

JUNE 2024

# MONTHLY MUSINGS FROM UUMFE

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## Overview

Dear UU Ministry for Earth Community,  
We have loved creating free monthly worship and small group ministry resources for you - all focused on Earth care and climate justice. We publish the information two months in advance of the time you'll actually use them. And so here in April 2024, we bring you the resources for June 2024. The theme is "Come to our Senses", and we explore ways to engage your physical senses to restore a right relationship with nature. We also include a Summer Solstice ceremony.

You are invited to visit our website for an overview of Monthly Musings along with past issues. And this Google folder is where you can find the content in both PDF and Google Doc format.

We are taking a break from Monthly Musings so we can focus on planning the Climate Justice Revival which is September 28 and 29, 2024. We hope you'll participate and register your congregation soon.

With gratitude for your commitment to our faith and climate justice!

The UU Ministry for Earth Team

June 2024

Come to our  
Senses, and  
Summer  
Solstice



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST  
MINISTRY FOR EARTH

*Respect Life. Restore Earth. Renew Spirit.*

# Service and Sermon Prompts

During [UU Ministry for Earth's World Water Day celebration on March 21, 2024](#), Rev. Dr. Clyde Grubbs reminds us that colonialism led to broken relationships between humans and nature. So the spiritual practice of the human community is to restore relationships. He asks:

Have you ever listened to a bird? The music they make? Or is it background noise? Listening to birds is a spiritual practice and a way to restore right relationship. To listen to the trees blowing in the wind or animals in the woods is a spiritual practice.

Touch is a spiritual practice. Have you ever touched something in nature and really felt it? What did it feel like?

Do you know the names of your kin in the natural world?

People usually make sight primary. Do more than look, contemplate. Look at the topography - how rivers, trees and land come together. Contemplate those connections. If we compare the spiritual practices of the Eastern and Western hemispheres, we have contemplation in common.

(Contemplation is the practice of being fully present in heart, mind, and body; to think, imagine, reflect, consider.)

Research your own location and gather natural elements from your landscapes. Know their names. Bring them to the worship service. Introduce them to your congregation as if they were there visiting for the first time. And then invite the congregation to use their senses to contemplate, connect and restore relationships.

## Opening Words

We  
name our collective  
recommitment to care for  
the earth.  
Knowing  
the ground we live upon is  
sacred,  
We  
pledge to bring new life to  
the earth  
New  
Life to the air  
New  
Life to the waters  
New  
Life to each other  
For  
all Life is sacred

--By Rev. Dr. Kate Walker -  
used regularly at First  
Unitarian Church of  
Pittsburgh.

## Chalice Lighting

In the book *Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram writes:  
“A human community that lives in a mutually beneficial relation with the surrounding earth is a community, we might say, that lives in truth.” Come now into worship to explore this truth.



## Readings

In his book, *Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram writes, “Letters and technology speak so intensely that they eclipse older forms of sensorial participation. Give primary value to the full-bodied world of face-to-face and face-to-place encounters. Open ourselves to the local earth. Unplug from the digital thrall. Step out to wander and bask in the scents. Recalibrate our organism. Come to our senses.”

In her book, *Sacred Nature*, Ursula Goodenough writes, “Hence my spiritual practice instead entails the joy of connecting with rivers and mountains not as living beings but on their own terms, *sui generis*—marveling at their inherent magnificence, their inherent river-ness and mountain-ness, and offering them my deepest respect and reverence. I hold a rock in my hand and I resonate with its heft and its patterns; I try to imagine its broiling history within the Earth’s interior; I rejoice in our co-habitation within the planetary matrix; and I absorb the understanding that our atoms all came from the same stars, and that some of my atoms will come to inhabit rocks and that some of its atoms will come to inhabit lifeforms.”

## Time For All Ages/ Wisdom Story

Little Night/Nohecita (bilingual edition), written, illustrated, and translated by Yuyi Morales, Roaring Brook Press-MacMillan, 2016

Little Night plays hide and seek with Mother Sky in this child-friendly allegory of a joyful, loving, sensory universe at summer solstice time.

