



UUW Reads: Creating Meaning 4

Session 4: Creating a Ritual

Email to Participants:

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your thoughtful work connecting pluralism with the symbolism of the chalice. For the next gathering we will be creating a ritual by using a stone to symbolize the importance of connecting our spiritual lives with nature as we explore the proposed Article II value of interdependence:

“Interdependence. We honor the interdependent web of all existence. We covenant to cherish Earth and all beings by creating and nurturing relationships of care and respect. With humility and reverence, we acknowledge our place in the great web of life, and we work to repair harm and damaged relationships.”

We will gather on [Date/Time] for Session 4: Creating Ritual.

[Use this paragraph for those gathering online. Otherwise gather these materials as the facilitator.]

- An index card and markers for adding to your altar deck of cards.

- A stone and permanent markers or paint
- Your journal

[Use this sentence instead of the previous paragraph if you are gathering the materials and meeting in person.]

Please bring a journal to our meeting.

If you can find the time, read about or watch any of these videos on honoring our earth to prepare for our discussion.

- [“Bring Us Close to the Earth”](#) by Lyn Cox
- [“Fire Meditation”](#) (start at 1 min to 3 min 30 min) and “Meditation” (start at by Rev. Mariela Perez-Simons from “Get Rooted, Get Ready” by Rev. Earth Day Worship Service
- [“Blue Boat Home”](#) by Peter Mayer

Before we meet, spend a few minutes reflecting and/or journaling on the following questions. You will be invited to share some of this reflection with the group.

- What are you carrying in your heart today?
- Where do you find grounding in your life?
- What does interdependence mean to you?

As we gather for the second half of our sessions together, we will consider what it means to be a religious community that honors our connection to the earth and to each other.

With anticipation,

Your name and contact information.

Chalice Lighting (5 min)

Read the chalice lighting below aloud, or invite a volunteer to do so, as someone lights the chalice.

Come We Now Out of the Darkness

a "forest" of red and orange paper star lanterns in the dark

Come we now out of the darkness of our unknowing

and the dusk of our dreaming;

Come we now from far places.

Come we now into the twilight of our awakening
and the reflection of our gathering.

Come we now all together.

We bring, unilluminated, our dark caves of doubting;

We seek, unbedazzled, the clear light of understanding.

May the sparks of our joining kindle our resolve,

brighten our spirits, reflect our love,

and unshadow our days.

Come we now; enter the dawning.

by Annie Foerster

Please join me in [2 or 3] minutes of centering silence or [grounding music](#). (Note this is over an hour long so fade the music at 2-3 minutes).

Check In (15 min)

Read the instructions below out loud (and paste them in the chat if you are online).

Please share your name and pronouns before briefly responding to this question: What do you do regularly that gives you a peaceful feeling? Just take a turn when you are ready and if you do not feel like sharing, you may pass.

Once everyone has shared, review the group covenant. Ask participants if there is anything they would like to change or add. Discuss anything that comes up in the covenant. Then, ask the group to show that they reaffirm the covenant by giving a thumbs up.

Centering Activity: Stone Ritual (25 min)

Say: For our fourth week we are considering the stone, a symbol of grounding that comes from nature and reminds us of both our center and our connection to the web of life. The stone is often placed on an altar to help us set down a heavy emotion or problem we've been carrying. Or it can be balanced on other stones for a tangible reminder that one depends on the other. Today we will be creating a symbol, playing a cooperative game, and practicing a ritual with our stones.

Share these two quotes by reading aloud, and/or sharing your screen and posting in the chat. Then, invite sharing about this week's journal questions.

“Interdependence. We honor the interdependent web of all existence. We covenant to cherish Earth and all beings by creating and nurturing relationships of care and respect. With humility and reverence, we acknowledge our place in the great web of life, and we work to repair harm and damaged relationships.”

from proposed Article II

“Waiting with slow breaths,

Listening for the very stones to cry out

With their rocky stories of

Tectonic plates meeting and parting meeting

Their mineral memories of

Hadean days, molten rocks flowing and joining

Their ancient legends of

Stars born out of the collapse of other stars

Help us to re-member.

Help us to piece together

Our one-ness with matter,

Our one-ness that matters.”

-“Bring Us Close to the Earth” by Lyn Cox

This week’s journal questions:

- What are you carrying in your heart today?
- Where do you find grounding in your life?
- What does interdependence mean to you?

Creative Play: Grounding Stones (15 min)

Invite everyone to gather their materials for this session: A blank index card, a stone and permanent markers/paint. Tell the group that they will make a stone for their personal altar. Read the italicized instructions out loud (and paste them in the chat).

Say: Some people carry a stone to represent something in their lives. It becomes a ritual to deposit it in a pocket, or felt during the day or night. The stone can symbolize something important for the carrier.

Today, we are going to create a stone that symbolizes the feelings that we carry with us. Think of a feeling that you want to carry with you every day. Love? Peacefulness? Calmness? What colors, shapes, words, and images would you like to have on a stone for this purpose? Plan and decorate a stone on your card. Decorate an actual stone as well, to carry with you. If you don't have a stone now, use your index card to guide you later in recreating the symbol onto your stone.

Consider playing your Community Playlist while the group works, and/or holding casual conversation about their stones or what those stones might represent today. If time and interest allow, invite participants to share their finished stone cards or stones with the group.

Creative Play: Comparing UU Logos (15 min)

Share this [website page of UU logos or print it out in color](#). Choose two logos next to one another so you can highlight them on the screen. Ask what is similar and what is different between the two logos. Allow for exploration and making some generalizations about color, shapes, etc. Invite conversation about what they find.

If time permits, play “[One Word Story](#)” by choosing a stone that was not chosen and an emotion that the group chooses. Then tell them they are going to bring the stone to life to tell a story about how the stone spends its day as a Unitarian Universalist by adding just one word at a time. If you are online, invite each person to also type their word after they share it.

Ritual: Grounding (10 min)

Invite everyone to hold their decorated stone or card in their hand.

Say: (And paste them in the chat for those online).

Feel the weight of the stone (card) in your hand. Notice the bumps and colors of your stone. Just as a stone has weight and unique attributes, the feelings we hold have weight, with the particulars of the circumstances and who we are providing the unique attributes in this moment.

For this grounding ritual, please share what you are carrying in your heart today, recognizing the weight of our feelings as well as how the bumps, smooth and rough parts all contribute to the experience. You may “pass” if you don't feel like sharing. After you share, you may add your stone to your altar.

If appropriate, give a time limit for each sharing. Go first or invite a volunteer to go first to model how the characteristics of a stone can help us feel deeply, which can lead to feeling grounded. When everyone has shared or passed, thank everyone for sharing.

Closing (5 min)

Close with this check out prompt: Share one or two sentences about what you are taking from this session out into your everyday life and where you will keep your stone.