

The Path of Belonging



Monthly Theme Resources
September 2022

UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OF
JACKSON



Calendar Connections: September 2022

Sept. 5	Labor Day (*first Monday)
Sept. 8	International Literacy Day
Sept. 10	Suicide Prevention Month , World Suicide Prevention Day Grandparents Day
Sept. 11	Ingathering/Water Communion Ritual 9-11 Remembrance
Sept. 15 - Oct. 15	Hispanic Heritage Month
Sept. 19	The first meeting of the Transcendentalist Club - (1836) (more here and here) Talk Like a Pirate Day
Sept. 20	Battle of the Sexes Tennis Match - (1973)
Sept. 21	International Peace Day (more here) World Gratitude Day
Sept. 22	Mabon/Autumn Equinox – Wicca (more here & here) Hobbit Day
Sept. 23	Bisexual Pride Day , CBD, Bisexual Pride, and Bi Visibility Day Bisexual Awareness Week - (more here)
Sept. 23-29	Banned Books Week - (more here)
Sept. 25-27	Rosh Hashanah - Jewish New Year
Sept. 26	Johnny Appleseed Day
Sept 28	Publication of David Walker's Appeal - (1829) (more here , here and here)
Sept. 30	Rumi's birthday (1207) Universalism Day: John Murray preaches 1st sermon in US (1770) (more here)

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

Word Roots & Definitions

The word 'belonging' holds together the two fundamental aspects of life: Being and Longing, the longing of our Being and the being of our Longing.

[John O'Donohue](#)

We have this word, belong. We use it to mean, "being part of." But the old English prefix be- has the semantic consequence of intensifying as it goes. So belonging means something closer to "the deepening of longing." That's how you belong—not by finally arriving, but by having longing for arrival quickened, by being willing to long after life by living

Stephen Jenkinson

Wise Words

Home is where I want to be, but I guess I'm already there.

Talking Heads, "[This Must Be the Place](#)"

The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us, and the light goes out.

James Baldwin

Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountain is going home; that wildness is necessity; that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.

John Muir

Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free.

[Starhawk](#)

This we know: the earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. We did not weave the web of life; we are merely strands in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

[Inspired by](#) the words of Chief Seattle

The ancient question, “Who am I?” inevitably leads to a deeper one: “Whose am I?” – because there is no identity outside of relationship. You cannot be a person by yourself. To ask “Whose am I” is to extend the question far beyond the little self-absorbed self, and wonder: Who needs you? Who loves you? To whom are you accountable? To whom do you answer? Whose life is altered by your choices? With whose life is your own all bound up, inextricably, in obvious or invisible ways?
Douglas Steer

Is the land a source of belongings, or a source of belonging?

[Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)

Where you belong is where you choose to constantly choose to show up.

Karina Antonopoulos

I was so shocked to learn that the opposite of belonging is fitting in. Because fitting in is assessing a group of people and changing who you are. But true belonging never asks us to change who we are. It demands we be who we are.

[Brené Brown](#)

Belong to your place by the knowledge of the others who are your neighbors in it: the old man, sick and poor, who comes like a heron to fish in the creek.

[Wendell Berry](#)

Ah, Grief, I should not treat you like a homeless dog...

I should trust you.

I should coax you

into the house and give you your own corner...

Denise Levertov, from Talking to Grief

No one is as capable of gratitude as one who has emerged from the kingdom of night.

We know that every moment is a moment of grace,

every hour an offering;

not to share them would mean to betray them.

Our lives no longer belong to us alone;

they belong to all those who need us desperately.

Elie Wiesel, Safe Passage

We belong to every part of our lives and every part of our lives belongs to us. Even the failures. The cruelty. The betrayals. The addictions. The cowardice. Until we embrace those scared and tender parts with the kindness and forgiveness we so generously give to others, we will never be whole. We will never be home.

Rev. Scott Tayler

The only true belonging is the courage to stand alone and belong to ourselves.

[Azriel ReShel](#)

The child does not yet know what belongs and what does not: therefore for her all things belong. The ear of the child is open to all music. Her eyes are open to all arts. Her mind is open to all tongues. Her being is open to all manners. In the child's country, there are no foreigners.

Kenneth L. Patton, This World, my Home

I believe every inch of America is sacred, from sea to shining sea. I believe we make it holy by who we welcome and by how we relate to each other.

