



Guest at Your Table 2026–2027

Sample Worship Materials

Theme: Next Door, Across Borders, and Worldwide

What does it mean to be a neighbor? Justice movements are born out of and sustained by community connection. When human rights and international aid are under attack, we must show up for all our neighbors, both locally and globally. UUSC's partners demonstrate what neighboring means in action, showing how community care transcends borders.

Please use these sample worship resources to in your Guest at Your Table service or let them serve as inspiration for your own words. Thank you for joining in this beloved UUSC tradition with Unitarian Universalists around the world as we come together to commit ourselves to action and community care on behalf of our neighbors everywhere.



Suggested Hymns

from *Sing Out Love*

As We Carry This Flame Forward by William Moore

Do Not be Daunted by Lynn Harrison

A Just Peace by Timothy L. Anderson

The Tide is Rising by Shoshana Meira Friedman

from *Singing the Journey*

#1023 Building Bridges

#1017 Building a New Way

#1028 The Fire of Commitment

from *Singing the Living Tradition*

#134 Our World Is One World

#146 Soon the Day Will Arrive

#159 This is My Song

#315 This Old World

#317 We Are Not Our Own

Responsive Readings

from *Singing the Living Tradition*

#464 And Then (we suggest substituting "all people" for "both men and women" and "both women and men" to be inclusive of all genders)

#584 A Network of Mutuality

#598 Without Hate

#666 The Legacy of Caring



Suggested Opening Words/Chalice Lightings

Come into this circle of love and justice

By Marilyn Sewell

from *UUA's Worship Web*

Come into this circle of love and justice,
Come into this community where we can dream and
Believe in those dreams—
Come into this holy space where we remember who we are
And how we want to live.
Come now, and let us worship together!

Welcome to this Place

By Cathy Rion Starr

from *UUA's Worship Web*

Welcome to this place of peace;
May we find some moments of quiet contemplation.

Welcome to this place of celebration;
May our hearts soar with gratitude for the gift of life.

Welcome to this place of sacred love;
May we gently hold all that is broken here.

Welcome to this place of inquiry;
Here, may we be challenged to open our minds and hearts ever wider.

Come into this place of community;
May we, together, draw the circle of love and justice ever wider.

Welcome to this sacred place;
Come, let us worship, celebrate, grieve, and love together.



This Faith

By Heide Cottam

from *UUA's Worship Web*

Let us be a faith that gathers, reaching for one another
through the walls of hate others build,
through the cages of ignorance and arrogance,
and through the fear that burns city streets.

Let us be a faith that sees a vision of a better world:
More compassionate, more just, more holy,
And with more love.

There is a faith that binds up the broken,
cauterizes battle wounds with the balm of peace,
sings longer and louder than the trumpets of war –
let us be that faith, too.

Let us be the ones who do not tread lightly in this world,
but light it up with our love,
who hold up the mirror of worth and dignity,
who are the sanctuary others seek.
But first:

Let us be a faith that worships together.

Here.

This morning.

In this space.

At this moment.

Let us be a faith.



Suggested Prayer

All That We Share Is Sacred

By Rev. Andrée Mol

from *UUA's Worship Web*

This blessing was written in honor of two Unitarians, Martha and Waitstill Sharp, who during WWII dared to risk their own comfort in order to help save the lives of those in desperate need.

As we gather together,
May we remember
When you share with me what is most important to you,
That is where listening begins.
When I show you that I hear you,
When I say your life matters,
That is where compassion begins.
When I open the door to greet you,
That is where hospitality begins.
When I venture out to bring you to shelter,
That is where love begins.
When I risk my comfort to ease your suffering,
When I act against hatred, violence, and injustice,
That is where courage begins.
When we experience the full presence of each other,
Because of our shared humanity,
Because of our differences,
That is where holy gratitude begins.
May this space be a table
that is not complete
until all are welcome.
May this table be a space of beauty
where together
we create a series of miracles, and
where all that we share is sacred.
May it be so.



Suggested Readings

The Common Good

By Rev. Kathleen McTigue

We breathe the common wind of the earth
no matter where we live, who we love,
what language we speak.

We drink the common water of the earth
no matter what our color, how long we live,
the coverings we drape on our forms.

We travel the common paths of the earth
no matter our beliefs, how far we move from home,
the gold that we carry, or its lack.

