



Soul Matters

The Gift of Liberating Love

Worship Research
January 2025

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About Online Permissions, Multi-Platform Support & Referencing Resources

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

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

Engaging Our New Article II Values

This year's packets and themes are built around our UUA's new [Article II Values](#) and tied together by the overarching frame of "The Gift of...", which invites us to engage the values through the lens of the gifts that our faith gives us and asks us to give to the world.

The seven new values are among the ten monthly themes themselves, *identified below in bold and italics text*. The months surrounding those have themes that set up and bring closure to the exploration of our seven values. September's theme of Welcome starts off the year on the note of welcoming change and October's theme of Heritage honors the idea of holding on to the past even as we move forward. While December's theme of Mystery is not one of the seven values, it is lifted up in the Inspirations section, with language that has been long-loved by UUs: "Direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder...[that] open our hearts, renew our spirits, and transform our lives." And finally, June's theme of Renewal closes the year out by making space to celebrate and reflect on how these new values will renew us and help us renew the world.

September: The Gift of Welcome

October: The Gift of Heritage

November: The Gift of ***Generosity***

December: The Gift of Mystery

January: The Gift of ***Liberating Love***

February: The Gift of ***Justice & Equity***

March: The Gift of ***Transformation***

April: The Gift of ***Interdependence***

May: The Gift of ***Pluralism***

June: The Gift of Renewal

Liberating Love in Our UUA Shared Values & Covenant Statement

To give this month's theme, Welcome, more context, here is how it is addressed in [our new Article II statement](#):

"Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through ***the spiritual discipline of Love.***"

Calendar Connections

View our full-year calendar [HERE](#)

January 2025

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

Interfaith

- [Hanukkah](#) (Jewish) - Dec. 25, 2024 -Jan. 2, 2025 (more [here](#))
- [Twelfth Night](#) (Christian) - Jan. 5
- [Epiphany](#) (Christian) - Jan. 6
- [World Religion Day](#) (Baha'i) - Jan. 19, 2025
- Birthday of [Thomas Merton](#) - Jan. 31 (1915) (more [here](#) and [here](#))

Unitarian Universalist

- [Thirty Days of Love](#) - Side with Love Campaign - Jan.15 - Feb.14
- [Millard Fillmore](#)'s Birthday - Jan. 7, 1800 (Unitarian President; on his contradictions [here](#))
- [Joseph Tuckerman](#)'s Birthday - Jan. 18 (1778) (more [here](#))

National & Cultural

- [New Year's Day](#) - Jan. 1
- The Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln - Jan. 1 (1863)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Jan. 20, 2025, third Monday of January (connections [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Rowe vs. Wade](#) Anniversary - Jan. 22 (more [here](#))
- International Holocaust ([Shoah](#)) [Remembrance Day](#) - Jan. 27
- [Lunar New Year](#) - Jan. 29, 2025 (more [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [a UU service.](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe

- [National Hug Day](#) - Jan.21
- [I'm Not Going To Take it Anymore](#) Day - Jan. 7th
- [Belly Laugh Day](#) - Jan. 24 (more [here](#) and [here](#))

Chalice Lightings & Opening Words

We All Emerge *

Eric Williams

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/benediction/we-all-emerge>

[Permission Source](#)

We all emerge from
Dwell within
Are transformed by
And called back to Love...

Love is the spirit of this church

James Vila Blake

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.

Chalice Lighting for 30 Days of Love

QuianaDena Perkins

<https://vimeo.com/666271353>

Let us Look First to the Response of Love *

Rev. Maureen Killoran

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/let-us-look-first-response-love>

[Permission Source](#)

...In the midst of uncertainty, may our chalice be a beacon of encouragement,
that our values may guide our choices.
Let us look first at the response of love.

For When Things Aren't Okay *

Rev. Molly Brewer

Full piece: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/chalice-lighting-when-things-arent-okay>

[Permission Source](#)

... all I ask in this moment is that we remember the words of Rebecca Parker:
There is a Love.
There is a Love holding us.
There is a Love holding all...

Into the liberating light... *

Rev. Margo Rinehart

Permission Secured by Soul Matters

May this chalice bring us to the precipice of truth,
Where nothing can be hidden from the flame.
And may we find the reckoning place where our souls burst open and into the liberating light.

The Flames of Love *

Rev. Kimi Floyd Reisch

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We light the flame of commitment,
To stand with and work to create change,
Until all know they are beloved.

We light the flame of survival,
Grateful for our lives,
Remembering in love those lost along the road.

We light the flame of change,
Committing to recenter toward love,
In hearts, in minds, in our world.

We light the flame of hope,
Loving each other, building community,
even when it is uncomfortable.

We light the flame of knowledge,
Following the path of justice,
Justice that is love embodied.

We light this flame of radical love.
To speak out for those who have been silenced.
Those who have been rejected for who they love.
Those who have been persecuted for who they are.
Those who have been bullied for daring to be bold.
Those who have been othered and forced into the
margins.
Those who have been lonely.
Those who have been hurt.
Those who are still hurting.

We light this flame as
a people committed,
we are survivors.
we will change the world,
until no one lives without hope,
until no one lives without justice.
We light this flame and pledge that
In love, with love, and through love,
All things are possible.

An Invocation to Liberating Love *

Rev. Dr. David Breeden

(can be read antiphonally)

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Buildings speak—
not in voices of stone
but in the hum of conversation,
of flesh and bone gathering,

nearly mystical
at times. Almost
we sense mental
chains shattering,

almost we hear
birds wrenching free
of their cages.

And the walls long
hidden in the corners
of our minds—

walls so defining
hold us fast

until together
our voices rise,
trust blooming

until there,
there is a sky,
blue, unending.

Judgments wither
like cut flowers then,
and love—love is

the ground on
which we dance,
singing of liberation.

Know only that you are loved *

Rev. Gretchen Haley

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

For this one moment
Know only that you are loved
That you are safe, and whole and loved
Know that you belong here
Here among us, here upon this earth
In your body
However tired, or broken
Your heart may be
Whatever fear, disappointment, anger you carry
For this hour know you are not alone
Feel the presence of others
Surrounding you,
Breathing beside you, and with you,
Discovering together the way our voices rise, and
fall together
In harmony, in hope
Claim here a resilient freedom
The choice for love, for light, to live with joy and
gratitude and praise as a form of resistance
Already we are organizing
Come, let us worship, together

You Are Beloved and You Are Welcome Here *

Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are
welcome here
*Voice 2: Whether tears have fallen from
your eyes this past week, or gleeful
laughter has spilled out of your
smiling mouth*
Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are
welcome here
*Voice 2: Whether you are feeling brave or
broken-hearted, defiant, or
defeated; fearsome or fearful*
Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are
welcome here
*Voice 2: Whether you have untold stories
buried deep inside, or stories that
have been forced beyond the edges
of comfort*

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are
welcome here

*Voice 2: Whether you have made promises,
broken promises, or are renewing
your promises,*

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are
welcome here

*Voice 2: Whatever is on your heart,
However it is with your soul in this
moment*

Voice 1: You are beloved, and you are
welcome here

*Voice 2: In this space of welcome and
acceptance, commitment, and re-
commitment, of covenant &
connection, Let us worship together.*

The Names of Love *

Rev. Scott Tayler

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We light this chalice in the names of love.
The love of family that brings us into being, allows
us to bloom, and then sends us on our way with
courage, knowing we can return no matter what.
The love of partnered hearts that teach us to trust
and help us know that who we are does not end at
the barrier of our own skin.
The love of friends who help us feel seen and sing
our song back to us when we cannot hear it with
our ears alone.
The love of community that bathes us in belonging
and calls us to see the needs of others as our own.
And the greatest love: the love that will not let us
go, even in our fear, even in our failure, even when
we are lonely or lost.
Love invites us home. If we listen, it is doing so,
even today.

