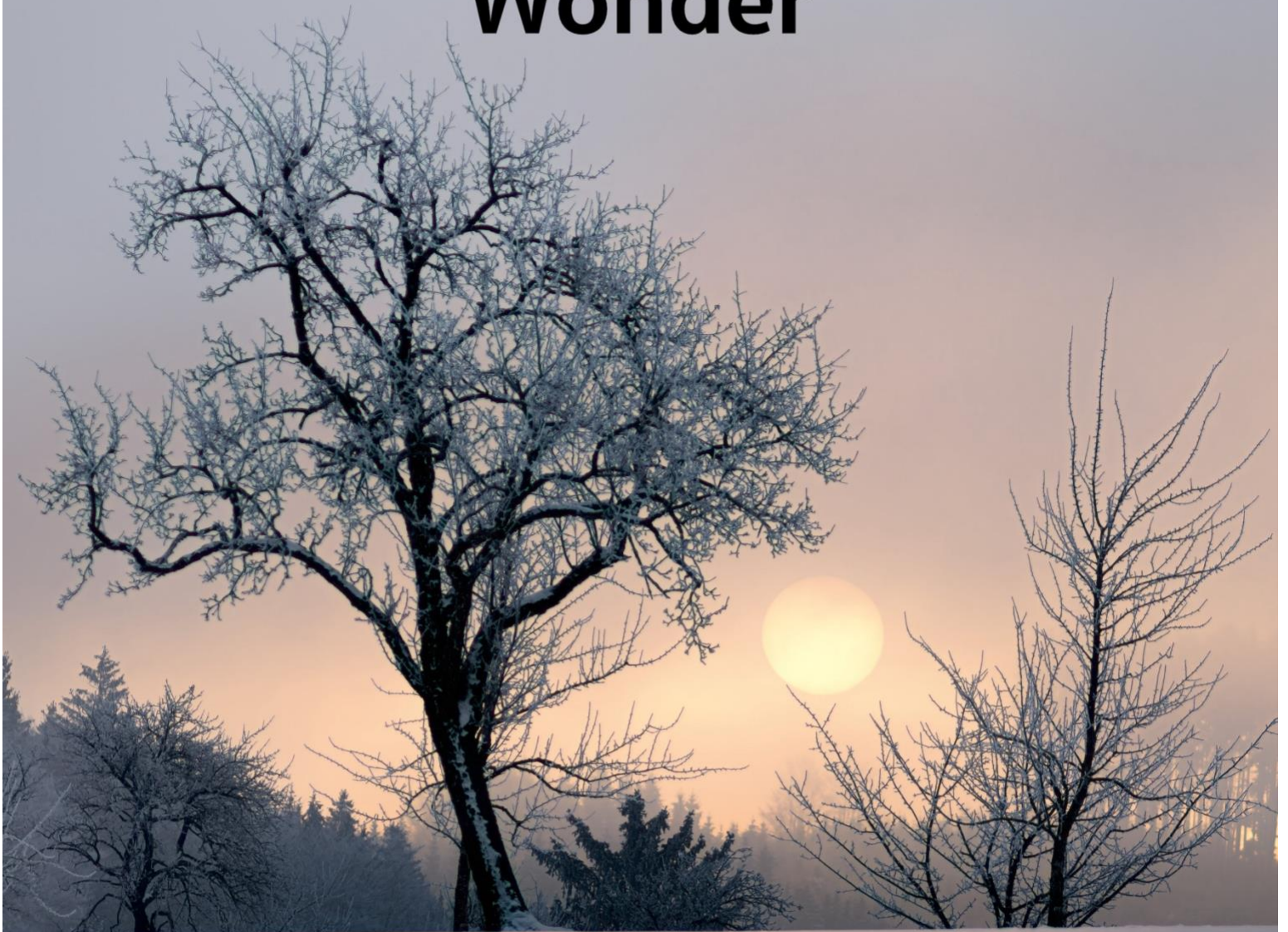




Soul Matters

The Path of Wonder



Worship Research

December 2022

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About Online Permissions, Multi-Platform Support & Referencing Resources

Once again, we're supporting multi-platform worship by researching and noting material that is permissioned for online use. We will identify those online permissioned pieces with an asterisk by the title of the suggested resource, as well as with "permission notes" beneath the title information that document the source of that online permission.

A Reminder About Partial Texts and "Pointing not Publishing": To honor legal and relational standards, we do not include the full pieces of authors' works unless we've received explicit permission to do so. We want all subscribers to clearly understand that our worship packets are research packets not publications, which means we focus on "pointing" to where you can find fair use and publicly available pieces, rather than on "publishing" original writings and full resources. Our main service to you is theme-based *curation* and *research*, done in the service of saving professionals time.

A Note About Author Titles: Many of the authors we refer to are ministers. Some ministers prefer to be credited with their title "Rev.", others don't, and still others are fine either way. Our practice is to follow whatever practice was used in the source material we reference.

Calendar Connections

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

December 2022

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

Interfaith:

- [Advent](#) (Christian) Nov. 27 -Dec. 24, 2022 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Hanukkah](#) (Jewish) - Dec. 18 -Dec. 26, 2022 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Bodhi Day](#) (Buddha's Enlightenment) - [Dec. 8](#) (more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Chalica](#) (UU) Dec. 5 - 11, 2022, first Monday in December and lasts seven days (more [here](#) & [here](#))
- [Yule](#), Solstice (Pagan/Wiccan) - Dec. 21
- Christmas Eve - Dec. 24, 2022 (Saturday)
- Christmas Day - Dec. 25, 2022 (Sunday)
- [Holy Innocents Day](#) (Christian) - Dec. 28
- [Watch Night](#)/Freedom's Eve (Christian) - Dec. 31
- [Kwanzaa](#) - Dec. 26 - Jan. 1 (more [here](#) and [here](#))

National & Cultural:

