

## Sample Readings from Services at Northlake UU Church

A Unitarian Universalist is how I describe myself, but if I described my theology, I would describe my theology as a deist, humanist, existentialist with a shot of Christianity and a twist of taoism. ... If someone said, 'Well what does John believe?' they would find my belief systems within all those different faiths, and Unitarian Universalism gives me that space to be that. Instead of telling people I'm "all of what I just said," I just tell people I'm a Unitarian Universalist.

Rev. John Crestwell

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### **All That You Need Lies Within You**

Consider this an invitation to you.

Yes—you

with all your happiness

and your burdens,

your hopes and regrets.

An invitation if you feel good today,

and an invitation if you do not,

if you are aching—

and there are so many ways to ache... .

Maybe your heart is heavy

or hardened.

Maybe it's troubled

and peace can take up residence

only in a small corner,

only on the edge,

with all that is going on in the world,

and in your life.

Ni modo. It doesn't matter.

All that you need

for a deep and comforting peace to grow

lies within you.

Once it is in your heart

let it spread into your life,

let it pour from your life into the world—

and once it is in the world,

let it shine upon all beings."

—Angela Herrera, [Reaching for the Sun](#)

Available at inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop

## **A Blessing for Risk-Takers and Failures by Robin Tanner**

Today we share in a blessing for losers, risk-takers, all failures far and wide....

Blessed are they who fall in the mud, who jump with gusto and rip the pants, who skin the elbows, and bruise the ego,  
for they shall know the sweetness of risk.

Blessed are they who make giant mistakes, whose intentions are good but impact has injured, who know the hot sense of regret and ask for mercy,  
for their hearts will know the gift of forgiveness.

Blessed are they who have seen a D or an F or C or any letter less than perfect, who are painfully familiar with the red pen and the labels as "less than,"  
for they know the wisdom in the imperfect.

Blessed are they who try again, who dust off, who wash up, who extend the wish for peace, who return to sites of failure, who are dogged in their pursuit,  
for they will discover the secret to dreams.

Blessed are they who refuse to listen to the naysayers,  
for their hearts will be houses for hope.

Blessed are they who see beyond the surface of another,  
for they will be able to delight in the gift of compassion.

Blessed are they who stop running the race to help a fellow traveler, who pick up the fallen, who stop for injured life,  
for they shall know the kindness of strangers.

Blessed are they who wildly, boldly abandon winning,  
for they shall know the path of justice.

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“We are not trapped or locked up in these bones. No, no. We are free to change. And love changes us. And if we can love one another, we can break open the sky.”

— Walter Mosley, [Blue Light](#)

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## A Prayer by Shantideva

May I become at all times, both now and forever  
A protector of those without protection  
A guide for those who have lost their way  
A ship for those with oceans to cross  
A bridge for those with rivers to cross  
A sanctuary for those in danger  
A lamp for those without light  
A place of refuge for those who lack shelter  
And a servant to all in need  
For as long as space endures,  
And for as long as living beings remain,  
Until then may I, too, abide  
To dispel the misery of the world.

Shantideva was an 8th century Indian Buddhist monk. There are many forms of this prayer, attributed to him. Source: Eight Century Indian Buddhist Scholar Shantideva, *The Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life).

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“We instinctively tend to limit for whom we exert ourselves. We do it for people like us, and for people whom we like. Jesus will have none of that. By depicting a Samaritan helping a Jew, Jesus could not have found a more forceful way to say that anyone at all in need - regardless of race, politics, class, and religion - is your neighbour. Not everyone is your brother or sister in faith, but everyone is your neighbour, and you must love your neighbour.”

— Timothy J. Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*

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## **A Prayer for Courage by Jo Carr and Imogene Sorley**

It takes courage  
to be crocus-minded.

Lord, I'd rather wait until June,  
like wise roses,  
when the hazards of winter are safely behind,  
and I'm expected,  
and everything's ready for roses.

But crocuses?  
Highly irregular,  
Knifing up through hard-frozen ground and snow,  
sticking their necks out,  
because they believe in spring  
and have something personal  
and emphatic to say about it.