Meditations, Prayers & Blessings

The Home That Love Made, Rev. Amanda Poppei *

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love that the founders felt, when they planned out these walls and raised these beams above us.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love of all who have worshiped here; those who have celebrated and grieved here; the babies dedicated, couples married, and family members mourned here.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love of our children, as they learn and laugh together, and our youth, as they grow into their own sense of purpose and meaning.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love of the staff who have served it, full of their hopes for this congregation, their hard work and their acts of dedication.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love of the choir, the love made so clear in the voices lifted here on Sunday morning.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of our love: the love of this community, despite our differences and our disagreements; the love that holds us together as a people.

This is the home that love made.

Can you feel it? May the love be with us always. Amen.

Power Prayer, Rev. Becky Brooks *

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/power-prayer>

[Permission Source](#)

Spirit of Life, I have witnessed

a loud love,

an out-loud love,

that challenges me.

I did not recognize it

at first—

the rumble of an ocean

I had long been under.

But here it is right now...

It doesn't play nice...

This love demands...

Open Our Hearts With Love, Rev. Naomi King *

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/184319.shtml>

[Permission Source](#)

When the world's violence shatters the joy of a moment

We pause and reach out for the hands that remain

We open our hearts with love.

When despair rises as a monster from the deep and drags down one of our own, our answer is that

We open our hearts with love...

Love and Justice, Rev. Tess Baumberger *

(Based on 1 Corinthians)

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Love is kind with people but impatient with injustice.
Love is assertive and respectful.
Love listens to the anger of those who experience oppression
Without responding, without defending,
Without interrupting, without explaining.
It listens with compassion, seeking always to understand.

Love is slow to anger, especially at the start or end of life,
and with anyone who the world discounts.
Yet anger can be a part of love.
Consider the force with which parents defend their young.
Love fears for those it loves, for what it loves.
When who or what it loves cannot defend itself,
Love rises to defend.
When those it loves have the power of defense
It takes their lead with humility and courage.
Love assists, empowers, and frees.
Love's anger rises to meet injustice
In considered ways that help correct it.

Love is willing to examine itself,
Its thoughts, actions, and unmeditated bias.
It recognizes one's power to harm, or to be part of systems of harm
With or without awareness, but once aware it can only intend
To make amends, to right the wrongs, to change the systems
That legislate hatred.

Love is willing always to change,
Always to learn, always to heal.
Love rejoices in truth and in equity.
There is no limit to love's steady presence,
Or it's holding us, gently but insistently, to what is right.

More Love, Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd

Full piece found in [To Wake, To Rise](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

Putting our love in boxes with qualifications: I will love you if – I will see you if – I will bear the truth of my soul
alongside you if – and only if... you agree with me, you look like me, you act like me, you sing like me, you wear
your gender on your sleeve and produce it upon demand.
I will love you and will meet you in the sanctuary of our hearts – If and only if...
And so today,... Let our willingness to love beyond our expectations or experience break down our long-held
barriers... May there truly be more love, with no labels, and no binary, and no preface, and no qualification, and
no arithmetic, and no limit...

The Imprint of Love, Rev. Laura Horton-Ludwig *

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

At times we may fear that love will not be strong enough.
At times we may question whether love really is at the root of all things,
in this world with so much struggle and suffering and discord.
We may struggle to hold on to our faith in love...

In the stillness and silence of our own heart
we read the imprint of love
created not by our own will,
but planted there for us to discover...

A New Year's Meditation - May you fall madly in love this year, Rachel Lamb

Full piece at <https://notesfromthelovewars.com/2016/01/05/fall-in-love/?utm>

May you fall madly in love this year, in love with someone who unhinges your tired trajectory,... in love with the particular pedigree of genius insanity that has perhaps claimed you in spite of your reluctance, and certainly in love with an animal, a cloud, a redwood, the wild .. these at least once a day...

Music

Suggestions For January 2025 - “The Gift of Liberating Love”

Hymns: Singing the Living Tradition - permissioned

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

95 - There is More Love Somewhere	131 - Love Will Guide Us
116 - I'm on My Way	148 - Let Freedom Span Both East and West
118 - This Little Light of Mine	149 - Lift Every Voice and Sing
121 - We'll Build a Land	155 - Circle Round for Freedom
123 - Spirit of Life	156 - Oh, Freedom
124 - Be that Guide	169 - We Shall Overcome
130 - O Liberating Rose	346 - Come, Sing a Song with Me

Hymns: Singing the Journey - permissioned

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

1008 - When Our Heart is in a Holy Place
1009 - When I Breathe In
1014 - Answering the Call of Love
1031 - Filled with Loving Kindness
1035 - Freedom is Coming
1037 - We Begin Again in Love
1040 - Hush

Hymns: Singing the Living Tradition - permissions needed

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

6 - Just as Long as I Have Breath (permission granted if written credit is given as: “Lyrics by Alicia S. Carpenter, c. 1990; used with permission by the Estate of Alicia Carpenter)
18 - What Wondrous Love (harmony: Abingdon Press, One License)
299 - Make Channels for the Streams of Love (music & harmony: J. Fischer Bros, One License)
318 - We Would Be One (arr. Westminster John Knox Press, One License)
323 - Break Not the Circle (Hope Publishing Co., One License)
324 - Where My Free Spirit Onward Leads (music: Oxford University Press, One License, words: permission granted if written credit is given as: “Lyrics by Alicia S.Carpenter, c. 1990; used with permission by the Estate of Alicia Carpenter)

Choral/Vocal Suggestions

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

- [Love is Gonna Set Us Free - SATB](#)
- [Love Free - SSA](#)
- [Amazing Grace, My Chains Are Gone - SATB](#)
- [The Gift to be Simple - SATB](#)
- [We Shall Be Free - SATB, SAB, 2 part](#)
- [The Gift to be Free - SATB - Dillworth](#)
- [Lovely - SATB, SAB, SSA](#)
- [Oh, Freedom - SATB](#)
- [We Shall Overcome - SATB](#)
- [I Will Be Your Standing Stone: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YminLnyYU5w>](#)
- [There is a love: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/music/there-love>](#)
- The [Justice Choir Songbook](#) has a ton of wonderful songs on Love and Liberation. Free for non-commercial use, with the option to donate

