



On the Road Together

The Path of Deep Listening



A Youth Group Resource
from Soul Matters
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Welcome

Sessions

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2. [Session 2](#). Listen to BIPOC Voices
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Off-Road Adventures

Things to Do Outside of Regular Sessions

Inspiration, Support and Gratitudes

Note about session structure: Just a reminder that we organize each of the sessions as building blocks. This means that every session includes the following five standard sections or building blocks:

- I. Getting Started**
- II. Spiritual Practice**
- III. Discussion Starters**
- IV. Express Yourself**
- V. Fun & Games**

Welcome

Welcome to the “On the Road Together” youth packet! This month we travel the road of Deep Listening.

Deep listening brings us into the realm of compassion. Deep listening points out the importance of listening to your heart.

Our sessions are centered around four listening lessons or invitations our faith makes. It invites and calls us to...

Listen to Your Heart (Session A. on Principle #2)

Listen to BIPOC Voices (Session B. on Anti-Racism and our [8th Principle](#))

Listen to Nature (Session C. on our 7th Principle)

Listen to Our Ancestors (Section D. on the wisdom and memory of our ancestors/ UU Source #2)

Grandparents are part of the “ancestors” to whom we listen deeply. They often are sources of wisdom and comfort for youth. And adults too! When I went through my divorce after 32 years of marriage, my grandmother’s spirit came to me in a dream. I had been struggling with what new last name to use. I didn’t want my married name, and I didn’t feel like a “maiden” name fit anymore. My grandmother had always emphasized dignity and freedom to me as a child. She had struggled with the role of women and gleefully whispered that she “didn’t wear a bra, just Grandpa’s undershirts,” and she wore Grandpa’s shoes, she was so done with women’s shoes. Quite the quiet revolutionary! And so, in my dream, my grandmother told me I should become “Katie Covey,” which was her family name. She also told me I would become a famous mystery writer, but I figure a curriculum writer is close enough. And so, Katie Covey I became. Her wise presence in that dream helped me listen to my heart and chart a new path. I hope the call of deep listening in this packet helps the group clarify a path as well.

This is your chance to listen carefully.

Your whole life might depend on what you hear.

- [Joyce Sutphen](#)

Listening helped me find my way.

Indeed listening helps all of us find our way. The listening of therapists allows us to navigate our way through life. We turn to prayer to hear God’s guidance. We listen to experts so we can get ahead. Like a flashlight that leads us through the darkness, listening helps us keep on course.

And yet our faith says there’s even more to it than that. Listening doesn’t just guide us through the world, it says. It also creates our world.

Just think about why you listen to those close to you. Is it really just to gather information? To hear the other clearly? Or is it because you’ve discovered in those rare moments of deep listening that a space suddenly opens up? A space that feels sacred. A space that, once you’ve experienced it, you never want to leave.

This is why the flashlight way of understanding listening is so limited and limiting. Listening’s value isn’t just instrumental. It doesn’t just help us collect and expose information. It’s not just a tool.

It’s a place.

Those voices calling us home are our home. We don't have conversations; we are our conversations. Listening literally determines the world we live in. And whom we become.

That old story about the cricket and coins comes to mind. Two people are walking down a busy city street. Everyone is rushing to and from their work, trying to get ahead. One of the friends turns to the other and says, "Do you hear that? It's a cricket!" The other friend responds with doubt, but after focusing his attention finally hears it. "Wow," he says, "How did you hear that cricket with all the noise around us?" His friend responds, "It's all about how I was raised, about what I was taught to listen for." He goes on, "Here, I'll show you something." The friend then reaches into his pocket and pulls out a handful of coins - nickels, quarters, dimes - and he drops them on the sidewalk. Everyone who was rushing by stops... to listen.

One wonders if this is why the poet says, "Listen carefully. Your whole life might depend on what you hear."

We must remember this: We don't have conversations; we are our conversations. Who and what we listen to is who and what we become.

May this month, and our time together, help us take one more step toward listening our way into being.

Katie on behalf of the entire Soul Matters Team

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Session 1

Listen to Your Heart

(2nd Principle Focus)

Theme Angle:

Our faith asks us to practice compassion. It's part of our Second UU Principle, "Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations." So, what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of deep listening? It tells us to "Listen to your heart's call to be compassionate!"

I. Getting Started

Connecting to Our Community & The Skill of Personal Sharing

Leader Tip

You will be sharing videos and music through Zoom. Learn how to play music on Zoom: [How to play music and videos on Zoom](#), and how to play just music on Zoom [Soul Matters' How to play music PDF](#).

Centering or Chalice Lighting Quotes

The Whisper of Our Souls by the Soul Matters Team

Come,
let us listen with new ears.
Do you hear it?
That voice,
so familiar, yet still far.
Less a longing and more a knowing.
A whisper of something inside
that seems to have known us
longer than we've known it.
Come,
let us listen together.

Check In Prompt

Who has your compassion right now? Who are you holding in your heart? A family member or friend? BLM protesters? Your neighbor who just lost their job because of Covid?

