



# Soulful Home

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Finding the Sacred In  
Our Everyday Spaces

April 2021  
Becoming



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# The Welcome Mat

## What Does it Mean to be a Family of Becoming?

How has becoming a parent changed you?

Likely, becoming a parent changed you in a few ways that you chose, and a lot of ways that you didn't; the majority of the changes we encounter just sort of...happen. In the second of our two At the Bedside stories this month, we follow the adventures of a plucky young Norwegian boy, Odd, whose luck changes drastically throughout the book. However, what's most interesting is how he responds to his changing reality, how he 'becomes' stronger, wiser, and more savvy as he *conscientiously adapts to his circumstances*.

My friend Sue, who is 89, and who spent a decade of her life as a family counselor, showed me her old business card one day. On the back, it said, "Change is inevitable. Growth is optional."\* This adage refocuses us on what we say or do when we encounter and experience change. I think of growth as the kind of becoming we can shape, through our responses and reflections, like our character, Odd. It's this kind of becoming that we're exploring together as families this month.

Becoming can be very difficult. It's deep work, not to be undertaken alone. Be sure to invite your trusted friend, co-parent, church buddy, or other supportive folk along as you navigate your packet this month. Also, be sure to drink deeply from the fun, surprise, joy, and silliness of becoming! Awkward and uncomfortable growing/becoming pains are so much easier to bear when one can laugh through them, especially with others. Know that we at Soul Matters are becoming right along with you through the good, the bad, and the gawky. :)

Yours in our shared becoming,

Teresa, on behalf of the Soul Matters team

*\*While this quote is attributed Christian leadership author John C. Maxwell, Sue's using of it seems to predate his most popular works. Sue does not remember where she first heard the saying.*



# At the Table

## Exploring Becoming Through Discussions

*At the Table questions explore the monthly theme through a discussion for all ages. They are designed for a family gathering - maybe during a Friday night meal, a quiet moment in the living room or before a board game night.*

### Introducing the Activity

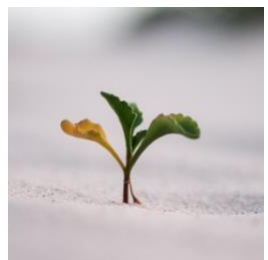
Family members who are readers can alternate who reads the questions. Those who are not readers are invited to share their own impromptu questions. Discussion partners might answer as thoughts come to them or take turns in a circle.

### Discussion Questions

1. Whose example helped you know who you want to become, or maybe what kind of person you wanted to be?
2. When do we stop becoming?
3. If you stopped growing right at this minute, what would you be happiest to keep exactly as it is? What would you regret not being able to become?
4. Some people believe that when they die, they become another living thing (reincarnation). What would you most want to become?
5. Sometimes, change and becoming happen suddenly and in an instant. Is there a big “before” and “after” moment in your life, when you felt like you became someone new? Or were suddenly placed on a new path? (Examples might be getting glasses, moving to a new neighborhood, experiencing a grandparent’s death, or getting a puppy.)
6. Who has helped you become the best version of yourself?
7. Sometimes becoming requires us to let go of things. What is one thing you’ve had to let go of to become something new? (For example, in order to become a speaker of a second or third language, we have to let go of fear of sounding silly as we learn. In order to become a trumpet player, we have to let go of a few afternoons of free time each week to practice.)
8. Last year, we all became families who had gone through Covid together, a unique circumstance in all of human history. How has that experience changed you?

### Return to the Discussion Throughout the Week

Thoughts develop with time. Find opportunities to bring up particularly compelling questions again during the month, maybe on walks, rides home, when tucking your child in to bed, etc. If thoughts grew or changed, notice together how we are all evolving beings, opening ourselves to new truths and understandings as we live our lives and connect with others.



# Around the Neighborhood

*Around the Neighborhood activities engage families with their surroundings through the lens of the theme. It's about perceiving our well-known world in new ways. As you safely move around your neighborhood during this time of Covid, these suggestions help you transform your everyday backs-and-forths into a family adventure!*

## Treasure Hunt for Becoming

This month, we are acknowledging the part we all play in the becoming of the world around us. We are powerful agents of change! Let's look together for examples of how we, as a community, are noticing transformation and the becoming happening all around us..

