



Soul Matters

What does it mean to be
a people of **BELONGING**?



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Calendar Connections

October 2019 - Belonging

Click on the name on each event for more information or inspiration.

Interfaith:

- [Feast of St Francis of Assisi](#) (Christian) - Oct. 4
- [Yom Kippur](#) - Jewish Day of Atonement - Oct. 8 - 9
- [Sukkot](#): Feast of Tabernacles (Jewish) - Oct. 13 - 20
- National Observance of [Children's Sabbath](#) - Oct. 18-20
- [Diwali: Festival of Lights](#) (Hindu) - Oct. 27
- [Reformation Day](#) (Christian) - Oct. 31
- Martin Luther posts [95 theses](#) - Oct. 31 1517
- [Samhain](#) (Wiccan) - Oct. 31 - Nov. 1 [[more](#) and [more](#)]

Unitarian Universalist:

- Birthday of [e e cummings](#) - Oct. 14
- [Michael Servetus](#) burned at the stake in Geneva - Oct. 27 (1553) (more [here](#))

National & Cultural Holidays:

- [LGBTQ History Month](#)
- [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15)
- [Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#)
- [Bullying Prevention Month](#) (more [here](#))
- [ADHD Awareness Month](#)
- Birthday of Mohandas Gandhi - Oct. 2 (1869)
- Thurgood Marshall is first African American associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. - Oct. 2, 1967
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg joins the U.S. Supreme Court as its second woman Justice - Oct. 4, 1993
- [Sisters in Spirit Vigils](#) (Canada) - October 4, 2018 : Honoring the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)
- [Indigenous Peoples Day](#)(U.S.) - Oct. 8
- Thanksgiving Day (Canada) - Oct. 8 (not major holiday)
- Toni Morrison becomes the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature - Oct. 8, 1993
- [National Coming Out Day](#) - Oct. 11
- John Brown's Raid - Oct. 16 (1859)
- Laquan McDonald is killed by officer Jason Van Dyke in Chicago - Oct. 20 (2014)
- Suffrage Movement March In New York - Oct. 23 (1915)
- [United Nations Day](#) - Oct. 24
- Halloween, All Soul's Eve - Oct. 31
- [Día de los Muertos](#) - Oct.31 - Nov.2

For Fun and On the Fringe:

- Country Music Month (designated Oct. 1970 [by Richard Nixon](#)) more [here](#) and [here](#)
- World Vegetarian Day - Oct. 1
- First episode of Unitarian [Rod Sterling's](#) "Twilight Zone" - Oct. 1 (1959)
- [World Smile Day](#) - Oct. 6
- Apple introduce new iPod - Oct. 13 (2005)
- [Clergy Appreciation Day](#) - Oct. 14
- War of the Worlds radio lay causes mass hysteria - Oct. 30 (1938)

Chalice Lightings & Opening Words

The Longing for Something More

Rev. Gretchen Haley

Full reading at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/longing-something-more>

“Every little thing that
breaks your heart
Is welcome here..”

Waiting

Rev. Marta Valentin

Full piece found in [Voices from the Margins](#), A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)”

“Step into the center
come in from the margins...”

Belonging for Our Whole Selves

Rev. Scott Tayler

May the flame we now kindle
light the path back to our center,
back to that place of
belonging again
to our deepest self.
And may our chalice
remind us that we are held
and welcomed whole,
without the need to hide
a single piece or part
of who we are.

A Place of Belonging and Caring

Kimberlee Anne Tomczak Carlson

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/place-belonging-and-caring>

“And so, you began seeking a beloved community:
A people that does not put fences around love.
A community that holds its arms open to possibilities of love...”

We are All Longing to Go Home

Starhawk

“We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been – a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free.”
May our time together be another step on our journey home.

To Unveil the Bonds that Bind Each to All

Mark Morrison-Reed

#580 in Singing the Living Tradition

The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice.

It is the church that assures us that we are not struggling for justice on our own, but as members of a larger community. The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done. Together our vision widens and our strength is renewed.

Today We Return to the Shelter of Each Other

Rev. Scott Tayler

Today we return to the shelter of each other,
to arms that hold us in the midst of the storm,
to voices that help us hear our own,
to hearts that accept us for who we are.
May we be for each other a source of safety and sending.
May we offer each other both comfort and challenge.
May this place of peace lead us to share peace with others.
Let us begin.

We Gather to Draw a Wider Circle

Rev. Gretchen Haley

In a world that feeds on moral outrage
We are here to cultivate moral courage
In a time that prizes picking sides
We gather to draw a wider circle
And in a culture that teaches us to get for what we give
And to ask "what's in it for me?"
We come to practice generosity and to remember,
We are all in this together.
In the midst of life's bitterness,
we choose to sing, to give thanks,
to laugh together, and to be keepers of beauty
to offer a place of belonging for all who come
in gladness and in pain
to resist the push to the next moment, and the next
to slow down, to breathe more deeply, to feel a part of something greater
for this hour, and in this space
let us be the change we wish to see
come, let us worship together.

Meditations, Prayers & Blessings

A Blessing Called Sanctuary

Jan Richardson

Full meditation found at <https://adventdoor.com/2015/12/14/advent-4-a-blessing-called-sanctuary/>

You hardly knew
how hungry you were
to be gathered in,
to receive the welcome
that invited you to enter
entirely...

Tentative steps
became settling in...
You began to breathe again...
You learned to sing.

