Ancient Rituals and Time Honored Traditions
Of our Winter Celebration of UU Values

During the first full week of December, Unitarian Universalists take time each evening to celebrate our covenant, reflect on our values, and to be kind to ourselves and the people around us. The days with the least light are the best days for remembering the luminescence this shared faith brings to our lives. Celebrating with your family, in your own unique way, is a gift you can give to your children that they can take into adulthood to share with the families they create, rooted in practices that bring Unitarian Universalism to life.

Some Ways to Celebrate

Special rituals:

- Light a chalice at home every evening and reflect on the ways in which you have put our eight principles into practice. If you don't have a chalice, you can make one. The chalice you make together may become the most loved symbol of your family's holiday together.
- Recite a blessing before your evening meal, or whichever meal you share as a family. See below for more ideas for blessings.
- Make any of the elements you may need to celebrate in a way that feels special: A lighted seven-pointed star, an altar, a special tablecloth or anything else that will help set the time aside as special, reflective, and joyful.

Reflection:

- Spend time reflecting on our shared values, expressed in our Eight Principles and our proposed Article II, both of which you can find below.
- Put a mirror under your chalice or on your altar as a symbol of the process of personal reflection, and also to bounce and reflect the light that feels so precious during this time of year.

Create your own traditions:

- Nurture narcissus bulbs into bloom, as reminders to reflect and to take loving care of ourselves so that we may care for others.
- Share sweet or savory bean dishes like these we collected from our congregation last year, in solidarity with people around the world who rely on legumes as their main protein source, and to promote holiday eating that is healthier for us and our planet.
- Make a special dish (maybe highlighting beans!) that you only make at this time of year.
- Make an anthology of poems and short readings appropriate for chalice lighting.
- Write a blessing together, then memorize it.
- Read a different short story each night after dinner (and before dessert?!) You can find anthologies and other books at the UUA bookstore.
- Find a way to connect this special time to your family's existing traditions. If the seasonal traditions of other faiths are part of your family's story, it's perfectly authentic to respectfully incorporate them into your new traditions, or build new ones that are similar.

You may want to walk a labyrinth before dinner, light a menorah alongside your chalice, or make chalice ornaments for a Christmas tree.

Service and Spreading Love

- Exchange small, handmade gifts as tokens of your appreciation for friends and family. Items to consider: soaps, black bean brownies, truffles, spiced nuts, blank note cards or greeting cards, decorative items, framed photos.
- Write letters to congregants who are shut in, neighbors who may be alone, or — through the Unitarian Universalist church of the Larger Fellowship — to incarcerated individuals seeking connections to our faith. You can get more information at www.worthynow.org
- Donate to Guest at Your Table, an annual program of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

The important thing is that you have a fun, joyful mini celebration every day with a routine that works for your family. It's best if it isn't overly complicated or taxing and includes a little treat to make it special, while remaining grounded in UU practices and traditions. And we invite you to share your thoughts about what the traditions and rituals mean to you.

Some Chalice Lighting Readings

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

- Albert Schweitzer

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.
Blessed is the flame that burns in the heart's secret places.
Blessed is the heart with strength to stop its beating for honor's sake.
Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.

- Hannah Senesh

I am only one
But still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
But still I can do something.
And because I cannot do everything
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

- Edward Everett Hale

O Spinner, Weaver of our lives,
Your loom is Love.
May we who are gathered here
Be empowered by that love
To weave new patterns of Truth
And Justice into a Web of Life that is strong,
Beautiful,
And everlasting.

- Barbara Wells

In these, the darkest days of the year,
We welcome into our midst the light of this chalice,
A reminder of the love we share with those around us,
And our deep connection to all life,
As we seek and find the warm glow of a flame,
The ideals that bind us together in faith,
And hope that we may know peace.

- Denis Paul

We light this chalice as Unitarian Universalists *(make each hand into a big U)*
We are a people of open minds *(touch our foreheads)*
Of loving hearts *(place hands over our hearts)*
And of helping hands *(hold hands out in front of us)*
We care for our earth *(make arms into a round ball in front of our body)*
And we work for peace *(hold up hands into peace signs)*
And justice *(put hands into fists high above heads)*
Together *(bring hands to clasp in front of chest)*

- An RE chalice lighting

Some Blessings to say before a meal

Bless the earth and the sky and the marriage between the two which brings forth all life.
Bless the many hands through which this food has passed along its journey.
Bless those who reap, those who till and those who sow.
Bless those who sell, ship, shop, chop, cook and clean. (Especially those who clean!)
May all be touched by the abundance with which we now find ourselves.
And Blessings on this food, that when we eat it, we take its energy out into the world to do good things.

- Author Unknown

All life is your own,
All fruits of the earth are fruits of your womb,
Your union,
Your dance.
[Parents and ancestors,]
We thank you for blessings and abundance.
Join with us.
Feast with us.
Enjoy with us.
Blessed be.

- Starhawk

Give us, O Force of Creation,
Thankful hearts
Which never forget your goodness to us.
Give us, O spirit of Life,
Grateful hearts,
Which do not waste time complaining.

- based on a prayer by St. Thomas Aquinas

Beloved Divine Mother,
Who has become our earth, our skies,
Our waters, our trees,
Our animal siblings, our human cousins,
Our parents, families, and neighbors,
Nurture us always
And cradle us in your never-ending Love.
Teach us to see your beauty.
Teach us to feel your beauty.
Teach us to be your beauty,
Wherever we go.

- based on a prayer by Wave Carberry

The Eight Principles of Unitarian Universalism

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

The right of conscience and the use of democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part;

Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountability dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

UU Statement of Values [Article II Proposal, fall 2023]