May we live from these truths: our hearts
open to the holiness all around us,
and our hands turned always toward the common good.

Borders and Bridges

By Gina Valdés

from *UUA's Worship Web*

Hay tantísimas fronteras
que dividen a la gente,
pero por cada frontera
existe también un puente.

*There are so many borders
that divide people,
but for every border
there is also a bridge.*

Adapted from "Copla #1," *Puentes y fronteras/Bridges and Borders*, translated
by Katherine Callen King



Outside/Inside

By Laura Bogle

from *UUA's Worship Web*

Outside

The flags fly

Down the highway, hanging on to the back of large trucks or the chest of a man.

Outside

There is grabbing and taking

A staking and restaking

Of territory claimed

The roads cut, the oil burned, blockades erected, and walls built

Outside

The borders between us are made visible in noise, colors, ballots.

Signs and signals.

Inside resides

The breath of common ancestors

The child who plays with no thought of malice

The heart tuned toward suffering

The taste of figs ripening in the lingering autumn heat

The sliver of an orange moon low in the evening November sky.

Inside, begins something you might call a prayer

Let us kneel down.

Not to God or nation or ideology

But to what is inside. A feeling, a connection

A welling like the waters at the very beginning of time

Unpolluted and gently flowing.

Sweet and dark and healing.

Let us kneel down to the persistent possibility that the life and love within prevail.

Let us release what is inside outward in beauty, spilling towards each other, until all merges.

Unstoppable well of knowing that we will only ever be saved by one another.



Sermon

Imagining Belonging: Next Door, Across Borders, and Worldwide

By Rev. Mary Katherine Morn

(A recording of Rev. Morn offering this sermon is [available here](#) for use in worship services.)

Will you join me in arriving to this time of worship, whether you are gathered together in shared space, or joining, as I am, virtually—still with the remembrance of communities of worship gathered and the assurance of connections that we share.

The breath and rhythm of gathering for worship is about those connections. It is intention toward making visible the bonds of kinship, the bonds of life, the bonds of love that hold us.

I invite you to join me in turning attention to the connections, which might just make possible a revelation of the Holy, the whole of what we are, one human family sharing one earthly home.

We begin with this invocation, invoking again the Holy Love from which we all come to life, the Sacred Spirit that animates us and calls us to honor our connections and our kinship and to take part in the creativity that is our Life.

I am Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, President and Lead Executive Officer of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. It is my privilege and pleasure to offer this year's Guest at your Table sermon. Our theme is "Next Door, Across Borders, and Around the World."

About eight years ago, I joined a multi-faith coalition in southern California, to protest our government's response to humans crossing the border. The gathering, organized by the American Friends Service Committee, and co-sponsored by UUSC, among others, took place on International Human Rights Day.

We started our procession at Border Field State Park. We walked the trail through the park with reverence. This made the sound of the drones surveilling us more striking. We interspersed our movement with protest songs, so that the humming of the drones was overcome by the melodies of our resistance.



When we were about halfway to the border fence, the organizers stopped us, calling us into silence. It was warm, even on that December day, with few clouds. As the drones hummed, leaders spaced out along our long procession called out the names of some of those killed in migration, whether in detention, in the desert, or on the streets by agents or by the weaponized conditions created to deter people from migrating.

With every name called, we responded honoring each person, "Presente." Not numbers, not abstractions. Felipe. Jacklin. And so many others. Between the reading of the names, we paused, hearing only the sounds of birds, and the wind, and the humming sound of relentless surveillance.

After this sacred honoring, we made our way to the border and when the fence appeared in the distance, it was surreal. So tall. Cutting through the earth like a scar. And running some distance into the ocean. Maybe you've seen it.

I've seen other border walls. But the ocean's refusal to comply with this wall's arbitrary division almost made me laugh. Then I saw the birds sitting high on the fence watching us. As we walked toward the heavily armed border patrol, the birds flew playfully up and around. Down the length of the fence above the water. Around the end of the fence and back. It grounded me to watch them as I joined the chants and songs.

Poet Gina Valdez reminds us, "There are so many borders that divide people, but for every border there is also a bridge."

For every border there is also a bridge. We humans do not have wings to transcend the fences and borders that are built to divide us...so we build bridges. For every fearful policy that dehumanizes some, there is a vision that points to the worth of every person and towards our collective liberation.

