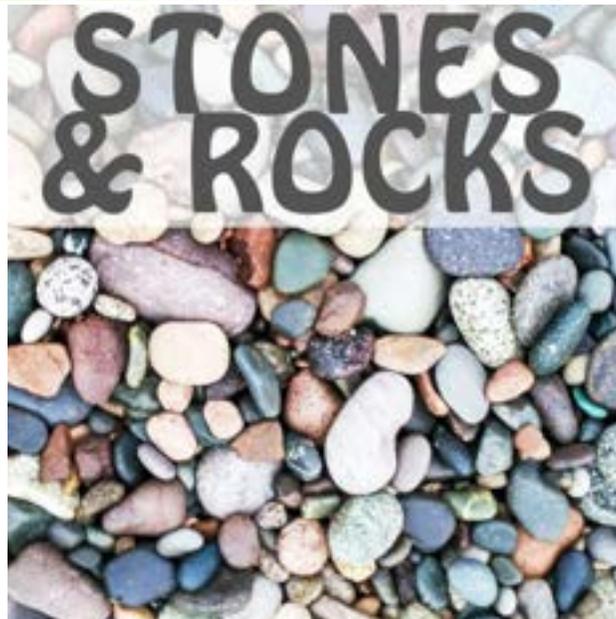


Earth Teacher

UU FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
SOCIETY OF BURLINGTON



JOURNALING PROMPTS

- **Wisdom:** What wisdom (caution or inspiration) does this Earth Teacher have to share with me? What do I need to do to be receptive?
- **Resilience:** What does this Earth Teacher have to offer to help me deepen my personal resilience? My community's collective resilience?

QUOTES

“When we sat down, Clarke reached to his left, placed his hand on a large rock lying on a table, and said, ‘This is my clock. I operate at geologic speed. And if you are going to work with the soul, you need to learn this rhythm, because this is how the soul moves.’”
~ Francis Weller



"Let us pick up the stones over which we stumble, friends, and build altars." ~ Padraig o Tuama



“And know that love is indeed stronger than death, for people who love are like stones tossed into a pool. The circles of love radiate out and echo back long after the stone has come to rest on the bottom.” ~ Mark DeWolfe

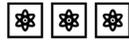


“That song that sucked biology out of the rimming rocks, and that peopled our planet with the exuberance of lifeforms—that is what sings in us now. And we come that that be kindled, so we can hear it again—stronger. Because we want to become who we are. That’s why we’ve come here. And now that we, in our long planetary journey, have become graced with self-reflective consciousness, we take glory in those roots and can let the song sing through us.” ~ Joanna Macy



Joy is the Justice We Give Ourselves (excerpt) by J. Drew Lanham

Joy is the truth,
crooked lies hammered straight,
whitewashed myths
wiped away.
Stone Mountain
—just stone.
Rushmore
—no more.
Give the eagles
their mountains back.



“If I see a stone as merely an object in the way or as some weight I can use, I am drawn into a limited plane of living that is governed by problem solving; this piece fits here, this one does not, this piece will help me get over there, this is in the way. Being so strategic may shorten my to-do list, but it doesn't open me up. With no sense of how things are connected, I may move things along without ever being touched by life.

But if I can hold that stone with enough presence and attention to realize its journey over centuries, how it wasn't always solid, how its minerals coalesced, how it felt the thud and press of every horse, car, and road placed above it, I might feel a deeper connection to the Earth that might broaden my perspective beyond the confines of my individual life.”

from "What Happens When You Really Listen" by Mark Nepo, in Seven Thousand Ways to Listen: Staying Close to What is Sacred

MUSIC

“[Stone by Stone](#)” by Tret Fure

“[River God](#)” by Nichole Nordeman

“[Bring Stones](#)” by Hugh Blumenfeld

“[Solid as a Rock](#),” sung here by Movement Music (Matt Meyer & friends). My recommendation is to shift language to be more inclusive, substituting the word “feeling” for the word “standing.”

POETRY

Wind, Water, Stone by Octavio Paz

(translated by Eliot Weinberger)

for Roger Caillois

Water hollows stone,
wind scatters water,
stone stops the wind.
Water, wind, stone.

Wind carves stone,
stone's a cup of water,
water escapes and is wind.
Stone, wind, water.

Wind sings in its whirling,
water murmurs going by,
unmoving stone keeps still.
Wind, water, stone.

Each is another and no other:
crossing and vanishing
through their empty names:
water, stone, wind.



The Stones by Wendell Berry

I owned a slope full of stones.
Like buried pianos they lay in the ground,
shards of old sea-ledges, stumbling blocks
where the earth caught and kept them
dark, an old music mute in them
that my head keeps now I have dug them out.
I broke them where they slugged in the dark
cells, and lifted them up in pieces.
As I piled them in the light
I began their music. I heard their old lime
rouse in breath of song that had not left me.
I gave pain and weariness to their bearing out.
What bond have I made with the earth,
having worn myself against it? It is a fatal singing
I have carried with me out of that day.
The stones have given me music
that figures for me their holes in the earth
and their long lying in them dark.
They have taught me the weariness that loves the ground,
and I must prepare a fitting silence.