II. Spiritual Practice

Connecting to Our Soul & The Skill of Mindfulness

Mindfulness Moment Option #1: Lectio Divina

This exercise invites you to explore the way our hearts “speak” to us. Yes, often the voice of heart urges us to connect with other people’s pain and struggles, but it also is a voice of wisdom and guidance trying to offer us help and compassion. It does that by helping us reconnect with important feelings or memories. Or even by mysteriously sending us messages.

One of the ways our Christian siblings try to get in touch with this inner voice of guidance and compassion is with a deep listening technique called Lectio Divina. Learn more about it [here](#) and [here](#).

The basic idea is to deeply listen to a text by reading it multiple times through a different reflective lens each time. You can also think of it as bringing different discernment questions to the text, with each question inviting you to listen to the text in a new way. Our favorite three questions are:

- What FEELINGS arise?
- What MEMORIES does it stir?
- What MESSAGE does it have for you? (“words of comfort or challenge”)

So give it a try with each other using one or both of these poems:

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

http://www.phys.unm.edu/~tw/fas/yits/archive/oliver_wildgeese.html

God Says Yes To Me by Kaylin Haught

<https://wordsoftheyear.com/2015/08/14/god-says-yes-to-me-by-kaylin-haught/>

Both of them are about self-compassion and care generally. Use the Lectio Divina practice to figure out what *specifically* your inner voice might be trying to say to you through the text.

Centering:

I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Read one of the poems three times. With the first reading guided by the question: What FEELINGS arise as I listen to the words?” And the second reading guided by “What MEMORIES does it stir?” Ending with a third reading guided by “What MESSAGE does this have for me? What word of comfort or challenge is it trying to offer me?” (On this third reading it often helps

to listen for which single word or phrase pops out at you, and then apply the question to that word/phrase.)

If you are up for a fourth reading, consider using this question to guide you: “Who am I in the text? Which character or action represents me and where I’m at right now?”

Mindfulness Moment Option #2: The Voice of Sounds

We listen with our ears. We also appreciate listening with our minds or hearts. But what about listening with your skin? Your body? Your imagination? Or even your memory?

This exercise invites us to creatively listen in new ways. Soul Matters Creativity Consultant, [Elizabeth McKoy](#), has created a SoundScape Journey to guide us through this exercise. This guided journey is captured on an audio clip. To access and play it, just click on the link below.

Listen straight through or hit pause after each soundscape and make some extra room for reflection or writing your reactions down. Whatever works best. It helps to have some paper and a marker or pen.

Share one or two of the most impactful things that came up for you.

SoundScape Journey (7 min)

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-JGui-gd8H_4sqjYQOLhIImJyVcenk?usp=sharing

As the sounds come to an end, pause for a moment, then say, “Return now to the world of all the senses. Finish up any drawings or notes you made for yourself. Then share your image/reflection with the group as you are willing.”

III. Discussion Starters

Connecting to Our Minds & The Skill of Reflection

Discussion Starter Option #1: Thick Listening

from “Thick Stories” by Christine C. Robinson, Alicia Hawkins | 5/14/2012 | SUMMER 2012 UU World

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/listen-heart>

Read the story told by Rev. Christine Robinson, starting at

“...A few years after Hurricane Katrina, a friend and I (Christine) were taking a cab to the New Orleans airport, and the driver, a native New Orleanian, began to talk about how badly people had behaved during the storm...

End with “...As often happens when people tell their personal stories, I didn’t have to prod or interpret. I hardly said a word between my question and my thank-you as we paid him at the airport, and this wonderful story came pouring out, thick as molasses. Whenever the subject of Hurricane Katrina comes up, I remember it still.”

Engaging the Group: Afterward invite the youth to share their own take away from the story. What do you think the lesson of the story is?

Discussion Starter Option #3: On following your heart.

Watch this video: Tricking your head to follow your heart | Purin Phanichphant | TEDx Bangkok (15 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emeEpz kf044>

(See [How to play music or a video on Zoom](#))

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What new insight did the video give you? What point or argument expanded your learning the most?
- What *feelings* arose for you as you watched this video?
- What *thoughts* arose for you as you watched this video?

IV. Express Yourself

Connecting to Our Creativity & The Skills of the Expressive Arts

Deep Listening Word Art

“Silent” and “listen” are anagrams. They have all the same letters in a different order! Create a sketch intertwining these letters with symbols that you associate with deep listening. Share with the group. Consider playing the Transition Tool while drawing.

Transition Tool: Use between sections as a transition time or as a background

Heartbeat <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMqkv5RIPjk>

V. Fun & Games

Connecting to Our Bodies & The Skill of Play

Your Heartbeat

How to take your pulse:

Use the radial (wrist) or carotid (neck) method described [HERE](#).

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- Introduce the activity by pointing out that we use the term “heart” to mean the center of our spirits. AND the heart as an organ is pretty special too. If we hope to listen to our hearts as spirit, why don’t we also listen to our heartbeat through our pulse.
- We are going to really listen to our heart as we try out some different exercises and see what that does to our pulses.

