

DECEMBER 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":



During the holiday season, many people return home to visit family. This month our focus is on returning home to ourselves and to Earth, often best done when it's cold and dark outside. Author, teacher and ecowomanist, Melanie Harris says that by coming home using a contemplative path, we are led to peace, justice and service. So this month, we ask: How are you finding your own contemplative path so that you can return home to yourself and Earth?

December: Return Home

EMBODIMENT

PAGE 2

EMPOWERMENT

PAGE 5

ENGAGEMENT

PAGE 6



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
MINISTRY FOR EARTH

Respect Life. Restore Earth. Renew Spirit.



EMBODIMENT - Spiritual Grounding

CHALICE LIGHTINGS

[In This Small Flame Dwell](#)

In this small flame dwell:
the beacon light of lanterns guiding travelers home;
the warmth of hearth fires tended through the generations;
the transforming energy of furnaces and the power and life of our sun.
May these blessings --
warmth and light and life-giving energy --
be kindled in each of us.

OPENING WORDS

In the book, [Justice on Earth](#), Rev. Kathleen McTigue reminds us that if we want our activism to reflect our faith, there are compelling reasons to dedicate ourselves to spiritual practices because they ground us in something bigger than ourselves, help us stay in the present moment, cultivate the qualities we most want to bring forward, remind us that what we want to change in the world also exists in ourselves, and help sustain us through confusion and despair. Let us gather to ground and return home in these ways.

READING

[Go forth](#) (Excerpt)

Because we are always going forth from somewhere
[...]

Go forth,
Leave behind the comfort and community of one place
Head into the anxiety and loneliness of another.

Carry with you the love and laughter of this place
And let it light your way
[...]

And when you have been away long enough, far enough,
Done what you'd set off to do
Been there so long
That place too, starts to feel like home

SERMON PROMPT:

What is a contemplative practice? Why do activists use them? What is one you use or want to try so that you can return again to the home of your soul and in turn, Earth? Use this [Contemplative Tree](#). You could focus on practices like mindfulness, walking meditation, beholding (using sight as a way to notice details of nature or art or anything).

For more detail, content, or a sermon series: Ecowomanist spirituality asks us to “return home” to Earth. Steps suggested by bell hooks, American author, theorist, educator, and social critic are:

- Tap into your ecomemory (This idea was introduced in our discussion about ancestors. How have you returned to it since then? How did you come into relationship with Earth?)
- Recognize loss - especially as it relates to climate chaos. If you choose to go here, you could use the [Climate Ribbon Project](#) ritual.
- Return to Earth communion through contemplative practice (see above)
- Cultivate compassion and spiritual kinship with Earth
- Reverence life and cherish Black life in particular
- Honor all beings
- Work to end [White Supremacy](#)
- Walk in dignity (again, walking meditation as described above)
- Become a witness to Earth’s beauty (beholding)
- Garden, get green, recommit to Earth justice, re(create) home

Source: Interview with Melanie Harris at Boston College School of Theology- Fall 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2LTkyM7IOM>

Musical Meditations

#1011 in Singing the Journey - [Return Again](#) sung by The Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, NY.

[Homecoming](#) by Vienna Teng



Closing Words

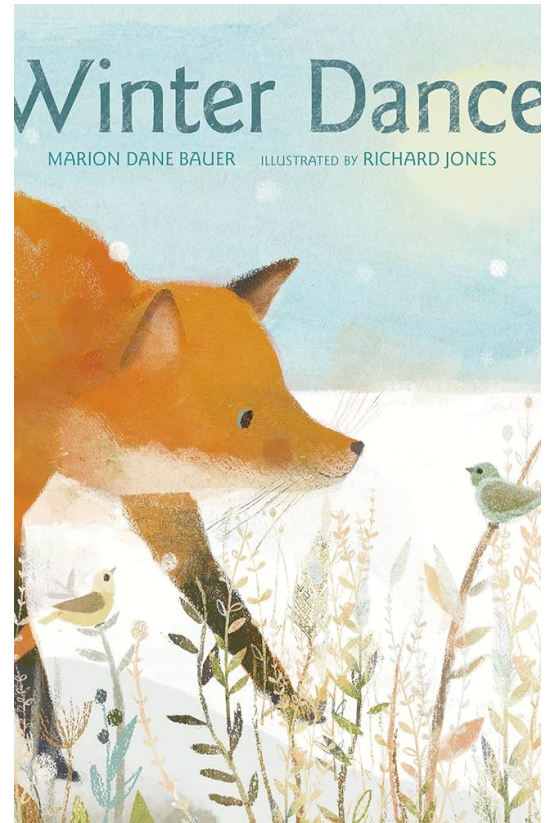
by Martha Kirby Capo:
Our time together is finished
But our work is not done.
May our spirits be renewed
And our resolve
strengthened
As we meet the challenges of
the days to come.
This chalice flame is
extinguished
Until we ignite it again
With the spark of our
communion