Instrumental/Handbell

- [Let Love Be Our Voice - 2 - 5va opt. guitar/keyboard/organ](#)
- [Amazing Grace, My Chains Are Gone - 3 - 5va w/ optional hand chimes](#)
- [Simple Gifts - 3va](#)
- [Love Will Set You Free - Vocal solo](#)
- [Fervent Freedom - 3 - 5va](#)
- [Love, Love, Love - 3-5va](#)

Music From the AUUMM (Association for UU Musicians Ministries) Online Database:

The wonderful leadership of the AUUMM have added our monthly themes to the AUUMM music database. It's a great way to get music suggestions from UUs all around the country. Molly, our Soul Matters Music Resources Coordinator, goes through the AUUMM database each month and includes items she feels are most related to the theme, but you may also want to do your own searching.

You can access the general AUUMM Music Database [here](#).

- The following are direct links to the AUUMM Database for works relating to our Soul Matters theme of the month (The Gift of Liberating Love):
 - [Freedom/Liberation](#)
 - [Love and Compassion](#)

Music for Online Worship from UUA

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

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

- ["Filled with Loving Kindness," \(Vimeo\)](#) a version of the Buddhist Metta (lovingkindness) prayer, as taught, sung, and accompanied by Mark David Buckles. "May I (*you, we, all) be filled with loving kindness; may I* be well. May I* be peaceful and at ease; and may I* be happy.
- ["Spirit of Life" \(GoogleDrive\)](#) (#123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; music and words by Carolyn McDade, harmony by Grace Lewis-McLaren.) Choral arrangement by Nylea L. Butler-Moore. Video by the UU Virtual Singers of the Unitarian Church of Los Alamos, NM; Nylea Butler-Moore, Music Director; Rick Bolton, AV Engineer. If you use this video, please email Nylea at nyleab@uulosalamos.org. [Pay-what-you-can to the Unitarian Church of Los Alamos.](#)
- ["Woyaya" \(YouTube\)](#) (words & music by Loughty Amoa, Solomon Amarfio, Robert M. Bailey, Roy Bedeau, Francis T. Osei, Whendell K. Richardson, and Mac Tontoh; #1020 in *Singing the Journey*). Created by Paul Thompson (Music Director at the UU Church of the Palouse, Moscow ID). Please make a pay-what-you-can [donation](#).
- Adam and Matt Podd's arrangement of ["My Life Flows on in Endless Song" \("How Can I Keep From Singing"\) \(YouTube\)](#), featuring musicians and singers from Grace Chorale of Brooklyn, First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn, and First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn. (Quaker text; melody by American Baptist minister Robert Wadsworth Lowry; #108 in *Singing the Living Tradition*). Adam's PayPal ID: adamppodd@gmail.com/Venmo: @adamppodd
- ["Called To Love \(YouTube\)"](#) written and arranged by Darrell Courtley and performed by Darrell and his wife, Mary Courtley. This congregational song was inspired by the Eighth Principle. If you use this video, please notify Darrell at atdcourtley@gmail.com. [Pay-what-you-can to the Morristown UU Fellowship.](#)
- ["Lifted in Love \(Vimeo\),"](#) written by Carl Karush and Lea Morris, and performed by Lea Morris. [Pay-what-you-can to Lea.](#)

More Music From the UU World

Please see individual citation preferences/donation opportunities.

From [Sharon Scholl](#) (Please visit her website (<https://freeprintmusic.com/>) for many more compositions and arrangements, including a page devoted to music devoted to [Soul Matters](#)! She would love to hear back from you about any music you download and use.

- [Liberating Love](#)

From UUA.Org:

- Music on love to the tune of My Life Flows on in Endless Song:
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/music/new-love-joyous-ringing>
- Music: Love Break Our Hearts by Jason Shelton
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/music/love-break-our-hearts>
- Music: There is a Love, words by Rebecca Parker, music by Elizabeth Norton
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/music/there-love>
- Music: The Song in Your Heart, by Jason Shelton
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/music/song-your-heart>
- Music: Love One Another, by Jason Shelton
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/music/love-one-another>

Contemporary Music Suggestions - permissions needed

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

- Love Reaches Out, The Sanctuaries in Washington, DC:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvIPa28cVfA&list=PL6B257199CC44C6AB&index=3>
- We Shall Overcome - Pete Seeger
- Love and Freedom - BeBe Winans
- If You Love Somebody, Set them Free - Sting

***Important Note:** the artists listed above generally are the performers of the works and not always/necessarily the songwriters, please do your due diligence in seeking out crediting info. Many of the above songs can be found on JWPepper, MusicNotes.com and the Chords/Tabs for most of the above can be found here:*

[Ultimate Guitar](#)

[Ukulele Chords/Tabs - Free to Transpose](#)

[Chordify](#)

***Another Note About Contemporary Music:** For our small group packets, we put together contemporary music playlists for each month. While these are designed as personal musical meditations on the theme, some of the songs on these playlists could be used in worship.*

You can find the "Liberating Love Playlist" on Spotify [HERE](#) and on YouTube [HERE](#).

Stories For All Ages

A Lamp in Every Corner

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/miracles/session-6/lamp>

This story tells of how a community transformed itself, building a church with the efforts of many individuals and ultimately lighting the new building with glowing flames from candles held by all the people who contributed. This story is one way of understanding how love pulls us to work together and helps us build a foundation.

The River Story

From Tapestry of Faith, Windows and Mirrors

About how liberating love calls us to fight the system, not just the symptoms of a problem.

Video Story: The Parable of the River Video Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNTaISmch0k>
(stop at 2:17)

The Water Bearer's Garden

About how love pulls us toward self-acceptance and reminds us that we have value and are enough even when we are not perfect.

Tellable Tale “The Water Bearers” Written Out in the Introduce It Section of Session D
<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/windows/session5/143528.shtml>

Love by Matt de la Peña

On the many ways we experience the universal bond of love, which carries us from the day we are born throughout the years of our childhood and beyond.

Book: [HERE](#) **Video:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwrA4UHL9_0

The Case for Loving: The Fight for Interracial Marriage by Selina Alko

Allowing liberating all people to love who they love.

Book: [HERE](#) **Read Aloud:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkyPagSI1Rk>

Under the Love Umbrella by Davina Bellv

Using an umbrella as a metaphor for love, acceptance, safety and comfort

Book: [HERE](#) **Read Aloud:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urd8CaIHPLk>

Sermon Seeds

Angles, Ideas & Twists To Get Your Sermon Started!

