



Soulful Home

Finding the Sacred in
Our Everyday Spaces

March 2022
Renewing Faith

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The Welcome Mat

What Does it Mean to be a Family Renewing Faith?

Do you remember [this part](#) of Amanda Gorman’s poem, from President Joe Biden’s inauguration?

For there is always light
If only we’re brave enough to see it
If only we’re brave enough to be it

This quote resonated with many, many people in America, and indeed, all over the world. And I think it has special meaning to us as Unitarian Universalists. Culturally, and theologically, we UUs are more apt to think of faith not as being based on unquestioned belief, but rather on our direct observations that the world becomes better when people make it so. One important reason we learn, sing, serve, worship, and act in the world together as a people is that we are endeavoring to become a people worth having faith in. Another way to say this might be that we hope to be a beacon, a light, that helps goodness gather.

Your relationship with your faith community might feel a little more tenuous than usual these days. Perhaps your faith in yourself feels thin in places. Your faith in your fellow residents, maybe even all of humanity, might be a little worse for the wear, too. We’ve all been there, and many of us are right there, right now.

This month, as a Soul Matters sharing circle of families, we’re bringing people to mind and heart who have helped us renew our faith in the past, and whose memory and example may have that power for us still. Our entire treasure hunt in Around the Neighborhood is designed to add names and observations to this wealth of worthiness, sending us on a daily search for kindnesses. And our monthly mantra has a DIY element to it, as we find lyrics—UU or otherwise—that we can recite when we need a little faith boost. And because renewing faith is such a big task in our current moment, our On the Porch section has a choice of two special activities to help you and your trusted friend or conversation partner to go together to that wide-open, vulnerable heart-space where faith lives.

May that be a journey that all of our families make this month!

Teresa, on behalf of the Soul Matters team



At the Table

Exploring Renewing Faith Through Discussions

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

Introducing the Activity

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

Discussion Questions

1. Who can you really count on in your life, people who you know will be there for you no matter what?
2. Who in your life makes you feel better about the world?
3. What evidence do you see that the earth heals itself, given the chance?
4. When's the last time you said to yourself, "I can do this!"
5. What's something you would not have believed until you saw it for yourself, in person?
6. What kinds of things help you to feel less discouraged?
7. When you're feeling bad about something, what usually makes you feel OK again? (For example, some people might just need a little time, some people need a rest or a reading break, others some cuddle time, etc.)
8. What's something you started, or tried, before you had any idea whether or not it would work?
9. Has a friend ever let you down? What did you do to renew your faith in them?

Return to the Discussion Throughout the Week

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



Around the Neighborhood

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

Treasure Hunt for Renewing Faith

This month's treasure hunt is a little family competition. You are all going to be looking for acts of kindness or helping, the kinds of interactions between people in your neighborhood that renew our faith in humanity's goodness and potential.

Once a day, for a whole week, you'll all come together and tell one another about this act of goodness that you observed. For each one, the family member gets a point. At the end of the week, the family member who was able to report the best acts, kind words, or helpful contributions that they observed others make...wins! (Of course, you don't have to make this a competition. Competition is energizing and fun for some families, others not.)

You might keep track of your observations by each claiming a color, then dropping your color of glass pebbles into a jar or marking colored dots on a wall calendar. In making your search visible in your family all month, you will be able to reflect on all the many reasons you have for renewing your faith in your community's potential.



From the Mailbox

Our literal mailboxes connect us to the wide world outside, sometimes with messages asking things from us (a donation letter or flyer encouraging us to vote), sometimes with messages offering us gifts (a letter from a friend or a special delivery). Our “From the Mailbox” section applies this metaphor to today’s call for families to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy culture. And so, we open and accept these “invitations” to join those wise leaders and organizations who are co-creating an anti-racist future.