Activity:

Count their heartbeat and record their heart rate. Invite them to hold up a piece of paper to the screen with their pulse written on it for each activity:

After each physical activity below provide 1 to 2 minutes to let their heart rate recover before starting the next activity.

1. Sitting in a chair - relaxed
2. Standing - relaxed
3. After walking in place at a leisurely pace for 3 minutes
4. After speed walking in place for 2 minutes
5. After 2 minutes of jogging in place
6. After doing 25 jumping jacks
7. After running in place as fast as possible for 1 minute

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

- Why do you think we use the phrase “listen with your heart” when the heart doesn’t really listen?
- Why do you think the heart is considered the center of our spirit?

Session 2

Listen to BIPOC Voices

(Anti-Racism and 8th Principle Focus)

Theme Angle:

Each month we are dedicating one packet session to a different aspect of decentering whiteness work, with our theme guiding us toward which aspect to focus on. When it comes to deep listening, leaders have lifted up the importance of [decentering whiteness](#), listening to BIPOC voices and placing those BIPOC voices at the center of our storytelling and discussions. Our faith has taken up this work and called white UU's to be especially vigilant about the work of listening to and centering BIPOC voices. So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of deep listening? It says, "White UU's, listen to BIPOC voices and actively work to bring them into the center of our faith!"

I. Getting Started

Connecting to Our Community & The Skill of Personal Sharing

Leader Tips

You will be sharing videos and music through Zoom. Learn how to play music on Zoom: [How to play music and videos on Zoom](#), and how to play just music on Zoom [Soul Matters' How to play music PDF](#).

As you guide your youth through these discussions, keep in mind that experts often recommend using a [caucus affinity group](#) to help white and BIPOC youth process according to their unique needs. You can do this by utilizing Zoom's "[breakout room](#)" feature.

Centering or Chalice Lighting Quote

Race and racism is a reality that so many of us grow up learning to just deal with. But if we ever hope to move past it, it can't just be on people of color to deal with it. It's up to all of us – Black, white, everyone – no matter how well-meaning we think we might be, to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting it out. It starts with self-examination and listening to those whose lives are different from our own. It ends with justice, compassion, and empathy that manifests in our lives and on our streets. - *Michelle Obama*

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. - *Maya Angelou*

Check In Prompt

When was the time when you first encountered racism?

II. Spiritual Practice

Connecting to Our Soul & The Skill of Mindfulness

Mindful Moment Option #1: Practicing Powerful Pauses

Introducing the Mindful Moment: *Learning to listen deeply is important in our anti-racism work. Regardless of our age, a white UU can say things that [exclude or hurt the feelings](#) of a BIPOC person. When a BIPOC person says, “You hurt my feelings,” a white person might feel defensive and want to argue back or speak AT them rather than listen to them.*

So if you are white person, you need to learn the practice of taking a pause and deep breath so you can listen better instead defensively responding back.

If you are a BIPOC person, it helps to remember to take care of yourself by practicing to pause so you can decide which way of responding will feel safest and best to you. Here’s a good article that teases this out: <https://pulse.seattlechildrens.org/unraveling-microaggressions/>

Either way, learning to pause so we can better listen to others or listen to our own needs is a very important tool. Pausing, reflecting, and moving into silence gives us a moment to catch our breath. This mindfulness exercise teaches us about this “practice of powerful pauses.”

Centering:

I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Mindful Moment Instructions:

from [Magination Press](#) to help you learn about “powerful pauses”:

Counting the Breath

“Like computers, at times our “operating systems” can benefit from a reboot. How many breaths does it take to reset your nervous system? Begin with five breaths in and out.

Inhale for one count; exhale for one count.

Inhale for two counts; exhale for two counts.

Inhale for three counts; exhale for three counts.

Inhale for four counts; exhale for four counts.

Inhale for five counts; exhale for five counts.

Ask your group to notice any changes after the exercise.”

Mindful Moment Option #2: Poetry Slam with BIPOC Voices from [Button Poetry](#)

Listen to BIPOC voices speaking their hearts and minds. Choose a performance poet below:

Darnell Carson - "Captain's Log"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=38&v=57mkiKKvNuw&feature=emb_logo

"My friend walks home in the middle of the day and I hope he is not mistaken for a stranger."

Shasparay - "Resignation Letter"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLC5PJtWBigV2MvC0HG8Wt1IQU_mFSDepG&time_continue=42&v=41SvErK6Tos&feature=emb_logo

Lewis McCaleb - "Black Lives Matter"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLC5PJtWBigV38fKYkbJm7LCzjD4vsQG7Q&time_continue=233&v=bEqd2FNKKTc&feature=emb_logo

"I wonder why it took so long to realize Black Lives Matter?"

Reflection & Discussion Questions:

- Share times when you have tried to take a powerful pause.
- Were you surprised by any thoughts or feelings during your mindfulness moment?

III. Discussion Starters

Connecting to Our Minds & The Skill of Reflection

Discussion Starter Option #1 - *Listen to a Photo*

Part of deep listening is paying close attention to “the issues.” But sometimes the most important voices and messages come from paying close attention to images. One of the most powerful and provocative images to arise from the Black Lives Matter protests was the 2016 picture of Leshia Evans at the protests in Baton Rouge, Louisiana after the death of Alton Sterling.