Don't forget to explore the small group packet for additional sermon seeds. It contains quotes and poems to enhance your sermon, as well as numerous sermon angles in the questions and the spiritual exercises.

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

Liberating Love in Our UUA Shared Values & Covenant Statement

To give this month's theme, Welcome, more context, here is how it is addressed in [our new Article II statement](#):

"Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through ***the spiritual discipline of Love.***"

On Placing Love at Our UU Center

Quote/Reading - Rev Tess Baumberger*

Reflection on the [Article II graphic](#) with love at its center

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

At the center of [this image](#) is love - that heart of Universalism - that eternal and all-conquering force. Around it and from it flows values that express that love.

This love that sits at the center of this image is not sentimental love or romantic love. It is the love we grow in our communities, a deep and abiding love that affirms our worth no matter what we do or don't achieve or believe. This love is a belief in ourselves and in one another that nothing can rip apart. This love affirms our interdependence.

It is a love that says we all deserve to be loved, whether we have been hurt or have hurt others. For some of us, the love at the center of this image includes a divine love that holds us tenderly and tightly. It is a fierce, protective, and liberating love.

It is a hopeful love, a love that inspires people of good will and sacrificial spirit to overcome evil and to make this earth as heavenly as possible – just and equitable, pluralistic, affirming all people of all nations, all races, and all creeds.

Ours is and always has been a heretical faith, a courageous faith, a covenantal faith, and a faith that calls us to work with that all-conquering, liberating love, to make this earth a heaven.

Quote - [Cameron Trimble](#)

Congregations at their best are "schools of love," places where we can be with others who make us more compassionate, generous, peace-filled, and kind.

Article - Love: An essential spiritual and moral value, Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/essential-spiritual-moral-value>

It is this understanding of love that formed one of the most precious gifts Unitarian Universalism has given me: the gift of a religion that teaches that the work of justice is inseparable from a faith rooted in love... It was reinforced by the stories and theology of Unitarian Universalism—that no one is outside the circle of love.

Webpage - UUA 30 Days of Love Campaign

<https://sidewithlove.org/30daysoflove2023>

Reading/Poem - The Path of Love, Rev. Scott Tayler *

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qaW8nYzOd--BMHC98_ijQfKqTwUJUAWnJTdPp6uKu0/edit?usp=sharing

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On The Liberating Love of Universalism (Love Without Limit)

Quote - [Rev. Sara Smalley](#)

Historically, Universalism was the belief no one would go to hell – that there was universal salvation. Love was that powerful – more powerful than death. This freed our Universalist ancestors to stop worrying about the afterlife and instead work to bring heaven to earth. It was up to us to replicate the eternal fractal of the afterlife on earth.

There's a great story about Hosea Ballou, a major theologian of early 19th-century Universalism. He was traveling through the New Hampshire hills with a Baptist preacher, and they were arguing theology as they traveled. At one point, the Baptist looked over and said, "Brother Ballou, if I were a Universalist and feared not the fires of hell, I could hit you over the head, steal your horse and saddle, and ride away, and I'd still go to heaven." Hosea Ballou looked over at him and said, "If you were a Universalist, the idea would never occur to you."

The idea would never occur to you. If you believed to your very core that all were loved, all were worthy, it would never occur to you to hurt another.

Reading/Meditation - God Gave Me a Word, Rev. Amy Petrie Shaw *

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/god-gave-me-word>

[Permission Source](#)

And a Word was hung around my neck to take out to the people standing in the streets...

And the Word was Love...

So I'm taking my Word out into the world.

Love made it clear that it was the Word for the poor and the broken hearted. For the queer boi and the angry girl...

Love was the Word for all of the screwed up and pushed over and too tired and I can't take no more.

Love was the Word for the HIV patient and the man with no papers.

Love was the Word for me and for you, for the saints and the sinners and the scramblers in between...

Quote - Rev. Kathleen McTigue

Fear's pronoun is singular: I've got to watch out for me and mine. Love's pronoun is plural: we're in this together, and together we can grow things that will blossom even in a time of drought.

Quote - [Rev. Gretchen Haley](#)

Universalism, as a religious tradition, started off as a theological claim about life after death. Our religious forebears asserted that there was no way that an all-loving God would damn any of God's own people to eternal punishment and torment. The idea was inconsistent with love in an ultimate sense. Universalism was a claim that whatever destiny any of us is meant for, all of us are meant for.

In the 20th century, this after-life affirmation became instead a claim, and a commitment we make about this life. An affirmation that as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr said, "we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny." Whatever lines we may consciously or subconsciously seek to draw between us and them, enemy and friend, good or bad, worthy or unworthy –there is no escaping or undoing how interconnected we are, how interdependent.

No matter how different or disagreeable, no one is less or more human than any other of us. No one.

The outcome of this theological claim is what King described as the Beloved Community. BeLOVED as in fueled by and held together by the promises of love. Not just any love, but agape love. Whereas other types of love are directed at particular individuals –romantic love, or the love of friends, King described agape as the sort of love that "makes no distinction between a friend and enemy ...it is an overflowing love that is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless and creative...the love of God operating in the human heart...."

King went so far to call it "disinterested love" because it is the sort of love that doesn't care whether it is loved back. It is the love that will "go to any lengths to restore community."

Poem/Reading - To Invoke Love, Rev. Sean Parker Dennison

Found in [Breaking and Blessing](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

To invoke Love is... to consider yourself worthy to be made whole,
willing to encounter Love that will never
let us let each other go.

Quote - Erich Fromm

Love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one "object" of love. If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the rest of his fellow men, his love is not love but a symbiotic attachment, or an enlarged egotism.

Article/Reading - What do we mean when we talk of love?

https://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2008/02/13_love.shtml

"When Keltner talks about love of humanity, he means a community-focused love, one in which Jesus' basic teachings come to life: "The real test," he says, "is giving to people in need who are non-kin." ...Where does the impulse originate to love and care for other people to whom we are unrelated?... Keltner points to the work of Paul Zak, ...whose research indicates that oxytocin "is the biological catalyst of trust... [and thus Keltner] is concerned about America's lack of trust toward its citizens as well as the dearth of brotherly love in our country. "Trust in America - both the government's trust in its citizens and the citizenry's trust of one another - is on the decline, notes Keltner. "If you randomly surveyed people from different countries and asked, 'Do you trust your neighbor?' we're very low on that measure," he says. Countries such as Norway, China, and India - that are thriving economically - have high levels of trust among their citizens. Where there's a trust deficit, he observes, "you sue someone instead of negotiating. If you trust your fellow citizen, you're not pulling the trigger."..."

On Unconditional Love

Quote - Hafiz

Even after all this time,
the sun never says to the earth,
“You owe me.”
Look what happens with a love like that.
It lights the whole sky.