But the deal with this blessing
is that it will not leave you alone,
will not let you linger...
this blessing
will ask you to leave,
not because it has tired of you
but because it desires for you
to become the sanctuary
that you have found...

Love after Love

Derek Walcott

Full poem at <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/love-after-love/>

Spoken version at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=n_3QbH_aNmc

“you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other’s welcome...”

Suggested transition into silence after reading: “Let us now sit in silence, as we listen, as we feast, as we meet and smile again at the stranger that is ourself...”

Belonging

Karen Hering

Found in *With or Without Candlelight*, A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)”

“What would the world be like...
if we let ourselves belong to our longings...”

Beneath the Hustle and Bustle

On the stillness within, to which we truly belong

Rev. Angela Herrera

From [Reaching for the Sun](#) (pg.32), A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

Beneath the streams of thoughts
That clammers and chatters
Over the landscape of our interior world,
Beneath our habits of momentum and stirring,
There is a stillness
deep and peaceful
the place where creation begins.
Who lives there?
We know her my many names. Truth. Love. God. Wisdom.
We turn our hearts toward her face, toward the mystery,
and bring our prayers of awe, of longing, of hope, of exhaustion.

She holds us in our grief and anger,
in our disappointment, our loneliness', and our rebirth.
From her viewpoint she sees us
Children of the stillness
Children of love.
She sees our place in the order of things
joined together in the larger story
and she invites us again and again into living
invites us into loving,
invites us into being loved.

May we be restored to wholeness
and blessed with peace.
May all those whom we encounter
receive this blessing
Through our being in the world

We Are Jazz

Rev. Adam Lawrence Dyer

Found in Love Beyond God, pages 8-10, A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)"

"The United States of Otherness
We are jazz...
The players are individuals,
And none of them belong together...
Just lucky to be in the same key, in the same room."

Know You are Not Alone and Discover the Way Our Voices Rise

Rev. Gretchen Haley

For this one moment
Know only that you are loved
That you are safe, and whole and loved
Know that you belong here
Here among us, here upon this earth
In your body
However tired, or broken
Your heart may be
Whatever fear, disappointment, anger
you carry
For this hour know you are not alone
Feel the presence of others
Surrounding you,
Breathing beside you, and with you,
Discovering together the way our voices rise, and fall together
In harmony, in hope
Claim here a resilient freedom
The choice for love, for light, to live with joy
and gratitude and praise
as a form of resistance

Suggested transition into silence: "And with this breathing of one breath, this sacred belonging, may we know enter into a time of silence, together..."

Children of Your Light

Rev. Marta Valentin

Found in A Long Time Blooming, A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)"
(for [LGBTQ History Month](#))

"Help us all...
to gather this day, worship together,
sit at the table as one..."

The Small Plot of Ground

Alla Renee Bozarth

<http://www.faithhousemanhattan.org/2011/02/25/a-sabbath-poem-bozarth/#.XToHOi2ZO2t>

On embracing our many belongings

A Prayer for Liminal Time

Rev. Karen G. Johnston

For [Samhain](#), [All Souls](#), [Día de los Muertos](#)

Full prayer/meditation at <http://blog.awakeandwitness.net/wp/2015/11/a-prayer-for-liminal-time/>

“Now the dead move through all of us still glowing,
... wound and bound together and enflowing...”

Lamentation for Two Voices - Responsive Reading

Erika A. Hewitt, Rebekah Savage

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/responsive-reading/promise-and-practice-lamentation-two-voices>

“If our need for one other were reciprocal; if our craving for each other’s truth and experience were genuine—if we longed for other to feel as deep a sense of belonging as our own belonging—that need would have long ago forced us, my white kin of faith, to surrender our grip on our certainty, our preferences, our standards of comfort...”

Litany: The Promise That Binds

Viola Abbitt

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/litany/promise-and-practice-litany-promise-binds>

“Many hearts have been, and often continue to be, broken, time and again...
The pulpits and pews which should have been warm and welcoming...
The future of this faith is reliant on and belongs to all who embrace religious liberalism...”

Readings

Listening for Our Song

Rev. David S Blanchard

On the “song that belongs to us” and the work it takes to belong to oneself...

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/listening-to-our-song>

“Our songs sing back to us something of our essence, something of our truth, something of our uniqueness. When our songs are sung back to us, it is not about approval, but about recognizing our being and our belonging in the human family...”

In Sweet Company

Margaret Wolff

Full poem at: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/thedivinefeminine/2012/01/in-sweet-company/>

We sit together and I tell you things,
You make room in your heart for my voice...
In sweet company
I am home at last.

Everybody Else

Jabari S. Jones

An invitation for us all to notice the “flags” we allow to fly in our communities and how we reply, “yes, but...”

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/everybody-else>

“I am a black man in Maine. In so many ways, I am not like everybody else around here. But I want to belong here. In so many ways, that flag represents the denial of my rights, my belonging... It clings to me like a nightmare, while it seems like everyone else is walking through a dream. I point at the thing and say “Look!” and the crowd replies, “Yes, but...””

The Healing is Not Done

Rev. Rebekah Savage

On our failing and struggle to create a true community of belonging...

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/homily/promise-and-practice-healing-not-done-reflection>

“I play this moment over and over again in my head: the day I heard of the Thomas Jefferson Ball, hosted by Unitarian Universalists in 1993. As a person of color, raised in a UU congregation, I felt a shiver down my spine as I learned something new and unsettling about the faith that I call home... This is part of the story of how people of color experience sharing worship and community within our faith... I grieve for those who left our communities because of how this event was handled, which broke their trust in finding spacious rest in our congregations from the pervasive, violent racism in our country. I grieve for those who, at the time, were unable to traverse the gaps in their spiritual understanding of justice and belonging...”