One of the things that makes this picture so powerful and important is the way its meaning has evolved as people have listened to each other’s reactions to it. For instance, the first reactions to it were like this one from a [Twitter](#) post:

“Grace, Beauty, Defiance, Strength: Behold Lady Liberty!”

But after such affirming responses, Leshia Evans felt she needed to add another perspective to the conversation. She lifted up the photo’s limits and dangers, saying, “It’s safe... It is the color book version of the truth.”

So, using this article which contains a podcast and a poem about the picture, take some time to listen deeply to this iconic photo. Share the *many ways* it spoke to you with your group.

Unrest in Baton Rouge: Anatomy of a Photo

<https://www.wnyc.org/story/unrest-baton-rouge/>

Discussion Starter Option #2 *Listening Anew to the “Violence” of Today’s Protests*

It’s striking how conversations about racial justice protests quickly move from the pain and moral demands that sit at the center of those protests to the violence that sometimes lives at the edges of them. Deep listening helps us notice how certain “narratives” and “frames” about the violence actually work to remove the protests’ moral demands and pain from the center of the discussion, how they distract and in many cases seek to undermine that work for justice. And these frames don’t just live “out there”; they live inside many of us as well.

Using the below toolkit article as your guide, take some time to listen anew to these unhelpful frames, and learn how to challenge them in ourselves and others.

SURJ Toolkit: Calling People in Around "Violence"

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BQVqLVI-](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BQVqLVI-3zVb0VcsOZB7JKVaVsHllyjwM6cvdcqWHal/edit?fbclid=IwAR3w2QRnqlAiDaXfiQVbLGbAr9ch_7JLKKgNBN-u9qkXA-m7mQUMODI00_o)

[3zVb0VcsOZB7JKVaVsHllyjwM6cvdcqWHal/edit?fbclid=IwAR3w2QRnqlAiDaXfiQVbLGbAr9ch_7JLKKgNBN-u9qkXA-m7mQUMODI00_o](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BQVqLVI-3zVb0VcsOZB7JKVaVsHllyjwM6cvdcqWHal/edit?fbclid=IwAR3w2QRnqlAiDaXfiQVbLGbAr9ch_7JLKKgNBN-u9qkXA-m7mQUMODI00_o)

IV. Express Yourself

Connecting to Our Creativity & The Skills of the Expressive Arts

Identity Mapping from “[Be The Change! Youth Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Project](#)”

Session 1 “Race: What’s the Difference?”, Activity 3. Scroll down the PDF to find the Activity <https://www.uua.org/files/documents/yaya/btc/btc1.pdf>

Use the Identity Mapping worksheet in the “On the Road Together” Shared Google Docs at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i71nSieb8HdoiPRVXJ-31pDUtaJgnvQBjHY09rppg/edit?usp=sharing>

Activity: Create an Identity Map

- It can be a drawing, a fill in the blank, or a real map.
- Use your creativity.
- When we share, listen deeply to each person describe their identity map and what it means to them.

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

Listen deeply to the learnings from each person.

What surprised you about your own identity map?

Which category was most difficult for you to complete?

What differences do you find that might suggest differing perspectives?

Our differences make us unique. Having our differences ignored can often be hurtful. Some people do not like to hear the phrase, “I’m color blind. I don’t see race.” Why might that be?

What new insights have emerged for you?

What does this have to do with dismantling racism?

V. Fun & Games

Connecting to Our Bodies & The Skill of Play

Listening Name Game

Visit the following website for Game Rules, Original Lyrics by Shirley Ellis, and a Name Lyrics Generator at <https://www.techhelpinc.com/namegame/>

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- In UU congregations we used to think it was good to be “[color blind](#)” to race. Not to see colors of skin.
- BIPOC people are now teaching white people to see the problems with this approach and instead are recommending the goal of noticing, appreciating and celebrating differences. Here’s a great article about this: <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/raising-kids-colorblind-anti-racism> | [5ee3bf4bc5b64b33b225479f](#)

- One important part of seeing and celebrating difference involves listening to how people want to be called or how they want to be treated. A good example to use might be asking and listening to preferences about being referred to as “Native American” or “Indian.” See this article for background and help framing the discussion:
https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/native-american-vs-indian-IIUK00r1EionG_T5_LgRA
- After explaining the above points, transition to the Listening Name Game as a way to practice honoring difference and honoring how each person we meet wants to be referred to.
- Encourage participants to listen to the changes in how a name sounds, as you play one of these games. (Be careful to avoid adapting anyone's name to become a mean or otherwise inappropriate word.)

Activity: Get familiar with the Name Game lyrics so that you can change the lyrics according to the names of the youth who are with you. You might wish to share the screen for the [Name Lyrics Generator](#) so the youth can see the lyrics for names they wish to submit. They should do their own names, and what about pet names, parent names, friend names? For example:

Let's do Katie!
Katie Katie bo-batie
Banana fanna fo-fatie
Fee, fy, mo-matie.
Katie!