Closing Words - Even When Our Hearts Are Broken, Rebecca Parker *

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/affirmation/even-when-our-hearts-are-broken>
[Permission Source](#)

Even when our hearts are broken
by our own failure.
there is a Universal Love
that has never broken faith with us...

On Our Liberating Encounters with Larger Love

Poem/Reading - Misty, Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Full piece at <https://readalittlepoetry.com/2023/07/12/misty-by-rosemerry-wahtola-trommer/>

And sometimes when I move
at the edge of a greatness—
a lake or a sea or a mountainside...
comes a love so enormous
I can love anyone, anyone,
even myself.

Quote - [Rev. Jen Crow](#)

Love can work its way into improbable and impossible situations. Like water over stone, it has the potential to wear down our suffering, create new pathways of possibility, and support life in inhospitable terrain. Love can't fix every situation, but it does have a way of working on us and opening portals to our closed hearts. Love keeps us company, settling in beside the unlikely good or the unlikely bad that comes our way.

Reading - [T. De Los Reyes](#)

Sometimes when I glance outside the window and see the sun like a giant yolk sitting atop the clouds I can almost understand why it is worth it. When I think of something funny and I start laughing until I'm crying, when I've eaten a good bowl of soup and I feel the warmth inside my body, when the rain falls gently and the fog moves in and the thunder feels more a murmur than a rumble—I think, yes, this will do. And when you call me beautiful and it gives me the sweetest ache, I remember that I do, you know. Love myself, I mean. Because I want to be here. Because I want all this, still.

Quote - Rev. Scott Tayler

Often, we think of *choosing* our social justice or social service commitments. But isn't there also a sense in which they choose us? For instance, we're reading the paper and suddenly a story "breaks our heart." We didn't choose that. It happened to us. It *called* to us. Something clicked and we found ourselves being lured to expand our concern, our love. Somehow, we didn't just feel called to *serve* needs greater than our own; No, suddenly, we *experienced* those needs and pain of others *as our own*.

On the Liberation Found In Knowing We Are Loved

Reading - Meister Eckhart

All day long the little donkey labors, sometimes with heavy loads on her back and sometimes just with worries about the things that bother only donkeys. And worries, as we know, can be more exhausting than physical labor.

Once in a while a kind monk comes to her stable and brings a pear, but more than that, he looks into the donkey's eyes and touches her ears and for a few seconds the donkey is free and even seems to laugh, because love does that. Love frees.

Quote - James Baldwin

Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.

Quote - [Cole Arthur Riley](#)

Find those who tell you Do not be afraid, yet stay close enough to tremble with you. This is a love.

Reflection & Poem - Jan Richardson

Full piece at <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2016/02/11/lent-1-beloved-is-where-we-begin/>

I can tell you
that you will know
the strange graces...
that fly to meet us
bearing comfort
and strength,
that come alongside us
for no other cause
than to lean themselves
toward our ear
and with their
curious insistence
whisper our name:
Beloved.

Quote - James Baldwin

The longer I live, the more deeply I learn that love—whether we call it friendship or family or romance— is the work of mirroring and magnifying each other's light. Gentle work. Steadfast work. Life-saving work in those moments when life and shame and sorrow occlude our own light from our view but there is still a clear-eyed loving person to beam it back. In our best moments, we are that person for another.

Reading/Blessing/Closings Words - [Kate Landis](#)

I want you to know that you are loved beyond your wildest imaginings by the spirit of creation. Every bit of you is holy—even the embarrassing parts, even the thoughts you wouldn't tell your best friend. God is in your every cell, calling you to live a loving, joyful, boisterous life. To go easier on yourself. To accept that you are a blessing. To spread the word that there is no original sin, that we are all glorious gifts to a world that desperately needs us.

On a Love that Liberates Us by Loving Us as We Are

Video - The love that liberates us from our masks, James Finley

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CsoemaNpiE6/?igshid=MTc4MmM1YmI2Ng%3D%3D>

Quote - Nikita Gill

If he truly loves you, he will love you when you are an ocean breeze, but also when you are a summer storm. You were not made to be loved in parts, you were meant to be loved as a whole.

Quote - Marc Ian Barasch

Every now and then, I'll meet an escapee, someone who has broken free of self-centeredness and lit out for the territory of compassion. You've met them, too, those people who seem to emit a steady stream of, for want of a better word, love-vibes. As soon as you come within range, you feel embraced, accepted for who you are. For those of us who suspect that you rarely get something for nothing, such geniality can be discomfiting. Yet it feels so good to be around them. They stand there, radiating photons of goodwill, and despite yourself you beam back, and the world, in a twinkling, changes.

Quote - [Rev. angel Kyodo williams](#)

The way that I think of love most often these days is that love is space. It is developing our own capacity for spaciousness within ourselves to allow others to be as they are — that that is love. And that doesn't mean that we don't have hopes or wishes that things are changed or shifted, but that to come from a place of love is to be in acceptance of what is, even in the face of moving it towards something that is more whole, more just, more spacious for all of us. It's bigness. It's allowance. It's flexibility.

On the Liberating Power of Viewing Love as a Choice

Poem - On A Day When The World Has Its Way With Me, Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Full poem at <https://www.afirstsip.com/2018/11/on-day-when-world-has-its-way-with-me.html>

it is apparent that only love
will save us. Not in the grandiose
abstract way, but in the alarming
specific way. As in forgiveness, now.
As in choosing to hug instead
of fighting back. As in taking
three deep breaths before saying
something we regret. It saves us...
but only if we save it first by
choosing it, now in this moment...

Quote - bell hooks

The moment we choose to love, we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom.

Quote - M. Scott Peck

Love is the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth.

Quote - [Ineye Komonibo](#)

In the early chapters of *All About Love*, bell hooks repeatedly cites psychiatrist M. Scott Peck's definition of love, which hinges on the idea on our will to nurture each other's growth. "Love is an act of will — namely, both an intention and an action," Peck explains. "Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love." That concept alone seems so straightforward, but in practice, it's much harder to execute. We tend to see love as an urge or an innate desire that's activated against our will, but in reality, it's something we do have power over.

Quote - [Morgan](#)

When you think of love as an action word, you see that it can coexist with emotions we usually think of as negative. You begin to see the merit in getting angry when people you love are mistreated. When you understand the need for liberation, you begin to see love as what you do for the benefit of your loved ones, in addition to how you interact with them. Being a loving person means you see the potential good in humanity and you want to see the best version of humanity emerge. Being loving means you love all people despite the individual harm they've done and instead look to the improvement of life for everyone.

Reading - [Waiting](#). Rev. Marta Valentin

Found in [A Long Time Blooming](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" book.

Step into the center
Come in from the margins...
You and I
Make the circle
If we choose to...

The Liberation Found in Self-Love

Quote - [Yolo Akili Robinson](#)

There is nothing wrong with me. I have patterns to unlearn, new behaviors to embody & wounds to heal. But there is nothing wrong with the core of me & who I am. I am unlearning generations of harm and remembering love. *It takes time.*

Quote - Parker Palmer

Self-care (and self-love) is never a selfish act — it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to our true self and give it the care it requires, we do so not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch.

