. Mourners remember, when they fall to hug the ground and sob. Lovers remember, when they lie on their backs in the grass and stare up at the stars.

Can you remember?

Rev. Molly Housh Gordon is the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbia, Missouri.

Practice

Today's practice is to get rooted in [SHIFT](#), the first pillar of Commit2Respond: our collective shift to a low carbon future. Today, share one or more ways you have already worked to shift to a low carbon future, both small and large, individual and collective. It can be things you've done in the past or ongoing ways you are currently contributing to our low carbon future. Share on Commit2Respond's [share forum](#), or share on social media using the hashtag #commit2respond.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the inspiring story of First Parish Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist, which [voted in 2013 to divest](#) its holdings in fossil fuel stocks over the next five years, and this week is participating in [Harvard Heat Week](#), a week of actions calling on Harvard to divest its endowment from the fossil fuel industry. Starting yesterday, each day of the week includes an action training held at First Parish Cambridge. If you or your congregation has divested, [share](#)! If you or your congregation has investments and hasn't divested, [make the commitment](#).



Day 23: Saying "Yes"

Reflection

When I was a kid, I gobbled up book series like *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The thing that most captured my imagination was that these stories were about exceptional people acting under extraordinary circumstances who save the world. And I wondered, if faced with similar circumstances, whether I could prove myself a hero like they were.

Not that long ago I was thinking about the crises facing us—the perpetual wars, violent intolerance, gross economic inequity, and looming above all the threat of devastating climate change—and suddenly realized that the stuff of my childhood fantasies was upon us. We are facing catastrophes.

There may be no fire-breathing dragons terrorizing towns, but there are coal-burning power plants that belch soot and greenhouse gases into our air. There may be no evil wizards plotting to take over the world but there are multinational corporations willing to devastate our Earth and exploit Her people for the sake of profits.

And I realized that heroes are indeed special people. But they aren't special because they're the “chosen” ones—offspring of gods, people with special birthmarks or powers—rather, they're special because they said “Yes.” The circumstances demanded that someone act, as the circumstances do now, and rather than looking away and leaving the work to others, heroes are the ones who say, “Yes, I'll do my part.”

Friends, we are facing extraordinary circumstances. Now is the time to show what we're really capable of. Not for glory, but for love—because the work needs to be done. Let us be heroes for Mother Earth and say “Yes.”

Kat Liu is a board member of Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth, a member of Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Collaboratory, and the owner/curator of wzdUUm.net.

Practice

Today's practice is to prepare the ground for yourself or a group you are a part of to make a new commitment to action that will contribute to our collective [SHIFT](#) to a low carbon future. If you haven't already, start a process of discernment about where your growing edge is and what your next step is to deepen your existing commitment. One suggested step of preparation is to find out the sources of the energy you use and explore the repercussions of its use for the climate and people.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message are the [Earth Day resources](#) available from Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth. Individuals, families, and congregations are invited to connect to one or more issues that relate to realizing economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable communities, and this year's Earth Day theme is the critical role that energy plays in our world and our future.



Day 24: The Return of Earth/She

Reflection

The Earth has returned. She is living, breathing,
Realizing her breath was leaving. She
was needing us to remember her worth,
to recognize her worth all over again.

We used to be her friends. We used to help
her heal us. Help her, heal us. Help her heal us.
And then, she lost all trust and faith in us.

She has returned mad, saddened. Mad, saddened.
However, she's empowered by this new commitment
We are signing on to. We are signing on to.

She wants you, me, and the rest of the human beings
Who populate this planet to never take her for granted
again. To never take her for granted again.

If she is dying, then who wins?
If she is dying, then who wins?
If Earth is dying, who really wins?

She is providing for species.

We live in a cycle that provides
for one another. That provides for
one another.

You and I, we are Earth's sisters
and brothers. We must take care of one
another. We must take care of one another.

Her lungs are smothered with toxins,
radioactive chemicals, and plastic
She cannot digest. She has cancerous
garbage in her breasts. We have polluted
Earth to death.

Unless, we take a step forward and reverse
Our damaging effects, our damaging effects.
Our damaging effects.

Our next steps should be radical movements
that peacefully changes things. That peacefully
changes things with civility.

We have the ability. We have the ability.

Earth is alive. We can't let her die.

I want my Earth back.
I want my Earth back.
I want my Earth back.

I want to take each of our solutions
Then spin them into 180 degree revolutions
We all have effective contributions
We need to turn our passion into action,
execution.

Drum circles, live spoken word theater,
or even getting arrested. We are all a collective
that can't be defeated. That can't be defeated.
Immediate action is needed, is needed.

What about our children?

What about future generations?

Who is going to save the lungs of the
eco system? Who is going to save
the lungs of the eco system?

Toxic water slaughters the frogs and
the fish. Imagine how much they wished
We didn't pollute their habitats. Clean
water, clean air, imagine that!