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

How carefully do you listen to others? Do you focus on what they are saying and feeling, or get ready to jump in with your own story?

Session 3

Listen to Nature

(7th Principle Focus)

Theme Angle:

Our faith reminds us that deep listening to nature is healing. Our Seventh Principle encourages us to affirm and promote “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” When we practice deep listening to nature, we are taken to a place of calm, knowing that we are not isolated and alone but instead a part of something so interconnected. So what’s one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of deep listening? It tells us to “Listen to Nature!”

I. Getting Started

Connecting to Our Community & The Skill of Personal Sharing

Leader Tip

You will be sharing videos and music through Zoom. Learn how to play music on Zoom: [How to play music and videos on Zoom](#), and how to play just music on Zoom [Soul Matters’ How to play music PDF](#).

Centering or Chalice Lighting Quote

I Decided to Ask The Trees by Nicola Torbett

Full reading at

<https://www.facebook.com/internationalconsciousleadership/posts/2837798869672815>

Yesterday, walking in the redwoods with a dog, I decided to ask the trees about COVID-19...

They said:

"What if you used this time when all the events are getting canceled and many of you are being told not to report to work to reconnect with what you love?

What if this virus brings you to your knees so that you have to admit that you don't really know how to move forward?

And then what if you started reconsidering how you've been living? And then reaching out to each other..."

Expeditions and Encounters by Annie Dillard

At a certain point, you say to the woods, to the sea, to the mountains, the world, Now I am ready. Now I will stop and be wholly attentive. You empty yourself and wait, listening. After a time you hear it: there is nothing there. There is nothing but those things only, those created objects, discrete, growing or holding, or swaying, being rained on or raining, held, flooding or ebbing, standing, or spread. You feel the world's word as a tension, a hum, a single chorused note everywhere the same. This is it: this hum is the silence. Nature does utter a peep - just this one. The birds and insects, the meadows and swamps and rivers and stones and mountains and clouds: they all do it; they all don't do it. There is a vibrancy to the silence, a suppression, as if someone were gagging the world. But you wait, you give your life's length to listening, and nothing happens. The ice rolls up, the ice rolls back, and still that single note obtains. The

tension, or lack of it, is intolerable. The silence is not actually suppression: instead, it is all there is. - *Annie Dillard, Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters*

Check In Prompt

What is your favorite nature spot? Where do you most deeply connect with nature?

II. Spiritual Practice

Connecting to Our Soul & The Skill of Mindfulness

Meditations with a Cricket Symphony

Centering:

I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Suggested Script:

Suggested Script:

When we are listening deeply in the evening, we often hear crickets. It's one of the sounds of the night. Listening deeply to the sounds of nature makes us feel calm. Listening deeply can heal us from the busyness of our lives, when we are removed from the web of life. We can rest gently knowing we are interconnected with all of nature.

Share the "Cricket Symphony" <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1810889285894025>

Note: The Cricket Symphony has been represented as being only the sounds of crickets chirping, slowed down. There are various versions of the track, some including overdubbing by a Native American opera singer. In addition, [Snopes](#) says, "Nonetheless, even if the original recording featured nothing other than the sounds of crickets chirping, exactly what was done to those sounds to create the finished piece remains a subject of contention. Critics contend that Wilson didn't simply slow down a continuous recording of crickets chirping; they interpret his statement that he "slowed down this recording to various levels" and Bonnie Joe Hunt's reference to Wilson's "lowering the pitch" several times to mean that he used multiple recordings of crickets, each slowed down by a different amount to produce a specific pitch, and layered them to create a melodic effect sounding like a "well-trained church choir."

Lead With Strategy: Recruit someone who is an amateur entomologist (someone who just likes insects) and knows about crickets to join your zoom call. Do you know someone with a [Madagascar Hissing Cockroach](#) as a pet? Could they share it?

Is there someone who can share cricket noises (made with a comb or [your mouth](#)?)

Transition Tool: use for transitioning between sections

Cricket Sound Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQFEY9RIRJA>

Reflection Question: How did the Cricket Symphony make you feel?

III. Discussion Starters

Connecting to Our Minds & The Skill of Reflection

First Thoughts: Sharing our own thoughts

Discussion Prompt:

How exactly does listening to nature help you? Some say nature is healing because it invokes humility by making our worries seem small and putting things in perspective. Others say nature is healing because it helps us feel connected to everything around us and makes us realize we are not alone. What is it for you? One of these two? Or something else entirely?

Widening the Conversation: Engaging the Thoughts of Others

In this video by the BBC, a study shows an improvement in emotions after watching nature videos. What do you think?

Video to discuss:

Nature Makes You Happy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wkPMUZ9vX4>

Discussion Questions:

- Would you use a nature video now to alleviate stress?
- What if nature videos replace the need for real places where people can deeply listen and encounter the natural world?
- What real places do you seek out to deeply listen to nature?

IV. Express Yourself

Connecting to Our Creativity & The Skills of the Expressive Arts

Cricket Comb Symphony!