Quote - Marianne Williamson

Love is what we are born with. Fear is what we learn. The spiritual journey is the unlearning of fear and prejudices and the acceptance of love back in our hearts.

Quote - Bernie Siegel

Self-love means not letting the opinions, preferences, needs, and desires of others dictate your life

Quote - Shakti Gawain

My willingness to be intimate with my own deep feelings creates the space for intimacy with another. As I learn to love myself, I receive the love I desire from others.

Quote - Louise L. Hay

Loving ourselves works miracles in our lives.

Quote - Stephen Chbosky

We accept the love we think we deserve.

Quote - Maya Angelou

I do not trust people who don't love themselves and yet tell me, "I love you." There is an African saying which is: "Be careful when a naked person offers you a shirt."

Quote - [bell hooks](#)

One of the best guides to how to be self-loving is to give ourselves the love we are often dreaming about receiving from others. There was a time when I felt lousy about my over-forty body, saw myself as too fat, too this, or too that. Yet I fantasized about finding a lover who would give me the gift of being loved as I am. It is silly, isn't it, that I would dream of someone else offering to me the acceptance and affirmation I was withholding from myself. This was a moment when the maxim "You can never love anybody if you are unable to love yourself" made clear sense. And I add, "Do not expect to receive the love from someone else you do not give yourself."

Quote - Can I Love This Too? Rev. Kate Landis

an excerpt from [Stubborn Grace: Faith, Mental Illness, and Demanding a Blessing](#)

The Dalai Lama says that when we make a mistake, we need to ask, "Can I love this too?" Can I love all of me, even the peevish parts? Even the insecure bits, the anxious bits? Because I can love my niece even when she sticks her hand in my cup of coffee and gets mad and hollers at me for it. It's easy. I don't expect her to be perfect. Can I extend that understanding to myself? Can I love my anxiety too? My depression too? My desire to seem like I have my shit together even when I'm freaking out? Can I love all of me?

Quote - Macrina Wiederkehr

I will believe the truth about myself no matter how beautiful it is.

Poem - Rev. Theresa Soto *

Full piece found at <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/blog-roundup-2018-10-05>
[Permission Source](#)

I need you to know
that there is nothing
wrong with you...
You were never meant... to spend your joy
frantically soothing yourself
in order to tend wounds
of being constantly
dehumanized. I need you
to know that your sense
of injury and anger is not
overdeveloped...

Quote – [Suleika Jaouadr](#)

Whenever I hear someone I love being hard on themselves—whether referring to something they did, how they look, or a habit they can't kick—I have a little rejoinder. I always say, "Don't talk about my friend like that."

TED Talk - The benefits of not being a jerk to yourself, Dan Harris

https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_harris_the_benefits_of_not_being_a_jerk_to_yourself

A clever, fresh and Buddhist take on loving yourself. Great sermon fodder!

Quote - [Rupi Kaur](#)

How you love yourself is how you teach others to love you.

Quote - [unknown author](#)

You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere.

Reading - [T. De Los Reyes](#)

Sometimes when I glance outside the window and see the sun like a giant yolk sitting atop the clouds I can almost understand why it is worth it. When I think of something funny and I start laughing until I'm crying, when I've eaten a good bowl of soup and I feel the warmth inside my body, when the rain falls gently and the fog moves in and the thunder feels more a murmur than a rumble—I think, yes, this will do. And when you call me beautiful and it gives me the sweetest ache, I remember that I do, you know. Love myself, I mean. Because I want to be here. Because I want all this, still.

Poem - "A Love Letter to My Voice" (a poem about working through gender dysphoria)*

Rev. Juniper Meadows

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

I do not sound "like a man";
My voice is a tempest in tenor,
Winds blowing so hard
they make the bells ring.
Some soft starlight skipping
to sunbeams shining on
Everything.
I cannot stay small,
I cannot Embody the bad story
Of how women are to shrink;
The moon in Her perigee
full of all the light she has been given;
Give me a big voice like that
So I can bounce it all back,

Slow and loud.
I do not sound like anything,
I chew through the vocal chords
of the advertising agency,
Put all my bad faith that passing
as the path to safety on the pyre;
Let my voice sound like that fire,
Smoke and mirrors,
Silence and symphony;
This is my gift to me,
to Love the sound of my own voice
like it's a gift from God themself,
and speak it's million colors.

Quote & Post – [Elizabeth Gilbert](#)

To condemn yourself as unlovable is to swallow a terrible lie. And to believe that you must earn love through perfectionism, or that you must seek love from others in order to become whole, turns all of us into hungry beggars. I believe there is an ocean of warm, affectionate, and outrageously unconditional love available to us all — and that it is conveniently accessible from within. I don't believe anyone is excluded from this ocean of love; it is only a question of learning how to hear it, how to feel it, how to trust it.

Quote - Henri Nouwen

When Jesus talks about faith,
he means first of all to
trust unreservedly that
you are loved,
so that you can
abandon every
false way of obtaining it.

Meditation - Let Love Go, Jeff Foster

Forget about 'transcending' the body.
Love it instead!
Let go of the idea of 'letting go'.
Instead, let love go deep into the tender places, the parts that ache...
So stop trying to love yourself;
simply be the Self that loves.

Guided Meditation - Rev. Anne Mason *

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Take a moment to center your body. Breathe. Listen to what is floating up into your mind. Is it joyful? Is it painful? Are you frustrated, anxious, tired? See if you can identify for yourself what emotions you are carrying.

And now take just a moment to summon a picture of yourself as a young child. Are you running with others? Gathering flowers? Blowing bubbles? Having a temper tantrum?

Can you see your own sweet childish face?

Now take a moment, and speak gently to this young child. Say 'sweetheart' I see you. I remember you. I still love you.

Now take another moment and summon up the emotions and struggles you identified earlier. Speak gently to your inner self. Say 'sweetheart' I see you. I remember you. I still love you.

Take a deep breath. When you breathe in, you breathe in peace. When you breathe out, you breathe out love. Breathe in Breathe out. Peace. Love. Peace. Love.

As we return to this present moment I invite you to feel the presence of each person in the room or online together. We are in this together, my friends. Let us share our peace and our love as we drift together on this beautiful blue green earth.

Closing Words - [Omid Safi](#)

Go, be your best self. Be your most beautiful self. Be your luminous self. Be your most generous self. Be your most radically loving self. And when you fall short of that — as we all do, as we all have — bounce back and return. And return again. There is a grace in this returning to your luminous self.