Lord, I am by nature rose-minded,  
Even when I have studied the situation here  
and know there are wrongs that need righting,  
affirmations that need stating,  
and know also that my speaking out may offend –  
for it rocks the boat –  
well I'd rather wait until June.  
Maybe later things will work themselves out,  
and we won't have to make an issue of it.

Lord, forgive,  
Wrongs don't work themselves out.  
Injustices and inequities and hurt don't  
just dissolve.

Somebody has to stick her neck out,  
somebody who cares enough  
to think through  
and work through hard ground,  
because she believes  
and has something personal  
and emphatic to say about it.

Me, Lord? Crocus-minded?  
Could it be that there are things that need  
to be said, and you want me to say them?

I pray for courage. Amen

## Just Beyond Yourself: A Poem by David Whyte

Just beyond yourself.

It's where you need to be.

Half a step  
into self-forgetting  
and the rest  
restored  
by what  
you'll meet.

There is a road  
always beckoning.

When you see  
the two sides of it  
closing together  
at that far horizon  
and deep in  
the foundations  
of your own  
heart  
at exactly the same time,  
that's how  
you know  
it's the road  
you have to follow.

That's how  
you know  
it's where you have to go.

That's how  
you know  
you have to go.

That's  
how you know.

Just beyond  
yourself,  
it's where you need to be.

This poem is from David Whyte's collection of poetry, [The Bell and the Blackbird](#).

## **Mother's Day Blessing Litany – adapted from Maureen Killoran**

In one way or another, each of you was born of a mother. Mothering is a wider and richer story than is often told.

Because we are human, it's likely that your relationship with that mother is, was, or will some day be challenging. Mothering is a story that is ever-evolving.

If you identify as a woman, or transgender, then it's almost certain that your connection with this matter of "mothering" is or was sufficiently complex that it's sometimes hard to explain. Mothering is a story we continually re-tell to ourselves.

From the diversity of our lives, from the similarity of our hearts, let us pray:

For all who never knew their mothers... and all who chose, or were compelled to, let their children drift away...

We ask a blessing on this day.

For all who longed to hold their newborn in the arms of love... and all who faced a pregnancy with fear...

We ask a blessing on this day.

For all who struggle with the pain of a mother's increasing confusion.... And for all who feel the muddle growing in their own heads and seek to keep it from their child...

We ask a blessing on this day.

For all who missed the chance to say I love you... and all who long to say it now, but find ourselves afraid...

We ask a blessing on this day.

For all who carry ancient wounds... infertility... abuse... misunderstanding... anger... grief...

We ask a blessing on this day.

For all who struggle with regret...

We ask a blessing on this day.

For all who are living in the everyday messy chaos of life with children, young or old...

We ask a blessing on this day.

## Excerpt from the [Kaushitaki Upanishad](#).

It is not the speech which we should want to know: we should know the speaker.

It is not things seen which we should want to know: we should know the seer.

It is not sounds which we should want to know: we should know the hearer.

It is not mind which we should want to know: we should know the thinker.

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## Nancy Shaffer: "Calling"

When you heard that voice and  
knew finally it called for you  
and what it was saying—where  
were you? Were you in the shower,  
wet and soapy, or chopping cabbage  
late for dinner? Were you planting radish  
seeds or seeking one lost sock? Maybe  
wiping handprints off a window  
or coaxing words into a sentence.  
Or coming upon a hyacinth or one last No.  
Where were you when you heard that ancient  
voice, and did Yes get born right then  
and did you weep? Had it called you since  
before you even were, and when you  
knew that, did your joy escape all holding?  
Where were you when you heard that  
calling voice, and how, in that moment,  
did you mark it? How, ever after,  
are you changed?

Tell us, please, all you can about that voice.  
Teach us how to listen, how to hear.

Teach us all you can of saying Yes.

"Calling" by Nancy Shaffer. Text as published in *Instructions in Joy: Meditations*