All the Pieces Fit by JeKaren Olaoya

They insist
Strength is stone
Hard, fortified
Protection
Stone is a fortress
Unfailing
The only way to make it
We pick them up
Heavy, dusty
And hurl them for kicks, skips
Across water that conceals
And they sink below the surface
We want stones
Smooth, handheld
Not realizing they are battered
Storm worn
With licks of water wearing them down
The jagged rocks, they stay
They need more time
But they have not been

Rounded
Sharpness keeps
And it doesn't matter
It's not who you are
Pressure bruises
And blood pools
Into all of the in between
Soft
Animal
You weren't made to be tossed
Deliberately
Though you endure
Though you stand up each time you
Fall to your knees
Soft
Warm
Not stone
Breakable but
Mostly resilient



Forgiveness and Stones by Patty Willis

In our lives, people sometimes do us wrong
They betray us, hurt us, and do not hold our humanity sacred.
Their unkindness can lie heavy on our hearts

*How can we lift this burden
That can feel like the weight of stones?*

Wounded, we cry for justice.
Scarred, we remember each hurt and betrayal.

*How can we lift this burden
That can feel like stones on our heart?*

We are not alone.
A multitude is around us
With their scars and their stones.

*We cry to the universe to lift these stones,
“Take them,” we say, “until they are out of the field of gravity.”*

They travel upward for a moment slowly
And then quickly as they lift off into space.

*A meteor shower in the other direction.
A night sky full of brilliant stars.*



Stone by Charles Simic

Go inside a stone
That would be my way.
Let somebody else become a dove
Or gnash with a tiger’s tooth.
I am happy to be a stone.

From the outside the stone is a riddle:
No one knows how to answer it.
Yet within, it must be cool and quiet
Even though a cow steps on it full
weight,
Even though a child throws it in a river;

The stone sinks, slow, unperturbed
To the river bottom
Where the fishes come to knock on it
And listen.

I have seen sparks fly out
When two stones are rubbed,
So perhaps it is not dark inside after all;
Perhaps there is a moon shining
From somewhere, as though behind a
hill—
Just enough light to make out
The strange writings, the star-charts
On the inner walls



an excerpt from “**The Book of Camp Branch**” by Wendell Berry,

How much delight I’ve known
in navigating down the flow
by stepping stones, by sounding
stones, by words that are
stepping and sounding stones.

Going down stone by stone,
the song of the water changes,
changing the way I walk
which changes my thought
as I go. Stone to stone

the stream flows. Stone to stone
the walker goes. The words
stand stone still until
the flow moves them, changing
the sound – a new word –
a new place to step or stand.

from his book of poems “Leavings” (2010)



In Silence by Thomas Merton

Be still.
Listen to the stones of the wall.
Be silent, they try
To speak your

Name.
Listen
To the living walls.
Who are you?
Who

Are you? Whose
Silence are you?

Who (be quiet)
Are you (as these stones
Are quiet). Do not
Think of what you are
Still less of
What you may one day be.
Rather
Be what you are (but who?) be
The unthinkable one

You do not know.

O be still, while
You are still alive,
And all things live around you
Speaking (I do not hear)
To your own being,
Speaking by the Unknown
That is in you and in themselves.

“I will try, like them
To be my own silence:
And this is difficult. The whole
World is secretly on fire. The stones
Burn, even the stones
They burn me. How can a man be still or
Listen to all things burning? How can he
dare
To sit with them
When all their silence
Is on fire?



Blessing the Rock Harvest by Karen G. Johnston

*I'm cleaning out the garden.
It's a messy business and it's not terribly pleasant.
But in the very task of doing it, my senses are being brought alive.
I'm attuning my body. I'm cleansing my soul.*

I'm making myself ready to receive the gift.
Vigen Guroian

Every spring,
a new crop.
I marvel
at their
ever emergence,
their omnipresence,
their stony throng.

If I am to sow anything,
these mineral impediments
must first be reaped.

Metallic clatter of trowel
against quartz, chert, or shale –
it matters not –
only confirms this theology.

Pulsing ever upward,
from lithosphere to earthly surface,
exposed to raw air and
late winter's barren sunlight,
this rocky multitude
provides undeniable satisfaction:
dislodging of rock,
dark loam insinuating itself
under ragged fingernails,
the slight suck of soil
as leverage excavates
the common relic,
with its common homeliness,
its ordinary elegance,
its extraordinary blessing.

JOKES / PUNS

Be patient with geologists—they all have their faults.

My rock collection has so much *sedimental* value.

Why was the sedimentary rock collection so cheap?...Because it was on Shale.