Wandering Around an Albuquerque Airport Terminal

Naomi Shahib Nye

Full poem at <https://9musesnews.com/2013/05/05/poetry-wandering-around-an-albuquerque-airport-terminal-by-naomi-shahib-nye/>

Read by poet: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=59&v=HwDXJ50U22o

“And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and thought,
This is the world I want to live in. The shared world.

Not a single person in this gate—once the crying of confusion stopped—
has seemed apprehensive about any other person...”

Black Church

Rev. Adam Lawrence Dyer

Found in Love Beyond God, page 14, A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)"

"Bring your whole self..

large and formal or shabby and small.

Your voice is always welcome in this song."

Mending the Broken World

Rev. Kathleen McTigue

Found in Shine & Shadow, pages 50-51, A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)"

"It's easy to imagine God at work in the immense universe, quietly humming, pulling our lives together into something strong and useful. I don't mean we're mute or helpless... I mean only that there is a place for us, that our gifts – the shape of our minds and talents, the angles of our interest and concern-fit the needs of the world the way my neighbor's stones anchor themselves in the lengthening wall. .."

Music

Soul Matters Music Resources

In addition to the suggestions below, be sure to tap into our other sources of support for music leaders:

1. **UUMN (UU Musicians Network) Online Database**: The wonderful leadership of the UUMN have added our monthly themes to the UUMN music database. This provides a centralized place for Soul Matters musicians to post and share music ideas with each other. You also get to tap into the suggestions from other UU musicians from around the country. You can access the UUMN Music Database [here](#). More detail is provided on the "[music resources](#)" page in the members-only section of our Soul Matters website.
2. **Soul Matters Music Support Facebook Page**: This support page is for on-going sharing among Soul Matters musicians. Click [here](#) to go to the Facebook page.
3. **Soul Matters Worship Support Facebook Page**: This support page is for on-going sharing among worship leaders and teams. It is also a great source of music support. Click [here](#) to visit the page.
4. **Soul Matters Spotify Playlists**: We create a [Spotify](#) playlist for each month that includes a number of songs on the monthly theme. This is intended to provide inspiration for our small group participants but might be useful to musicians. Click [here](#) for links to the Spotify playlists for each month.

Suggestions For This Month

Hymn and Choral Recommendations

from Soul Matters Music Resources Coordinator, [Sara Brandt-Doelle](#):

Hymns Recommended as Easier to Lead

145 As Tranquil Streams

1056 Thula Klizeo

157 Step by Step, the Longest March

188 Come, Come Whoever You Are

360 Here We Have Gathered

15 The Lone, Wild Bird

354 We Laugh, We Cry

318 We would be one

1053 How could anyone

Others More Difficult to Lead

197 There are numerous strings

323 Break Not the Circle

315 This Old World

Choral or Vocal Pieces

- Belong - David Glasgow - <https://davidmglasgow.com/product/belong/>
- Here Together - David Glasgow
- Song of Kabir - Elizabeth Alexander - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONx0uowyD4w>;
<https://www.seafarerpress.com/works/song-of-kabir>
- We Shall Be Known - MaMuse - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwglwlyyZfvk>
- All God's Critters (Place in the Choir) - Bill Staines - There are several settings of this folksy song
- Dazzling Bouquet - Bret Helsa - <https://www.brethesla.com/downloads/dazzling-bouquet/>
- Unitarian Universalist - Hal Walker - <https://www.halwalkermusic.com/bio/> ;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ux4VCBTsS0>
- Room at the Table - Carrie newcomer - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92OM5bdQ4N4>;
<https://www.carrienewcomer.com/store/sanctuary-a-carrie-newcomer-songbook>

Some Extras:

Do not leave your cares at the door: Elizabeth Alexander and Norman Naylor

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

We Will Be the Shelter for Each Other

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsIdu5QFBdQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxOdVvq8TbU>

Here Is My Home

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmpwTC9HKNk>

Home: Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4306i99LMXo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSTLv8cYBms>

Imagine your choir or whole congregation singing it together!

Where You Go: Shoshana Jedwab

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esELRijykp4>

Stories For All Ages

Rivers

By Rev. Christopher Buice, on *Worship Web*

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/story/rivers>

Theme Message: Even when it feels and looks like we are separate, our true belonging rests with each other. And when the more we forget that we are connected and belong to each other, the more likely it is to compete with and put each other down.

Recommended Wisdom Tales from “Doorways to the Soul” by Elisa Davy Pearmain

(We’ve recommended this book as an addition to your library. Because of copyright issues, we can only share the story titles)

Story #25 - The Castle Door (I am thou - belonging to God, and bigger things)

Story #52 - The Question (belonging to your authentic self)

The Welcome Challenge: Who Belongs?

From *Tapestry of Faith, Signs of Our Faith, Session 10*

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/signs/session10/287883.shtml>

Save a space for an imaginary visitor as you invite the children to the Story for All Ages. Then, invite the congregation to imagine and share how they might welcome different kinds of visitors. Who belongs here?