Eboo Patel

I'm on my way to a job where I am the only black person in my office. I work with people who either don't know or don't care about Alton Sterling or Philando Castile. They are going to ask me "How are you this morning?" and the simple truth is I can't be honest. I can't say that I'm scared and angry and that I want to take a mental health day. I can't say that I and people like me subconsciously fear for our lives on a daily basis. I can't say how I am this morning because it will make them uncomfortable and offended. The offensiveness of my pain is why we have to remind America over and over again that Black Lives Matter: because if you lack empathy for our tears it's likely that you lack respect for our lives.

[Shane Paul Neil](#)

It took many years of vomiting up all the filth I'd been taught about myself, and half-believed, before I was able to walk on the earth as though I had a right to be here.

James Baldwin

Your great mistake is to act the drama as if you were alone... To feel abandoned is to deny the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely, even you, at times, have felt the grand array; the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding out your solo voice. You must note the way the soap dish enables you, or the window latch grants you freedom... The stairs are your mentor of things to come...

Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the conversation. The kettle is singing even as it pours you a drink... Everything is waiting for you.

[David Whyte](#)

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

[The 8th Principle](#)

Articles

Distinguished and Singing

adrienne maree brown

<https://adriennemareebrown.net/2021/03/26/distinguished-and-singing/>

"right now, people are confusing identity with community, and finding no satisfaction in either place..."

On Our Bodies Not Belonging to Us...

Song by Abigail Bengson of the Bengsons

Abigail singing: [HERE](#)

adrienne maree brown singing and sharing it [HERE](#)

We will not. We will not.

We will not be controlled.

I am sovereign in my body.

I am sovereign in my soul.

We're Not Going Back to the Time Before Roe v. Wade. We're Going Somewhere Worse, The New Yorker

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/07/04/we-are-not-going-back-to-the-time-before-roe-we-are-going-somewhere-worse>

Overturing Roe: The Disparate Effect on Women of Color, Democracy Now

<https://www.democracynow.org/2022/6/27/scotus-roe-overturing-ignores-slavery-legacy>

Music

Two different playlists are available each month: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. They are organized as a journey of sorts, so consider listening from beginning to end and using the playlists as musical meditations.

Click [here](#) for the Spotify playlist on [Belonging](#).

Click [here](#) for the YouTube playlist on [Belonging](#).

Special Playlist - "The PLACES we belong to" found [here](#)

Videos & Podcasts

What Does Home Mean to You? | 0-100
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWt76WqRCVs>

How to Be Alone, Pádraig Ó Tuama
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgZT6UJocRs>

Brené Brown on the opposite of belonging
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWZa3wm1Nns>

Earthrise
<https://emergencemagazine.org/story/earthrise-film/>

Award winning short video telling the story of the Apollo 8 astronauts and the first image captured of Earth from space in 1968. About "escaping" earth to realize how deeply we belong to it, and each other.

Opening the Question of Race to the Question of Belonging - On Being Podcast
<https://onbeing.org/programs/john-a-powell-opening-to-the-question-of-belonging-may2018/>

On anti-racism as "the project of belonging" and a challenge to enlightenment individualism.

The Star Spanglish Banner, Angelica Maria
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwffEcUSsCU>

Books

Eternal Echoes: Exploring Our Yearning to Belong
John O'Donohue
Excerpt: "There is a lovely balance at the heart of our nature: each of us is utterly unique and yet we live in the most intimate kinship with everyone and everything else. Its more profound intention is the awakening of the Great Belonging which embraces everything. Our hunger to belong is the desire to awaken this hidden affinity. Then we know that we are not outsiders cut off from everything, but rather participants at the heart of creation..."

Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone.
Brené Brown
Review:
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/author-brene-brown-social-scientist-new-book-braving-the-wilderness/>


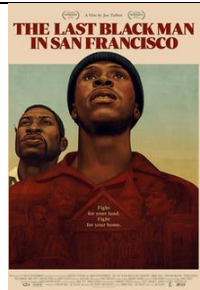




Beloved
Toni Morrison
On belonging to our trauma and secrets.