- [Drunk](#) and [Drugged](#) Driving Prevention Month
- [Seasonal Depression](#) Awareness Month
- [World AIDS Day](#) - Dec. 1 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Rosa Parks](#) Arrested - Dec. 1 (1955)
- International Day of [Persons with Disabilities](#) - Dec. 3
- [Human Rights Day](#) - Dec 10th
- Anniversary of [Sandy Hook](#) Shootings - Dec 14
- [Montgomery's buses](#) are desegregated - Dec. 21 (1956)
- [Boxing Day](#) (Canada) Dec. 26 (more [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe:

- [Nobel Prize](#) Day - Dec 10
- How [the Grinch](#) Stole Christmas shown for first time - Dec 18, 1966
- [Festivus](#) for [the rest of us](#) – Dec 23
- Copyright registration of Star Trek [theme song](#) - Dec 27, 1966
 - Star Trek is credited with the first interracial kiss on prime-time television in the US and the first African American actor in a main character on prime time

Chalice Lightings & Opening Words

In This Spirit of Searching *

Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Out of depths unknown
the spark of life ignites
and we are born
we enter a world, a universe
not of our making
our lives unfold
in mystery and wonder
questions abound
for which there are no definite answers
and so
we gather in community
to seek in one another
assurance
and recognition
compassion
and strength
we gather in community
to be reminded
of what is most ultimate
and what is most sacred
in this spirit of searching
and of reverence
let us worship together this morning.

What Song

Rev. Victoria Safford

Full piece found at

<http://archive.uuworld.org/2003/03/calltoworship.html>

What if there were a universe, a cosmos, that began
in shining blackness...
and into it came billions and billions of stars...
and near one of them a world, a blue-green world
so beautiful that learned clergymen could not even
speak
about it cogently...
If such a universe existed and you noticed it, what
would you do? What song would come out of your
mouth?...

Wonder *

Rev. Dr. David Breeden

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We light this flame,
reminding ourselves
to treasure the magic
in the mundane,

the wonders of
carbon dioxide,
oxygen, nitrogen,
rapid oxidation

into light, heat, and
the dance of a flame.
We light this chalice,
kindling, remembering

our innate sense
of wonder at
the very real magic
of our world.

To Love Life *

Rev. Daniel Chesney Kanter

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/to-love-life>
[Permission Source](#)

To love life is to notice the wonders that abound...

Our Lives Intersect and Intertwine *

Tania Márquez

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/our-lives-intersect-and-intertwine>
[Permission Source](#)

It is a wonder and mystery that our paths have
crossed;
That in the immensity of time, in the vastness of
space, we coincide here.
I am in awe at the ways in which our lives intersect
and intertwine...

Because We Are Finite

Rev. David Usher

From <https://www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/opening-words>

Because we are finite, we lift up our eyes to the
infinite sky, and feel wonder and awe.
Because we have stumbled, we take the tender
hand which beckons us to rise,
and feel strength and reassurance.
Because we are lonely, we reach out to those
around us, and feel warmth and acceptance.
Because we are human, we do all of these things,
and in our worship, feel the presence of the divine.

The Wonder All Around Us *

Rev. Scott Tayler

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Look friends, to the sky,
to the stars that dance like fireworks overhead
this tiny globe on which we travel.
Look to the horizon, the tree line, the expanse of
wide-open fields,
to this living, breathing earth that makes our living
and breathing possible.
Look at the faces that surround you,
and notice what a wonder it is that we don't have
to walk this world alone.
All of it is a miracle. All of it deserves our awe.
May this light we now kindle
and this time we share,
illuminate the astonishing preciousness
of it all.

Suddenly Awake with Awe *

Rev. Gretchen Haley

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Do not fail to be surprised
By the catching of your breath
The quickening of your heart
The fullness of your eyes
Wide and
Suddenly awake
With awe
Here is a place filled with wonder
That still there might be
Something new
born today
That we
might be born anew
today
Do not fail to notice
The changing
The life full and abundant
Already beginning
By our coming together
Already possible
By the promises we make
To give, to receive,
to become
more together,
and to forgive: again, and again
the falling short
that is always/already here
Here we find ourselves
among the courageous
feeling ourselves
Trying to become brave
With each in, and out, of breath
Each word, each pause, each song
We give thanks,
To be on this journey
Come let us worship together.

Meditations, Prayers & Blessings

Winter Weather Meditation *

Rev. Jonalu Johnstone

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Winter weather can be seen as gift or curse –

The curse is easy to see – ruined plans, icy falls, fender-benders, cabin fever. The gift may be harder to find.

There are new kinds of beauty before us – the still, clear starkness of a winter blanket, the glisten of icy crystals. There is wonder before us. Our everyday landscape transformed.

And what about the wonder of snowstorms, that cancel everything from meetings to school to work, allowing time to extend, and reminding us of the gift of time with no particular expectations or assignments, with no place to go and no one to see. A time for dreaming, perhaps, or music, or reading, or silence. A time for re-connecting with precious people we live with – and sometimes drift away from in the clatter of normal routine. Time may be the most special gift we have in these days, if we are ready to make something of it.

The words of David Rankin:

There must be a time when we cease speaking to be fully present with ourselves.

There must be a time when we exclude clamor by listening to nothing whatsoever.

There must be a time when we forgo our plans as if we had no plans at all.

There must be a time when we abandon conceits and tap into a deeper wisdom.

There must be a time when we stop striving and find the peace within.

May this wonder of altered time, come as a blessing, to us all.

AMEN.

Winter Solstice *

Rebecca Parker

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/winter-solstice>

[Permission Source](#)

Let there be a season

when holiness is heard and

The splendor of living is revealed...

We are not alone.

In the universe there moves a Wild One

whose gestures alter earth's axis

toward love...

Nourished *

Rev. Jay Wolin

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/nourished>

[Permission Source](#)

When I look up into the night sky,

I am in awe of all that is...

When I walk in the ocean...

I feel a certain peace with the world...

All of these wonders...

let us protect them...