Stellaluna (also suggested in Session 3 for Preschool/Kindergarten)

by Janell Cannon

Book: https://www.amazon.com/Stellaluna-25th-Anniversary-Janell-Cannon/dp/0544874358/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3B0DT1TVO7LXU&keywords=stella+luna+books&qid=1563833245&s=gateway&sprefix=stella+luna%2Caps%2C180&sr=8-1

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mk8uL9o_f9w

A story about belonging and not belonging: “Knocked from her mother’s safe embrace by an attacking owl, Stellaluna lands headfirst in a bird’s nest. This adorable baby fruit bat’s world is literally turned upside down when she is adopted by the occupants of the nest and adapts to their peculiar bird habits.” - Amazon

Ira's Sleepover

by Bernard Waber

Book: https://www.amazon.com/Ira-Sleeps-Over-Bernard-Waber/dp/0395205034/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2H7U0XXPHXX2W&keywords=ira+sleeps+over+by+bernard+waber&qid=1563834371&s=gateway&sprefix=Ira%27s+Sleep%2Caps%2C178&sr=8-1

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iPaMjh8Kyk>

“Ira is thrilled to spend the night at Reggie's, until his sister raises the question of whether he should take his teddy bear.” - Amazon

Theme Message: We sometimes hide parts of ourselves so that we can belong. But Ira finds out that he can be his real self with his teddy bear, and he can share all the parts of himself with his friend.

Sermon Seeds

Angles, Ideas & Twists To Get Your Sermon Started!

Don't forget to explore the small group packet for additional sermon seeds. It contains quotes and poems to enhance your sermon, as well as numerous sermon angles in the questions and the spiritual exercises.

Quote - James Baldwin

The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us, and the light goes out.

Quote (and book) - [Joanna Macy, Coming Back to Life](#)

It is no longer appropriate to think only in terms of even my nation or my country, let alone my village. If we are to overcome the problems we face, we need what I have called a sense of universal responsibility rooted in love and kindness for our human brothers and sisters. In our present state of affairs, the very survival of humankind depends on people developing concern for the whole of humanity, not just their own community or nation. The reality of our situation impels us to act and think more clearly. Narrow-mindedness and self-centered thinking may have served us well in the past, but today will only lead to disaster.

Quote - [Casper ter Kuile](#)

'Who you affiliate with, not what you affiliate with, is the name of the game,' explains one interviewee in this Moishe House report on engaging Gen Z by Danya Shults. Think Instagram influencers instead of denominations and single-issue campaigners over political parties.

Quote - Karina Antonopoulos

Where you belong is where you choose to constantly choose to show up.

Quote - John O'Donohue (On already belonging)

Sometimes the urgency of our hunger blinds us to the fact that we are already at the feast. To accept this can change everything; we are always home, never exiled.

Quote - Douglas Steer

The ancient question, "Who am I?" inevitable leads to a deeper one: "Whose am I?" – because there is not identity outside of relationship. You cannot be a person by yourself. To ask "Whose am I" is to extend the question far beyond the little self-absorbed self, and wonder: Who needs you? Who loves you? To whom are you accountable? To whom do you answer? Whose life is altered by your choices? With whose life, whose lives is your own all bound up, inextricably, in obvious or invisible ways?

Quote - Rev. Hilary Krivchenia

Last year, my spouse was finishing up an MS in Environmental Sciences, and he took a course on environmental psychology from Dr. Ming Kuo, at UI Champagne. Dr. Ming Kuo drew on research into happiness and she explained that [four key pillars of happiness](#) are wealth, dessert, fast cars, and power. No, no... Actually, the research showed that the key pillars of happiness are [belonging](#), mastery, purpose, and self-determination (and some add transcendence). That is exactly the purpose of our faith community and what engagement in our faith communities bears as fruit. We're here to fashion a people and a community to offer a path to real belonging, to new masteries and competencies, to a faith of the free, and to a sense of purpose that will transform your life and more lives in the present and for the future.

Sermon Excerpt: From [Long to Belong](#) by Rev. Rod Richards

“Together our vision widens and our strength is renewed.” That jumped out at me in preparation for this service. That is not a bad measure for our health as a community. That is not a bad measure for the health of our definition of belonging. At our best, belonging here will widen your vision and renew your strength. [indeed,] have you ever been in a group where you could say of it: together our vision narrows? Together our vision narrows and our strength is spent pointing accusing fingers at everyone else?... I sure have been an active and enthusiastic participant in such groups. We here are susceptible to becoming that group. But at our best, our vision is not narrowed by being together, but widened... my vision alone is too narrow, there are things of which I am not aware that can cause me to inadvertently or carelessly betray my own highest aspirations, and so I rely on you all, and on people out there, to widen my vision. And our strength is renewed. Belonging should offer renewal... I know that many are deeply troubled by what’s happening in the world today, saddened by the ugly trends and fearful of the future, and that leaves us feeling exhausted and drained. I hope that belonging here, knowing that there are people, an abundance of people, who are in this together, helps to strengthen your spirit. I hope that the tiny circles we create here and pull around ourselves...tiny groups that make us feel loved and safe and part of something...I hope that they help to renew you when life feels overwhelming... And I hope that whatever good you find here, you will find a way to share that in the wider world. Because this place is not a given. It only exists through those who choose to make it so. We who belong.

Quote - [John O'Donohue](#)

To be human is to belong. Belonging is a circle that embraces everything; if we reject it, we damage our nature.

Quote - Rachel Naomi Remen, from [My Grandfather's Blessing](#)

On silence as the space in which our discovery of belonging begins

Perhaps the most important thing we bring to another person is the silence in us. Not the sort of silence that is filled with unspoken criticism or hard withdrawal. The sort of silence that is a place of refuge, of rest, of acceptance of someone as they are. We are all hungry for this other silence. It is hard to find. In its presence we can remember something beyond the moment, a strength on which to build a life. Silence is a place of great power and healing...[and belonging].