1. An empty lot or abandoned building becoming something new
2. A community center, an RV or large truck, a parking lot, or other space that has become a Covid vaccination space
3. A piece of land becoming a garden
4. A favorite view changing, because of a tree growing tall or a new building going up, etc.
5. A piece of nature transforming into something new, like a tree growing leaves or a sprout pushing through the ground.
6. A puppy or kitten becoming a dog or cat (pets have a tween phase, too!)
7. A small weather event becoming a big one (depending on where you live, this might be a thunderstorm, snowstorm, drought, and so one)
8. Someone growing a mustache or a beard
9. Someone who is pregnant
10. Someone learning to ride a bike, either by seeing them learn with the help of their parents or by noticing them riding with training wheels



# From the Mailbox

*Our literal mailboxes connect us to the wide world outside, sometimes with messages asking things from us (a donation letter or flyer encouraging us to vote), sometimes with messages offering us gifts (a letter from a friend or a special delivery). Our "From the Mailbox" section applies this metaphor to today's call for families to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy culture. Together each month, as a Soulful Home community, we open and accept these "invitations" to join some of the many brave, inspiring and wise leaders and organizations who are co-creating a future that is actively anti-racist.*

## When I was young...

This month's love note is about becoming older, and looking back to reconnect with our younger selves, especially the times we saw ourselves as inseparable from the natural world. Too often, we get stuck on the inconvenient or challenging aspects of growing older. But as we age, we accrue connections all throughout the interconnected web of life. Think of the music below as self-care that mends and maintains your spiritual connections across time, an acknowledgement that no matter how much older we become, we still contain all our previous ages within us.

Invitation: Listen to this powerful call-and-response song, from the group [Beautiful Chorus](#). Sing along, either alone or with your family.

<https://beautifulchorus.bandcamp.com/track/when-i-was-young>

You can follow Beautiful Chorus on Spotify, or explore their discography and support their work [here](#).

## Becoming Connected Through Birds

If you are a person of color, and you are a birdwatcher, you are likely to 1) have been the only person of color in the nature spaces you're enjoying; 2) have not had the benefit of a mentor or guide who looks like you; 3) have been stared at, scowled at, and otherwise made to feel unwelcome out-of-doors; 4) been confronted about what you're doing, and maybe not believed when you say you're birding; 5) been followed; and maybe even 6) had the police called on you.

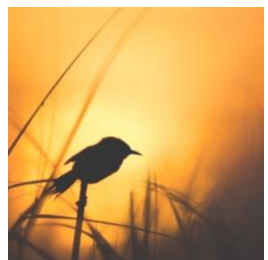
Birdwatching is one of the most popular outdoor hobbies. One reason for this might be that environmental degradation and habit loss has left birds as the wildlife most visible to us. Through birdwatching, we are able to satisfy that longing within to see, hear, feel, and remember our place on the web of life. Wildlife veterinarian and UU minister [LoraKim Joyner says](#) that "Birding is but one way to take up an intentional practice that asks us to



look within at our inner demons and look outward in acknowledgement that though we may be alone or feel it, we are interconnected to all of life.”

Invitation: On Instagram, follow the account @flocktogether.world, or check out their website, <https://www.flocktogether.world/>. Flock Together is a joyful group of birders who are people of color and who regularly host walks for new and experienced birders alike. They don’t have a donation space set up yet, but keep an eye out for when they do. Meanwhile, check out [these 15 organizations](#) whose mission all include helping Black, indigenous, and people of color to enjoy the outdoors. Choose one to receive your donation this month, if you have the means to do so.

Note: For our longtime subscribers, you may remember our Extra Mile activity in November of 2019 that involved families joining the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Project Feederwatch. If you’re willing, we’d love to hear and see and update on how that project went--or is still going!--for you! Take a picture of your current set-up, and tag us on Instagram, @soul\_matters\_circle.



# At Play

## Playing Games with Becoming

*At Play activities and questions are a way to joyfully, playfully, and imaginatively experience the theme.*

### Option A: An Imaginary Something Becoming Something Else

I first learned this as a theater game for about ten people, but have since played it in groups as small as three and as big as twenty. It's outdoor and social-distance friendly.

Standing in a circle, the first person pantomimes using an object. Maybe they are pretending they are fishing, and cast a long cane pole far out into the water. They wordlessly "use" their item a few times, then "toss" it across the circle to someone else. The person who "catches" the item may or may not have guessed what the item was in the mind of the thrower, but either way, they first have to use the object in the same way the tosser did. Then, they have to mime contorting the object so that it becomes something new. Using our cane pole example, maybe the second person reaches waaaay out to either side, grips the ends of the cane pole, bends the pole into a circle, and uses it as a hula hoop. After a few whirls around their hips, the second person then tosses the hula hoop to a third.

The game goes on for a few rounds until each person has had two or three chances to morph the object and pass it along.