Peace, Salam, Shalom... Renewing Faith Through Song

In [this video](#), linked from Northwoods UU Church in Texas, the two members of the band Emma’s Revolution—Pat Humphries and Sandy O—talk about why they recorded the song, [Peace, Salam, Shalom](#). The song has had, and continues to have, a very special life, as described [here](#) by Pat and Sandy. Our inclusion of it in this section is because the song works on us as anti-racist families in two ways:

- One, the chorus of this wonderfully catchy song gets stuck in our heads, and acts like a mantra to help us restore to a state of peace. It’s the best kind of earworm!
- And two, the song is about renewing faith in the possibility of peace, especially among those who speak English, Hebrew, and Arabic. We recognize that Black Muslims in America, who comprise about 25% of the total Muslim population, face compounded discrimination—racial and religious—and their experience matters.

Invitation: Listen to the song a few times. Sing and play along with it. Then, learn more about the [experience of Black Muslims](#) from the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. Who in your circle needs to see this information? How can you best share it? Call a friend and brainstorm ways to act on what you learn here, anything from attending a service at a mosque in your community to joining a local, multifaith effort of mutual concern.

Renewing Faith with Dogs: Pawsitivity and Supporting Black Veterans

The rhetorical question goes, “What did we do to deserve dogs?” The special bond that dogs offer to humans is an endless source of faith that there is goodness and love in the universe. There are many groups providing service dogs to people in need, among them, veterans who are disabled. [Pawsitivity](#) is a Minnesota-based organization whose mission includes a special commitment to diversity, and namely, “training service dogs for Black U.S. military veterans.” According to a 2014 study by the Veterans Administration, minority veterans are four times less likely to use veteran health benefits as compared to white veterans, meaning they are not getting the health and wellness services they are entitled to. Service dogs have been proven to improve mental, emotional, and physical health, and could improve the quality of life for Black veterans who want them.

The invitation: Consider donating to this organization, doing a special ask at your congregation for a church-wide contribution, or both. If there is a group in your area that supports Black veterans in other ways, call them and see what kind of support would be most impactful in your community.



At Play

Playing Games with Renewing Faith

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

Option A: Name that Puppy

We know of few better ways to quickly and effectively renew one's faith in the power of love than spending some time with puppies! The premise of [Name that Puppy](#) is simple: a chooser draws a puppy's name from the pile, and the other players try to find the puppy in their hand who best matches that name, hoping the chooser will select theirs as the best match. If you know the game [Apples to Apples](#), this is in the same genre.

The game is simple and sweet, and although it says all-ages, it tends to work best for slightly younger crowds, elementary aged and below. Pre-readers can easily be brought along, too. That said, older kids will definitely be drawn in enough to play two or three rounds, so time your first offering of this game for when everyone is together!

Has your family ever considered fostering a pet? If it's possible in your circumstances, that could be a very special follow-up to this night of fun!

Option B: "Starting Over" Beach Ball Game

For this game, you need a blow-up beach ball for each pair of people in the family.

Set up a course around your house—maybe it's down the hall, into the bedroom, out again, and back to the front door. Or maybe you play this game outside and choose a path there. The goal is to move the beachball together through this course without using your hands and without dropping it. You might be back-to-back with the beach ball between you, or hip to hip, or front-to-front, etc. Your unique configurations will determine which arrangement works best. Each time you drop the ball or accidentally use your hands, you must go back to the beginning and try again.

If you want to make the game competitive, see which pair of people gets the job done first. If you want to keep it cooperative, just focus on everyone getting it successfully.

In light of our monthly theme of renewing faith, this game reminds us, by virtue of almost guaranteed do-overs (and -overs, and -overs!) that making mistakes, learning from them, and beginning again is how we build and rebuild faith in ourselves and in our support circle.



On the Message Board

A Monthly Reminder

The On the Message Board section lifts up a theme-related mantra, graphic, quote, or gesture for your family to carry with them throughout the month. Think of these “family sayings” or “family signs” as tools for the journey, reminders that help us refocus and steady ourselves and our kids as we navigate through life’s challenges and opportunities. Each month, write this mantra on your family message board, or on a sticky note to put on your bathroom mirror, or the fridge. Make it part of your routine to share the mantra each morning so that it becomes something you all carry with you throughout the day.

