



# Guest at Your Table 2021-22

## Sample Worship Service

### Contents

- Page 1  
Suggested Hymns & Readings
- Page 2  
Suggested Reading
- Page 3-6  
Sermon
- Page 7-8  
Story for All Ages

### Theme: Now is the Time for Courageous Change

The injustices and crises of the past year have underscored the importance of our shared goal – a world free from oppression, where all can realize their full human rights. They also have emphasized just how big a task that is. To meet the enormous challenges of today and build a more just future, we need big ideas and bold change. We must fundamentally transform the way things are, so that we do not perpetuate systemic inequities and repeat the harms of the past.

At UUSC, we believe that the transformational solutions we need come from communities most directly impacted by injustice. Join us for this year’s Guest at Your Table program to learn what UUSC partners are doing to address immediate injustices – as well as what they envision for the future. At this extraordinary juncture in history, we think their stories will offer inspiration and guidance on the path toward justice.

### Suggested Hymns and Readings

from *Singing the Journey*

Hymns:

- #1004 Busca el Amor
- #1023 Building Bridges
- #1064 Blue Boat Home

from *Singing the Living Tradition*

Hymns:

- #318 We Would Be One
- #175 We Celebrate the Web of Life
- #134 Our World Is One World

Responsive Readings:

- #584 A Network of Mutuality
- #568 Connections Are Made Slowly
- #648 Beginners





### Chalice Lighting

“Choose to Bless the World” by Rebecca Parker (<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/blessing/choose-bless-world>)

Your gifts—whatever you discover them to be—  
can be used to bless or curse the world.

The mind’s power,  
The strength of the hands,  
The reaches of the heart,  
The gift of speaking, listening, imagining,  
seeing, waiting

Any of these can serve to feed the hungry,  
Bind up wounds,  
Welcome the stranger,  
Praise what is sacred,  
Do the work of justice  
Or offer love.

Any of these can draw down the prison door,  
Hoard bread,  
Abandon the poor,  
Obscure what is holy,  
Comply with injustice  
Or withhold love.

You must answer this question:  
What will you do with your gifts?

Choose to bless the world.

The choice to bless the world is more than an act  
of will,  
A moving forward into the world  
With the intention to do good.  
It is an act of recognition, a confession of  
surprise, a grateful acknowledgment  
That in the midst of a broken world

Unspeakable beauty, grace and mystery abide.

There is an embrace of kindness that encompasses all  
life, even yours.

And while there is injustice, anesthetization, or evil  
There moves  
A holy disturbance,  
A benevolent rage,  
A revolutionary love,  
Protesting, urging, insisting  
That which is sacred will not be defiled.  
Those who bless the world live their life as a gesture of  
thanks  
For this beauty  
And this rage.

The choice to bless the world can take you into  
solitude  
To search for the sources of power and grace;  
Native wisdom, healing, and liberation.

More, the choice will draw you into community,  
The endeavor shared,  
The heritage passed on,  
The companionship of struggle,  
The importance of keeping faith,  
The life of ritual and praise,  
The comfort of human friendship,  
The company of earth  
The chorus of life welcoming you.

None of us alone can save the world.  
Together—that is another possibility waiting.



**“Power, Partnership, and Change”- *Sermon by Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, President and CEO of UUSC***

Perhaps you have heard or read the parable of the starfish thrower before?

The tale comes from Loren Eiseley, the mid-20th century scientist and philosopher, who recounts meeting a person on a beach after a storm which has washed thousands of starfish onto the shore.

This person seeks out the living starfish and flings them back into the sea where they may survive.

After contemplating the seeming futility of such an endeavor in the face of a problem that is so large (it would be impossible to rescue all the starfish on this beach after all), Eiseley recognizes the hope and defiance in taking such action.

Eiseley finishes his tale by writing, “I looked back across my shoulder to see the star thrower stoop and fling once more. I never looked again. The task we had assumed was too immense for gazing.

All about us roared the insatiable waters of death. But we, . . . alone and small in that immensity, hurled back the living stars.

I flung and flung again.”

Not too far from Boston, about about an hour outside of the city, is Purgatory Chasm State Park. The park is on land cherished and traditionally protected by Nipmuc Peoples, a tribe of now 600 living in Massachusetts.

The half mile long chasm is a treacherous hike. A slow pace is needed to navigate the incredible scale and danger of the chasm, the stones, large and small, that jut beneath and loom above the hikers.

Stone can be viewed as a symbol of patience and the steady pace of change. Boulders worn smooth by the elements and gigantic canyons carved out by tiny streams. We can be reassured by the long view perspective of time revealed in stone.

Purgatory Chasm is not such a symbol. This immense breach in the earth was created in an instant. A moment of immediate, dramatic, disruptive, violent change. Scientists now believe the chasm was formed by the sudden release of glacial meltwater fourteen thousand years ago. Change sometimes happens like that. Stone is sometimes shaped by sheer and urgent power, in an instant. Right now, these days, that image of change is more resonant than the slow, steady force of a small



stream carving a canyon.