One special way to end the game among other UUs might be to smooch the imaginary object down into a little flame, symbolized by your two, facing palms dancing toward one another and upward. You can "toss" little pieces of this fire to each person in the circle, and when everyone has theirs, bring them into your own heart--"We carry the flame."

This game works well on Zoom, especially if you ask friends and family members to keep their objects tabletop-size, and call out the name of the person you're tossing to. In real life, it makes a great stretch after a time waiting in the car, or home on a rainy day.





## Option B: Drawing Becoming--Sketchbook Exercises

The exercises below all invite the artist to play with becoming, with change from one form to the other, through 1) before and after, 2) front and back, 3) single line representation, and 4) reductionism. It could be fun to try one exercise a week for the whole month, then host a family art show one evening! You could hang a string around the gathering room of your home, and display all your art with clothespins. You could even dress fancy and make a special meal or snack to share as you admired one another's creations.

1. Scenes around our homes change throughout the day. Choose one spot to sketch in the morning, and again in the afternoon or evening. Maybe your family takes and leaves shoes by the door, maybe your dish rack empties and fills, or the light coming through a south-facing window changes dramatically.
2. Inside or outside, pick something to draw from the front, on one side of your paper, and from the back, on the other side. This could work with people, pets, landscapes, favorite toys, or anything else that is 3-D.
3. Decide what you'd like to sketch, and without taking your hand off of the paper, draw your object in one, continuous line. This technique has been around for a long time, and is well loved for loosening up one's hand and mind, alike!
4. Completely cover your paper in pencil marks. (You might want to trim down your sketch paper for this, as it takes quite a bit of time and pencil dust!) Then, using an erasure, make your picture by erasing pieces of the background.



# On the Message Board

## A Monthly Reminder

*The On the Message Board section lifts up a theme-related mantra, graphic, quote, or gesture for your family to carry with them throughout the month. Think of these “family sayings” or “family signs” as tools for the journey, reminders that help us refocus and steady ourselves and our kids as we navigate through life’s challenges and opportunities.*

### April’s Message: Who am I becoming right now?

This month’s message meets us right in the middle of the messy, uncomfortable, gooey, growth space, when we are shedding the skin of the old and growing the shape of the new. Because that experience can be so disorienting for many of us, this mantra is intended to help us focus on the reality that those psychological & spiritual growing pains don’t last forever and hold exciting possibilities when we emerge from them.

Here’s an example. At the high school track meet, you mention to a friend and an acquaintance that you’re frustrated by not being able to visit colleges in person this spring due to Covid, since you think this would provide important information for your college-bound high-school junior. The acquaintance points out – maybe even with a little bit of snideness, or another affect that really gets under your skin\* – that it sounds like you are stuck in your educational privilege, and that safety measures are more important than any one person’s decision about which college to go to.

*(Possible) first response: BIG FEELINGS--anger, guilt, hurt, embarrassment, rejection, fear! In response to acute stress and discomfort, heart rate increases, breathing becomes rapid and shallow, furrows form on forehead. Inner voice yells, take defensive action!*

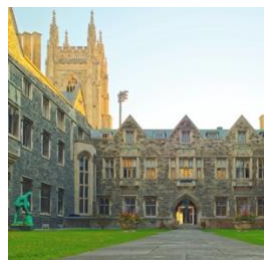
And then, you instead take a deep breath, because life has taught you that is almost always the next good thing to do. Maybe you take three or four.

*(Possible) secondary response: Inner voice--Who am I becoming right now? (Breath, again). Who am I becoming right now? Images form. The fruiting body of a mushroom emerging from mycelium below ground. A chrysalis cracking open just a little bit. An eagle chick losing a little tuft of downy fluff, and a strong, waterproof feather being visible underneath.*

Do you see where we’re going here? Every time your ego is challenged, it is an opportunity to evolve, to *become* something new. Each psychological discomfort gives us the opportunity to grow wiser, kinder, more patient, more compassionate, and more connected to the Spirit of Mystery and Wonder.

Use this month’s mantra to reframe and refocus your precious energy into your own evolution. You might even share a story like the one above around the dinner table or other place you gather to talk about the day, to model how each of us has the power to reframe our challenges as moments of becoming.