It's All Relative: Adventures Up and Down the World's Family Tree
A.J. Jacobs
Review:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/01/books/review/its-all-relative-aj-jacobs.html>

The Economics of Belonging: A Radical Plan to Win Back the Left Behind and Achieve Prosperity for All
Martin Sandbu

- [Related webinar](#)
- [Book Review](#)

Movies

<p>Lion: A 2016 Australian biographical drama film directed by Garth Davis from a screenplay by Luke Davies based on the 2013 non-fiction book <i>A Long Way Home</i> by Saroo Brierley. The film stars Dev Patel, Sunny Pawar, Rooney Mara, David Wenham, and Nicole Kidman. It tells the true story of how Brierley, 25 years after being separated from his family in India, sets out to find them.</p>	
<p>The Last Black Man in San Francisco: A 2019 American drama film, directed and produced by Joe Talbot. Talbot wrote the screenplay with Rob Richert and the story with Jimmie Fails, on whose life the film is partly based. The film stars Fails, Jonathan Majors, Tichina Arnold, Rob Morgan, Mike Epps, Finn Wittrock, and Danny Glover.</p>	
<p>Flee: A 2021 Danish adult animated documentary film directed by Jonas Poher Rasmussen. It follows the story of a man under the alias Amin Nawabi, who shares his hidden past of fleeing his home country of Afghanistan to Denmark for the first time. Riz Ahmed and Nikolaj Coster-Waldau serve as executive producers and narrators for the English-language dub version..</p>	
<p>Nomadland: A 2020 American drama film written, produced, edited, and directed by Chloé Zhao. Based on the 2017 nonfiction book <i>Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century</i> by Jessica Bruder, it stars Frances McDormand as a widow who leaves to travel around the United States in her van as a nomad. David Strathairn also stars in a supporting role. Real-life nomads appear as fictionalized versions of themselves, including Linda May, Swankie and Bob Wells.</p>	
<p>Short Term 12: A 2013 American independent drama film written and directed by Destin Daniel Cretton, adapted from Cretton's short film of the same name, produced in 2009. The film stars Brie Larson as Grace Howard, a young supervisor of a group home for troubled teenagers. Cretton based <i>Short Term 12</i> on his own experience working in a group facility for teenagers. He wrote and produced a short film exploring this and later adapted it into a feature-length screenplay.</p>	
<p>Unorthodox: A German-American drama television miniseries that debuted on Netflix on March 26, 2020. Primarily in Yiddish, it is inspired by Deborah Feldman's 2012 autobiography, <i>Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots</i>. The 4-part miniseries was created and written by Anna Winger and Alexa Karolinski, and directed by Maria Schrader.</p>	

Reflection Questions

Don't treat these questions like "homework" or try to answer everyone. Instead, make time to meditate on the list and then pick the one question that speaks to you most. The goal is to figure out which question captures the call of your inner voice? Which one contains "your work"? And what is that question trying to get you to notice or acknowledge?

Often it helps to read the list to a friend or loved one and ask them which question they think is the question you need to wrestle with!

1. When was the first time you thought to yourself, "Now I belong."
2. How does the assurance of belonging most often enter your body? Through words? Touch? Silence? Song? Solitude? Nature? Creative expression? Prayer? Memory?
3. What does the phrase "Belonging to myself" mean to you?
4. Whose inability to belong breaks your heart?
5. Is living in the future distorting the fact that you are already home?
6. What exiled or hidden part of yourself needs invited back into belonging?
7. Is it time to let yourself belong to your grief, rather than exiling it?
8. What one change in your UU church community would increase your sense of belonging?
9. Who reminds you of what real belonging is? Have you ever thanked them for that gift?
10. Are you being tempted or pressured to sacrifice your integrity for belonging?
11. What are you going to do to end your imposter syndrome, i.e. your secret feeling that you don't really belong, and they will soon find you out?
12. What has life taught you about disconnecting your belonging from your belongings?
13. If someone asked you, "How do you belong to the land?", what would you answer?
14. Think of the family members and friends that have the deepest sense of belonging. What do they all have in common?
15. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to find it.

Meditations, Prayers & Blessings

Love after Love

Derek Walcott

Full poem at <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/love-after-love/>

Spoken version at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=n_3QbH_aNmc

“you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other’s welcome...”

Know You are Not Alone and Discover the Way Our Voices Rise

Rev. Gretchen Haley

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

In Gatherings

Rev. Marta Valentin

Full piece found in [Voices from the Margins](#), A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters
“[Common Shelf](#)”

Belonging

Karen Hering

Found in With or Without Candlelight, A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)”

“What would the world be like...
if we let ourselves belong to our longings...”