March’s Mantra

March’s message board is going to take a little hunting around from you. Your job this month is to find a song that resonates with everyone in the family, and to copy down the lyrics to the chorus (or a favorite stanza) to carry with you this month when you need a little boost of faith. Music, as we know—because we can feel it—reaches us on a different plane than any other type of communication. Use the power of music to amplify this month’s message about renewing faith and enjoy your search for the perfect words!

Of course, we always have the Soul Matters [Spotify](#) or [YouTube](#) playlist to get you off to a good start. Here are a few teasers that you might listen out for if you decide to give that list a go:

The light is on your side.
...a change is gonna come.
...life can be beautiful if you let it be.
There will be better days.

There are also several playlists of UU hymns on YouTube: [here’s a good one](#). You probably have favorite lines from UU hymns already, but here are a few from [Singing the Living Tradition](#) for inspiration. Incidentally, do you have a copy of that hymnal at home? SLT is feeling its age, but it also contains some real gems. You can buy a home copy at the InSpirit book store:

Web of Life, may this thread I weave
help me bear witness to all I believe. (SLT 194)

Light one candle. (SLT 221)

Lift our eyes to what may come. (SLT 126)

...love shows us how. (SLT 298)



At the Bedside

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

Faith in People:

How Brigid Got Lands for the Poor

For this month's story, we turn to the truly wonderful faith-at-home treasure trove that was UU World's "Families" pages. While they are no longer being produced, the [archive](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/19_fall_families.pdf) is online, and it is where we found this month's story, "How Brigid Got Lands for the Poor." Read it online here:

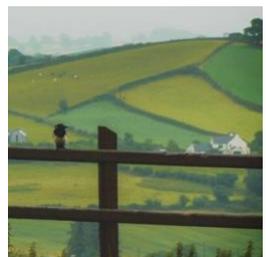
https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/19_fall_families.pdf

The story is presented as part of an exploration of the theme of miracles, which is a great segue to or from renewing faith! The angle we're going to take together on this story is how Brigid, with her determination, perseverance, and importantly, faith in the landlord's capacity to do better, was able to keep the people of the land from starving.

If you have a cloak or large blanket that you could wear during the telling, you can spread the cloak over you and your child or children to illustrate that part of the story!

Stretching the Story:

- Parents, tell about a time that you had faith in a person when it seemed like this person would not change. Where do you think that faith came from? Did the situation work out as you'd hoped? What did you learn about yourself?
- What makes a person worthy of our faith in them? What makes someone unworthy of that faith?
- How do you think the peasants felt in this story?
- Where are you in this story?



On the Porch

Raising a Child Renewing Faith Together

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

A Sip of Something New – Two Choices

Six Word Statement of Faith

This activity features in our small group packet and was inspired by the [six-word memoir trend](#) from about 15 years ago. Spiritual and religious folks quickly put their own spin on the idea, and six-word statements of faith flew around the internet, inspiring others to cut to the chase and communicate what was core, or unique, or humorous about their own spiritual lives in just a handful of words.

Even if you and your trusted friend or conversation partner have done this exercise before, try it again this month, because our relationship to our faith changes as we change.

UU minister Tandi Rogers pitched the idea out to her Facebook friends in 2014, and here’s their list, for inspiration:

<https://www.facebook.com/tandi.rogers/posts/10152204974568645>

How easy or hard was this to do? How is your statement now different from what it was or would have been 5 years ago? 10 years ago? 15 years ago?

Ann Lamott’s Faith-Straight-Ahead

Ann Lamott writes a lot from her perspective as a person of faith, a single parent, and a recovering addict. Read the passage below from her 2008 book, *Grace (Eventually)* aloud with your trusted friend or conversation partner:

“A sober friend told me that while fear and confusion often swirl around us, faith is straight ahead: I trusted that even though I didn’t know a thing about taking care of infants, toddlers, kids, or teenagers, I would be shown the next right step on a need-to-know basis. I trusted that other parents would help me every step of the way, and that if I did not keep secrets when motherhood was going particularly badly, there would be healing and enough understanding and stamina to get by. And this has proven to be true.”