*\*It’s so much more difficult to allow ourselves to be changed for the good when we perceive the agent of that change--the person who challenged our assumptions or patterns--as an enemy. Play with this idea hypothetically a few times, if you like. The folks who irritate us the most often create internal disruptions big enough for us to have real, powerful epiphanies and insights. Use that! Your becoming might be that much more profound because of it!*



# At the Bedside

*At The Bedside activities engage the theme through storytelling. This takes place during the dreamy, almost otherworldly hour or so before children or youth drift off to sleep. Through stories and the questions and realizations that they prompt, we come to understand the nature of and our own place in the cosmos. But also, these selections invite you to remember, shape, and share stories from your own past, using thoughtful narratives to help your child weave the tale of who they are and whose they are.*

Note: We have two stories linked below, a short reflection, and a short novel. Use one or both this month, as suits your family. The novel takes about an hour and a half to read aloud, so you might consider reading or listening to it over a week or so as your bedtime story.

## How Social Justice Becomes Part of Us: “Peace Begins With Me”

This is the story of how Unitarian Universalist young adult Raziq Brown came to internalize and understand his role in the pursuit of social justice. The retelling linked below comes from the free, UUA curriculum, “Heeding the Call,” written by Jodi Tharan and Nicole Bowmer. We have two sets of discussion questions to use below for children below and over 12 years old. As always, pick and choose to suit your own circumstances!

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/call/workshop3/171770.shtml>

### Questions for younger children:

What do you think social justice means? (Affirm many answers. You might summarize it as the idea that everyone deserves to get treated right, and no one can get treated badly because of who they are.)

If you saw someone who was very hurt, on the outside, like in Raziq Brown’s story, or on the inside, maybe with deeply hurt feelings, who would you ask to help you help that person?

Parents, share a story from your own youth where you were able to provide or get help for someone in need.

### Questions for older children:

Brown ends by telling readers that this experience of his is how he learned what social justice meant, on a deep and personal level, and how he became committed to it. What has that experience been for you? Or is your social justice awakening still on its way to you?

What are you most excited about our society becoming more of? Less of?

Parents: Be ready to tell about an epiphany or awakening of your own related to social justice, a time when you became sure of your values and how you wanted to see them in the world.



## **Becoming Adventuresome: *Odd and the Frost Giants***

*Odd and the Frost Giants* is a short novel by Neil Gaimon taking as its main character a 12-year-old boy named Odd who is “cheerful and infuriating and clever.” Odd becomes the child of a single parent when his father dies at sea. He becomes the stepson to a stepfather who is not very fond of him. And he becomes disabled when a tree falls on his leg and shatters it. There is more becoming to be discovered, including gods and monsters taking on all kinds of surprising shapes and forms, both by chance and by choice.

If your local library has access to the e-reader and audiobook apps Libby or OverDrive, you might be able to check out the audiobook version read by Gaimon himself. Audiobooks.com and Audible.com both have 30-day free trials, and offer the Gaimon-narrated version, too.

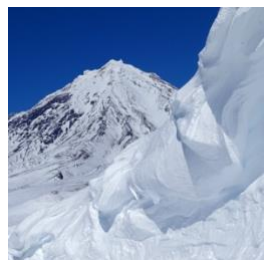
And for something really interesting, here is an artist, Caleb Cleveland, who illustrates the entire book as he reads it aloud over YouTube (1 hour, 30 minutes).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVG6w3ESwN8>

### ***For Discussion:***

Sometimes we get to choose what we become, and sometimes we don't. For example, Odd did not want to become a child of a parent who died. But through his actions, he did become a kind of hero and legend to the gods of Asgard. What is one thing you are becoming, by what you are doing in the world?

Parents, what did you “become” as a young person that you neither asked for nor wanted? How did that shape your life? How did you integrate that experience into your identity?



# On the Porch

## Raising a Child of Becoming Together

*On the Porch supports sharing realizations, challenges and hopes around the theme with other supportive adults. Perhaps this happens on a literal porch or front stoop, but it could happen wherever parents and their circle of support gather and talk (online or in person) over the soulful parts of parenthood. The “A Sip of Something New” section invites you and your discussion partner to take in a new idea shared by someone else. The “Spiritual Snacks” section stimulates personal storytelling and the sharing of your own wisdom and experience.*

### A Sip of Something New

One undeniable thing that you and your trusted conversation partners both are becoming is *older*. When’s the last time you talked about your own death? If the answer was “never,” at least not in specific terms, you’re not alone. A 2012 study showed that nearly 90% of people felt it was important to talk about their own thoughts, feelings, and hopes around their own death, but only 27% of people had those conversations with loved ones.

Use this conversation guide, published by The Institute for Healthcare Improvement, to inspire a talk about end-of-life priorities. You could download and fill it out ahead of sitting down for your On the Porch time together, and share the answers that were the most meaningful for you, or about which you had the strongest feelings.