Into Greater Union with the Mysterious *

Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Spirit of Life, Mother of All
Mystery Beyond Our Understanding

Here we are
living breathing creatures
with minds that wonder
and hearts that feel awe
we face questions that we know can't be answered
and tragedies that we know can't be explained
May we find patience
in all that is unanswered
and peace in all that
will never be explained

Here we are
living breathing creatures
with open minds
and tender hearts
May we hold ourselves with gentleness
with all that brings us worry
and all that makes our hearts break

May the living breathing creatures that we are
feel the breath of life
moving in us
and through all things
bringing us into greater union
with the mysterious universe of which we are a part

Blessed be.

Amen.

The practice of zooming in, zooming out... *

Rev. Kimberly Wildszewski

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

"Do you remember what we learned this past summer?
Deep within the history of our universe, there have been galaxies dancing together. Stretching each other.
Did you see it? Did you see the pictures of NASA's Webb Telescope? We now know. No wait. We can now see: 5
galaxies. Let's stop there.
One galaxy is a huge collection of gas, dust, billions of stars, and each of those stars' solar systems held together
by gravity.
This week we saw images of five galaxies. I can't actually conceptualize that. But what I've learned is that four of
those interact. They are pulling on one another. They are influencing each other. They are forming baby stars.
Yes, baby stars behind the curtain of dust and gas in what are called Cosmic Cliffs.
When I've been picturing cliffs lately, I've only seen us falling down, falling off.
Remember that early computer game where the lemmings fall thoughtlessly into an abyss, a straight shot down
to their demise? Following their leader, who is following their leader and so on all because the controller
couldn't redirect them?

Cosmic Cliffs create something new. Whole universes. Whole solar systems. Possibility.

What if we decided this image, these images, came at just the right time? When the world, our tiny, teeny gorgeous ornate inimitable world feels so incredibly despairing. What if we learned to look differently at it, at us? If we began to wonder about what we didn't know, couldn't see, couldn't even conceptualize really, but took up the practice of zooming in, zooming out.

We'd have to stop following the followers. We'd have to start with curiosity. We'd have to begin with the truth that we are but a speck; yes, important, beloved, worthy of life and love and health and safety, but still, a grain of sand in a thousand stunning deserts.

I think we'd find within this possibility. I think we'd learn to breathe. To let go. To give thanks. To bow in awe. Today we come to this space with whole worlds, whole solar systems of joy and sorrow dancing and stretching inside our very own bodies. Hate has influenced how we love. Hope accompanies our depressions. Life combats the enclosures, the closets, the confines that seem to be building up around us everywhere. Whole solar systems within us.

If it's too much to accept our speck-ness today, if it feels like one more overwhelming new thing. Zoom in to your own universe and discover there what you could not see before. Zoom out and allow yourself to see the enormity of the system, the village, the interdependence of which you are a part.

Be held. Be held in the possibility that is still before us, still stretching and forming us, still inviting us to dance. Breathe. Let go. Give thanks.

Let the spirit of life interrupt the path we have been following to despair.

The Miracle in the Mundane *

Kyle Johnson

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/miracle-mundane>
[Permission Source](#)

Oh Spirit that moves in ALL things...

Help us to see the Miracle in the Mundane,

To see the crystal stars, the shape-shifting clouds, the patient trees –

To see each other through fresh eyes...

As we move through our lives,

let us remember to see through the Mundane to the Miracle beneath...

Boundaries *

Rev. Lynn Ungar

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/boundaries>
[Permission Source](#)

...The world comes in at every pore...

Listen. Every molecule is humming
its particular pitch.

Of course you are a symphony.

Whose tune do you think

the planets are singing

as they dance?

Guided Meditation *

Martha Kirby Capo

Full meditation at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/guided-meditation-potential>

Connected to the idea of an "[Awe Walk](#)."

[Permission Source](#)

Teach us to look for you *

Fr. Austin Fleming

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/teach-us-look-you>

This prayer was written to accompany the Advent hymn "People, Look East," #226 in Singing the Living Tradition.

[Permission Source](#)

Turn our faces in any and every direction
from which you draw near to us.

Teach us to look for you in places
we would not expect to find you...

Let every star in the heavens be a light...

With or Without Candlelight

Rev. John Marsh

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

If you are going to meditate by candlelight,
Do not hurry to light the candle...

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. Monthly online musicians' brainstorming group:** We meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 6pm eastern time. To join the call use this Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5857099120>. No pre-registration necessary. Just come as you are able.
- 2. Soul Matters Music Support Facebook Page:** This support page is for on-going sharing among Soul Matters musicians. Here's the link: <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=soul%20matters%20musicians%20support>
- 3. Recordings of all of our monthly music brainstorming calls** are available at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pHuVaUqAnNPIW9dis3Tz31B4eGxdxebl?usp=sharing>
- 4. Soul Matters Music Playlists:** We create two different playlists each month: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. 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. Click [here](#) to check out the YouTube playlists.
- 5. AUUMM (Association for UU Musicians Ministries) Online Database:** The wonderful leadership of the AUUMM have added our monthly themes to the AUUMM music database. It's a great way to get music suggestions from UUs all around the country. Access the AUUMM Music Database [here](#).

Suggestions For December 2022 - Wonder

from Soul Matters Music Resources Coordinator, [Molly J. Webster](#)

Hymns: Singing the Living Tradition - permissioned

All of the hymns listed below have permissions for in-person performance, live streaming and online recording/archiving, assuming you have legally obtained copies of the UU hymnals and unless otherwise noted. ([Permission Source](#))

- 46 - Now the Day is Over
- 54 - Now Light is Less
- 56 - Bells in the High Tower
- 73 - Chant for the Seasons
- 126 - Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing
- 283 - The Spacious Firmament on High
- 345 - With Joy We Claim The Growing Light
- 352 - Find a Stillness
- 389 - Gathered Here
- 398 - To See the World in a Grain of Sand

Hanukkah/Advent/Christmas: 221 - 258

Please see [permissions](#) for the following: 221, 224, 225, 226, 228, 229, 232, 239, 240, 244, 247, 254, 256

Hymns: Singing the Journey - permissioned

All of the hymns listed below have permissions for in-person performance, live streaming and online recording/archiving, assuming you have legally obtained copies of the UU hymnals and unless otherwise noted. ([Permission Source](#))