Book - [Eternal Echoes: Exploring Our Yearning to Belong](#), by John O'Donohue

“In post-modern culture there is a deep hunger to belong. An increasing majority of people feel isolated and marginalized. Experience is haunted by fragmentation. Many of the traditional shelters are in ruins. Society is losing the art of fostering community. Consumerism is now propelling life towards the lonely isolation of individualism. Technology pretends to unite us, yet more often than not all it delivers are simulated images. The “global village” has no roads or neighbors; it is a faceless limbo from which all individuality has been abstracted... From this perspective, it seems we are in the midst of a huge crisis of belonging. When the outer cultural shelters are in ruins, we need to explore and reawaken the depths of belonging in the human mind and soul; perhaps, the recognition of the depth of our hunger to belong may gradually assist us in awakening new and unexpected possibilities of community and friendship...”

Book - [Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect](#)

Matthew Lieberman

“Why is loneliness so painful? Why do we care how others treat us? And, why do we spend so much time perseverating on past and future relationships? These are some of the questions addressed in Matthew Lieberman’s new book... Lieberman... outlines the fascinating neurological evidence for the primacy of social connections in our lives, and presents guidelines for how we can use this information to improve our workplaces, schools, and personal well-being...” - [review](#)

Article and Book - The Loneliness of the Modern Nomad

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/loneliness_of_modern_nomad

On neighborliness, settling down, rootedness and a commitment to truly belonging to a local community...

Essay - The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone

Maria Popova

https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/07/11/the-lonely-city-olivia-laing/?mc_cid=1d875ee9e9&mc_eid=04e3c8a6e2

"Loneliness is difficult to confess; difficult too to categorize. Like depression, a state with which it often intersects, it can run deep in the fabric of a person."

Essay - Amin Maalouf on Belonging, Conflict, and How We Inhabit Our Identity

Maria Popova

https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/08/20/amin-maalouf-identity/?mc_cid=1d875ee9e9&mc_eid=04e3c8a6e2

Book - [Community: The Structure of Belonging](#), by Peter Block

Speaks to belonging and community building from a neighborhood and city planning perspective, but its moral and relational depth makes it a must read for sacred church communities. In a way, it argues that all community only happens when the goal is sacred community.

Presentation at Anabaptist Leadership Conference:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1205&v=SEalvnuwr3A

Review: <https://www.leadershipnow.com/leadershop/9781605092775.html>

Quote and [Article](#) - Margaret Wheatley

Very often the price of belonging to a community is to forfeit one's individual autonomy... Particularly in the West, and in response to this too-demanding price of belonging, we move toward isolationism in order to defend our individual freedom. We choose a life lived alone in order for it to be our life. We give up the meaningful life that can only be discovered in relationship with others for a meaningless life that at least we think is ours. An African proverb says "Alone, I have seen many marvelous things, none of which are true." What we can see from our pursuit of loneliness is the terrible price exacted for such independence. We end up in deep, vacant places, overwhelmed by loneliness and the emptiness of life...

Quote and Sermon Illustration - Emily Esfahani Smith

Belonging comes from being in relationships where you are valued for who you are intrinsically and where you value others as well. But some groups delivered a cheap form of belonging. You are valued for what you believe and for who you hate, not for who you are...

More detail and great sermon illustration found on her [TED talk](#), minutes 2:50 - 4:40

Quote - [John O'Donohue](#)

May the frames of your belonging be large enough for the dreams of your soul.

Article - Brené Brown on True Belonging

<https://upliftconnect.com/brene-brown-on-true-belonging/>

Excerpt: "Our desire for connection and love runs deep, so much so that we may compromise who we are, in order to belong. Brené Brown says that when we 'fit in' instead of actually 'belong,' we mold ourselves to the situation instead of standing for our authentic self. This doesn't create real connection and we can end up feeling lonelier... In reality, the only true belonging that exists, and the connection that underscores everything else and all other relationships in life, is that powerful sense of belonging to ourselves. We are so often trying to belong elsewhere that we turn our backs on this most important and key aspect of belonging..."

Quote - Brené Brown

Belonging so fully to yourself that you're willing to stand alone is a wilderness—an untamed, unpredictable place of solitude and searching. It is a place as dangerous as it is breathtaking, a place as sought after as it is feared. The wilderness can often feel unholy because we can't control it, or what people think about our choice of whether to venture into that vastness or not. But it turns out to be the place of true belonging, and it's the bravest and most sacred place you will ever stand.

Poem - Love after Love

Derek Walcott

Full poem at <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/love-after-love/>

"you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome..."

Book - Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone."

Brené Brown

Review: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/author-brene-brown-social-scientist-new-book-braving-the-wilderness/>

NOTE: this review contains an article and video that has numerous great sermon angles and illustrations.

Sermon Illustration - Rev. Andy Burnette

Video from minute 2:30 - 4:30: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HC2Mc-nHLk>

A great story and reflection on the we shut ourselves out of belonging. On our struggle to feel we belong and are worthy to sit at the table

Reflection: A Candid Welcome; 10 Reasons You May Not Feel Welcome in a UU Congregation

Rev. Meg Riley

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/candid-welcome-uu>

10 beliefs that unveil some of the boundaries to "UU Belonging." How might you use Riley's list to create a list - and a sermon - of your own?!