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- Deep listening to nature helps us heal and calms us by reminding us of our interconnectedness. When we hear and notice the crickets in the evening we are transported into the web of life. We are reminded that we are part of a family of wonderful creatures. You might even say we are part of the “choir of creatures.”
- So as a way of reminding ourselves to practice deep listening and feel a part of the “choir of creatures,” we will create a cricket comb symphony. Running your finger along the comb is similar to the way crickets create their chirp. Find a comb and some wax paper (or plastic bag) to create a musical instrument. [GIVE THEM A COUPLE OF MINUTES TO SEARCH THEIR HOUSE] Some call it a comb saxophone; some call it a kazoo. Share the videos below on how to make and play the comb or describe it to the group yourself. These combs make playing easy. Suggest a UU song that the youth know already or have an easy tune to learn, such as “[I Wish I Knew How It Felt to Be Free](#),” or “[Spirit of Life](#)” or “[This Little Light of Mine](#)” or play along with the videos.

Make a Comb Saxophone/Kazoo (Comb and wax/baking paper)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkGwVO6KuMI>

The song in which they used the comb saxophones: Love Yourself - Justin Bieber (Short Cover by Mario Anes and Ronja Petersen; playing comb at the end)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5j0fRi42oE>

Play along with Comb Blues (comb and plastic bag)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgpKZiCpTTQ&list=RDckGwVO6KuMI&index=3>

Written Instructions: How to Make a Kazoo Out of a Comb (comb and wax paper)

<https://ourpastimes.com/how-to-make-a-kazoo-out-of-a-comb-12302951.html>

Transition Tool: Play while the youth are looking for a comb and wax paper or plastic bag.

Cricket Sound Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQFEY9RIRJA>

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

- What time of the day inspires you to practice deep listening the most?
- When do you feel most connected to the web of life?

Lead With Strategy: Invite a musician to help demonstrate the kazoo.

Paint Your Fantasy Window

Use acrylic and dry erase markers and [outline then paint the picture on your window](#) which you wish you had. Share with your group.

V. Fun & Games

Connecting to Our Bodies & The Skill of Play

Deepen your understanding of renewal with these below activities.

Go Outside!

Here we are staring at our Zoom screens when we are talking about deep listening to nature! It's a puzzlement. Suggest ways that the group might actually go outside and listen.

Can you take your laptop or phone outside, and one at a time, while others are muted, share the sounds around you outside?

Can you turn off the video when you are outside and only listen to the sounds? Like making your own SoundScape moments from Session 1, only with the sounds of the outdoors around you?

Share the stories and memories that come to mind after each sound shared.

If sounds are too hard to pick out, what about playing "I Spy" and pay attention to each person's background to find the object of a certain color or shape.

With a little preparation....

If it's not possible to go outside now, consider inviting everyone to listen outside at another time and then share during the group meeting a photo, or an audio clip of something that they encountered while outside.

Bring a bit of Nature Inside to listen and talk to.

Did you know [plants thrive when they listen to you talking to them?](#)

Build a self-watering planter out of a plastic bottle and grow your own plant to talk and listen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6uUe3Uulrc>

Session 4

Listen to the Ancestors

(Source #2/ Wisdom and Memory Focus)

Theme Angle:

Our faith reminds us that deep listening to people is important, so much so that we've put it in the second of our UU sources: "Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love." But it's not just prophetic people, it's also wise people. And our faith tells us that some of the wisest people are older people, or as our faith calls them, Elders. They have many years of life experience. Listening to their many journeys helps us navigate our own. So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of deep listening? It tells us to "Listen to those who have come before! Listen to the Elders!"

I. Getting Started

Connecting to Our Community & The Skill of Personal Sharing

Leader Tip

You will be sharing videos and music through Zoom. Learn how to play music on Zoom: [How to play music and videos on Zoom](#), and how to play just music on Zoom [Soul Matters' How to play music PDF](#).

Centering or Chalice Lighting Quote

It Is That Time and That Place

Rev. Dr. Qiyamah Rahman

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/it-time-and-place>

Now is the time to call on the memories of the ancestors who thought they -could not walk another step -toward freedom—and yet they did.

It is that time and place to call on the memories of the ancestors who, when the darkness of their lives threatened to take away the hope and light, reached a -little deeper and prayed yet another prayer.

It is that time and place to remember those who came through the long night to witness another sunrise...

Remember me (song from Coco)

Remember me

Though I have to say goodbye

Remember me

Don't let it make you cry

For ever if I'm far away

I hold you in my heart

I sing a secret song to you

Each night we are apart
Remember me
Though I have to travel far
Remember me
Each time you hear a sad guitar
Know that I'm with you
The only way that I can be
Until you're in my arms again
Remember me -

Que nuestra canción no deje de latir
Solo con tu amor yo puedo existir (recuérdame)
Que nuestra canción no deje de latir
Solo con tu amor yo puedo existir (recuérdame)
Si en tu mente vivo estoy (recuérdame)
Mis sueños yo te doy
Te llevo en mi corazón
Y te acompañaré
Unidos en nuestra canción
Contigo ahí estaré
Recuérdame
Si sola crees estar
Recuérdame
Y mi cantar te irá a abrazar
Aun en la distancia
Nunca vayas a olvidar...
<https://lyricstranslate.com/en/recu%C3%A9rdame-reuni%C3%B3n-remember-me.html>
About the song: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remember_Me_\(Coco_song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remember_Me_(Coco_song))

Check In Prompts

What's the best piece of advice you've received from a grandparent or elder person?
Tell a story about a part of your name that relates to family - like where your last name came from, why your family chose your first/last/middle name, how you got a nickname and what that story says about your ancestry (genetic, cultural, or chosen.)