- 1003 - Where Do We Come From?
- 1051 - We Are...
- 1063 - Winter Solstice Chant

Hymns: Singing the Living Tradition - permissions needed

The following permissions are needed if using in streaming/hybrid/online recorded services

- 18 - What Wondrous Love (alternative harmony: Abingdon Press, One License)
- 43 - The Morning, Noiseless (music: Henmar Press, CCS)
- 50 - When Darkness Nears (music: G.I.A. Publications, One License)
- 55 - Dark of Winter (donate to [Heritage UU Church in Cincinnati](#) choir or children's music program)
- 57 - All Beautiful the March of Days (music: Oxford University Press, One License)
- 58 - Ring Out, Wild Bells (music: Oxford University Press, One License)
- 130 - O Liberating Rose (music: [email](#) when used)
- 298 - Wake, Now, My Senses (harmony: Abingdon Press, One License)
- 385 - Gloria (G.I.A Publishing, One License)

Contemporary Suggestions - permissions needed

*If you are streaming your services/are hybrid, please note that all copyright permissions are your responsibility to obtain***

- *What a Wonderful World* - Thiele/Weiss, Louis Armstrong
- *World of Wonder* - Bruce Cockburn
- *Wonder* - Shawn Mendes
- *Winter Solstice Song* - Lisa Thiel
- *Star of Wonder* - Tori Amos
- *Wonder* - Natalie Merchant
- *I Stand in Wonder* - Joe Cocker

Many of the above songs can be found on JWPepper, MusicNotes.com and the Chords/Tabs for most of the above can be found here:

[Ultimate Guitar](#); [Ukulele Chords/Tabs - Free to Transpose](#); [Chordify](#)

Choral/Vocal

All listed music can be found on JWPepper and can be located by following the link or searching by title.

- [I Wonder as I Wander - SATB, SSA - Ruth Elaine Schram](#)
- [What a Wonderful World - SATB - Weiss, Thiele, Arr. Clausen](#)
- [Brightest and Best - SATB, SSAA, TTBB w/violin - Sean Kirchner](#)
- [With Wondering Awe - SATB](#)
- [With Wondering Awe - unison](#)
- [Solstice Carole - SATB, SSA - Baryluk](#)
- [Star of Wonder - SATB - Arr. Gilpin](#)
- [Mary Had a Baby - SATB - William Dawson](#)
- [O Magnum Mysterium - vocal solo](#)
- [O Magnum Mysterium - SATB - Lauridsen](#)
- [Glory, Glory, Glory to the Newborn King - SATB Divisi - Moses Hogan](#)
- [Winter Solstice Carol - SATB w/ Handbells](#)

Instrumental/Handbell

- [I Wonder as I Wander - 2-3va](#)
- [Wonder and Awe - 2va](#)
- [Star of Wonder - 3 -5va](#)
- [I Wonder as I Wander - Piano & Clarinet](#)
- [What a Wonderful World - piano](#)
- [I Stand in Awe - piano](#)
- [O Magnum Mysterium - piano and violin](#)

Music for Online Worship from UUA

The following videos may be used in online and recorded worship services by Unitarian Universalist congregations. The music that follows does not require additional permission for online use (see sidebar). However, be sure to provide full attribution to the composers and lyricists on your screens, not just verbally, for each piece that you incorporate into worship.

These videos are intended to lighten the burdens imposed by online worship. They should not be used to justify decreasing the wages or positions of professional music staff. ([Permission Source](#))

- ["You That Have Spent the Silent Night" \(GoogleDrive\)](#) (#41 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; words by George Gascoigne, music by Nikolaus Herman, harmony by J.S. Bach.) Video by the UU Virtual Singers of the Unitarian Church of Los Alamos, NM; Yelena Mealy, piano; Nylea Butler-Moore, Music Director; Rick Bolton, AV Engineer. If you use this video, please email Nylea at nyleab@uulosalamos.org. [Pay-what-you-can to the Unitarian Church of Los Alamos.](#)
- ["I Sought the Wood in Summer" \(YouTube\)](#) (#328 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; music: Hal Hopson, ©Hope Publishing Co. Requires One License. words: Willa Cather.) Performed by Kim Hamel, Jeri Searle, & Linda Himes Accompaniment: James Boyle. Make a pay-what-you-can donation; Venmo ID @himesmusic.
- ["Dona Nobis Pacem" \(YouTube\)](#) (#388 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; traditional Latin canon). Singing by the Washington Ethical Society (Washington, D.C.), produced by Lea Morris. [Pay-what-you-can to Lea.](#)
- ["We Are" by Dr. Ysaÿe Barnwell \(Vimeo\)](#), performed by Dr. Ysaÿe Barnwell and the UUA General Assembly 2020 virtual choir. Produced and Directed by Benjie Messer. Video Editing and Motion Graphics by Izzy Hyman. Audio Editing by Sam Plattner. Photos by Clint McKoy, Christopher L. Walton, Paul Becker, Janine Gelsinger, and contributed by members of the choir. All audio and videos was captured by musicians in their own homes. Dr. Barnwell notes that if you've purchased scores for each of your singers, there is nothing else required. However, if you wish to use this piece in worship, please send a one-time fee of \$30 to Barnwells Notes, Inc., 2442 Tunlaw Rd North West, Washington, D.C. 20007.

But Wait, There's (a bit) More...

Please see individual citation preferences/donation opportunities.

- An additional resource of over 35 copyright-free hymns curated by [Daniel Harper](#)
- Please visit [Sharon Scholl's website](#) for many more compositions and arrangements! She would love to hear back from you about any music you download and use. Please contact [Amanda Udis-Kessler](#) to reach Sharon. Amanda will pass along your messages and contact information.
 - [Wonder](#)
 - [Awe](#)
 - [Mystery](#)

Extra, Extra!!!

Read All About: [The Music Inclusion Coalition](#), an amazing non-profit that seeks to break down the barriers that exist for BIPOC & LGBTQ+ within our musical communities. These are “barriers of entry that disproportionately affect students of color, leading to a lack of musical multiculturalism within academia.”