On the Pull (and Push) of Love

Quote - [Richard Rohr](#)

Love, which might be called the attraction of all things toward all things, is a universal language and underlying energy that keeps showing itself despite our best efforts to resist it... we all know positive flow when we sense it, and we all know resistance and coldness when we feel it... Have you ever deliberately befriended a person standing alone at a party? Perhaps someone who was in no way attractive to you, or with whom you shared no common interests? That would be a small but real example of divine love flowing. Don't dismiss it as insignificant. That is how the flow starts.

Quote - [Richard Rohr](#)

It seems to me Christianity has put major emphasis on us loving God. Yet the mystics consistently describe an overwhelming experience of how God loves us! In their writings, God is the initiator, God is the doer, God is the one who seduces us. It's all about God's initiative. Then we certainly want to love back the way we have been loved... I want to love back the way I have been loved. But it's not like I've got to prove my love for God by doing things. *My job is simply to complete the circuit!*

Mystics experience a full-bodied embrace and acceptance by Divine Love, and then spend their lives trying to verbalize and embody it. They invariably find ways to give that love back through forms of service and worship, but it's never earning the love—*it's always returning the love.*

Scripture - 1 John 4:19

We love because God first loved us.

The Demands of Liberating Love

Quote - Jesus, from John 21:17

If you love me, feed my sheep

Quote - Austin Channing Brown

I am confused by people who say they love us but are never upset when we are treated unjustly. The two simply cannot co-exist. A love that's aloof isn't a love I have any use for. I need a love that is troubled by injustice.

Prayer/Reading - Power Prayer, Rev. Becky Brooks *

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

Spirit of Life, I have witnessed a loud love, an out-loud love,
that challenges me...It doesn't play nice...
This love demands...

Quote - Eric Fromm

Love isn't something natural. Rather it requires discipline, concentration, patience, faith, and the overcoming of narcissism. It isn't a feeling, it is a practice.

Religious Perspective - A Muslim Perspective: The Path of Radical Love: Linking Love & Justice, Dr. Omid Safi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VKzKoC Maak>

Be sure to watch Dr. Safi's intro to his talk which begins at minute 10:30!

Quotes - [Valarie Kaur](#)

Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger is the force that protects that which is loved.

I always thought anger and rage was the opposite of love. No, your rage and anger is what you harness to protect that which you love.

On Love Liberating Us from Narrow Views of Opponents & Enemies

Video - How to Look with Love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jraZdnk9Mk>

On love pushing us push to look at the conditions behind bad behavior on loving the wrong doer

Quote - [Rev Darcey Laine](#)

There's such a strong drive in us to think of our enemies as monsters. There's a kind of rush that courses through us when we boo that other football team, when we make coarse jokes about the leader of the other political party. Don Bisson argues that this is partly because of the sense of unity this gives us – us against the enemy. We strengthen our own sense of identity when we know who we are not, who we are against. When we make the

other guy into an enemy, part of the reason that feels so good is because we finally have someone to carry that part of our own shadow. It makes us feel clean and righteous to externalize our shadow onto the other. If a racist looks like all those images of white men holding tiki torches shouting hateful things, we can all focus on how to stop “them” and no means of confronting or attacking them is immoral. If they are the enemy, I don't have to struggle with my own shadow, my own white privilege, my own participation in white supremacy culture.

Quote - [Valarie Kaur](#)

It is very tempting to think about our opponents as evil, but I have come to believe that there is no such thing as monsters in this world, only people who are wounded, people whose insecurity or pain or blindness or greed make them able to be complicit in systems of oppression that cause them to pull the trigger or cast the vote or pass the policy aimed at us. But if we listen to even their stories - beneath the slogans and beneath the sound bites - we begin to hear their pain and understand that they too are wounded. Of course, our wounds are not morally equivalent, but once we begin to see the suffering of even our opponents, we can listen to their stories to gather information for how to change the cultures and the institutions of power that allow them to hurt us.

Book - [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#), Valarie Kaur

Sermon - [Loving Our Enemies: Nobody Said It Would Be Easy](#) (MLK Day Connection)

<https://www.uubedford.org/loving-our-enemies-nobody-said-it-would-be-easy/>

On Martin Luther King Jr's Call to Connect Love and Power

Quote - [Martin Luther King Jr.](#)

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

Quote - [Paul Tillich](#)

Power is the drive of everything living to realize itself, with increasing intensity and extensity. Love is the drive towards unity of the separated.

TED Talk - [Power and Love: Adam Kahane](#)

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

Book Review - Power and Love by Adam Kahane

<https://medium.com/@chrisjriedy/power-and-love-by-adam-kahane-f2c2b5793877>

Quote - [bell hooks](#)

Love [is] the antithesis of the will to dominate and subjugate

Quote - [bell hooks](#)

When we understand love as the will to nurture our own and another's spiritual growth, it becomes clear that we cannot claim to love if we are hurtful and abusive. Love and abuse cannot coexist.

Quote - Sandra Cisneros, on why she writes and speaks out against oppression

We do this because the world we live in is a house on fire and the people we love are burning.

Quote - [Rev. Julie Taylor](#)

...Love looks different when we relate to systems.

Love looks different in the face of injustice.

It is then that

Love is resistant

Love is defiant...

Love is challenging — because none of us is free until all of us are free...

Quote - [Austin Channing Brown](#)

To practice love is to disrupt the status quo which is masquerading as peace.

Related Liberating Love Resources from Soul Matters

Previous Packets on *Beloved Community!*

Three years ago during our 2020-21 season, one of our monthly themes was Beloved Community. So we have worship, small group and RE packets on Beloved Community, as well youth and middle school packets. If you weren't a subscriber during that church year, you can purchase those packets on our "Individual Packets Page" on our website: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/individual-packets>. To help with tight budgets, we've discounted all of those packets.

Check Out Our Specialty Worship Packet on *Honoring Martin Luther King Jr.*

In addition to our "regular" monthly themed packets, we make specialty packets on a number of special Sundays and observances. You can check out all of those specialty packets on our website at:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/special-worship-packets.html>.

*For our theme of Liberating Love, you might want to check out the specialty packet: **Honoring Martin Luther King Jr.** https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/store/p338/Honoring_Martin_Luther_King%2C_Jr.html*

Recommended Sermons

Notes about 2024-25 sermon recommendations:

- **We mostly list written scripts:** In order not to undermine UU preachers who depend on live and online guest preaching income for their livelihood, we mainly focus on sharing sermon texts (and sometimes audio clips), but not videos. When, on occasion, we include a video sermon, it will be from congregations that share those as part of their mission.
- **Permissions Secured:** All of the sermons below have received permission for your online use. Unless otherwise noted, they can be used for both live streaming and recorded services that are posted on YouTube or a podcast. **However, to be extra cautious and in good relationship, we ask that you reach out to the minister to let them know you are planning to use their sermon, also asking if they have any particular requests or guidance for how to do that.**
- **An Important Note About Editing:** If you want to make changes to the sermon for brevity or context, **you need to reach out to the preachers directly for such editing permission.** Contact information of each of the referenced preachers is listed after the list of sermons.
- **Note about hiring preachers for online guest preaching:** All of the texts listed below can be used and *read* in your worship services for free. And, in some cases, the preachers of these sermons are glad to be hired to guest preach and give these sermons at your congregation either by zooming into your service or sending you a video recording of them giving it. When this is the case, there is a note under the sermon title/link with the preacher's contact information.