If you are inspired afterward to take concrete action such as filling out an advanced directive or making a plan for your own funeral, be each other’s accountability buddies to achieve those goals.

<https://theconversationproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ConversationStarterGuide.pdf>

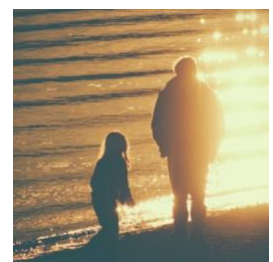


## Spiritual Snacks to Share

*Bring these questions with you when the time comes to hang out with your co-parent or buddies. Don't treat the questions as a list to go through one by one. Instead pick the one or two that speak to you the most. Treat the questions less as a quiz and more like doorways inviting you into the world of storytelling and memory.*

### Questions

1. When you find out a friend or family member is soon to become a parent, what is your first thought and feeling? What is that response rooted in?
2. How are you resisting your own becoming in this very moment? What transformation can you feel happening, but that you're not quite ready for?
3. Who is with you on your journey to becoming? Are they the right companions?
4. Who does your child remind you of in their becoming? Who are they like more and more, as they grow older?
5. How has your faith helped you become the parent you are?
6. Using the second definition of becoming--meaning lovely and attractive--what do you find becoming in yourself?
7. What do you most hope our society is able to become in the next ten years?



# The Extra Mile

*The Extra Mile section is for families who want to continue exploring the theme of the month through larger adventures, more complex projects or simply through additional modalities not otherwise included in the packets. The Extra Mile suggestions often surpass what is considered an “everyday moment” in a family, and may involve more preparation, planning, or time to accomplish. A bit more effort, but well worth it!*

## **A Butterfly’s Becoming, Under Our Care**

Butterflies might be the most enduring symbols of transformation and becoming, partly because of how dramatic their change is. For this month’s Extra Mile, we’re going to take on the tried-and-true scientific--and spiritual!--task of raising butterflies.

You may have done this project in the past, or it may have been on your wish list for some time now. Consider this your invitation to try it, or try it again, this month!

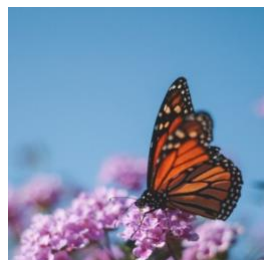
This site has a good beginner’s section for butterfly-raisers:

[http://www.raisingbutterflies.org/getting\\_started/](http://www.raisingbutterflies.org/getting_started/)

There could be no start-up cost at all, if you find butterfly eggs in the wild and use repurposed materials. Or the cost could be \$20-30 for a basic kit.

As you enjoy this process, let different facets of “becoming” emerge. Here are some questions that you might consider over the weeks of your attention:

1. Are the caterpillar and the butterfly the same “person”? One becomes the other, and yet, they have two different sets of DNA. So, what makes us uniquely us?
2. Butterflies are becoming threatened by human-induced climate change. What are our hopes for the future of these insects?
3. Why do we think of butterflies as beautiful, but caterpillars...meh. What makes something becoming--as in, beautiful and attractive--to us?
4. What’s your question?



# Blessing of Becoming

What is becoming of us, beloved? We ask this again and again, with care and curiosity: what is becoming of us?

As we change--inevitably, sometimes uncomfortably--may we choose dynamism over stubbornness, transformation over safe sameness, possibility over status-quo.

May we flow instead of calcify, remembering there are paths away from mistakes, and we can always make more room for those joining the current.

May we reach toward one another and toward interdependence. May we seek and make contact and community as if our lives depend on it, which of course, they do.

May we lead with love, and carry grace; becoming is hard work, and people doing hard things often struggle to be at their best.

May we accept the blessing and responsibility of becoming, for our world, our communities, and our own spirits thrive on nothing less.

Love to our bodies in their becoming. Love to our minds in their becoming. Love to our spirits in their becoming. And love to our people--ancestral, present, and yet to be-- for our shared future becomes even more blessed and beautiful in our remembering of our interconnection.



Teresa





## Connect with more Inspiration for your family, and for you!

Parents can Join our Facebook and Instagram pages for  
daily inspiration on our themes:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/?ref=settings>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/soul\\_matters\\_circle/](https://www.instagram.com/soul_matters_circle/)

Parents and youth will want to check out our music playlists on the monthly themes.  
One playlist is one [Spotify](#) and another on our [YouTube](#) channel

### Credits

Soulful Home packets are prepared by  
Teresa Honey Youngblood,  
Our Soul Matters [Family Ministry Coordinator](#)

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