

APRIL 2024

MONTHLY MUSINGS FROM UUMFE

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Overview

Resources for the month of April 2024 help us celebrate Earth Day, express our deep devotion to all life, and recommit to protecting what we love.

Speaker(s) will share love letters to a person, place, creature, element - anything they love! After the service, congregants are invited to write a love letter, using the instructions at the bottom of this document. UU Ministry for Earth will be collecting letters for sharing and archiving. Instructions about where to send them are also found at the bottom of this resource.

Join UU Ministry for Earth online on April 23, 2024 to honor Earth Day and the Full Moon. [Details and registration here.](#)

You can find past issues of Monthly Musings on [our website](#). And [this Google folder](#) is where you can find them in Google Doc and PDF formats.

We provide these resources for free! Would you consider a donation to sustain our ongoing work? Earth Day is a great day to donate [here](#). Learn about sharing your congregation's offering plate [here](#).

April 2024

Earth Day Protecting What We Love



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
MINISTRY FOR EARTH

Respect Life. Restore Earth. Renew Spirit.



Service and Sermon Prompt:

Rachel Myslivy is the climate justice organizer for the UUA's Side With Love Organizing Strategy Team. During 30 Days of Love, she asks: What could the future hold if love was at the center of our selves, of our relationships, of our actions, of our world? If we reimagine a world with justice, with love at the center, we cultivate communities of care where all beings thrive.

The proposed revision to Article II of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Bylaws, Principles and Purposes reminds us that Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.

On this Earth Day, let's put love at the center of our work for climate justice and Earth care. For indeed, we protect what we love!

Speaker(s), you are invited to identify something you love. It could be a person, element, creature or place. It could be yourself.

Write a letter about why you love them, your devotion to them, how you want to show your love, and your desire to protect them to ensure their full flourishing.

Make it less than 500 words.

During the service, two or three speakers can read their letters. We also encourage sharing about the process of writing the letter.

If you need inspiration:

- Thich Nhat Hanh: <https://emergencemagazine.org/essay/ten-love-letters-to-the-earth/>
- You might imagine you are writing to a jilted lover, sharing your deep affection and love.
- You could go so far as to make it a very sensual and passionate love letter, like the Song of Songs in the Hebrew Bible. [Background is here.](#) [Full text is here.](#)

Here is an example. Rev. Kelly Dignan's letter to Air:

Dear Air,

I marvel at the invisible dance we've shared through the decades. In my 60s now, I've come to recognize your silent yet profound presence in every breath I take. You are the essence of life, a constant companion.

Through the years, I've witnessed your subtle changes—the crisp freshness of mountain air, the salty tang by the sea, and the sweet aroma after a summer rain. Each breath I take is a reminder of your diverse nature, reflecting your beauty and resilience.

However, my dear Air, I feel compelled to express a growing concern that weighs heavily on my heart. The pollution that infiltrates your purity is not just a matter of distant consequence; it's a dagger that pierces the very core of the well-being of all life. When you, my beloved companion, are tainted, it sends ripples of despair through my soul.

Your pollution is a silent scream that echoes in the hearts of those around me. The wheezing coughs of neighbors, the asthma in young children. The ailing trees in my garden, and the disheartening signs of a wounded Earth—all symptoms of a shared affliction.

As I wander through my garden, nurturing blooms and whispering words of solace to the plants, I cannot escape the realization that their struggle mirrors those of humans.

I write to you today, dearest Air, with a promise that I will speak to those who hold the power to make choices for our shared home. I will let them understand that polluting the air is not just an environmental concern but an assault on the very fabric of our collective well-being. The repercussions are not abstract; they are tangible and deeply felt.

In the golden years of my life, surrounded by the warmth of community and the embrace of nature, I yearn for a future where the air is pure, where each inhalation is a balm to the soul. I will do all I can to safeguard you, my beloved Air, ensuring a legacy of clean breaths for generations to come.

With unwavering love,
Kelly

Call to Worship

Ecologist Baba Dioum said, "In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught." We gather today to celebrate Earth Day, to express our deep devotion to all life, and to recommit to protecting what we love.

Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice

Symbolic of the warmth of community and
The brightness that love brings to the world
Illuminating our search for justice and peace
Light, that force that nurtures all living things

Here in our midst in this flame,

So tiny and so significant

From Worship Web; by Debra Faulk



Music

Love Song to The Earth Video With Paul McCartney

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLCSTn6_uU0

Time for All Ages

Love Letter to a Tree, a story by Rev. Kelly Dignan. Illustration by Nasreen Khan.



Once upon a time, there was a child named Alex - a deep soul with a heart full of love. Alex spent countless hours under the shade of wise old trees in their backyard. One in particular was Alex's favorite.

One sunny day, as the leaves whispered secrets in the breeze, Alex decided to express their feelings in a love letter to their favorite tree. With a box of crayons and a sheet of paper, they poured their emotions onto the page. The letter began, "Dear Tree, you're my best buddy. Your leaves are like green confetti, and your branches are my favorite hiding spots." Alex wrote about memories shared with the tree - picnics beneath its branches, reading stories, and even daydreaming about far-off lands.

The letter spoke of the tree's strength, resilience, and the beauty it brought to the garden. Alex marveled at the way the tree sheltered birds and insects, creating a harmonious ecosystem. Carefully folding the letter, Alex nestled it into a small nook in the tree's bark.

"This is for you, my dearest friend," they whispered, feeling a warm connection to their living friend, the tree.

One stormy night, a powerful wind blew through town. The next morning, Alex rushed outside to find a small branch had been cracked by the storm. Sadness washed over Alex, but determination sparkled in their eyes.