In his reflection on saving the starfish along the ocean's shore, Loren Eisley writes, "All about us roared the insatiable waters of death." For me, this line brings to mind the creatures and the plants and the habitat lost in that dramatic moment of change fourteen thousand years ago at Purgatory Chasm. Think of it. Water roaring from above. Melted, who knows how much earlier, working, perhaps for a long time to find its escape. But forming the landscape in an instant. The power of water is so compelling.

"All about us roar the insatiable waters of death." Loren Eisley saw this from the perspective of the starfish's life, and his own. We can see it in the indifference of a virus and the intimate violence of racism.

We are at a rare time in history when so much is revealed by the rapid change and disruption of this moment. What is revealed is not anything new. What is revealed is what too many of us have managed not to see. Even as we've understood, as Dr. King reminded us, that what affects one, affects all. Many of us turn away, I believe, not because we don't care, but largely because we underestimate our power. And then, often, those of us with various forms of privilege get comfortable. And our gaze remains fixed toward truths that soothe us.

The shaking of so many foundations around us has forced us to see so vividly much more than many of us ordinarily see. Horrific inequity. Systems designed precisely to maintain castes among us. The complicity of silence and the seductive comfort of our perceived powerlessness.

These times are urgently calling on us to remember and use our power.

That's right, power. Did you know that UUSC's mission includes an affirmation of the inherent power and dignity of all people? For Unitarian Universalists, repeating the beautiful words of our first principle, it is easy to read right over the small but significant difference. It's not denying inherent worth, that's implied. But the addition of power is significant.

At UUSC, we affirm the inherent dignity and power of all people.

The power of compassion that demands our hands and minds and hearts be engaged in fulfilling the promise of human dignity and worth. The power of faithful imagination, the refusal to give in to the cynicism and powerlessness that tyrants and empires depend upon to thrive.

These times are urgently calling on us to remember and use our power.

Do you see it? Your power? Can you sit up a little straighter, take a breath, and feel your power?



## Guest at Your Table 2021-22 Sample Worship Service

NOW IS THE TIME FOR COURAGEOUS CHANGE

.... I'm afraid you're not buying it.

Because often, I don't either. Especially these days. These days I'm feeling pretty small. And less able than ever to accomplish things. The roar gets inside me and I feel so alone. I feel fear and grief. And powerless.

Okay, shake that off. I'm not asking you to deny those feelings, but to see something more.

We've come here today because we know that religious community will hold us when we feel small and alone. Community will call us back to the power that we each carry. That we recognize in each other. That is called out from us in community. We show up, we are here together today, because we believe that ministry, our shared ministry, will comfort us and confront us. Will call us to our power.

I invite you to call the name of someone who has reminded you of your dignity, your worth, your power. And now call to mind memories of the power that has arisen from communities you are a part of, from this congregation. Prophetic witness in the larger community, calls for justice and healing. Actions that were part of movements that brought about actual change. Friends, you have what you need to create a better world. We have what we need to enact courageous change.

I am also deeply inspired, every day, by the fierce power of the grassroots partners who are the heart of UUSC's mission. We believe, and know from experience, that partnering with communities most deeply impacted by injustice is the most faithful and the most effective way to contribute to a better world.

This is what UUSC's Guest at Your Table program has been highlighting decades, offering us the chance to learn more deeply the stories of four of our grassroots partners. These "guests" invite us each year into more profound solidarity with them and the communities they serve.

Our partner Axel Fuentes from the Rural Community Workers Alliance, or RCWA, is organizing food processing factory workers in the midwestern United States, building coalitions through organizers that speak the language and know the culture of the workers they collaborate with. Together, they are tapping into their power to demand safer working conditions that honor their dignity. Axel says that "UUSC's support has been one of the most important pieces for RWCA to be able to survive and make progress as a grassroots organization in the fight for the rights of the most vulnerable."

Myra Dahgaypaw, a member of the Karen ethnic minority and director of the U.S. Campaign for Burma, is drawing on her experience as someone targeted by the Burmese military junta as a child to bring attention to the crisis happening in Burma today. She advocates for Burmese ethnic minorities and pro-democracy demonstrators with a vision for "a peaceful country that has achieved a





## Guest at Your Table 2021-22 Sample Worship Service

NOW IS THE TIME FOR COURAGEOUS CHANGE

true democratic state where the power lies with the people but not the military, and also a country that finally realizes that inclusivity makes them stronger.”

Our partner Maina (Mah-ee-na) Talia from the Kioa Island Community Organization in the South Pacific is working to make the communities of Kioa Island resilient to the forces of climate change for the sake of future generations and to serve as a refuge for those living on neighboring islands with lower elevations. “The island must provide agricultural support, moral support, and have climate-proof structures to ensure the continuity of our people,” Maina says. “Our vision is to build community resilience.” UUSC is especially honored to be working with the Kioa Island Community Organization as their first funder.

