

MONTHLY MUSINGS FROM UUMFE

uumfe.org

Welcome to Monthly Musings from UUMFE

The Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth is delighted to share worship and small group ministry resources that are Earth-centered and focused on climate justice. They are organized by our theory of change and what we call our "Three Es":



This month, we expand our sense of community into the future - to the descendants - the ones who come after us. We are not talking about only biological human ancestors or descendants, but also chosen, religious, activist, political, artistic, scientific, nonhuman, and whoever you imagine the lives to be. We ask: How are we becoming good ancestors as we think about the future? You may have noticed that each month we honor an element. This month, it is Fire.

November: Descendants

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UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
MINISTRY FOR EARTH

Respect Life. Restore Earth. Renew Spirit.



EMBODIMENT - Worship Resources

SERMON PROMPT:

“It feels like you loved us already.” What would the future generations write or say about how we direct our actions and our love? What advice or counsel would they have? What encouragement would they offer? Let’s dream and imagine about that together now.

TIME FOR ALL AGES

Option 1:

Creation from the Dreamtime - Adapted from an Aboriginal creation story from Australia.

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/sing/session1/220266.shtml>

Imagine you are an ancestor. How do you claim yourself and your creations that will live on for your descendants?

Option 2:

Keepunumuk: Weeâchumun’s Thanksgiving Story by Danielle Greendeer, Anthony Perry, and Alexis Bunten, illustrated by Garry Meeches, Sr (Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing, 2021).

Gratitude at harvest time grows out of enduring reciprocal relationships among plants, animals, and people in this thanksgiving story by indigenous creators.

Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice with the future in mind, letting the light of the flame illuminate our present moment and also carry our love and actions forward to the generations yet to come.
(Rev. Kelly Dignan)

Opening Words

Dreams and Fears

(from Be the Change by Stephen Shick)

Our dreams and fears
Become entwined
In stories woven over time
And shape the truth
In trembling minds
That want to know
Beyond all doubt
What life is all about

MUSIC

#1028 The Fire of Commitment
By Crispy Watkins (UU minister) -
Tend this Flame

Readings

Everything is Still On Fire by Rev. Julián Jamaica Soto (formerly Theresa)
Everything is still on fire. Despite your best efforts. In addition to living,

It is clear, that fire or not, you must level up in what it means to thrive. Right now, that means wrestling with the truth in the fact that everything is not all your fault.

I am sorry that everything is still on fire. Once hate catches, the winds of “not my problem” blow and the blaze is hard to stop. But hard is not impossible. Not yet is different than never. You, in community have an answer. You have a response to systems of power and control and to the cost of suffering.

You and your community, together, are the answer. You are not only a people of flame but also a people of cold, clear truth. You know both where you fall short and where you flourish, and where you still reach.

Everything is still on fire, but all is not lost. You remain, more nimble than steadfast. More unshakable than swayed by the latest rage. You are here to put out the ravenous flames and heal the world. Enough is enough.

Becoming Good Ancestors by Claire Rousell (Excerpt)

They are wanting to tell us something, the future people

The people of whom we are the ancestors

Yet they are the wiser

They are wanting to tell us that what we do now matters

They want us to know that they see the dismembered ways that we live and how difficult it is for us to re-member how to return to the family of all things

But their existence is testament to the fact that it is possible

They know we feel trapped by this system of entanglements and obligations and the amputations of our imaginations in a system that only ever intended to keep us blind to the bars of our cages

But they want to remind us that there was a time when we could not imagine a world order that was not based on the divine rights of kings

And before that even, there was a time when we knew what it was to belong

When we knew we were Eland, Mantis and Dancer

When we knew we were the firefly and the ocean, the stuff of stars and the breath of birds

They ask us, stroking our hair and touching our faces, how did you know that something else was possible? Where did that idea germinate inside you? Show us, point to the place.

[...]For what dignity is possible if dignity is not available for all?