UUSC partners are carrying that vision, building collective liberation, every day. With support from people like you, we provide grants, technical support, research, communication support, advocacy, and solidarity that advances human rights around the world. Each year with Guest at your Table, we invite you to meet some of our partners, so you can learn about what collective liberation means to them, what they're doing to create it, and how we together can be part of building a better world for all of us.



You can learn a great deal more about each of this year's partners on our UUSC website. I'd like to offer a brief introduction to a couple of them.

Widlore Mérancourt was a reserved teenager, he fell in love with reading, writing, and journalism. He frequented the library, pouring over newspapers. At 15, he started working at the local radio station. Whether in the papers or on the radio, however, Mérancourt never got news from his neighborhood. He grew up in the city of Jérémie of the Grand'Anse department in Haiti. All the news stories were about Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince miles and miles away.

Mérancourt wanted to be a journalist, but he was determined to produce accountability journalism: elevating local, frontline voices, exposing human rights abuses, and capturing stories left untold.

In 2019, Mérancourt was able to realize his dreams when he became the Editor in Chief of AyiboPost. This independent news organization was founded in 2014 with a mission to become the primary online media reference for investigation and explanatory content in Haiti. Under Mérancourt's leadership, AyiboPost became a UUSC partner.

AyiboPost's reporting helps people respond to ongoing crises in Haiti. Just recently, articles by the news outlet have resulted in the successful liberation of women who had been victims of human trafficking. AyiboPost facilitated the recovery of children who had been trafficked.

Of course there is deeper history here—one we shouldn't ignore. Perhaps you know it. Most do not. In 1804, enslaved Africans in Haiti won freedom, establishing the world's first Black republic. But just twenty years later France demanded 90 million francs, due them they said because of lost income from slave ownership.

Let's sit with that for one minute.

The new nation had no choice, with the violent alternative bearing down on them in the form of warships off their coast. According to a 2022 The New York Times analysis, because of loans taken to pay off this double debt, the final payment to debtors was actually made in 1947. They approximated that 112 million francs was actually paid in indemnity, which is equivalent to \$560 million in 2022 after adjusting for inflation. And when you add the cost of the loans, an estimated \$21 billion dollars was taken from Haiti from 1825 to 1947.



When you next hear about the failure of Haiti, I hope you will remember the work Mérancourt and his colleagues are doing at AyiboPost, to tell the fuller story, to lift up the resilience of people in Haiti. To remind us all that the roots of crisis lie in colonization—not in Haitian failure.

Mérancourt believes that “to make Haiti whole, to capture the true humanity of this country, we need a more complete story. We need to talk about not just the struggles, but also the resistance; not just the issues, but also how people are responding with local resources to those very issues.”

It is a privilege for UUSC to partner with Mérancourt and Aiybo Post. We are learning from their creative and courageous resistance and truth-telling.

Just as AyiboPost refuses deficit narratives, UUSC refuses charity models. Last year, UUSC hosted the inaugural Haiti Rising wellness retreat—four days of community care and renewal for grassroots partners. We fund their campaigns. We amplify their voices. We stand alongside, not above.

Finally, let me introduce you to Yulia Kondur. Yulia founded Chiricli to provide education to Ukrainians about Roma culture and history and to support Roma people facing discrimination and violence.

Roma people have been socially isolated and discriminated against for hundreds of years, facing enslavement, cultural erasure, and genocide. This prejudice and violence is largely rooted in xenophobia and racism. Roma culture is distinctive, and Roma people have resisted assimilation. Public institutions often refuse to meaningfully recognize Roma history and identity.

After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, Yulia has focused on supporting women impacted by violence. In addition to a mediation program and advocacy, Chiricli has programs to help Roma people access medical treatment, employment, education, and social mobility.

Chiricli has worked with the Ombudsman Secretariat, training judges, police officers, and other public officials. Their educational efforts help non-Roma authority figures and civilians to identify and root out discrimination. Chiricli directly confronts unjust power structures and social bias, strengthening communities and connecting neighbors.



Support for Roma communities and advocacy for Roma human rights have been an important pillar of UUSC's response to the crisis in Ukraine. I've had the privilege of visiting some of our partners there, including attending a portion of an annual Roma youth gathering in Krakow, Poland.

