



April 2018 Monthly Theme

# PROMISES

*the practice of creating the world*

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*The intention of the themed year is to help Unitarian Universalists build a robust spiritual and ethical vocabulary. The themes are points of departure for religious liberals seeking to think, speak and act theologically, prophetically and prayerfully. The themes reclaim religious language, casting old terms in a new key to deepen spiritual grounding and sharpen moral reasoning. More at: [wbuuc.org/themes](http://wbuuc.org/themes) or sign up for a circle at [wbuuc.org/classes](http://wbuuc.org/classes).*

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## QUESTIONS

What promises do we make to one another in our UU community?

What promises do we make to the world as Unitarian Universalists?

What helps us keep our promises, especially when it isn't the easy thing to do?

What does it mean to "create the world"?

## QUOTATIONS

Upon suffering beyond suffering: The Red Nation shall rise again and it shall be a blessing for a sick world; a world filled with broken promises, selfishness and separations; a world longing for light again. I see a time of Seven Generations when all the colors of mankind will gather under the Sacred Tree of Life and the whole Earth will become one circle again. In that day, there will be those among the Lakota who will carry knowledge and understanding of unity among all living things and the young white ones will come to those of my people and ask for this wisdom. I salute the light within your eyes where the whole Universe dwells. For when you are at that center within you and I am that place within me, we shall be one. ~ **Crazy Horse, Oglala Lakota Sioux**

## Books for Children:

Be Kind ~ by Pat Zietlow Miller

Listening with My Heart: A story of kindness and self-compassion ~ by Gabi Garcia

The Golden Rule ~ by Ilene Cooper

## **The Promise of Easter ~ by Eugene B. Navias**

Who is to say what Easter is that we should celebrate this day and sing for joy?  
Easter is promises remembered and fulfilled of death and life and all that lies therein.  
It is the promise of the planets in their turn, the infinite fidelity of stars and suns and seasons.  
Easter is winter promising to Spring that earth shall yield its death to life again.  
It is the growth promise of the dormant seed, the barren meadow and the naked bough.  
It is the birth promise of all creatures which have life and breath and being.  
Easter is ancient sorrows stilled and hopes remembered. It is the memory of Jesus dying in Jerusalem.  
It is the promise that the heart shall be reborn as hatred dies and love is given birth.  
It is the promise that the mind shall be renewed as ignorance is lost to newfound truth.  
Easter is the promise to everyone who journeys from the death of prejudice to the life of understanding.  
Easter is promises to everyone who casts away the errors of the darkness to dwell within the light.  
Lo, Easter is of earthly promises and human hopes that make the human heart forever young.  
All: A song of life which springs from death, a joyous human song. Forever Alleluia sung.

## **martha promise receives leadbelly, 1935 ~ by Tyehimba Jess**

when your man comes home from prison,  
when he comes back like the wound  
and you are the stitch,  
when he comes back with pennies in his pocket  
and prayer fresh on his lips,  
you got to wash him down first.

you got to have the wildweed and treebark boiled  
and calmed, waiting for his skin like a shining baptism  
back into what he was before gun barrels and bars  
chewed their claim in his hide and spit him  
stumbling backwards into screaming sunlight.

you got to scrub loose the jailtime fingersmears  
from ashy skin, lather down the cuffmarks  
from ankle and wrist, rinse solitary's stench loose  
from his hair, scrape curse and confession  
from the welted and the smooth,  
the hard and the soft,  
the furrowed and the lax.  
you got to hold tight that shadrach's face  
between your palms, take crease and lid  
and lip and brow and rinse slow with river water,  
and when he opens his eyes  
you tell him calm and sure  
how a woman birthed him  
back whole again.

## **Building the World We Dream About (complete curriculum available to download/print)**

**By Mark Hicks © 2010 <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/btwwda>**

Building the World We Dream About is a Unitarian Universalist program that seeks to interrupt the workings of racism and transform how people from different racial/ethnic groups understand and relate to one another. It consists of 24 two-hour workshops, with Taking It Home activities, reflections, and readings to be done between workshops. The program creates opportunities for participants to practice dreaming our world otherwise, and then commit to new, intentional ways of being.

As Unitarian Universalists, we hope developing antiracist, anti-oppressive, and multicultural habits and skills will lead us to build the multicultural world of beloved community we dream about.

## **The Promise and the Practice of Our Faith for Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU)**

Imagine what our faith would look like if we upheld and centered the history, the perspectives, the voices, and the leadership of Black Lives of Unitarian Universalists...

The Promise and the Practice of Our Faith Campaign is our opportunity to take the lead as a faith denomination in addressing our history of upholding white supremacy. Together, we can collectively work to dismantle it and amend a long-broken promise to the Black Lives within our Association.

In October 2016 the UUA Board of Trustees made a bold \$5.3 million commitment to fund black leaders in Unitarian Universalism to support ministry to black-identified Unitarian Universalists:

- \$300,000 was allocated immediately to fund the March 2017 BLUU Convening and develop programming for the 2017 General Assembly.
- \$5 million was committed for an endowment to fund BLUU's ongoing work now and into the future.

The Board's decision reflects an understanding that Unitarian Universalism has benefitted from the system of white supremacy that advantages white people and white institutions. In the late 1960s, Unitarian Universalism was asked to take steps to address the silencing and marginalization of Black Unitarian Universalists. Though there was an initial affirmation of this commitment, the commitment went unfulfilled and the promise was broken.

More than 45 years later, the UUA Board of Trustees moved to fulfill those broken promises with a financial commitment to Black Unitarian Universalists. The Board made this commitment with the understanding that it is for Black Unitarian Universalists to determine for themselves what is needed and how it will be accomplished.

Congregations are asked to join in the Promise and the Practice of Our Faith by making a long-term commitment to dismantling white supremacy, racism and oppression from within our denomination and beyond, and uplifting the Black Lives, Voices, and Leadership of Unitarian Universalism.

This is our time to be Bold, Radical, and Transformational as we commit to nurture a radically inclusive, justice centered, multiracial and multigenerational religious faith!

## OUR PROMISES

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.

~ James Vila Blake

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

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### **The Myth of the Shattering of the Vessels – from the Jewish Kabbalah tradition**

At the beginning of time, God's presence filled the universe. When God decided to bring this world into being, to make room for creation, He first drew in His breath, contracting Himself. From that contraction darkness was created. And when God said, "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3), the light that came into being filled the darkness, and ten holy vessels came forth, each filled with primordial light.

In this way God sent forth those ten vessels, like a fleet of ships, each carrying its cargo of light. Had they all arrived intact, the world would have been perfect. But the vessels were too fragile to contain such a powerful, divine light. They broke open, split asunder, and all the holy sparks were scattered like sand, like seeds, like stars. Those sparks fell everywhere, but more fell on the Holy Land than anywhere else.

That is why we were created — to gather the sparks, no matter where they are hidden. God created the world so that the descendants of Jacob could raise up the holy sparks. That is why there have been so many exiles — to release the holy sparks from the servitude of captivity. In this way the Jewish people will sift all the holy sparks from the four corners of the earth.

And when enough holy sparks have been gathered, the broken vessels will be restored, and *tikkun olam*, the repair of the world, awaited so long, will finally be complete. Therefore, it should be the aim of everyone to raise these sparks from wherever they are imprisoned and to elevate them to holiness by the power of their soul.