They ask us, how did you manage to build this world in the flames of capitalism, and yet all the while you were disconnected from your rituals, from the rhythms and songs of your people, the tiny sacred acts of care that ensure that the world is recreated with every dawn chorus? [...] What did you do with your despair, personal, collective, ancestral?

How did you carry its magnitude in your heart without being overcome with madness, or perhaps while carrying your madness, your addictions and your chronic sadness, never really knowing the full extent of your vitality?

Did you carry pieces of it everywhere you went, stuffed in pockets and purses like used tissues,

Pulling out every pot and pan as the house flooded with tears? Did you feel it hanging in the air and walking alongside you, the ghosts of extinct creatures following you around reminding you of all that is at stake, suffocating you with the thickness of their memory?

Did you taste it in your food, forced from the soil and sea with chemicals and violence, food that no longer nourished but flared up in rashes and welts as it entered your body?

Did you feel the suffering as you dressed yourself in the forced labour of people and animals, their exhaustion stitched into the seams and hems of your clothes?

We see you, they say, standing on the shore with five hundred years of industry and environmental wreckage and slavery and torture at your back, gasping under its weight, with only the vast black sea in front of you.

We see you.

We see you holding the crumbling world in one hand and the germinating seed of life in the other.

We know you are listening. Listening to your children, to the wind, to the birds, to the voice that startles you from sleep just before dawn, to the harbingers of a new consciousness.

We feel how you allow your heart to be broken while every day preparing the house for love, making up her bed, setting a place for her at your table. All with no good reason for hope and every reason to despair.

We see what is to come for you. And what will remain when the storm, from which there will be no refuge, is over.

We see in you the thousands of varieties of potato and corn and wheat, the cornucopia of culture and craft, language and art, the compassion and commitment to the value of the life of the individual and the group. We know what you have known across time and species, across geography and incarnation. We know what you are capable of.

We salute you.

Because what you do now matters.

Readings (cont.)

From “Evidence” by Alexis Pauline Gumbs in [Octavia’s Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements](#).
“Ancestor Alexis, I’ve heard about you. I’ve even read some of your writing. Everyone says I have an old soul, and I’m really interested in what it was like back when you lived. It seems like people were afraid a lot. Maybe every day? It’s hard to imagine, but it seems that way from the writing. I have to remember that no one knew that things would get better, and that even people who were working to make it happen had to live with oppression every day. I read your writing and the writing of your other comrades from that time and I feel grateful. It seems like maybe you knew about us. It feels like you loved us already. Thank you for being brave.”

Ritual

Use the element of fire here. Invite people to come forward and light a candle as a symbol of something they hope future generations will remember about us and our work for climate justice. Let the light of the candles carry forward in time.

Meditation

In [The Work that Reconnects](#), Joanna Macy and other spiritual leaders suggest we listen to future generations to notice what they have to say to us. We paraphrase a practice here. Start by closing your eyes, and imagine yourself journeying forward through time. Identify with one human being living one hundred years from now. That is about three generations out. You do not need to know this being’s circumstances, just imagine that he or she or they are looking back at you from the time they inhabit. Ask them what they want to say to you about your current efforts for climate justice. What advice or counsel do they have? What encouragement do they offer? Open your heart and mind. Listen. Write or draw if you’d like. Share with others, if you’d like. By giving future beings a voice, we bring them closer in a way that helps us be guided by their perspective.



Closing Words

Arundhati Roy says, “Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

May it be so for us.