Mission: We strive to make the study of music more accessible and inclusive through advocacy, technology, and support as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) students move from high school to the collegiate level so that they have opportunities to pursue music as a career. Music should be accessible and inclusive to all students, *“So [they] will be closer to an infinite beyond this world, so [they] will have something to cling to, so [they] will have more love, more compassion, more gentleness, more good... in short, more life. Of what value will it be to make a prosperous living unless you know how to live?” - Anonymous*

Vision: **To** honor and support the communities we serve. **To** create a world where collegiate music programs & professional performance ensembles are representative of all people creating music. **To** diversify classical music so we can begin to break down barriers of entry and diversify the Western canon. We want to create space for composers in these communities to become a more integral part of the literature musicians experience in music school & professional performance ensembles. **To** break down systemic racism.

Stories For All Ages

The Other Seven Wonders

<https://philipchircop.wordpress.com/2012/08/03/the-other-seven-wonders/>

On the ordinary wonders we overlook

Wisdom tales on the idea of finding wonder in the ordinary

- Jewish Tale: [The Treasure](#)
- Sufi Tale: [Are You Searching In The Wrong Place?](#)

Books...

I Wonder by Annaka Harris

"Here is a book with our theme in the very title. It's called "I Wonder." It's about a girl who takes a walk with her mother and wonders about things around her. She sure notices what is around her. She learns it's okay to say, "I don't know."

Book: [HERE](#) Video Read Aloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59DSEIWszCw>

Star Stuff: Carl Sagan and the Mysteries of the Cosmos by Stephanie Roth Sisson

Looking at the stars is a powerful way to evoke a sense of wonder. Carl Sagan began looking at the stars in his childhood. This is his story.

Book: [HERE](#) Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnKUugls9_c

The Stuff of Stars By Marion Dane Bauer

Book: [HERE](#) Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cl5Pk45Nuns>

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.

Permissions Notes: In addition to the pieces we've noted as permissioned for online use (marked with an asterisk*), you can use the fair use sized quotes and fair use sized portions of longer pieces in your sermons/services. Pay attention to the hyperlinks we include within titles and authors' names; these hyperlinks provide the source material and direction for you to hunt down permissions on your own.

Readings: We do not designate pieces that can be used as readings before your sermon, however we do make an intentional effort to include a significant number of sermon seeds that are longer and can be used as sermon readings.

On Ordinary Wonder

Quote - St. Augustine

People go abroad to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering.

Story - The Other Seven Wonders

<https://philipchircop.wordpress.com/2012/08/03/the-other-seven-wonders/>

On the ordinary wonders we overlook.

Poem - Mysteries, Yes by Mary Oliver

Full poem at <https://apoemaday.tumblr.com/post/614761681993842688/mysteries-yes>

Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous
to be understood.
How grass can be nourishing in the
mouths of the lambs...
How two hands touch and the bonds will
never be broken...

Poem - Miracles, Walt Whitman

Full poem at <https://poets.org/poem/miracles>

As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,
Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge of the water...

Quote/Reading - Kent Neburn, from Small Graces

Full piece at <https://www.awakin.org/v2/read/view.php?tid=2259&op=audio>

Where does it come from, this strange unquenchable human urge for 'more'?... We must learn to value the small as well as the great... Do we really need much more than this? To honor the dawn. To visit a garden. To talk to a friend. To contemplate a cloud. To cherish a meal. To bow our heads before the mystery of the day... Sometimes we forget that the small graces are enough.

On The Wonder of It All

Quote - Albert Einstein

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.

Quote - Ray Bradbury

We are the miracle of force and matter making itself over into imagination and will. Incredible. The Life Force experimenting with forms. You for one. Me for another. The Universe has shouted itself alive. We are one of the shouts.

Poem/Video - Richard Feynman's Ode to the Wonder of Life

https://vimeo.com/700869688?embedded=true&source=video_title&owner=1022824

Related essay: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2022/04/22/richard-feynman-yo-yo-ma/>

On Wonder Waking Us Up to the Preciousness of Life

Quote - Rachel Carson

One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, "What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?"

Quote - A Jewish Prayer Book

Were the sun to rise but once a year, we would all cry out...How glorious! Our hymns would rise up, our thanks would ascend. O God,...Give us new eyes... and vision to see the world anew.

Scripture - The Bible, Book of Genesis

Surely the Lord is in this place — and I did not know it. How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Quote - Nisargadatta Maharaj

The other world is this world rightly seen.

Poem/Reflection - Steve Taylor, from The Strangeness

Full poem at <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/27983>

Don't let the world become familiar...
Don't forget the sheer strangeness of being here
on the surface of this spinning globe...
Don't forget the strangeness of seeming to be a ghostly self
that lives inside your body, that has attached itself to your form,
that seems to stare out from your eyes...
Don't forget the sheer strangeness of this world of form
where matter pulses with consciousness.
It's a strangeness even stranger
because it's not hostile or indifferent...

Poem - A History of Everything, Including You, Jenny Hollowell

On the wonder of the very grand and the very particular sweeping story of which we are a part... "Can you believe it?!"

Video Meditation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17bU94OYyxQ>

Audio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKtcbZ4qVBY>

Text: <http://www.bluephoto.biz/blog/2012/08/a-history-of-everything-including-you-by-jenny-hollowell/>

Quote - [Frederick Buechner](#)

Today is a moment of light surrounded on all sides by darkness and oblivion. In the entire history of the universe, let alone in your own history, there has never been another just like it and there will never be another just like it again. It is the point to which all your yesterdays have been leading since the hour of your birth. It is the point from which all your tomorrows will proceed until the hour of your death. If you were aware of how precious it is, you could hardly live through it. Unless you are aware of how precious it is, you can hardly be said to be living at all... If you waste it, it is your life that you're wasting... All other days have either disappeared into darkness and oblivion or not yet emerged from them. Today is the only day there is.

Poem - When Death comes, Mary Oliver

Full poem at <https://www.awakin.org/v2/read/view.php?tid=477>

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms...
I don't want to end up simply having visited this world...