Our last guest this year, Cristian Guzmán Merlo, is co-director of UUSC partner Fundación Entre Mujeres, or FEM. Organized by and for rural peasant women, or campesinas, in Nicaragua, FEM is both a feminist farming collective and an advocacy network linking 21 communities to bolster the economic, political, and social empowerment of women. The intersectional approach of FEM, seeing the connections between healing the land and healing the wounds of violence against women, offers a profound and necessary model of justice for the world. Cristian shares that what FEM wants “is collective transformation in the communities of this country, and all over the world.”

I am so grateful for what I learn every day about fierce power from UUSC’s grassroots partners, such as Axel, Myra, Maina, and Cristian. People who experience the intimate violence of oppression every day, and still know their dignity and power. People who lead the way in enacting courageous change.

These times are urgently calling us to remember and use our power. We have what we need to create a better world.

I want to thank those of you who are connected with the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee through our shared work for justice and with your financial support. UUSC is a member-supported organization that receives no funding from the UUA. We cannot do this work without you. I hope that today’s service inspires every one of you to become part of UUSC’s justice-loving, justice-seeking community.

In closing, I would like to invite in the voices of my UUSC colleagues to share more about the work we are doing in collaboration with you, our UUSC supporters, and our grassroots partners around the world.

Play staff video from 2021 Human Rights Celebration event: [uusc.org/about-uusc](https://uusc.org/about-uusc)

▶ For a video of Rev. Mary Katherine Morn delivering this sermon, go to [uusc.org/guest](https://uusc.org/guest).



### **“Introducing This Year’s Guests”- *Story for All Ages* by Rev. Laura Randall**

In today’s story, I want to introduce you to four people who live in different parts of the world but are all working with UUSC to help their communities have more justice and more resilience. Justice is another word for making things fair. And resilience means having the ability to heal after bad or hard things happen.

Even though we don’t have a chance to meet them in person, I want you to imagine they are coming over for dinner with you and your family. Think of them as a dinner guest, telling you an interesting story over a big plate of your favorite food.

All over the country, other kids like you are imagining the same dinner party and learning about the same people as part of a program called “Guest at Your Table.” The program is a chance to learn about four courageous people making a difference in their communities.

This year, the four people we are going to meet are Axel, Myra, Maina, and Cristian.

First I want to introduce you to Axel [[photo of Axel](#)], who lives in Missouri. Axel works with the people who work in the food processing factories in the midwestern United States. Many of the food service workers Axel works with are immigrants and refugees.

Without them we wouldn’t have a lot of the food we find in our grocery stores. They feed our whole country!

But even though they have this very important job, food service workers are often treated badly by the people that own the factories. They don’t make much money, they are forced to work for a long time without breaks, and they had to work all through the COVID pandemic without many of the simple items that would have helped them be safer from the virus.

To fight back against these unfair conditions, Axel is helping to organize people who work in these food processing factories so that they can work together to get better working conditions for themselves and their communities.

Next, I want to tell you about Myra [[photo of Myra](#)], an activist who lives in the United States now, but she is originally from a country called Burma. Burma is also sometimes called Myanmar.

When Myra was a little girl, her village was attacked by the country’s military and she was forced to flee her house along with her family. They weren’t able to bring anything with them when



## Guest at Your Table 2021-22 Sample Worship Service

NOW IS THE TIME FOR COURAGEOUS CHANGE

they ran. And they all had to travel through the forest for many days before they reached the country next door. Eventually, Myra was able to move to the United States. Now that she is safe, Myra speaks out on behalf of the many people still in Burma who are facing the same military violence that Myra went through as a little girl.

What Myra and her family went through was very scary and making sure this kind of violence stops is very important to her. Myra is using her voice to call attention to what is happening to the people of Burma right now.

The third person I want to introduce you to is Maina Talia [[photo of Maina](#)]. Maina lives in Kioa Island, which is part of the nation of Fiji in the South Pacific. Many countries in this part of the world are facing the impacts of climate change now. They are losing land to the ocean as sea levels rise.

Kioa Island has a higher elevation than many of its neighbors. This means that Kioa Island will be a safer place to live as sea levels continue to rise.

In order to prepare for welcoming new people to Kioa Island, Maina and the members of the Kioa Island Community Organization are working together to create community resilience by making plans and planting trees that will help the island withstand the forces of climate change.

Lastly, I want to introduce you to Cristian [[photo of Cristian](#)], who is from Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, many farmers have a hard time making a living because giant agricultural companies own the land, the farming equipment, even the seeds!

Cristian and the other women in their farming cooperative are doing things differently. They care for their own land, use traditional farming practices that do not harm the soil, and plant a variety of different kinds of seeds that have been used by their communities for generations.

This way of farming helps the land heal and helps women gain financial and social independence. Cristian is helping her community build resilience from both climate change and violence against women with their feminist farming cooperative.

I hope these stories were a chance to learn about the challenges this year's four "Guests" are facing, and how they are fighting for what is fair and right while also helping their communities become more resilient. Through "Guest at Your Table," your congregation and other congregations around the country are helping provide the "Guests" with resources to do their work. Together, we can make a better and fairer world. Thank you!

For a video of Rev. Laura Randall sharing this story, go to [uuscs.org/guest](https://uuscs.org/guest).