FOR KIDDOS

[Treasure Stones](#) by Janeen K Grohsmeyer

[Everybody Needs a Rock](#) by Byrd Baylor and pictures by Peter Parnall

MEDITATION

[Pebble Meditation Practice For Children & Their Parents/caregivers](#)

Adapted from Thich Nhat Hanh

Purpose: This activity introduces people of all ages ~ children and adults ~ to the practice of meditation, connecting each person with their breath, bodies and the natural world around them. It's a deep breathing practice that combines physically holding an object with visualization. Once learned, this simple meditation practice can be done anywhere or any time. The practice can help increase feeling grounded, secure and calm. This meditation practice was developed during a children's retreat held in the U.S. by the late Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist monk, teacher, author, poet and peace activist, who was born in Vietnam.

Materials: Four pebbles or stones, and a purchased or homemade pouch that pulls closed, to store the stones.

Meditation Activity: Select 4 pebbles or stones. Each one represents an element of nature: a flower, a mountain, calm water, and space. Alternatively, individuals may want each stone to represent a quality, such as love, compassion, joy and inclusiveness, or loved ones and important people in our lives (e.g. parent, grandparent, sibling or close friend).

The Practice: As you select each pebble, place it in the palm of your hand. Three breaths are taken with each pebble. After you finish with each pebble, place it back down and choose the next. The following words are written by Thich Nhat Hanh:

Flower

Breathing in, I see myself as a flower.

Breathing out, I feel fresh.
Flower, Fresh*

Mountain

Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain.
Breathing out, I feel solid.
Mountain, Solid*

Water

Breathing in, I see myself as still water.
Breathing out, I reflect things as they truly are.
Water, Reflecting*

Space

Breathing in, I see myself as space.
Breathing out, I feel free.
Space, Free.*

*Suggested: Breathe in and out three times, reciting to yourself, the final phrase for each of the stones.



Meditation on Turtles, Stones & Graves

Gather a few stones to hold in your hand or in your lap. Read the passage below from Sy Montgomery's, *Of Time and Turtles: Mending the World, Shell by Shattered Shell*, describing the process of a Turtle Rescue League as they buried those turtles they were not able to save.. Then reflect (by journaling or thinking) on these questions:

- To what do you feel a connection that is tangibly gone from you? Do you have a tangible symbol/talisman to help you feel that connection?
- How might you use a stone or rock to protect yourself or something you love from that which might bring harm?

Natasha pronounces a eulogy: "From an adult one hundred years old, to tiny babies," she says over the grave, "they all lived, even a little bit. They all tasted life. They all felt the warmth from Mother Earth. Some defied the odds to become monster turtles. From Mother Earth they crawled, and to Mother Earth they return. Let's complete their final nest in the ground by securing them. Everyone, feel free to place rocks over them."

We cover the bodies with rocks for a practical reason: They act as a barrier to digging animals who might unearth the corpses for a meal. We certainly don't want the dead to be disturbed, but we also don't want to draw predators to the property, so close to the Turtle Garden where rehab patients might be exercising, or to the nearby wetland where

wild turtles live. But as we place these weights, I am reminded of the ancient Jewish custom of leaving pebbles or stones on a grave.

The origin of the ritual is unclear, but it might be for roughly the same reason we're doing it: to keep demons, or other unwelcome visitors, away. An alternate explanation is that the rocks anchor the soul in the earth, so it stays with us always. Some say the custom dates to the times of the Temple in Jerusalem, when Jews marked graves with piles of rocks to warn certain priests away such priests, known as kohanim, tended to offerings, and were said to become ritually impure if they came within four feet of the dead. Others say that stones are just better than flowers, because they symbolize the permanence of our memories, and stand to remind subsequent visitors that the departed one is not forgotten.

No matter the origin, Jews all affirm it is a *mitzvah* —a good deed, an act of kindness and empathy, performed to fulfill a commandment of Jewish law—to place stones on the graves of the dead. In Hasidic teaching, the word *mitzvah* is said to derive from the root word *tzauta*, which means "connection." So each rock we place in the grave is a reminder: Those of us still living and those who have lived before us are still connected, our bond unbroken by death.



On Letting Go: A Precious Stone (source unknown)

Once upon a time, there was a wise woman who went traveling all through the mountains. One day, in the course of her travels, she found a precious stone in a stream. She was so happy, and grateful. That stone could change her life.

The next day she met a man who was also traveling through the mountains, just as she was. The man was hungry, and the wise woman was glad to share her food with him. But as she opened her bag, the man saw the jewel, the precious stone. He could see at a glance that it was worth a lot of money, and if he sold it, he would be secure and able to eat for the rest of his life. And so he said to the wise woman, "Instead of food - can I have that stone?"

The wise woman looked at him, and she said, "of course." And just like that, the precious stone was his. The man was so happy! He ran away quickly, afraid that she would change her mind.

A few days later, however, the man came back to the wise woman, carrying the stone in his hands. "Please take it back," he said. "I have been thinking. And I have been wondering. And I am hoping that instead of this stone, you can give me whatever it is that made it so easy for you to give the stone away."

IMAGES FOR CONTEMPLATION