II. Spiritual Practice

Connecting to Our Soul & The Skill of Mindfulness

Mindful Moment: Your First Wisdom/Lesson from an Elder

Invite the youth to have writing or drawing supplies nearby so they can express themselves during the meditation.

Centering:

I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Mindful Moment Script:

Imagine an elder in your life. It might be a grandparent, a chosen elder, or an elder figure who you respect.

Listen to this chant.

While listening, draw a picture or write a description of the first memory you have of wisdom/lesson from this person.

Play the chant:

Listen Listen Listen To My Heart Song

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJe-W_pD_6Y (Play to min. 3 then fade out)

Invite sharing of the drawings or reflections for those who are willing.

III. Discussion Starters

Connecting to Our Minds & The Skill of Reflection

First Thoughts: Adding your own critical voice to the voice of your ancestors/elders

There is a tension in listening to wisdom. We want to humbly honor the wisdom of our ancestors. On the other hand, we want to carefully evaluate it before we follow it. Honor it but add your own critical voice. Don't just silently obey. There may be times when listening to your ancestors or elders means you need to separate yourself from what they are saying. Phrases like "Be seen not heard" "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps." or racist or homophobic comments.

In addition, sometimes a person may have no real connection to ancestors. Sometimes we can be very removed from this concept or have very different ideas about it. For example, adoptees or those whose family were enslaved.

Chat about It Prompts:

- What wisdom from elders needs to be critically evaluated?
- What have you learned about kindly challenging your elders?
- How do you decide when to confront vs. letting it go, with someone you love.
- Do you have to love ancestors because you share genes?
- What about the family you choose?

Widening the Conversation: Engaging the Ideas of Others:

Option #1. Engage the wisdom of elders with one of these videos.

Elderly Advice On Modern Life <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsfS2Rh46g>

Pearls of Wisdom <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dARsDqZTOKA> (Katie's favorite!)

- What gems of wisdom sticks with you?

Option #2. Listening to and owning the history of ancestors

Choose the article or the video. In this article, two UU's visit the "Door of No Return" in the Slave Castle in Ghana, West Africa. In the video, a family visits the plantation where their ancestors were enslaved. Enslaved Africans were ripped from their families and traditions. Both describe the power of finding out more about their enslaved ancestors and how that affects their lives.

Article to read out loud together:

Sankofa Ghana: A Spiritual Journey Home <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/sankofa-ghana>

Video to Watch: Walking With My Enslaved Ancestors | Ancestry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1io77Yb8njU>

Discussion Questions:

- How might you search for your own ancestors, chosen or genetic?
- How does seeing your ancestor's history as your own change the way you think about your own living and loving?

IV. Express Yourself

Connecting to Our Creativity & The Skills of the Expressive Arts

Remembrance Sharing Ritual

Talking Points and Takeaways:

Introduce this as a time of tenderness, when we all are remembering the loss we feel.

One important part of a remembrance sharing is to deeply listen to each other's stories. So let's share and listen to some stories from each other.

We light a candle in remembrance of those who have died. For us UU's, late October can be a time for remembering those who have passed on, recently and a long time ago. UUs are not the only ones that use this time of year to think about those who have died. For instance, Halloween was born from Samhain, an ancient Pagan holiday, when the boundary between the living and the dead grows thin. And the Day of the Dead is a Mexican holiday celebrated throughout Mexico and Mexican communities in the United States to remember and honor ancestors who have died.

Remembering those who have died is a way of listening to and letting their voices live on. It's a way of saying "Their light never fully goes out." That's part of why we light candles like this. When we offer a memorial service to someone who has died, we often share stories of how that person lived their life. These stories can be sad, and they can also be joyous, or moving. We listen to the stories and learn how to live our own lives in a better way, in honor of the person who has died. We also remember special things about that person. One grandfather loved Snickers Bars. And so, the family made sure to have a big bowl of Snickers Bars available after the memorial service so everyone could remember their grandfather.

Activity:

Invite the group to find photos or memorabilia which reminds them of someone (or some being, a pet, for instance) who has died.

One by one, each person shares their photo or memorabilia and a short description of who they are missing. Share what they meant to them or something that person or pet has done that will live on-explain that the wisdom and memories that outlive a person, or a pet, are their legacy.

Optional, as each person shares, the leader lights a votive candle or small candle, for that being who is remembered. We will all lose someone eventually. Listening deeply to each other helps by sharing the universal experience of loss. It helps us know that we are not alone.

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

Now that each of us who wishes to, has shared, what final reflections do you wish to bring forth?

Lead With Strategy: This would be a good time for the minister to be a part of the small group sharing, so the youth know that the minister is **their** minister who can guide them in the difficult times around loss.