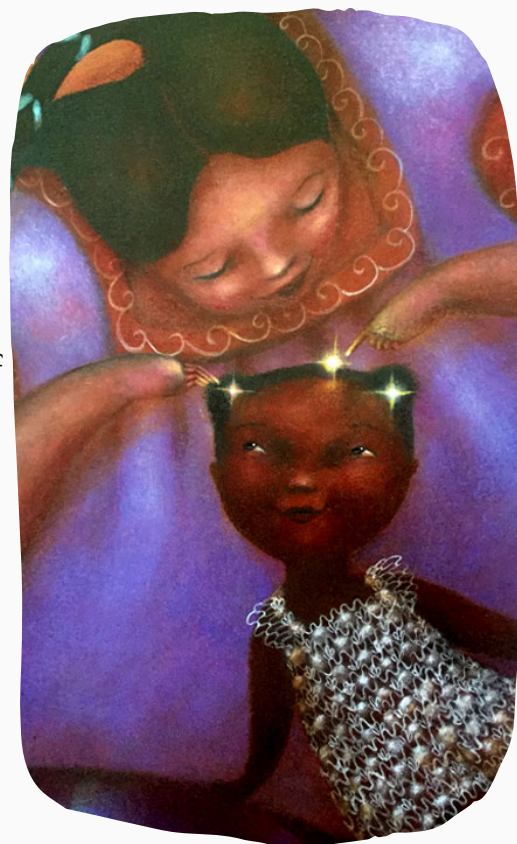
## Music

[Senses Song](#) (music for all ages: to the tune of BINGO)

[Taste and See](#)

[Longtime Sunshine](#)

[Here Comes the Sun](#)



## Ritual

Ahead of time, set up stations in the sanctuary for sense engagement. As described above, gather elements of nature local to your geography. Make labels with the names of the items and where they reside. (Make accessible trays for ushers to pass for those who aren't able to get up and move. Acknowledge that not all of us have access to all of our senses, so engage with those we do.)

- Smell native flowers or herbs
- Touch water or bark from a local tree
- Listen to drumming or recordings of bird songs
- Taste something sweet - vegetable, local food
- See bird feathers, shells, stones, leaves

Invite people to notice the connection that is created when senses are engaged. Invite people to go outside in the days and weeks ahead to connect and contemplate in this way.

On the Sunday closest to June 20th, lead the Summer Solstice Ceremony found below

## Small Group Ministry Resources

You can use the Summer Solstice prompts below and/or the questions for discussion about senses here: How have you given primary value to the full-bodied world of face-to-face and face-to-place encounters? In what ways could you unplug from the digital thrall? How could you come to your senses (be specific about where, what, which senses you would use)? How would that help you open yourself to the local earth?

## Closing Words

Rainer Maria Rilke writes,  
“Ah, not to be cut off,  
not through the slightest partition  
shut out from the law of the stars.  
The inner - what is it?  
if not intensified sky,  
hurled through with birds and  
deepwith the winds of  
homecoming.”  
May we go forth, not cut off, but  
reconnected to nature in this way.





## Summer Solstice Ceremony

To be used on a day close to [the Summer Solstice](#).

On this day in the Northern Hemisphere, the sun is traveling its most northern route and offering Earth sunlight at the most direct angle of the year. This creates the longest day of the year; the day with the most sunlight, also known as the Summer Solstice. “Solstice” comes from the Latin solstitium, or “sun stands still”. We gather to celebrate this bright, long day in the rhythm of the year. It is a time of growth and flourishing.

So, I invite you into a time of meditation. Focus on your breath. If your mind is scattered, find a point of attention in your heart center or your solar plexus. You can place your hands there if you like. Continue to breathe consciously, in and out at your own pace.

There is a quality of restoration in every solstice or equinox; a coming together of natural forces, elements and energy to create balance.

We are nature.

You are nature.

Earth your body.

Water your blood.

Air your breath.

And fire your spirit.

So however the elements are resculpting themselves, all life forms are being resculpted, including you! Everything is shifting, rebalancing and creating the needed landscape for growth.

Take a few more conscious breaths. Still in your body, consider what is growing near where you live or near where we are now. Are there blossoms giving way to fruits or flowers? Are vegetables inching toward the sun as they grow? Bring to mind something specific you have been noticing. How about birds or animals? Have their patterns changed?

Pause.

Imagine what practice of care you can offer intentionally. Maybe it's watering, weeding, pruning. Maybe it's offering three breaths to the plant. Perhaps it is filling a bird feeder. Or maybe a simple sentiment of gratitude feels right.

Now, still in your body, consider one way you want to grow spiritually in the month ahead. Pause.

If it feels right, consider drawing or writing about those practices. Optional: Have native, wildflower seed paper available for people to write on. They can take it with them to plant, water and welcome the blessing of the sun.

Now let's focus on sunshine energy.

Bring to mind the natural world and what is growing and changing.

Bring to mind what you want to grow in yourself.

Now feel the energy of the sun shining down upon Earth and you. Feel that energy helping things grow.

May the long time sun

Shine upon you

All love surround you

And the pure light

Within you

Guide your way on

Guide your way on

Play [Longtime Sunshine](#) as a closing blessing.



## This Month's Team:

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