Two hundred Roma youth came together from twenty different European countries. I was frankly embarrassed by how little I knew about Roma identity and Roma diversity. This important annual gathering helps Roma youth make connections across this diversity holding the precious thread of Roma identity.

And as we journeyed together to Auschwitz, we also joined together in refusing to ignore the history of genocide against the Romany. The work of preserving history, culture, identity, and belonging is the work of justice too.

Chircli means bird in the Romany language. Yulia named their organization for the spirit of the birds who are free and fly where they will.

Imagine. Imagine, communities gathering across borders as family, Muslims and Christians and traditional families and non-traditional, most speaking the language of their geography, but starting to learn and preserve their traditional language as well.

Imagine, people not defined by the political and economic contrivance of borders, but by history, by story, by kinship.

Imagine, knowing we belong: next door, across borders, and around the world.

UUSC partners are not waiting for rescue. They are building power. Chircli's mediators protecting Roma families. Casa Tochán's collaborators creating shared homes. AyiboPost's journalists recovering women from trafficking, liberating children from abusive custody. CAPAS congregations offering birthday parties, power of attorney guidance, wheelchair accessibility until recovery.

They are doing more than imagining. They are building belonging and freedom. Advancing human rights and justice. And we have the privilege of joining in solidarity.

We started this time together with invocation, the invocation of the holy, of all that makes us whole, the kinship, the gift of life, and the love that holds us in the truest sense of who we are, one human family, sharing one earthly home.

May it be so for all of us. Amen.



Story for All Ages

Jared and his father were in the kitchen together making dinner. Even in the mild San Diego evening, the windows were foggy with the steam coming from the tomato sauce bubbling on the stove. The kitchen smelled of garlic, onions, tomatoes, and spices. Jared loved cooking with his dad. They often talked about things as they worked side by side.

Today Jared's heart was heavy from something that happened at school.

"You're awfully quiet today, Jared," said Jared's dad. "What's up?"

"Today at recess there was an argument between some kids about whether it was good to have a border that was guarded between the United States and Mexico. Some kids said that it was important to have a border to keep order and to keep people safe. I was in the group saying borders were made up by humans and that it wasn't fair to keep people from going where they wanted to go – or from being with the people they love. My friend Max was arguing in favor of a guarded border!

"I was thinking about Natasha," Jared went on. "She only gets to see her dad in-person through the border wall, and not even very often. It makes me really sad."

"Our whole neighborhood was heartbroken when Natasha's dad was taken away," said Jared's dad. "I'm still so grateful our congregation is a CAPAS congregation and could help. We raised money and got Natasha's family connected to the legal support they needed. But it's taking a long time and there are still no guarantees they'll find a way for him to come back."

"It's not fair," said Jared quietly. Then with more force he exclaimed, "I can't understand how Max could argue in favor of the border!"

"It can be hard when our friends hold really different views than we do," said Jared's dad. "Different families have different life experiences and different values that shape how they see the world. And sometimes people repeat what they have heard others say without really thinking them through."

"Well, I like our values better," said Jared.



"Borders are complicated," said his dad. "There may be some good things about them, but when they separate families, we know we need to do better. We believe that every single person – no matter where they were born or where they live – deserves to be treated with dignity and compassion. It's hard to practice treating the whole world as neighbors... we know they really are, but we don't really know how to live that way yet as human beings. But it's worth trying."

They stirred the sauce together in silence for a moment

"Dad," said Jared, "can we have Natasha and her mom over for dinner soon? I want them to know we're thinking about them."

"Yes, let's do that, Jared!" his dad agreed. "It would be good to see them, and I'd like to know if they have everything they need during this long hard time they are in."

"And let's cook them something yummy together!" said Jared, smiling for the first time all afternoon.

If time allows, invite congregants to turn to one another to discuss: Is there someone in your life — a neighbor, a friend, someone in your community — who could use an invitation to dinner? One powerful thing we can do is simply say to our neighbors: you belong here, at our table.



Benediction

Neighbors Everywhere

By Rev. Laura Randall

May we recognize each other as neighbors,
knowing that our kinship transcends distance.

May we build bridges of welcome, respect, and love
where we find barriers of suspicion and violence.

In solidarity with our neighbors everywhere,
let us imagine a new world into being.