

Session 14: UUism and the Crisis of Life

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Session Metadata	
Session	14
Title	UUism and the Crisis of Life
UU Source	Earth-Centered Spirituality
Unit	5th Source: Earth-Centered Spirituality
Head / Hands / Heart	Hands
Has Exercise	No
Has Ritual	No
Has Spiritual Practice Presentation	Yes
Special Blocks	None

Preparation

Email to Participants

For our next session on [date], we will discuss how our faith has supported us, or not, during the crises of our lives. Part of the earth-centered spirituality source calls us to “live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.” This task is easy when our lives are filled with springtime and flowers, but

much harder when we face storms and personal challenges. In other words: the rhythms of nature include both growth and disease, both birth and mortality. How do we live in harmony with all of it? How does Unitarian Universalism support our life?

The pre-work for this session includes an article highlighting the support offered during the most difficult months of the pandemic. UU Chaplains who were called to care for those in crisis, discuss how their faith held them and helped them carry on.

- [Serving with the Deepest Respect and Care UU World Fall 2020](#)

This session also begins our reading of the book *Heartwood, The Art of Living with the End in Mind* by Barbara Becker. (Context Note: Becker writes from her personal experience and perspective of a white woman with economic and racial privilege. She includes stories and experiences that some have identified as problematic. We encourage a critical lens as you read.)

- Please read the Author's Note, and the first chapter titled "Marisa."

These additional short pieces explore areas that have challenged UUs:

- ["Don't Forget to Mourn"](#) by [Jekaren Olaoya](#) from *Shelter in Place* edited by Meg Riley. 2021. Printed by permission of author.
- ["Not enough Candles,"](#) (p. 13 and below) by Sean Neil-Barron from *To Wake To Rise: Meditations on Justice and Resilience* edited by William G. Sinkford. Printed by permission of poet.
- ["After the Shootings: A Prayer."](#) by Rev. [xolani kacela](#) (p. 31) from *To Wake To Rise: Meditations on Justice and Resilience* edited by William G. Sinkford. Used by permission of the author.

Reflection Questions

- What insights resonated with you from the article "Serving with the Deepest Respect and Care? How has your UU faith helped you or fallen short for you during the pandemic?
- In the book *Heartwood*, the author describes the core of a tree as the sustainer of new life. What is at your core that sustains you? How does your identity and ancestry affect your core?
- In the *Heartwood* chapter, "Marisa," the author finds that simple presence and ordinary life sustains her during a time of profound loss. Have you also found this to be true; if so, how have you experienced this?
- Did the readings from *To Wake, to Rise* bring any unexpected feelings for you or feelings of connection with the poets?

Also, **please bring something with you** that represents what sustains you in a time of spiritual, emotional and/or physical crisis. This could be a poem, music, writing, art, or something more personal such as an artifact of your religious past or a photo of a beloved person or place. Another

way to think about this is to imagine you are being rushed to the hospital in an ambulance and it's not clear if you will survive. What words, images, prayers, music, ideas would come to you at this time? What anchors you? How do you keep your heart open even while it's breaking?

Or maybe you haven't found the support you need in times of crisis. In times of crisis, such as a health crisis, loss of job or home, what do you long for? What would sustain you?

We will each have a chance to share our items with each other.

You may also be thinking about what's next? Your spiritual journey doesn't need to end here! You can find more information on all of UU Wellspring [programs](#) on the UU Wellspring website.

I'm looking forward to our time together.

Session Plan

Chalice Lighting and Silence

****Note to Facilitators:****Read aloud: "I Pray this Day for the Courage to Be..." by Maureen Killoran, found on page 30 of *To Wake to Rise*.

“I Pray this Day for the Courage to Be...”

I pray this day for the courage to be . . .

The courage to be humble in the face of inequity and pain, to know that the power has been given me to make a difference, although not to end all suffering or to save all the whales that populate our days.

I pray for the courage of endurance, to keep acting in the midst of despair, to keep trying in the aftermath of failure, to keep hoping in the emptiness that follows loss or change.

May courage give me patience and may I ever know Love's healing presence at the heart and center of my days.

Maureen Killoran, from *To Wake To Rise: Meditations on Justice and Resilience* edited by William G. Sinkford.

Play **Samuel Barber's [Adagio for Strings](#)** or say, "Let's take a few minutes of silence to bring ourselves fully into this circle."

Additional optional music to play during a Break or at the end of the session as people are logging off: [Standing Stone](#) and [Sending You Light](#), both performed by Unitarian Universalist Voice Activist Melanie DeMore.

Check-In

How is your spiritual practice going? Your spiritual direction? What are you carrying in your heart?

Covenant Review

Note for Facilitators: Use whatever process your group has established to stay current with the covenant, including reading it out loud together at each session.

Anything about the covenant that we should address?

Spiritual Practice Presentation

Reflection

We'll start our reflection time by sharing what we each brought. The invitation was to bring something — poetry, art, music — with you that represents what sustains you in times of crisis. Just a reminder that this is a circle without judgment or comment.

We will listen openly to our own and others' truth, and then once everyone has shared, we'll have some time for reflection.

Note for Facilitators: Divide the hour by the number of participants to make sure each person has time to share. Ask each person to share what s/he brought and to take [x] minutes to describe how and why it helps them through life crises.

As time allows, some possible reflection questions:

- What insights resonated with you from the article "Serving with the Deepest Respect and Care? How did your UU faith help you or fall short for you during the pandemic? Or another time of familial or congregational challenge?
- In the book *Heartwood*, the author describes the core of a tree as the sustainer of new life. What is at your core that sustains you? How does your identity and ancestry affect your core?
- In the *Heartwood* chapter, "Marisa," the author finds that simple presence and ordinary life sustains her during a time of profound loss. Have you also found this to be true; if so, how have you experienced this?

- Did the readings from *To Wake, to Rise* bring any unexpected feelings for you or feelings of connection with the poets?

Or ask these more general questions:

- What words, images, prayers, music, ideas would come to you at this time?
- What anchors you?
- How do you keep your heart open even while it's breaking?
- What do you long for? What would sustain you?

So What?

What does this reflection call you to do? In our circle? In your life?

Gratitude and Closing

Have everyone focus on the chalice. Each person, as moved, says one or two words about something from this session for which they are grateful or how they are feeling in this moment. After everyone has said a word, close with a brief statement of thanks and appreciation, such as, "For all this and more, we are grateful."

If you want to play music at the end, you might choose "[We Shall Be Known](#)" by MaMuse.

Revision #2

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