Poem - Messenger, Mary Oliver

Full poem at <https://wordsoftheyear.com/2020/04/04/messenger-by-mary-oliver/>

Let me keep my mind on what matters,
which is my work,
which is mostly standing still and learning to be
astonished...

Quote - Margaret Fuller

I never lived, that I remember, what you call a common natural day. All my days are touched by the supernatural, for I feel the pressure of hidden causes, and the presence, sometimes the communion, of unseen powers.

To Wonder Why

Video - On Exploring Wonder Together - On Being

<https://onbeing.org/the-summer-of-the-pause-issue-3/>

Quote - Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

I think us here to wonder, myself. To wonder. To ask. And that in wondering about the big things and asking about the big things, you learn about the little ones, almost by accident. But you never know nothing more about the big things than you start out with. The more I wonder, the more I love.

On Wonder and Humility

Poem - *Mysteries, Yes*, by Mary Oliver

Full poem at <https://apoemaday.tumblr.com/post/614761681993842688/mysteries-yes>

“...Let me keep my distance, always, from those
who think they have the answers.
Let me keep company always with those who say
“Look!” and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads.”

Book: *In the Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology*

Gordon Kaufman

https://www.amazon.com/Face-Mystery-Constructive-Theology/dp/0674445767/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1531262009&sr=8-1&keywords=in+the+face+of+mystery+by+Gordon+Kaufman

“Kaufman is also a kind of mystic. The matters with which theology deals—the purpose of human existence, the nature of ultimate reality, etc.—are unknowable mysteries. Accordingly, all of the things humans have said about such matters over the millennia are just that: human. Theology is and always has been the effort of finite human beings to find orientation and construct meaning in face of the mystery of life. “My piety toward the mystery qua mystery compels me to acknowledge that when we [theologize] we come up against the very limits of our language and our minds, we really do not know what we are saying” (IFM, xii). The failure to fess up to our agnosticism is tantamount to idolatry.”

On Wonder and Mysticism

Poem - *Falling into the Sky*, Rev. David Breeden *

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Years end ways
I dug and dug
Deeper into the earth
Looking for blue heaven
Choking always
On piles of dust rising
Then once
At midnight
I slipped
And fell into the sky

Video/Talk - Alan Watts on Mysticism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwb0Zd2Q898>

Book - *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, [David Abram](#)

A call not just to be in awe of the world around us, but to see it as “alive.”

Poem - Singularity, Marie Howe

Full poem at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2018/05/22/singularity-marie-howe-stephen-hawking/>

Video of author reading poem: <https://vimeo.com/271161318>

“would that we could wake up to what we were
— when we were ocean and before that
to when sky was earth, and animal was energy, and rock was liquid...
before we came to believe humans were so important...
No I, no We...
only a tiny tiny dot brimming with
is is is is is
All everything home”

On Wonder and Love

Poem - Winter Solstice, Rebecca Parker *

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/winter-solstice>

[Permission Source](#)

Let there be a season
when holiness is heard and
The splendor of living is revealed...
We are not alone.
In the universe there moves a Wild One
whose gestures alter earth's axis
toward love...

Quote - Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

I think us here to wonder, myself. To wonder. To ask. And that in wondering bout the big things and asking bout the big things, you learn about the little ones, almost by accident. But you never know nothing more about the big things than you start out with. The more I wonder, the more I love.

Quote - Valarie Kaur

“Wonder is where love begins, but the failure to wonder is the beginning of violence. Once people stop wondering about others, once they no longer see others as part of them, they disable their instinct for empathy. And once they lose empathy, they can do anything to them, or allow anything to be done to them. Entire institutions built to preserve the interests of one group of people over another depend on this failure of imagination...To wonder is to cultivate a sense of awe and openness to others' thoughts and experiences, their pain, their wants and needs. It is to look upon the face of anyone or anything and say: You are a part of me I do not yet know...”

Related webpage: <https://valariekaur.com/learninghub/part-1-wonder/>

Related book: *See No Stranger*, Valarie Kaur

Quote - Valerie Kaur, from *See No Stranger*, pg. 278

Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger protects that which is loved. And when we think we have reached our limit, wonder is the act that returns us to love.

On the Wonder of Pain and Joy Woven Fine

Poem/Reflection - Two Hearts, Brian Doyle

Full piece found here: <https://lagweer.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/two-hearts-brian-doyle/>

"I talk to God more than I admit. "Why did you break my boy?" I ask.
I gave you that boy, he says, and his lean brown brother, and the elfin daughter you love so.
"But you wrote death on his heart," I say.
I write death on all hearts, he says, just as I write life..."

Book Chapter - Chapter #3, "Wonder," from This Here Flesh

<https://www.amazon.com/This-Here-Flesh-Spirituality-Liberation/dp/0593239776>

On the Need for Wonder

Quote - Thomas Berry

Indigenous peoples . . . live in a universe, in a cosmological order, whereas we, the people of the industrial world, no longer live in a universe. We in North America live in a political world, a nation, a business world, an economic order. . . a Disney dreamland.

Poem/Reflection - Utterance of the Timeless Word, Rev, Angela Herrera*

Full reading found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/utterance-timeless-word>
[Permission Source](#)

You bring yourself before the sacred,
before the holy,
before what is ultimate and bigger than your lone life...
You stand at the edge of mystery,
at the edge of the deep...
Meanwhile, the armful of worries you brought to the edge of mystery
have fluttered to your feet...

Quote - [Aimee Nezhukumatathil](#)

"if you open yourself to wonder and learn about a plant or animal—human too—that you didn't know about before, like if you knew their names, knew the tender way they took care of their tiny eggs in their very own mouths (jawfish), knew how they used the moon and stars to figure out how to fly home (indigo buntings), knew how they pulled a blanket up to their son's chin on a cold night, I would imagine it would be harder...how could you still want to make violence on them?"

Poem - Primary Wonder, Denise Levertov

Full Poem found at <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/poemsandprayers/629-denise-levertov-primary-wonder>

And then
once more the quiet mystery
is present to me, the throng's clamor
recedes...