Essay - How We Gather: The Theology of CrossFit

<https://onbeing.org/blog/how-we-gather-part-1-the-theology-of-crossfit/>

"Recent decades have seen a steep rise in solitude, so that one in four Americans now have no one to confide in. Statistics suggest our relational fabric is tearing apart. With 3,500 churches closing each year, it's easy to fear the demise of meaningful community. But are we looking in the right places..."

TED Talk - Dare to refuse the origin myths that claim who you are

Chetan Bhatt

https://www.ted.com/talks/chetan_bhatt_dare_to_refuse_the_origin_myths_that_claim_who_you_are

"We all have origin stories and identity myths, our tribal narratives that give us a sense of security and belonging. But sometimes our small-group identities can keep us from connecting with humanity as a whole -- and even keep us from seeing others as human. It's time to change the question from "Where are you from?" to "Where are you going?""

Article - Four Ways Music Strengthens Social Bonds

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_ways_music_strengthens_social_bonds

Why would human evolution have given us music? New research says the answer may lie in our drive to connect.

A related article: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_music_bonds_us_together

Quote - Eboo Patel

I believe every inch of America is sacred, from sea to shining sea. I believe we make it holy by who we welcome and by how we relate to each other. Call it my Muslim eyes on the American project. “We made you different nations and tribes that you may come to know one another,” says the Qur’an.

Reflection - Sarah C Stewart, from The Story of Whiteness

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/story-whiteness>

“Whiteness has been used throughout the histories of America and Europe to praise desirable groups of people and exclude undesirable groups. But “whiteness” is not an ethnic group, a cultural group, or a nationality. In the United States, the Supreme Court legally defined what it meant to be “white” in a pair of decisions in 1922. In other words, whiteness was created by law to let some people in and keep others out...”

Reflection - Turquoise Patriot, by Rev. Victoria Safford

From [Walking Toward Morning](#) (pp.13-14), A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)”

On “ambivalent patriotism,” belonging to a pretty good country and ultimate allegiance (belonging) to your own conscience.

Poem - Spoiled Child, by Pages Matam

<https://poets.org/poem/spoiled-child>

On reconciling yourself to a language, country and culture that “you have fallen in love with” but which also oppresses and is unwilling to allow you to belong?

From the poet: ““‘Spoiled Child’ is one in a series of poems on the reclamation of country and language. English is one of five languages I hold fluently in reading and writing, and, after reading Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s Decolonizing the Mind, I thought to myself, how can I reconcile the traditions and culture as a Cameroonian born and raised writer in the current wave of immigration and oppression of those who are not ‘American’? How do I continue to use the language I have fallen in love with and mastered, which continues to persecute those who haven’t had such a privilege?”

Angle - Everybody Else

Jabari S. Jones

An invitation for us all to notice the “flags” we allow to fly in our communities and how we reply, “yes, but...”

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/everybody-else>

“I am a black man in Maine. In so many ways, I am not like everybody else around here. But I want to belong here. In so many ways, that flag represents the denial of my rights, my belonging... It clings to me like a nightmare, while it seems like everyone else is walking through a dream. I point at the thing and say “Look!” and the crowd replies, ‘Yes, but...’”

Missing Voices

Connie Simon

Full reflection at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/promise-and-practice-missing-voices-reading>

Excerpt: “When I started attending a UU church, I was excited by the promise of worship that would draw from the arts, science, nature, literature and a multitude of voices. Indeed, some of the voices that Unitarian Universalists hear in worship each week belong to Thoreau, Emerson, Ballou, and others. Their words are beautiful, but they come from a culture and experience that’s foreign to me. When do I get to hear voices from my culture?... I don’t hear those voices in UU churches, so I have to supplement... Will we always have to go “outside” to hear our voices? If that’s the case, maybe there’s no place for us in Unitarian Universalism...”

A Liberal Theology of Sexuality

Rev. Gretchen Haley

On the ethic and theology of belonging to our bodies... and the longing to be at home in them...

Full reflection at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/liberal-theology-sexuality>

“When we talk about a liberal theology and ethic of sexuality, we need to start in our vulnerable, needy bodies... Any theology of sex that doesn’t start with the body fails to address those implicit and injuring messages many of us and our culture carry. Early Christian thinkers...imagined human life dualistically—body and soul separate. The soul was eternal and of God, the body was sinful and to be overcome in service of saving the soul. A liberal theological anthropology... refuses to separate the parts in any way—but rather approaches humanity as one—one of body, mind, spirit, all one. All connected, all alive, indivisible, all gifts of God, or of the universe, all worthy of love and belonging...”

Article - Toward a Jewish Liberation Theology for All Genders

Rabbi Elliot Rose Kukla

On transgender belonging within the Jewish texts.

Full article found on page 81 at https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Gender-Identity-and-our-Faith-Communities_2008-12.pdf

“Judaism speaks in a different voice. Although Jewish Sages often tried to sort the world into binaries, they also acknowledged that not all parts of God’s creation can be contained in orderly boxes. Distinctions between Jews and non-Jews; Shabbat and the days of the week; purity and impurity, are crucial to Jewish tradition. However, it was the parts of the universe that defied binaries that interested the rabbis of the Mishna and the Talmud the most. Pages and pages of sacred texts are occupied with the minute details of the moment between fruit and bud, wildness and domestication, innocence and maturity, the twilight hour between day and night... We might have thought that the ambiguity of twilight would have made it dangerous or forbidden within Jewish tradition, since twilight marks the end of one day and start of the next. But, in fact, our Sages determined that dawn and dusk, the in-between moments, are the best times for prayer. (Babylonian Talmud Brachot 29b) Jewish tradition acknowledges that some parts of God’s creation defy categories and that these liminal people, places and things are often the sites of the most intense holiness... God creates diversity that is far too complex for human beings to understand. There are parts of each of us that are uncontainable. Every one of us must be appreciated as a ‘created being of our own’...”