There’s a lot to reflect on here. What jumps out at you? What about for your conversation partner? Spend a few minutes bringing to mind other parents you’ve encountered along the way whose words, acts, or examples helped you. How did their presence help renew your faith in yourself as a parent?



Spiritual Snacks to Share

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

Questions

1. What does a surge of faith feel like in your body? How about a dearth of faith?
2. How has being a person of faith been a source of strength? How has it made you more vulnerable?
3. Whose faith in you do you most want to live up to?
4. Who has believed in you the longest? Who believes in you the hardest?
5. What were the messages about faith that you received growing up?
6. When you first became a parent, were you more filled with doubt, or faith in your ability to raise a child?
7. What do you see in your own child that gives you faith in a more climate-conscious future?
8. When you feel afraid for the future for your child, and all our children, what do you do to ground and center yourself again?
9. When your child is your age, what do you hope they have faith in?



The Extra Mile

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

Renewing Faith through a New Language

This month, learn twenty words in a new-to-you language. Pick any one you like and make it really easy on yourself—use DuoLingo, or Mango, or another of the free apps that put the task right at your fingertips and give you daily reminders to carry on. Or choose your twenty words thoughtfully, and use Google Translate to help you find them in your chosen language.

Learning a new language is an act of faith that there will be a someday, a sometime, that you will be able to connect with another person through the uniquely human capacity to make meaning through language. As you review your new words, you might think of it as a kind of learning-prayer, sending your faith for a better future out into the world.

This I Believe: Articulations of Faith

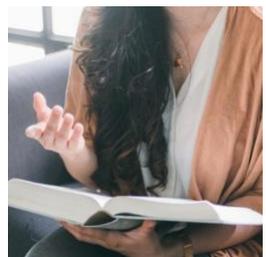
Here’s the gist of this project, from their website:

This I Believe, Inc., was founded in 2004 as an independent, not-for-profit organization that engages youth and adults from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing brief essays about the core values that guide their daily lives.

This I Believe is based on a 1950s radio program of the same name, hosted by acclaimed journalist Edward R. Murrow. Each day, Americans gathered by their radios to hear compelling essays from the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Robinson, Helen Keller, and Harry Truman as well as corporate leaders, cab drivers, scientists, and secretaries— anyone able to distill into a few minutes the guiding principles by which they lived. These essayists’ words brought comfort and inspiration to a country worried about the Cold War, McCarthyism, and racial division.

Here’s the website if you want to learn more and read samples: <https://thisibelieve.org/youth/>

UU youth often write credos as part of their coming-of-age programs. But the process is worthwhile for people of all ages. Have a conversation with your child about what they believe in at their core, something that guides them, or that they have been thinking a lot about lately. If they are less experienced writers, help them by writing a few sentences or one paragraph with them. Older children may be able to do this themselves. Choose a day later in the month to come together and share your words together, maybe over a family-favorite meal.



Blessing of Renewing Faith

When connections fray and trust decays, may our most loving and lasting friendships, our most dedicated mentors, and our cherished families restore our belief that others, too, are doing the best they can in a hurt and hurting world.

When words fail, and when promises made by powerful people seem woefully insufficient, may street art, subway music, guerilla theater, and emerging artists of all genres help us feel our way into a future that has a place for all of us.

When our hearts are cracked open by love or by hate, by sudden understanding or stubborn ignorance, and when we want to be alone but still loved, may we turn to the more-than-human earthlings—trees, dogs, soft earth, birdsong—to find a moment of comfort.

And when we feel despair, loneliness, hopelessness, overwhelm, and fear; when chaos swirls within and around us, may we find faith straight ahead, and may we be received with joy by the company we find there.



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

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

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

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/soul_matters_circle/

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

Credits

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