We need our Earth back, she returns.
We need our Earth back, it is her turn.

Christopher Sims is a spoken word poet, an environmental justice activist, and a member of the Board of Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM).

Practice

Today's practice is to get rooted in [ADVANCE](#), the second pillar of Commit2Respond: advancing the human rights of affected communities. Today, share one or more ways you have already worked to advance human rights for people affected by our environmental crisis. It could be things you've done in the past or ways you are currently being of service. Share on Commit2Respond's [share forum](#), or share on social media using the hashtag #commit2respond.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the inspiring work of the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship (BUF) and their partnership with the Lummi Nation and other First Nations peoples. Over the last ten years, BUF has developed relationships, educated themselves, and worked to be of service to the Lummi and further their rights as this coastal community has struggled to protect their sacred lands and the entire Salish Sea ecosystem from the fossil fuels industry. Learn more about BUF's [Native American Connections Ministry Team](#) and their involvement in the Lummi [Totem Pole Journey](#) for justice.



Day 25: Transformative Questions

Reflection

Among the greatest blessings of my life has been the mentorship of the late geologist, Father Thomas Berry.

Of the many things he has left us are his masterpiece *The Great Work*. Under this rubric, Thomas offers us three questions, three “koans” that we would work with over and over until they transform our way of seeing Earth, our living, communal body.

The first koan to begin the slow, subtle, substantive transformation toward ecological consciousness is: *"Is my next thought, word, or deed sustainable for Earth?"* I ask it as I go about my day, as I reach for something to sustain *me*, nurture *me*, entertain *me*, benefit *me*...

The second: *"Is my next thought, word, or deed an expression of greater intimacy with Earth?"* I ask it as I go about my day in a highly technologized, computerized culture in which I need not leave proximity to a fridge or computer to survive a regular American day. I ask it as I take my own ecological inventory and assess how I am greening or graying my sensorium, my soul.

The last question intended to lead me more deeply into a green mind and heart: *"How is my next thought, word, or deed a way of celebrating Earth?"* How is it a way of entering into Earth's marvelous festivals? How might I practice bringing myself to the Great Presence in all the life about me: all the eyes that see me, the ears that hear me, the breaths that breathe me, the great flow of energy that sustains me?

Simple, subtle, revolutionary questions: Thomas Berry's gift to our ecological transformation. With gratitude and hope we turn them over again and again with each breath for our own conversion and for the life and grace of *Earth*.

Dr. Kathleen Deignan, CND, is a Professor of Religious Studies, founding director of the Iona Spirituality Institute, Senior GreenFaith Fellow '08, and co-convenor of the Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue.

Practice

Today's practice is to prepare the ground for yourself or a group you are a part of to make a new commitment to action that will [ADVANCE](#) the human rights of people affected by the environmental crisis. If you haven't already, start a process of discernment about where your growing edge is and what your next step is to deepen your existing commitment. One suggested step of preparation is to learn who is already acting to address suffering and advance rights in local and global communities, and explore how you can follow the leadership of people from frontline affected communities.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message are the [service learning trips](#) offered by the Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice. These experiential learning programs help people of faith and conscience cross boundaries, gain insight, and gain the tools they need to further justice and human rights in the world, in partnership with frontline community organizations. Learn about [climate justice-related programs](#) and make a commitment to serving and learning in an affected community.



Day 26: Embodied Intimacy

Reflection

*Why should one seek outwardly for a treasure,
when the field of the body has its own bright jewel?*
—Pao-chih

I have come to believe the change necessary to transform cultures and institutions for the good, both on the personal and on the systemic level, requires embodied intimacy.

This is especially true now when human and Earth systems are under catastrophic stress—due partly because the Earth is viewed as inert, as a commodity and an infinite resource, and because only certain “types” of bodies are viewed as valuable and worthy of admiration, respect, and, in fact, of life.

The change that is required of us, as we face into the storm of intersecting and complex problems sweeping across the planet, is that we must become intimate with our lives—that is, with our bodies and with the Earth—in ways that we never have before as a collective human species.

To succeed in providing sanctuary for life and resilient enclaves for our own thriving in the coming decades, we must commit to fully allow and encourage the natural rising of a sense of embodied intimacy.

May we discover/forgo together the disciplines and communities of support to make it so.

Rev. Kurt Kuhwald is the Endorsed Community Minister at the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, CA, and a member of the Steering Committee for the Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Collaboratory.

Practice

Today’s practice is to get rooted in [GROW](#), the third pillar of Commit2Respond: growing the climate justice movement. Today, share one or more ways you have already worked to grow the movement and create ripple effects of engagement. It could be things you’ve done in the past or ongoing ways you are currently growing the movement. Share on Commit2Respond’s [share forum](#), or share on social media using the hashtag #commit2respond.