V. Fun & Games

Connecting to Our Bodies & The Skill of Play

Inherited Body Part Inventory

You may have found certain characteristics from ancestors which have been inherited. Whose hair, glasses, allergies, ears, etc. do you seem to have? Can you show a photo?

Pets as Ancestors: Dress Up Pets for Halloween

We've shared a lot about human elders and ancestors. What about the ancestry from other species? What have you learned from pets in your life? And what is it about pet ears sticking out of little bonnets? Ears represent listening. Celebrate the ears, tails and other parts of your family pet with a Dress Up Show n Tell. Everyone loves when our congregations do animal blessings. This is your chance to bring that same fun energy to a youth online show 'n tell event! To have a bit of fun with our monthly theme, tell everyone there will be a special prize for the pet with the best hat that highlights their ears! (Yes, we know, not fair to those of us whose pets are snakes!)

Theme Connection: The ears of other species make for deep listening.

Off Road Excursions

Things to Do Outside of Regular Sessions

Outdoor Movie Cinema -

<https://www.projectorpeople.com/resources/backyard-theater-guide.asp>

Show [“It’s the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown”](#) (25 minutes) for Halloween.

Theme Connection: It’s likely that Trick or Treating will be cancelled this year. Carry on with another Halloween tradition by sharing this movie outdoors together. Charlie and Linus listen for the arrival of the Great Pumpkin in Linus’ “most sincere” pumpkin patch. That sounds deep to us.

If the weather is bad, take the movie into a Zoom room: And remember, one of the great things about watching a movie on Zoom together is that everyone gets to “talk” *during the movie* through the Zoom chat box. When is another time people will let you “talk” during the movies?!

Elder Stories -

Our elders can be lonely during this time of isolation. Bridge the generations by requesting stories from an elder who remembers past times of the congregation. Set up a Zoom or Skype call and surprise the elder with the attendance of the Youth Group who are ready to ask questions. Give the elder the gift of deep listening to their experiences. Record the Zoom and share with those who couldn’t attend. Here are some possible story prompts:

Was there a special congregational tradition which they helped create, like a Renaissance Fair?

Was there a special visitor or former building that they could tell about?

What was it like to be a child in their Sunday School?

What is their favorite memory of church?

Extra secret part of the story collecting: Find a way to identify and recruit a loved one of the elder who lives far from them and who they haven’t been able to see because of Covid. At the end of the interview have this special guest hop on and tell their favorite story of the elder you are interviewing.

Theme connection: Deep listening to our elders dignifies the recipients and the givers!

Movies

Watch a movie together online

- People who have Netflix can download an extension from Chrome, and then watch a movie all together (in different locations), putting comments on the side. Here's the link to learn more:
<https://www.netflixparty.com/?fbclid=IwAR23nxb4v3jUvSPxFXazaLDfYBO0MUq8SErXvD9dxMMaJz96VaBZL6SGRAA>
- Watch a Movie together on Zoom and use the chat box to share comments on the side.

Movies on Deep Listening recommended by the Youth Packet Creative Crew

- [Sing!](#) - Animated about listening for talent.
- [August Rush](#) - An orphan prodigy tries to find his parents through music.
- [Book of Life](#) - Animated Disney flick about ancestors and Dia de los Muertos.
- [CoCo](#) - Disney animated, exploring the day of the dead, but this time through a boy who loves music, but his family does not want him to play. Great theme about how folks live on through our memories.
- [Amadeus](#) - Imagine Mozart listening to the music in his head as he created it! Be aware there are two versions with two ratings one is PG-13, one is R (Extended/Directors Version).
- [Harriet](#) - listening to her inner voice and heart.

More Inspiration

Inspiration Facebook Page

Offer your youth and youth advisors spiritual nourishment and inspiration by encouraging them to join the Soul Matters Inspiration Facebook Page. Use the memes for your congregational FB page, as well: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Soul Matters Music Playlists:

We create two different playlists on the monthly theme each month: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. The playlists are full of songs that your youth will connect with. Consider letting them know about the lists. Maybe even create your own list on the monthly theme that they can all contribute to and create together!

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

Share Your Ideas for Future Monthly Packets!

If you come across an activity, reflection piece or meditation that would be great for any of our upcoming theme packets, send it our way at soulmattersre@gmail.com

2020/2021 Themes:

November:	Healing
December:	Stillness
January:	Imagination
February:	Beloved Community
March:	Commitment
April:	Becoming
May:	Story
June:	Play

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with the help of a wonderful circle of thought partners!***

A special thanks goes out to our Creative Crew: Ashley Egan and Ivy Breivogel

Thanks as well to the other [Soul Matters Team](#) members who contribute to the content and shape of these packets, especially Rev. Scott Tayler, our Team Lead, and Susan Arnold, our administrator.

Join the Crew!

We would love one or two more Youth Leaders, Religious Educators or Youth Advisors to join our Creative Crew for this year. Contact Katie (soulmattersre@gmail.com) if you are interested. The role involves a once-a-month Zoom chat on the theme.



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Learn how to join at <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/>