Video Poem - The More Loving One, W.H. Auden

<https://vimeo.com/697039749>

Article - Why You Need to Protect Your Sense of Wonder

<https://hbr.org/2021/08/why-you-need-to-protect-your-sense-of-wonder-especially-now>

“One experimental group, when asked to draw pictures of themselves, literally drew themselves smaller in size after having an awe experience. Such an effect has been termed “unselfing.” This shift has big benefits: As you tap into something larger and your sense of self shrinks, so too do your mental chatter and your worries. At the same time, your desire to connect with and help others increases...”

Video Talk - Why Awe Is Such an Important Emotion, Dacher Keltner

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysAJQycTw-0>

An overview of our evolving understanding of the importance of awe.

Video Talk - Can Awe Combat Narcissism? Paul Piff

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7Q7wTt4lbA>

On the research that makes clear how awe moves us into kindness, tenderness and generosity.

Sermon Illustration / Study - On Awe and Altruism

Found in <http://www.drrobertbrooks.com/the-power-of-awe/>

Keltner and his colleagues conducted some fascinating experiments to highlight the benefits of awe. As one example, they requested one group of participants to gaze at North America’s tallest eucalyptus trees while another group looked up at a tall science building. Not unexpectedly, those glancing at the tree reported a greater feeling of awe than those looking at the building. A situation was then arranged in which participants from both groups encountered a person who stumbled and dropped a handful of pens on the ground. Those who had looked at the trees were more apt to help the person pick up the pens than those who had gazed at the science building....

Quote - Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings

God does not die on the day we cease to believe in a personal deity, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason.

Quote - Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Forfeit your sense of awe, let your conceit diminish your ability to revere, and the universe becomes a marketplace for you.

Quote - Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Endless wonder unlocks an innate sense of indebtedness. Within our awe there is no place for self-assertion. Within our awe we only know that all we own we owe.

Quote - Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement... get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed.

Scripture - Isaiah 29:14

I will astonish these people with wonder after wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish; the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish

Quote - Aeschylus

The meaning I picked, the one that changed my life: overcome fear, behold wonder.

TED Talk - How we experience awe -- and why it matters, Beau Lotto and Cirque du Soleil
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17D5SrgBE6g&list=RDLV1o2XkcftsMQ&index=4>

Video - Burke on: The Sublime

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvzG_p_sdOQ&list=RDLV1o2XkcftsMQ&index=9

Lecture - Paul Piff: Can Awe Combat Narcissism?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7Q7wTt4IbA&list=RDLV1o2XkcftsMQ&index=19>

Article - Why Do We Feel Awe?

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

Related article:

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

Video - Why You Need Awe, Jason Silva

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1oG2kt_fmM

On the awe-filled and wondrous experience of first sight and our human struggle to return to it. On overcoming the “Been there’s” and the “Done that’s” that get in our way.

Video - The Age of Awe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svWst53R2UQ&list=RDLV1o2XkcftsMQ&index=28>

Reading - If We Do Not Venture Out

Rev. Marni Harmony

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/if-we-do-not-venture-out>

...If, throughout these grace-given days of ours,
surrounded as we are by green life and
brown death, hot pink joy and cold gray
pain and miracles—always miracles—
If we stay inside ourselves and do not venture out
then the Fullness of the universe
shall be unknown to us
And our locked hearts shall never feel the rush of worship.

On The Wonder of Solstice

Poem - Winter Solstice, Rebecca Parker *

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/winter-solstice>
[Permission Source](#)

Let there be a season
when holiness is heard and
The splendor of living is revealed...
We are not alone.
In the universe there moves a Wild One...

On Wonder and Christmas

Quote - Howard Thurman, From the Inward Journey, p. 247

There must be always remaining in every [person's] life some place for the singing of angels, some place for that which in itself is breathlessly beautiful and by an inherent prerogative, throwing all the rest of life into a new and creative relatedness, something that gathers up in itself all the freshets of experience from drab and commonplace areas of living and glows in one bright light of penetrating beauty and meaning—then passes. The commonplace is shot through with new glory; old burdens become lighter, deep and ancient wounds lose much of their old, old hurting. A crown is placed over our heads that for the rest of our lives we are trying to grow tall enough to wear. Despite all the crassness of life, despite all the hardness of life, despite all of the harsh discords of life, life is saved by the singing of angels.

Quote - Rev. Michael Yaconelli

Immorality is more than adultery and dishonesty; it is living drab, colorless, dreary, stale, unimaginative lives. The greatest enemy of Christianity may be people who say they believe in Jesus but who are no longer astonished and amazed. Jesus Christ came to rescue us from listlessness as well as lostness; He came to save us from flat souls as well as corrupted souls... Alan Jones says that priests "are not so much people with answers as ones who guard the important questions and keep them alive." The church exists to guard the important questions! Keep them alive! When the questions are kept alive, our souls have a chance of staying alive. The church should be full of Christians who seek questions rather than answers, mystery instead of solutions, wonder instead of explanations.

Article - It's the Incarnation, Dammit!

On the central wonder of Christianity

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/freelancechristianity/its-the-incarnation-dammit/>

"Which is more central to Christianity—Christmas or Easter? In other words, the Incarnation or the Resurrection?... With over one hundred combined respondents, 76% voted for Easter, 24% for Christmas. With all due respect, the majority is wrong. It's all about the incarnation..."

Poem - Materializing, Jean M. Olson *

Full poem at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/materializing>

Connected to the theme of incarnation.

[Permission Source](#)

"In what form did the spirit
appear to you today..."

Poem - Christmas Eve Night, Mary Wellemeyer *

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/christmas-eve-night>

[Permission Source](#)

Like those shepherds who were on the hillsides...
like those wise ones in their observatories...
we find our daily work interrupted by these holidays...
we have to deal with the call of that special star...
we have to find our way to an unknown place
where a wonderful new beginning awaits.