Resource

Today’s resource for deepening this message is the inspiring story of the Florida Interfaith Climate Conference “[Bridging Spirituality, Healing and Action](#)” that took place in Longwood, FL, last weekend, organized by the Florida Council of Churches in conjunction with UU Justice Florida (a Unitarian Universalist state action network). Eighty people crossed divides of faith, age, means, and more and deepened connections, gained grounding, and were inspired and empowered to create change. [Find out more](#) and [share your story](#) from growing the movement.



Day 27: Committing Is About Joy

Reflection

Committing to climate justice has never been about sacrifice in my life.

In 2009, my friend Roseann and I created [InterGenerate](#), a small, food-justice organization in the exurbs of NYC. InterGenerate starts community gardens for people across a variety of diversities to grow our own food. We have three gardens and a chicken co-op.

We hoped InterGenerate would create environmentally and socially sustainable communities. We didn't know it would become a catalyst for transformation.

Children lie in the grass with the chickens, gardeners delicately nurse milkweed to secure food for butterflies, young women kneel for hours thinning beets, someone gleefully posts a picture of her first strawberry. And they aren't alone. A young couple report finally feeling at home in their town and a teen has taken his own plot so he can learn how to live gently and a widower tells us the garden saved his life. And as a result, I know the way we live, the way we connect with Earth and each other, is changing.

Committing to climate justice isn't about sacrifice. It's about being alive and connected to Earth and a multi-species community.

For me, the decision to grow the food my family eats and to source most of what we don't grow from local farms wasn't as huge as it seems. I started small. I started in our garden and at farmer's markets, shifting our shopping habits slowly. I joined a CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) farm share. I learned the art of canning and preserving. Slowly. With friends. And that circle grew and still grows as others want to live profoundly connected to Earth and each other.

Committing to climate justice has never been about sacrifice in my life. It is now, and has always been, about joy.

Rev. Peggy Clarke is the Minister at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester in Hastings, NY. She is also the Racial and Social Justice Consultant for the Metro NY District, on the Steering Committees for Green Sanctuary, UU EJ Collaboratory and Commit2Respond as well as the chair of the Food Justice Ministry. She is also a Senior GreenFaith Fellow.

Practice

Today's practice is to prepare the ground for yourself or a group you are a part of to make a new commitment to action that will [GROW](#) the climate justice movement. If you haven't already, start a process of discernment about where your growing edge is and what your next step is to deepen your existing commitment. One suggested step of preparation is to learn more and educate others about the goals and framework of climate justice, as well as the intersections and shared ground between different struggles for justice.

Resource

Today's resource for deepening this message is the [Green Sanctuary program](#). The Green Sanctuary program is a Unitarian Universalist certification program for congregations that strive to align their entire congregational culture with environmental sustainability and justice. The newest edition of the program emphasizes the role of social justice, and congregations that have gone through the program in the past are invited to re-engage and become re-accredited as part of Commit2Respond. [Learn more](#) about aligning Green Sanctuary work with Commit2Respond.



Climate Justice Month, Week 5: (Re)Commitment

Dear ones,

As human beings, we go in and out of our commitments.

The Jewish tradition has a formal process every year of returning to their commitment to living in right relationship with the whole. Last week, we read Thomas Berry's questions: Is my next thought, word or deed sustainable for, an expression of greater intimacy with, a celebration of Earth?

As climate justice Unitarian Universalists who braid the first and seventh principle together, we ask ourselves: Is my next thought, word or deed sustainable for, an expression of greater intimacy with, a celebration of The Whole? Are we in right relationship with The Whole?

We must ask ourselves this because we get out of alignment with our highest principles. While sometimes we miss the mark, sometimes we don't even aim. We get tired, lazy, distracted. Powerful forces are aligned against our effort to be in right relationship, tugging at us, tempting us to turn away from our commitments.

And we do. Day in and day out, we fail. But day in, and day out, we return again. This is why we have spiritual practice. This is why we have spiritual community. This is why we have relationships of accountability. This work is too hard to do alone, too hard to do without a regular practice that returns us to our highest ideals.

This month we have been through a transformative process that has brought us to commitment-making. For the earth we love, the people we love, the beings we love, for the running water, and clean air, and warm dirt we love, for our communities and the communities around us, we must make this commitment. And we must know that embedded in our highest ideals is missing the mark.

So we must build into those commitments practices of return: to self, to the commitments, and to our communities of accountability. How will you hold yourself? Who will you talk to? What is the most sustainable process for you to return to this commitment when you break it?

Build it in. We are human. And by returning again, we become resilient.

Your Commit2Respond Resource Team,

Rev. Sofia Betancourt
Rev. Peggy Clarke
Tim DeChristopher
Kat Liu
Jennifer Nordstrom



Day 29: A Climate Trinity

Reflection

How do we bridge from I to Thou and on to We?