Time for All Ages

[What Bees Do at Home](#) from Tapestry of Faith: Creating Home by Christy Olson and Jessica York.

OR

Winter Dance by Marion Dane Bauer, illustrated by Richard Jones (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017). See the world from other species's perspectives in this sweet seasonal meditation on finding a sense of belonging and joy.



RITUAL

Winter Solstice is a time for contemplation. It's a time:

- of renewal
- to immerse ourselves in the healing, creative dark
- for visioning and dreaming
- for listening to our own inner wisdom
- to feel the cycles of nature – of death and rebirth
- to ponder on constancy of change
- to appreciate the still point before the next cycle is underway
- to let go of the old and welcome in the new

On the Sunday nearest Winter Solstice, invite people to let some part of their skin touch Earth. For example, set your bare feet on the cold ground. Rest your hands on a large tree trunk, feeling its breadth and solidness. Notice creatures. What do you hear? Breathe in the crisp air. What do you smell? You are returning to Earth and the darkest time in the year. Feel the sacred rhythms of our life-giving Earth.

For an indoor ritual, create stations so people can use their senses to connect to stones, water, scents (essential oils), any other elements of nature. Or you could try this beautiful ritual: build an [Earth Altar](#). Even in winter, we can find items in nature to honor Earth in this way.

EMPOWERMENT - Lifelong Learning and Community

Small Group Ministry Discussion Prompts

Ecowomanist spirituality asks us to “return home” to ourselves and Earth. Steps suggest by bell hooks, American author, theorist, educator, and social critic are:

- Tap into your ecomemory (This idea was introduced in our discussion about ancestors. How have you returned to it since then? How did you come into relationship with Earth?)
- Recognize loss - especially as it relates to climate chaos. If you choose to go here, you could use the [Climate Ribbon Project](#) ritual.
- Return to Earth communion through contemplative practice
- Cultivate compassion and spiritual kinship with Earth
- Reverence life and cherish Black life in particular
- Honor all beings
- Work to end [White Supremacy](#)
- Walk in dignity (walking meditation)
- Become a witness to Earth’s beauty (beholding)
- Garden, get green, recommit to Earth justice, re(create) home

What is a contemplative practice you use or want to try so that you can return again to the home of your soul and in turn, Earth? Use this [Contemplative Tree](#). You could focus on practices like mindfulness, walking meditation, beholding (using sight as you are able as a way to notice details of nature, art or anything). UUMFE’s 2023 [GA presentation on spiritual practices](#) offers ideas. And our [guided meditation recordings](#) are yours to use!

OR

Pick one (or several) of the items above and go deeper with it in your small group.



ENGAGEMENT - Partnering and Support for Climate Justice Activism



In a recent [Climate Justice Action Reflection Circle](#), one of the participants said that she does spiritual practices to “come home” and renew after taking action for environmental justice. And another person added that he does spiritual practices so that his work for justice “comes from” his heart. So “come home” and “come from”. Spiritual practices support our climate justice work in both ways. Share your stories with us! Email kellydignan@uumfe.org.

Thanks to the Monthly Musings collaboration team. This month: Sheri Pillabaum, UU Religious Educator; Colleen Hamilton, MA Ed, 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>

VISIT OUR WEBSITE UUMFE.ORG

QUESTIONS ABOUT MONTHLY MUSINGS? PLEASE EMAIL
REV KELLY DIGNAN AT KELLYDIGNAN@UUMFE.ORG

[SUPPORT UUMFE - CONSIDER MINISTRY FOR EARTH FOR YOUR
CONGREGATION'S SHARE THE PLATE OFFERING](#)