To This Day Project - Shane Koyczan

For [Bullying Prevention Month](#)

Animated version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltun92DfnPY>

In person: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sa1iS1MqUy4&t=145s>

On the Sanctuary Movement, Immigration, Refugees and the Journey to Find Belonging

Home (poem)

Warsan Shire

Video Reading: <http://seekershut.org/blog/2015/09/home-warsan-shire/>

“No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark...”

Refuge (poem)

JJ Bola

Video Reading: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=102&v=0uWqV31QqLo

“We came here to find refuge / They called us refugees / So we hid ourselves in their language / until we sounded just like them. / Changed the way we dressed / to look just like them / Made this our home / until we lived just like them.”

Can Trump Supporters And Immigrants See Eye To Eye?

Middle Ground

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0SpzIHEaE&t=454s>

UUs & The New Sanctuary Movement - UU World

<https://www.uuworld.org/hashtag/new-sanctuary-movement>

Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal (book)

Aviva Chomsky

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00GQA28LM/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1

“Immigrant rights activist Aviva Chomsky shows how “illegality” and “undocumentedness” are concepts that were created to exclude and exploit. With a focus on US policy, she probes how people, especially Mexican and Central Americans, have been assigned this status [to prevent belonging].”

Note: There are more resources related to immigration, refugees and belonging in our October 2018 packet on “A People of Sanctuary.”

Recommended Sermons

Big B Belonging and Huge H Helping

Rev. Joshua Pawelek

<http://uuse.org/big-b-belonging-and-huge-h-helping/?fbclid=IwAR3zJFCgP6319qkFslqhnSYTCZoqXPzyOR8bEI6-B8nStdoo7HodiiEWIQ#.XTnqBC2ZO2u>

Excerpt: “What longing lies at the heart of your presence here [at church]? Here’s my answer to the question... This is what I know: the gentle, sustaining, wordless power flowing through everything, connecting everything, making everything whole; and I know the hurting, grieving, violent world. I long to feel whole and connected. And I long to respond in some meaningful way to the world’s immense hurt. In more concise language, I long to belong, and I long to help. In the end, these two longings are why I went into ministry. They are why I go to church... Having said that, the human longing to belong goes much deeper than belonging to a congregation. Belonging to a congregation is belonging with a small b. Belonging with a big B—or Big B Belonging—is that sense of belonging to the larger human family, or belonging to the whole of life, or belonging to God or Goddess, or to some holy power...”

We’re All in This Together

Rev. Hilary Krivchenia

<http://ccuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Sermon%202013-09-29%20Together.pdf>

Excerpt: “It is our nature to be in this together and to know it – somewhere in the back of our minds – in spite of what we might be told or sold – or even believe consciously. And, I think that we yearn to feel that deep sense of connection and belonging reawaken. Unconnected, we are really only partly alive – connected we are whole. We are like aspen trees – who have mistakenly thought that since we look like many trees that is the truth – but under the ground, our root system is one – we are fully alive when we are connected because we are, we were always, part of one another.

It might be scary, particularly if your moat and castle are well stocked and you’re sure that you’ll be fine when the zombie apocalypse arrives -- but still, I believe that – whatever assembly we come to: mosque, gurdjwara, synagogue, church, forest, prairie, or congregation – we are following a deep drive to reweave the larger web of belonging – to reclaim all that we have lost – in our hearts and our world.

Maybe you weren’t thinking that when you got ready to come here this morning – maybe you wanted a small dose of social connection or a bit of spirituality – Parker Palmer wrote: “spirituality refers to the eternal human longing to be part of something larger than one’s own ego.” Whatever we’re about here – it is surely to be part of something larger than one’s own ego. But we are trying, to one degree or another, for one hour of words and music to restructure something in ourselves that is formed and pressed by the larger world the other 167 hours...”

You Belong Here: Exploring the Heart of Beloved Community

Rev. Andy Burnette

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HC2Mc-nHLk>

“Feeling we don’t belong someplace, costs us someplace...Each of us has work to do to [allow *ourselves* to receive that welcome...” “Every person is welcome here; every behavior is not...”

Welcome as Spiritual Practice

Alex Kapitan

On Welcoming congregations as sanctuaries for our whole selves.

<http://uuse.org/the-welcoming-congregation-welcome-as-spiritual-practice/#.W2Ek5y2ZPdQ>

Excerpt: “What would it be like if you could trust, unequivocally, that you were valued here for the pieces of yourself that make you feel different, not despite those pieces. That in this space there was nothing about you that could make people reverse their welcome or reject you from the circle of belonging...”

Whose Are We?

Rev. Dr. John T. Morehouse

Text: <https://uwestport.org/sermons/rev-john-t-morehouses-sermons/whose-are-we-september-17-2017-video-available/>

Video: <https://vimeo.com/234245181>

“I still think it’s important to ask what matters most... [But] In recent years, I ask another question alongside what matters most. I ask, “whose are we?” To whom do we belong?...”

Practicing Community... Even When It's Hard

Kristen Psaki

https://foothillsuu.org/podcasts-and-sermons/?enmse=1&enmse_tid=5&enmse_mid=1179&enmse_av=1

On belonging to a community that disappoints and believing that within those disappointments lay gifts. Also on the work of “calling in” rather than “calling out” that sustains belonging.