More than any other challenge we've faced in the history of humankind, the unfolding climate catastrophe requires us to collaborate. Survival of our species and countless others demands that we tap our higher order capacity to muster compassion and inspire community on a global scale.

That may feel like an overwhelming challenge, but Commit2Respond offers a simple way forward: we must each make three commitments.

First, each of us needs to do our part to lower carbon pollution. The course humanity is currently on will lead to ruin. Yet our individual actions add up—not only in their tangible impact but in the hopeful spiritual ripples they send forth that lend encouragement to others. And integrating our beliefs with our actions is essential to our own sense of wholeness.

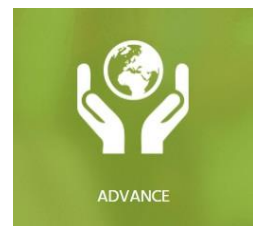
That's why we all need to make a new commitment to SHIFT to a low carbon future.

We also need to side with our siblings whose rights have been chronically denied, and follow the leadership of those already feeling the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. We will all be impacted, but the hardship will surely not be borne equally. As people of faith and conscience, we have a responsibility to care for each other and work together in solidarity.



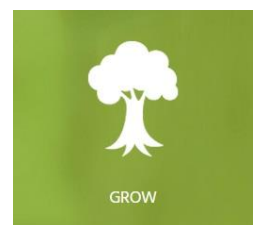
That's why we all need to make a new commitment to ADVANCE the human rights of affected communities.

Finally, as deeply committed as you and I might be, we surely cannot bring about a global revolution in values, lifestyle, and policy by ourselves. We must blend our energy, our influence, and our clear moral voices into a great chorus for change that inspires and empowers others.



That's why we all need to make a new commitment to GROW the climate justice movement.

This week we begin making new commitments for climate justice. I invite you to begin where you are. Do what you can, large or small, as you are able. But please look for at least one thing you might do to SHIFT to a sustainable future; one thing that might ADVANCE human rights; and one thing that will help GROW a movement that can change our world.



We've never faced a challenge like this before, but we can succeed. The history of great social change tells us that we need to start with ourselves; we need to privilege the knowledge and ideas of those who are most directly affected; and we need to build alliances that can change moral norms and reshape policies. We need to bridge from I to Thou to We, all three.

Please visit Commit2Respond.org and join me in [registering your new commitments](#) today.

Rev. Brock Leach is the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's executive consultant for mission, strategy, and innovation.

Practice

Today's practice is to make your new commitments for climate justice. We've spent the last month together moving through a spiritual process leading to discernment of what our next steps are, no matter how much or how little we feel we have contributed up to now. Now it is time to stretch ourselves and commit to our next actions to [shift, advance, and grow](#).



Day 30: The Courage to Commit

Reflection

As we make our commitments of how we will take a stand for climate justice, it's worth reflecting on the courage that will be required to hold on to those commitments.

There are always plenty of reasons to abandon our commitments to justice. Sometimes it's inconvenient; sometimes we're tired; sometimes we forget.

But mostly it's scary. We might be scared of losing our reputations, our financial security, our institutional stability, or our personal safety. Committing to stand up for climate justice implicitly means standing up against not only the fossil fuel industry, but the forces of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy that are at the root of the climate crisis. To stand against that kind of structural evil, we must be standing on solid rock.

Edward Abbey said that "Without courage, all other virtues are worthless." Never has that been more true than now, as our virtues direct us to let go of the false securities of the past and move toward a bold and unknown future. Where will we find the courage to match our virtues?

We might find courage in our love for one another, courage in our communities, courage in our relationship to God, courage in our sources of wisdom and courage in our traditions of justice making. We need spiritual practices of building courage and drawing closer to what gives us courage in order to build our resilience to fear.

Let us commit to being courageous enough to stand by our virtues even in a scary future.

Tim DeChristopher is a climate justice activist and a student at Harvard Divinity School.

Practice

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Day 31: An End and a Beginning

As we reach the end of our Climate Justice Month, we have reflected on Rejoicing, Reckoning, Reconnecting, and Committing.

These are complex ideas on which we will be continually reflecting in our rapidly changing world. But while our internal reflections continue, we must engage with the outer world to create climate justice. Even if we feel like we still have a lot of work to do on our own selves, we have to push our imperfect selves into action. Even if we make mistakes, our imperfect actions will deepen our reflections as we continue the cycle of praxis.

This is the time to take our commitments beyond ourselves and our congregations and support the development of the next generation of spiritually grounded activists. This is the time to make real the insight and inspiration that we have received over the past four weeks.

We hope these reflections of Climate Justice Month can be like trail mix to sustain you while on the move. The road ahead is full of promise and challenge, and we will travel it together in faith.

Your Commit2Respond Resource Team,

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