Your Presence Is Near

Rev. Julianne Lepp

We have not forgotten
In nature we seek you
In the whisper of wind
In the new green wood

Your presence is near

We have not lost hope
In the dust of the desert
In the rush of the wave
In the rise of the mountain

Your presence is near

We remember the cycle
In the promise of blossoms
In the dying leaves
In the bare branches

Your presence is near

Beneath the Hustle and Bustle

On the stillness within, to which we truly belong

Rev. Angela Herrera

Full piece found in [Reaching for the Sun](#) (pg.32), A UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters
“[Common Shelf](#)” Book

Beneath the streams of thoughts
That clammers and chatters...
There is a stillness...
We know her by many names. Truth. Love. God. Wisdom...
She holds us in our grief and anger,
in our disappointment, our loneliness', and our rebirth...

Belonging Here

Rev. Dr. David Breeden

When it feels like lament
is the only sound and need
the only way of being,

here is that one warm
room where you know
you belong, you know is

waiting, open, ready.

Here is that place you
remember where you

are remembered in this
too cold world. This place
calls now, softly: Come

into the circle where you
know that you belong.

We Belong to Ourselves: A Meditation for a Post-Roe World

Rev. Dr. Julia Corbett-Hemeyer

We belong to ourselves.

Oh, yes, of course, we also belong to families, friends, communities of faith, neighborhoods, the transcendent and the earth that holds us.

But for now, in our post-Roe world, for these few moments, let's focus our awareness on belonging to *ourselves*. Let this sink in: *We belong to ourselves*. This is the first belonging, the one that undergirds and grounds all the rest. We decide, in the sovereign mystery of our selfhood: Will we stay or will we go? What shall we do? Whom shall we love? What is best for me? Is life—*my* life—worth the living?

Who are we? Who am I? Why am I?

Now, close your eyes if that's comfortable for you. Focus on your breathing, deep and slow, resting in your center. You belong.

Stories For All Ages

Picture Books

Rivers By Rev. Christopher Buice, on Worship Web (possible story for Water Communion)

Even when it feels and looks like we are separate, our true belonging rests with each other. And when the more we forget that we are connected and belong to each other, the more likely it is to compete with and put each other down.

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/story/rivers>

Water Dance by Carole Lindstrom (Author), Michaela Goade (Illustrator)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIS6tGb9GxM>

Book: [HERE](#)

We are Water Protectors** by Carole Lindstrom (Author), Michaela Goade (Illustrator)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CD8shbwrK40>

Book: [HERE](#)

Tico and the Golden Wings By Leo Lionni (author, illustrator)

We belong to each other, and we are different from each other. We each have our own memories, and each have our own invisible golden dreams.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9evuaJd1Xw> **Book:** [HERE](#)

Stellaluna by Janell Cannon

A story about belonging and not belonging. Stella Luna doesn't belong in the bird nest, and finally returns to being her bat self when her mother finds her.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mk8uL9o_f9w **Book:** [HERE](#)

Ira's Sleepover by Bernard Waber

We sometimes hide parts of ourselves so that we can belong. But Ira finds out that he can be his real self with his teddy bear, and he can share all the parts of himself with his friend.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iPaMjh8Kyk> **Book:** [HERE](#)

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Bullying robs you of a sense of belonging and can make you miserable. But finding a person who supports you can turn the tables and make others want to be as authentic as you are.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fkR7X4SevE> **Book:** [HERE](#)

Nerdy Birdy by Aaron Reynolds

It is lonely being alone. It's important to be a friend. It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v2L_4f-nek **Book:** [HERE](#)

The Big Umbrella by Amy June Bates, co-written with Juniper Bates

In this story, an umbrella makes room for everyone, no matter how tall, how hairy, or how many legs.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7JZ9rRIZ3w> **Book:** [HERE](#)

Wisdom Tales

- **Aesop's Fable:** [The Bundle of Sticks](#)
- **Japanese Tale:** [The Parable of the Long Spoons](#)
- **Hasidic Tale:** [The Rabbi who Hummed and Danced](#)
- **African Tale of Unknown Origin:** [One Body](#) (also listed in "From Long Ago and Far Away as from Greece in "The Complaint Against the Stomach" and as [Roman](#).)
- **Islamic Tale:** [Mullah Nasruddin Feeds His Coat](#)