Video Clip - from the movie Rise of the Guardians where Santa explains that his center is wonder

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DolFqU6KCf0>

Reading/Poem - The Invitation, Rev. Teresa Schwartz

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/invitation>

We are tempted to reduce the whole of
the Christmas story
to a kinder, gentler God...
But what we have here are
terrifying and fascinating
dreams and apparitions.
Enough to make you lay down your work
and follow your vision.
That's what the shepherds did.
They ran from that place in search of the strange, the holy...

Reflection/Reading - Every Moment Is One, Quinn G. Caldwell

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/every-moment-one>

One of my favorite things about all the rituals and traditions attached to this time of year is the way they mess with time. My husband and son and I decorate our Christmas tree... As we do, we find that we are not just standing in the living room we share, but we're also standing in footed pajamas in the living rooms we grew up in, decorating every tree we've ever decorated, right in that moment...

Wonder and Holidays in General

Poem - The Moment of Magic by Rev. Victoria Safford *

Full poem found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/moment-of-magic>
[Permission Source](#)

Now is the moment of magic...
and here's a blessing:
they find nothing in the end but an ordinary baby...
makes people wonder as they wander through their lives...

Recommended Sermons

Notes about 2022-23 sermon recommendations:

- **We mostly list written scripts:** In order not to undermine UU preachers who depend on live and online guest preaching income for their livelihood, we mainly focus on sharing sermon texts (and sometimes audio clips), but not videos. When, on occasion, we include a video sermon, it will be from congregations that have sharing those as part of their mission.
- **Permissions Secured:** All of the sermons below have received permission for your online use. Unless otherwise noted, they can be used for both live streaming and recorded services that are posted on YouTube or a podcast. **However, to be extra cautious and in good relationship, we ask that you reach out to the minister to let them know you are planning to use their sermon, also asking if they have any particular requests or guidance for how to do that.**
- **An Important Note About Editing:** If you want to make changes to the sermon for brevity or context, **you need to reach out to the preachers directly for such editing permission.** Contact information of each of the referenced preachers is listed after the list of sermons.

Witness and Wonder, Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yiAmZoo4SqKaMAYoLw6PHdzP53L0ZMyT/view?usp=sharing>

"the quality of attention that is needed to bear witness to pain and suffering is the same quality of attention that is needed to witness the wondrously beautiful..."

Wonderfully Dark, Rev. Victoria Safford

<https://whitebearunitarian.org/wonderfully-dark-12-06-15-sermon/>

"And yet and still, in summer in a grassy field, in winter in the snow, he goes outside at night lies face upward on the ground, drenched in starlight and awash in wonder, bobbing on his back in the sea of mystery, and the tiny islands of his knowledge are like pinpricks of light in the vast velvet above. They don't weigh very much, the islands of knowledge. He's like a little kid. He's like a shaman or an ancient priest. He's like any of us, if we're mindful and open and available..."

When God Had a Body, Rev. Gretchen Haley

<https://revgretchenhaley.wordpress.com/2016/12/12/when-god-had-a-body/>

On the wonder of the incarnation and how it leads to the miracle of recognizing each other as divine.

Thin Places, Rev. Gretchen Haley

Text: <https://revgretchenhaley.wordpress.com/2016/08/19/thin-places/>

"As Peter Mayer's song Holy Now encourages – perhaps the challenge in life is not to look for miracles, but to find where there isn't one..."

To Finally Stand Still, Rev. Janet Parsons

<https://www.gloucesteruu.org/home-page/worship-music/sermons-worship-music/to-finally-stand-still/>

"In deliberate or unexpected awareness, I open up. It is in this openness that I "see" in a deeper or newer way, viewing people, creatures, and nature in a clearer light. As I open and become more aware, something happens inside of me to cause the barriers of my inattentiveness, judgments, or busyness to move aside and for bonding to occur. It is then that I recognize my oneness with the dancing that is inherent in the all of creation..."

Featured Preacher Bios & Contact Information

Rev. Joan Javier-Duval: <https://ucmvt.org/reverend-joan-javier-duval-minister/>

Rev. Victoria Safford: <https://whitebearunitarian.org/ministers-and-staff/>

Rev. Gretchen Haley: <https://foothillsuu.org/ministersandstaff/>

Rev. Janet Parsons: <https://www.gloucesteruu.org/about-us-3/our-minister-and-staff/>

Closing Words

In Awe of Another Day, G.K. Chesterton

Here dies another day
During which I have had eyes, ears, hands
And the great world round me;
And with tomorrow begins another.
Why am I allowed two?

[With awareness of the wonder of this day as well as the next, may we leave here committed to living our days as the marvels they are! Amen]

Mysteries, Yes, by Mary Oliver

Full poem at <https://apoemaday.tumblr.com/post/614761681993842688/mysteries-yes>

Let me keep company always with those who say
“Look!” and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads...

The Stars are Dancing, Om Prakash

Found in [Voices from the Margins](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)” Book

Do not sit alone in the dark
While creation sings three-part harmony
Dance, my friends. Dance wildly...
As the Beloved turns your soul to light.

Remembering that the universe is larger, Marjorie Newlin Leaming *

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/6035.shtml>
[Permission Source](#)

Remembering that the universe is so much larger than our ability to comprehend, let us go forth from this time together with the resolve to stop trying to reduce the incomprehensible...

Only one thing required of us, Rev. Kendyl R Gibbons *

Full pieces at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/6038.shtml>
[Permission Source](#)

We have such a little moment out of the vastness of time for all our wondering and loving. Therefore let there be no half-heartedness...

Winter Solstice Reflection, Gregory Jones *

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/winter-solstice-reflection>
[Permission Source](#)

...May we be awed by the great miracles of light and life,
and faithfully nurture the mystery and magic of wonder.

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<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
with this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Attend our monthly online musicians' brainstorming group:

First Tuesdays of each month from 6-7pm eastern
with this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Inspiration

Our Facebook Inspiration Page:

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

Our Instagram Page:

Find us as "soul_matters_circle"

Music Playlists:

Click [here](#) for links to the [Spotify playlists](#) for each month.

Click [here](#) to check out the [YouTube playlists](#).



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