Putting Love at the Center

Rev. Dana Worsnop

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1diX3zfFhI_vlBrzLI1T1PbRTGE1FdPNP/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

"Putting, keeping, holding love at the center of our lives, of our faith, in the world. That is our human quest. And it's really hard..."

I really believe that the love available in the world is ample, even abundant. Possible, even probable. Yet, anyone who has loved – which is all of us – knows it's so much more complicated..."

Note: Rev. Worsnop is available to offer this sermon as a recording or by Zooming into your service for a fee. If you are interested, you can contact Rev. Worsnop at rev.dana.worsnop@uuventura.org.

Fractals, Universalism, and Liberating Love

Rev. Sara Smalley

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KzyvPHfwt9NZL3IDDxrHJZ3Bxz9O5jBm/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true>

"Love, real love, transformational love, truly Universalist love, means we change fractal patterns. This is dangerous to the status quo, in our lives, in our communities, in our nation, in our world..."

A Listening Heart

Rev. Amy Russell

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ji9sjKTjt6SppsE1RJJk_0-5_V0vdSON/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

"Learning how to listen is learning how to love. What a wonderful idea. That if we learned how to listen without an agenda, without preparing ourselves for our response back, without judgment, we could love better. How many times in our families do we really do this? Sit down and listen to our partner, to our children? Or to a friend who might really need it?..."

Universal-ish

Lóre Stevens

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1T1mViKZuiF0eG2eA26rni1l1B4x6OOb8/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true>

"That illusion of separateness hurts on the deepest, most divine level in ourselves. Yet when we take actions that are aligned with love and justice, we remember who and what we truly are: facets of the Holy Oneness. When we side with love, we go beyond inclusion and work for justice. We remember that our liberation is bound up together and that we aren't free until we're all free..."

More Love

Rev Darcey Laine

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SjyDWCft2_lYm87M3Z7RC_Vy0VXKlyfy/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

"Love is both extremely simple, and profoundly challenging. I'm not talking here about affection, or attraction... I'm talking here about something deeper than those things- a love that lays like a bedrock under everything else... I invite you to consider -- where in your life you have seen that or felt a love that is deeper than affection, So dependable that it may sometimes be too quiet and still to draw our attention. Even when it is unnoticed it is there..."

Love Your Enemy

Rev Darcey Laine

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MPqB1d8_auSft7oRe3UnbDDsAlhu3_FW/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

"The culture around us shows us, day after day, what happens when we lash out at our enemies with hate. What happens when we love only our neighbors and hate our enemies. Perhaps it's time to break that vicious cycle of retribution and violence, and turn instead to the slow, vulnerable work of cultivating compassion, of weaving and re-weaving connections..."

Love 2.0

Rev. Kaaren Anderson

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XBnhtRCIvfMMJtrRhJ1kYACFYJOHkch_/edit?usp=share_link&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

"I want you to remember that the opposite of love is not hate. It's isolation..."

Note: Rev. Anderson is available to offer this sermon as a recording or by Zooming into your service for a fee. If you are interested, you can contact Rev. Anderson at solveigstudio@gmail.com or Revkaaren@uufvb.org

Featured Preacher Bios & Contact Information

- Rev. Dana Worsnop: <https://unitarianuniversalistventura.org/about-uu-ventura/minister-and-staff/>
- Rev. Sara Smalley: <https://uunorthfield.org/pages/meet-our-minister-staff>
- Rev. Amy Russell: <https://richmondUU.org/about/staff/>
- Lore Stevens: <https://www.fuuf.org/newpage1c158ca8>
- Rev Darcey Laine: <https://www.uucortland.org/about-us/our-minister/> & darceylaine@earthlink.net
- Rev. Kaaren Anderson: uurevkaaren@gmail.com & <https://uufvb.org/colibri-wp/about/staff>

Closing Words

May the love that overcomes all differences *

Frederick E Gillis

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/5990.shtml>

[Permission Source](#)

May the love that overcomes all differences,
that reconciles all who are separated,
Be in us and among us...

In the end it won't matter *

John C Morgan

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/6012.shtml>

[Permission Source](#)

In the end it won't matter how much we have...
how much we know...
but how deeply we love

Now may the love of truth guide you *

Jane E Mauldin

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/5992.shtml>

[Permission Source](#)

Now may... the warmth of love hold you,
and the spirit of peace bless you...

There is a love... *

Rev. Rebecca Parker

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation-blessing/there-love>

[Permission Source](#)

There is a love
Holding me...
Holding you...
Holding all...

Closing Words - Even When Our Hearts Are Broken *

Rev. Rebecca Parker

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/affirmation/even-when-our-hearts-are-broken>

[Permission Source](#)

Even when our hearts are broken
by our own failure.
there is a Universal Love
that has never broken faith with us...

Closing Words

[Omid Safi](#)

Go, be your best self. Be your most beautiful self. Be your luminous self. Be your most generous self. Be your most radically loving self. And when you fall short of that — as we all do, as we all have — bounce back and return. And return again. There is a grace in this returning to your luminous self.

A love that seeps into everything...

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

I wish you the peace
that comes when we trust ourselves
to meet whatever life brings.
I wish you love beyond
happy endings—
the kind of love
that seeps into everything
no matter where the story goes.

Benediction *

Rev. Anne Mason

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

If here you have found stillness, create a deep well in your own life to protect and preserve it.
If here you have found peace, let it be a beacon for those who need to find it as well.
If here you have found love, allow it to blossom in your life.
If here you have found courage, offer this as a gift to someone who needs it as much as you do.
May your days ahead be blessed with the gifts of stillness, peace, love and courage.

A New Year's Blessing & Closing Words - May you fall madly in love

[Rachelle Lamb](#)

May you fall madly in love this year ... in love with someone who unhinges your tired trajectory, in love with a spouse of several years who might be aching for lightning, in love with demanding children and crazy relatives ... in love with the particular pedigree of genius insanity that has perhaps claimed you in spite of your reluctance ... and certainly in love with an animal, a cloud, a redwood, the wild ... these at least once a day. May you fall in love with this fragile jewel of a world, with hard work, real learning, just causes, petitioning and prayers. May you fall in love with wonder itself, with the grand mystery, with all that feeds you in order that you may live ... and with the responsibility that that confers. May you fall in love with heartbreak and seeing how it's stitched into everything. May you fall in love with the natural order of things and with tears, tenderness and humility. May this be a magnificent year for you. May you fall deeply, madly, hopelessly, inextinguishably in love.



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