

“A Ritual for Lament, Loss, and Gratitude”
 A ritual for the one-year pandemic anniversary in the Needham-Boston area
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I am grateful for the inspiration drawn here from Rev Nancy McDonald Ladd’s “Appendix B: On Liturgies of Lament” in her book *After the Good News: Progressive Faith Beyond Optimism*.

Opening

As we settle into this ritual space of honoring the many complicated, compound, and ambiguous losses of the past year, we let the words of the UU Trauma Response Ministry team sink in.

We join together in this virtual Zoom space, as a community...

- Bent on loving and yet exhausted.
- Having gone through the movements that come with any large-scale disaster: the warning, the impact, the rescue phase, community cohesion, disillusionment, working through grief, and now the beginning of anniversaries.
- Having in the process seen many faces of ourselves and our loved ones.
- Having let our grief show visibly and, in other moments, let it simmer just under the surface *or* be buried much deeper.
- Having missed each other dearly and, in other moments, just not been able to keep up.

Loss/Lament

Let us take a moment to, in this shared space that is made holy by one another’s witness, recognize and name the heaviness that we carry from all that has been lost this year.

We gather first to remember and mourn the now 530,000 lives lost in our country and 2.6 million worldwide this year to the Covid-19 pandemic. (numbers now outdated)

We call to mind our 7th UU principle: the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part...which reminds us that we are connected to those who we lost to the pandemic and to one another in our grief.

You are invited to enter into the chat box the names of loved ones who you lost to the Covid pandemic. Rev Catie is going to read some of the names shared aloud. As the service is livestreaming to YouTube, if you would like the name of your loved one to stay within our community gathered on Zoom, please write “don’t read aloud” before your message.

While Rev. Catie reads, I will be dropping salt from my own home into three cups of water to represent our tears of healing. [*Chat messages are read aloud, while salt is added to water*].

After 52 weeks of the pandemic raging in our country, there are over 525,000 dead, and (as we know from *Rent*) there are 525,600 minutes in a year. That's one life lost every minute in this country--each one somebody's sibling, parent, child, spouse, or friend. So, this morning, we offer up these names and salt water tears to remember these losses that weigh so heavy on our hearts.

There have been countless other losses of the last year that so often go unnamed because of their ambiguous nature or because they might feel too trivial (jobs, valuable time with loved ones, trips, sports seasons, events, relationships and friendships, holidays, weddings, local businesses closing, important life experiences, and the list goes on and on).

You are invited now to enter into the chat box any of the losses you would like to name that you or we together have experienced over the last year. Again, if you would like your message to stay within our Zoom community, please write "don't read aloud" before your message.

While Rev. Catie reads, I will continue dropping salt into our three cups of water to represent tears of healing. [*Chat messages are read aloud, while salt is added to water*].

Spirit of Life and Love, as we bear witness to all that hurts on this 1-year anniversary of remote services, help to steady us. To remind us that sometimes we have to name and wade through loss to see that, on the other side, community and a truer hope abides. May naming these losses keep us tender and gentle toward each other, and committed to all that which gives life in a time that can feel barren.

As the sung part of our ritual this morning, please join me, Irina Georgieva, and Kate Loftus Campe in singing *I Know This Rose Will Open*. We will sing it through 3 times.

[Meditative hymn *I Know this rose will open* is played]

Gratitude

Let us take a moment to, in this shared space that is made holy by each other's witness, *also* recognize and name that which has buoyed and tethered us through this last year, all that we are grateful for, including:

- Health care workers at all levels of keeping the hospitals running (from doctors and nurses to environmental services to the kitchen staff and many more)

- Essential workers at all levels of keeping our communities operating, safe, and fed.
- Research teams working tirelessly to engineer vaccines to protect against Covid-19
- Anyone who has offered care, support, or understanding to us during this difficult year
- Anyone who has made us laugh during this difficult year
- And many more

You are invited to enter into the chat box anything that you feel grateful for today, from this past year. If you would like your message to stay within our community here, please write “don’t read aloud” before your message.

While Rev. Catie reads, I will be adding three daylilies to our cups of salt water on my screen. Daylilies are one of the flowers that are salt-tolerant, and survive in brackish water environments. To us, they represent an ecological resilience, that there is still life even in adverse conditions. *[Chat messages are read aloud, while daylilies are added to the salt water].*

Though the sorrow and heartache are still there, may we together carve out a space through our attention to our gratitude and, in so doing, our resilience...like the daylilies.

Let us close out our ritual time together with the words of Euro-American UU minister Rev Ken Langer:

“The great blue ship we call earth,
 This blue and green vessel we call home
 Has sailed 'round the sun once more.
 But this journey has been like no other.
 The storms that have risen above us
 in towering waves of angry water
 And crashed into our lives were like none before.
 The fury of those storms have touched every life
 From every corner and every shore of this planet
 and have taken too many away from us—
 too many!
 The waters drench us with the truth
 That every living being is connected to every other.
 We sail together or not at all.
 Let us hold fast to the mast—
 Be it friends, family, neighbors, kind strangers,
 Or the beauty of nature

For the wild seas shall subside
And the winds will be calmed
And we shall look forward to a brighter journey
Around the golden sun.”

Blessed be, and Amen.