Being made “not to belong”

Moises Nunez, from [Black Girl in Maine](#)

<https://www.blackgirlinmaine.com/racial-and-cultural/being-made-not-to-belong/>

Technically not a sermon but the structure and insights make it a model sermon.

Excerpt: “Telling someone to go back where they came from (whether they come from somewhere else or not) is not about patriotism, and it is not just racist. It’s also violent. It is meant to shock and meant to demean you. It is meant to take from you. Its aim is to amplify that painful sense that you are wrong for just existing. It’s also meant to deter you. It is a reminder that in the mind of those who believe they belong here; they have the right to oppress you...”

Choosing Family

Rev. Margaret Weis

Found at <https://unitarian.ithaca.ny.us/index.php/worship/past-worship-services/> - scroll down to September 16, 2018

On compadres and comadres, belonging beyond blood and the power, gift and importance of choosing our own definition of family.

A Place of Belonging

Rev. Alison W. Eskildsen

<https://www.uuathensga.org/services/a-place-of-belonging/>

A core quote from the sermon: “In contrast to how a child belongs in the world, adult belonging is never as natural, innocent, or playful. Adult belonging has to be chosen, received, and renewed. It is a lifetime’s work” - John O’Donohue

Safe and Profoundly Unsound

Rev. Victoria E Safford

Found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/sermon/safe-profoundly-unsound>

Excerpt: “Who belongs here, who doesn’t, who says so, and why? I look at Nidia Vallecillo in her handcuffs in the airport, crying for her child, and wonder what exactly is the threat she poses? On the scale of yellow, orange, red alerts, where do she and baby Jared fall? The big sign flashing on the road to the airport urges us to report all suspicious activity; I can think of few things more suspect than taking a mother (who is not a criminal) from her infant by force in the middle of the night, and deporting her to a country from which she may never be able to return to see him or hold him or mother him again...”

One of the assumptions with which I struggle always is the notion that I can be a citizen without being a vigilant patriot, that because I’m unlikely to be deported or detained offshore, I can leave the hard questions and the hard work to someone else, subcontracting out my share of the work of democracy. But I know this is not true... How far do we need to be prepared to go?...”

From Being to Belonging

Rev. Peter Friedrichs

<http://www.uucdc.org/worship/sermons/being-belonging>

“Belonging is not a spectator sport. It doesn’t happen by sitting on the sidelines, wondering or worrying why, given the promise of the church, we’re not feeling it. We need to walk toward it...”

In Memory of Them

Rev. Dr. John T. Morehouse

On belonging to the incomplete lives of those who have gone before

Related to [Samhain](#), [All Souls](#), [Día de los Muertos](#)

Video: <https://vimeo.com/304879483>

Another sermon on the same theme by Rev. Jen Crow: <https://firstuniv.podbean.com/e/january-8-2017-sermon-by-rev-jen-crow-remembrance-sunday/>

God Makes No Mistakes: Creating Beloved Community for All Our Children

Sally Patton

On disability and belonging

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/sermon/god-makes-no-mistakes-creating-beloved-community-all-our-children>

“As Father Homan says, “The walls only come down when the labels are changed into human faces.” It means accepting the Divine presence of every child.

Operating from “the giftedness paradigm” helps us understand the idea God does not make mistakes? Even for those who question the existence of God, this notion has profound implications for children with special challenges. Believing that children with disabilities are no mistakes is essential to our ability to accept them into our congregation, minister to or parent them. We must be able to see the wholeness of spirit instead of only brokenness or deficits. Otherwise, we lose sight of the whole child... As a congregation we can embrace the opportunity that each child and adult who crosses the threshold into our church provides us to be in a community that sees differences as gifts and opportunities for meaningful interaction and spiritual connection...”

Closing Words

May You Find Shelter

Rev. Barbara Hamilton-Holway

May you find shelter in being seen for who you are.
May you find hope in this place.
May you dwell always in your goodness.
May goodness and hope be your eternal home.

Safe Passage

Elie Wiesel

No one is as capable of gratitude
as one who has emerged from the kingdom of night.
We know that every moment is a moment of grace,
every hour an offering;
not to share them would mean to betray them.
Our lives no longer belong to us alone;
they belong to all those who need us desperately.

Blessing

John O'Donohue

Full piece/closing at <https://www.lovemagazine.com/magazine/article/a-blessing-a-poem-by-john-odonohue>

May the frames of your belonging be large enough for the dreams of your soul... May you know the eternal longing which lives at the heart of time... May you allow the wild beauty of the invisible world to gather you, mind you, and embrace you in belonging.

To Unveil the Bonds that Bind Each to All

Mark Morrison-Reed

#580 in Singing the Living Tradition

The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice.

It is the church that assures us that we are not struggling for justice on our own, but as members of a larger community. The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done. Together our vision widens, and our strength is renewed.

Caretaking

Jill-Beth Veronica-Sweeney

Found in With or Without Candlelight, A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)"

"Take care of your home..."

Support & Inspiration

Join the Soul Matters Worship Leader Support Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Join the Soul Matters Ministers' Support Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/719788338192570/>

Attend one of our two monthly online ministers' brainstorming groups:

First Tuesdays and First Thursdays of each month at 1pm eastern

Attend our monthly online musicians' brainstorming group:

Second Thursdays of each month at 1pm eastern

Join the Soul Matters Inspiration Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Find musical inspiration on our Soul Matters Spotify music playlists:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>

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