With care and creativity, Alex worked with their parent to gather rope and other supplies. Together, the two mended the branch. "You protect me from the sun, and now I'll protect you," Alex whispered. Lo and behold, after several months, the wood on the small branch fused back together, and a new leaf sprouted. Through all the seasons, the bond between Alex and the tree grew stronger. Their friendship became a beacon of love and resilience, teaching everyone that even the smallest act of kindness can make a big difference.

During Religious Education, children and youth are invited to write a love letter to something they love and want to protect.

Meditation -

Sit and settle your mind and body in any way that feels supportive. You might close your eyes or lower your gaze. Notice your breath - how it comes and goes naturally. Feel yourself settle even more deeply.

Pose this question to your heart:

What do I love?

Simply ask and notice whatever arises. Make space for anything and everything.

Pause.

Deepen this inquiry by asking: What is too important to me to lose or forget?

Keep listening, honoring whatever arises.

Pause.

As something clear emerges, appreciate your connection. Your commitment. Your devotion.

Pause.

And now in your imagination, offer a gesture or phrase to express your love.

Pause.

Gently come back to the present moment. You might want to wiggle your toes or fingers. And open your eyes if they have been closed.



MUSIC

In Singing the Living Tradition:
#95 - There is More Love Somewhere
#18 - What Wondrous Love

Readings

In her essay, [But the Greatest of These is Love](#), Mary Annaïse Heglar says:

“There’s many different schools of thought about how we should feel about climate change. For decades, the dominant narrative has been that we should feel guilt. Then, there’s the dual narrative that calls for hope. Others have called for fear, or panic. I myself am on the record calling for anger.

But, I don’t always feel angry, to tell the truth. In fact, sometimes I’m hopeful, sometimes I’m scared. Sometimes I’m overwhelmed, and sometimes I’m downright stubborn. (My mama would tell you that’s pretty much all the time.)

That’s because none of those emotions really get to the heart of what I truly feel. None of them are big enough. If I’m honest with myself, what I truly feel is...love.

I don’t mean any simple, sappy kind of love. I don’t mean anything cute or tame. I mean living, breathing, heart-beating love. Wild love. This love is not a noun, she is an action verb. She can shoot stars into the sky. She can spark a movement. She can sustain a revolution....

When you love something, or someone, that much, of course you're frightened when you see it under attack, and of course you're furious at anyone or anything that would dare to harm it...

But this love is strong enough to break through the terror. She is hot enough to burn through anger and turn into fury. She can shake you out of your despair and propel you to the front of the battle field."

"r/evolution means protecting the people. the plants. the animals. the air. the water. r/evolution means saving this planet. r/evolution is love." — Assata Shakuur

"At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love." — Che Guevara

Closing Words

A Prayer for Climate Justice by Rev. Kelly Dignan, slightly adapted from what was shared in Side with Love's 30 Days of Love 2024.

Feel free to use all or parts. You will notice it is a prayer grounded in religious naturalism.

In the presence of the boundless mysteries of the cosmos, we gather in deep gratitude and awe. We give thanks for the unfolding wonders of the natural world – the intricate dance of ecosystems, the resilience of life, and the profound interconnectedness that weaves through the tapestry of existence.

As we marvel at the grandeur of the universe, we humbly recognize our place within this cosmic symphony. Grant us the wisdom to embrace a deep love and reverence for Earth, our shared home. May we return to ancient practices of reciprocity and mutuality as we recognize the inherent value of every creature, every ecosystem, and every delicate balance that sustains life.

We acknowledge the urgent call for Earth care and climate justice. Help us imagine a future of flourishing for all. Align our actions with the rhythms of nature and the principles of justice. Grant us the courage to confront the challenges of our time with compassion, seeking justice for those most affected by environmental degradation.

In this shared journey, may we be guided by Love and the sacred energy that unites us all. May we embody the principles of care, gratitude, and a profound love for the intricate web of life. Amen.

Closing Song

The Tide is Rising -

Rabbi Shoshana Friedman

<https://www.rabbishoshana.com/the-tide-is-rising>

Or

We Shall Be Known - MaMuse

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4xhQcgyoLk>



After the Service

Congregants are invited to write love letters.

Instructions:

Identify something you love. It could be a person, element, creature or place. It could be yourself.

Write a letter about why you love them, your devotion to them, how you want to show your love, and your desire to protect them to ensure their full flourishing.

Each congregation can archive the letters collected. Or you could have envelopes for people to self-address and then mail those letters to the authors in a year or two or five.

UU Ministry for Earth will be collecting, sharing and archiving love letters. If you are willing to have yours shared, scan and email it to submissions@uumfe.org.

Small Group Ministry Prompts

Feel free to use the readings, music and rituals described above in your small group. Each person identifies something they love. It could be a person, element, creature or place. It could be yourself.

Write a letter about why you love them, your devotion to them, how you want to show your love, and your desire to protect them to ensure their full flourishing.

Share with the group.

- How does love deepen your work for climate justice?
- How are communities most impacted by climate injustice included in your devotion and action?
- How are your actions aligned with the rhythms of nature and the principles of justice?

Share your letters with UU Ministry for Earth:
submissions@uumfe.org



Thank you to this month's team:

Rev. Ron Phares, All Souls Unitarian, Colorado Springs; Rev. David Schwartz, UU Church of Boulder; Rev. Eric Banner, First Universalist Church of Denver; Rev. Kelly Dignan, Co-Director and Nasreen Khan, Communications Manager - both with UU Ministry for Earth.

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

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