

SEPTEMBER 2023

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":



September: Community

EMBODIMENT

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EMPOWERMENT

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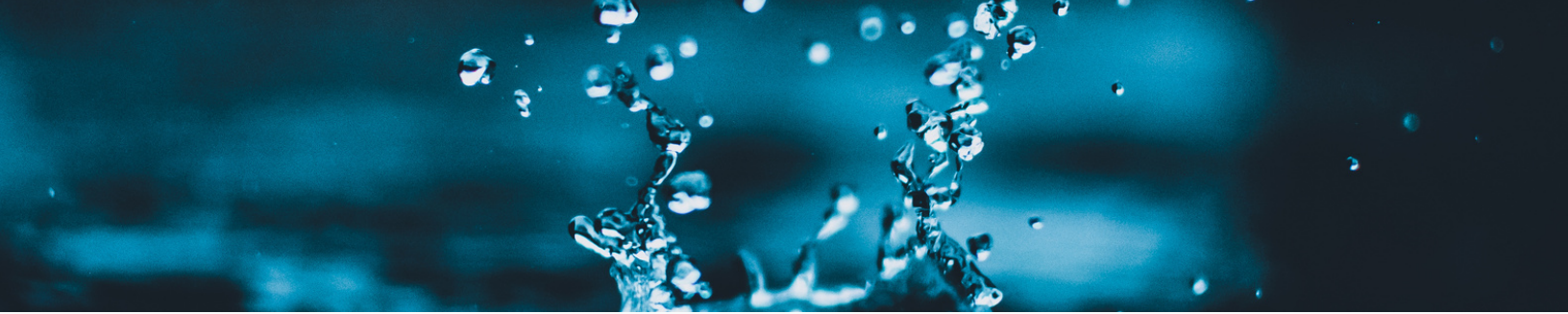
ENGAGEMENT

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UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
MINISTRY FOR EARTH

Respect Life. Restore Earth. Renew Spirit.



EMBODIMENT - Worship Resources

SERMON PROMPT:

It's hard to challenge our Unitarian Universalist ancestors because they have inspired us deeply and given us a history to hang our hats on. But at this time in history, when the climate crisis is impinging on all of us, especially those who historically have been marginalized, we have the unique opportunity to honor and challenge our forebears. We can honor the Transcendentalists' deep connection to nature. We can acknowledge their commitment to abolition. However, instead of keeping our work for both of those things separate, as they did, we can unite our first, seventh and eighth Principles in our consciousness, our spiritual practices, and our work for climate justice.

How? As we expand our sense of community, we put ourselves back into nature instead of on top of it. Greet the birds each morning and listen to their songs. Thank the food you eat each day. Develop a relationship of mutuality with one tree near you? Or one plant in your house. A flower. Maybe grass? Perhaps there is an animal you can build a deeper relationship with. That relationship may include saying hello, exchanging breath, singing to and with this friend.

Expanding our circle now to the human kin who are most impacted by climate change. "Our work toward environmental justice can be drawn from an intimate relationship with nature that includes, but is not limited to, the everyday interactions of our diverse human communities, with nonhuman nature, one that takes seriously the unequal impacts of environmental devastation levied upon our most marginalized groups." Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt page 42 of [Justice On Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class and the Environment](#)

We are in community with each other as Unitarian Universalists, and also with Earth. This month we explore those relationships. More specifically, what is your relationship with water? Are you impacted by water contamination? How? Who are the other relatives (human and more than human) who are affected? Who is working on that issue in your geographical area? What can you learn about them? Collect stories about that work, if you can.

Chalice Lighting

We gather today to expand our sense of community! We draw the circle wide to include all human kin and our more-than-human relationships in Nature. We light this chalice to honor the full, living Earth community.

Opening Words

Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant to affirm and promote Principles, which we hold as strong values and moral guides. We live out these Principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience.

As Rev. Barbara Wells ten Hove explains, “The Principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who choose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities.” Today, we are going to highlight three of our Principles.

The 1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

The 7th Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The 8th Principle: Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

We gather to honor these three pillars of our faith we explore and experience community.

<https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/principles> and
<https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>

Meditation

Use this soundtrack: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9wEYo6wjy8&t=9077s>

Follow the movement of the water for 2-5 minutes. Allow the rhythm to connect with your body. Release completely into the rhythm. Bring both hands over the heart and breathe with this rhythm and connection. Feel it in your heart to support you to stay centered throughout your day.

Reading

Human dignity and worth were not the primary environmental concerns of thinkers like Emerson and Thoreau, who were much more interested in what could be gained from an isolated communion with the natural world. Their abolitionist efforts, which are easily relatable to our first Principle, were not part of their connection to a wilderness that allows us to distance ourselves from the ugliness of everyday society in order to access a deeper truth. Consequently, we have inherited a theological vision of environmental engagement that is too often situated in a natural imaginary, a pristine landscape untrammelled and unpopulated by human beings save perhaps with one theologian or one person of faith actively communing with a sublime part of nature...

Unitarian Universalists are engaged with the work of environmental justice that seeks to repair environmental devastation while at the same time addressing gross injustices within the human family. Yet, the majority of us who live in the United States are also steeped in an environmental culture shaped by thinkers like Emerson and Thoreau.

Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt, from page 41 of [Justice On Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class and the Environment](#)

Closing Words

“I hold a vision of Beloved Community beyond the horizon of my knowing. In this community of human and nonhuman beings, we live in integrity with each other and the Earth. We work together to nourish and sustain life. We eat well, but do not take more than we need from each other or the Earth. We have diverse, flourishing cultures that cooperate with respect, and learn from one another without prejudice or hierarchy. We live free from violence or coercion. We celebrate every day and appreciate the joys of living. We laugh. While we help one another die well, we do not help death come before its time. We use our minds to the benefit of life, not death. We create music and art. We tell stories. We live in tune with the rhythms of the earth: the seasons, day and night. We live in tune with each other. We live in tune with the rhythms of our own hearts.” Jennifer Nordstrom, page 154 of [Justice On Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class and the Environment](#)

MUSIC

#1007 There's a River Flowing in My Soul.

Please check for copyright permissions of this video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IF0Mo_sQxvU

[Holy Waters](#) by Jason Shelton

TIME FOR ALL AGES

[We Are Water Protectors](#) Written by Carole Lindstrom, Illustrated by Michaela Goade



Water Communion Supplement

This is often a time of the year when UU congregations hold an annual ritual called [Water Communion](#). You can add a dimension to this year’s ritual by inviting people to research and connect with the water near them. This helps put ourselves back into nature instead of on top of it.

[What is a Watershed?](#) National Geographic explains, “A watershed is an area of land that drains or “sheds” water into a specific waterbody. Every body of water has a watershed. Watersheds drain rainfall and snowmelt into streams and rivers. These smaller bodies of water flow into larger ones, including lakes, bays, and oceans. Gravity helps to guide the path that water takes across the landscape.”

Use this [fun, interactive tool](#) to find out where water goes after it leaves your dwelling.

Who provides your drinking water? Where do they get it? What are some of the challenges they face? (Limited supply due to climate-driven drought? Contaminates such as PFAS or lead?)

Then use this [UUMFE Water Communion Ritual](#) during your worship, small group ministry meeting or any gathering you choose. Adapt as necessary.

EMPOWERMENT - Lifelong Learning and Community

ARTICLES and SITES OF INTEREST:

- Racism at heart of US failure to tackle deadly heatwaves, expert warns
 - <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/aug/06/jef-goodell-heatwaves-racism-the-heat-will-kill-you-first-book>
- Visit these sites that remind us of the good news related to climate:
 - <https://www.edf.org/good-climate-news>
 - <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/tag/climate/>

BOOK SUGGESTION

[Justice on Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class, and the environment.](#)

Focus on “Ethical Implications of Environmental Justice” by Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt

FOR SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

What are some things you do to create a relationship of mutuality with Nature?
Has your relationship with Nature been a solitary or communal experience?

What are any poems, music, visual art pieces, photographs, or religious texts about nature that are meaningful to you? Do those texts or creative expressions separate humanity from nature, or include human beings in nature?

Use this [fun, interactive tool](#) to find out where water goes after it leaves your dwelling. Share. Who are the people most impacted by water contamination and injustice in your area?

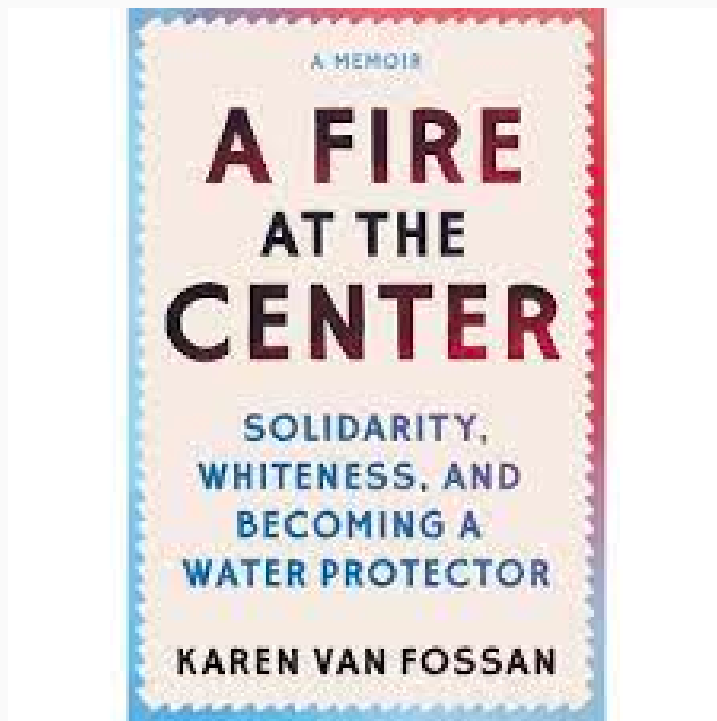
Who are the people in your area most affected by heat?

Tap into our Transcendentalist ancestors who were abolitionists as well as environmentalists. How is racism being used as a way to avoid climate justice? What could you do?



"The Great Wave off Kanagawa"
woodblock print by Japanese ukiyo-e artist
Hokusai, late 1831

ENGAGEMENT - Partnering and Support for Climate Justice Activism



We focus on water justice this month. What is the history of water justice in your area? Who is working on that issue now in your geographical area? What can you learn about them and from them? Collect stories about that work, if you can. If you're inclined, get involved. Do you know about the Water Protectors? Pre-order the book by Rev. Karen Van Fossan - [A Fire at the Center: Solidarity, Whiteness and Becoming a Water Protector.](#)

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/>

VISIT OUR WEBSITE UUMFE.ORG

QUESTIONS ABOUT MONTHLY MUSINGS? PLEASE EMAIL
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CONGREGATION'S SHARE THE PLATE OFFERING](#)