EMPOWERMENT - Lifelong Learning and Community

BOOK /PODCAST SUGGESTION

Layla F. Saad, author of [“Me and White Supremacy”](#) offers us the Good Ancestor Podcast. In [Episode 47](#), she interviews Mikaela Loach who is a young adult climate justice activist, the co-host of The Yikes Podcast, writer and a 4th-year medical student based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Mikaela talks about:

- Her own ancestors and how they have influenced her work for climate change.
- Change is created by many people working together; not one person or one leader. Collectiveness is important to focus on now. When we work in community, we can see hope. Arundhati Roy says, “Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.” We can hear another world when we are together.
- Indigenous communities are doing much more than any famous person doing work for climate justice, and you may not know their names. Focus on the collective.
- We need to be checking our egos, all the time.
- At 39 minutes, she talks about connections between migrant rights, climate justice, racial justice. All of these are connected through the climate crisis. Caring about all the issues strengthens our work and makes it better. It’s hopeful, because if we tackle all the issues through climate justice, we open the doors to all the issues.
- Continue to do individual actions (like recycling, composting, sustainable shopping, plastic bags) AND shift more focus on changing systems - pressuring business, government and other institutions.
- How to stay hopeful? Look at movements of the past. Old activists - the good ancestors.
- Over-glorifying being busy is a form of internalized capitalism. Give ourselves space for rest. We can’t carry it all. Value joy and don’t compromise it for success.
- At 1:19, Layla asks: “What does it mean to you to be a good ancestor?” Mikaela answers (paraphrased): It means checking in on the good and harm my ancestors have caused and noticing how I’m upholding both of those things. Honoring those who come after me and how I direct my actions and self in the world. I hope whoever comes after me can learn from me.

FOR SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

What will those who come after you learn from you? How are you working in community to address climate justice? In what ways do you see the intersections of all oppression? Racial, migrant, climate and other? Do your ancestors or older activists give you hope? How?

is free and easy to navigate. The platform we use, Padlet, allows you to access the materials and interact with other people who are using them. If you've never done any climate education with your congregation, use Climate Change, the United Nations & YoUU with all ages. Use any of the ideas as your Time for All Ages. A great way to honor and educate all the generations - together.



ENGAGEMENT - Partnering and Support for Climate Justice Activism

We know it's not feasible to do something new each month. And we don't want to overwhelm you. So take our suggestions for engagement and really listen to your hearts and souls about what calls to you. Remember that as UUs, our job is not to save, it's to partner.

- Celebrate the [Held vs. State of Montana decision](#) of August 14, 2023! Sweeping Constitutional Win for Held v. State of Montana Youth Plaintiffs
- Research organizations in your local area that focus on children and youth and climate justice. How could you engage?
- On an international level there is [Fridays for the Future](#), a youth-led and -organised movement that began in August 2018, after 15-year-old Greta Thunberg and other young activists sat in front of the Swedish parliament every school day for three weeks, to protest against the lack of action on the climate crisis. How can you listen to their wishes?
- In a [presentation and interview at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry](#), Melanie Harris describes how an ecowomanist theology asks us to educate our kids about where food comes from. White supremacy is present in food justice and food deserts. She also says that Freedom Farms during the Civil Rights movement became one of most important environmental justice acts of the time. (The Freedom Farm Cooperative was an agricultural cooperative in Sunflower County, Mississippi, founded by American civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer in 1967 as a rural economic development and political organizing project.)
 - Unitarian Universalists have been advocating for a just Farm Bill. [You can learn more here.](#)
 - Also, engage with the [Black Farmers' Appeal](#). Given the economic devastation caused by the racialized colonial constructs that historically kept our tenant farming ancestors and their descendants in cycles of debt and poverty, these same constructs cannot serve as the solutions.

If you have been enjoying Monthly Musings, consider attending or promoting our new Weekly Live Meditations. Starting Thursday Sept. 14, join UUMFE for a weekly, online, live meditation for 30 minutes. More info: <https://www.uumfe.org/spiritual-gatherings/weekly-live-meditation-gatherings/>

Thank You

Thanks to the Monthly Musings collaboration team. This month: Sheri Pillabaum, UU Religious Educator; Colleen Hamilton, PhD, Director of Religious Education, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sunnyvale (CA); Zoe Johnston and Rev. Kelly Dignan, UUMFE.

Please let us know how you're using these resources by completing this form:

<https://forms.gle/JA6d3nmEggT5BGK46>



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