

1/16/22 - 2/27/22

Frozen / Making Holy Space



What does it mean to make holy space during a frozen season?

Frozen ['frō-zən] (from Merriam-Webster.com)

1: treated, affected, or crusted over by freezing

2a: incapable of being changed, moved, or undone : FIXED

b: not available for present use, i.e., frozen capital

c (1): drained or incapable of emotion

(2): expressing or characterized by cold unfriendliness

Considering the similarity between “holy space” and “sacred space,” we chose this definition of “sacred space” to deepen our thoughts on both:

Sacred Space | Encyclopedia.com

A sacred place is first of all a defined place, a space distinguished from other spaces. The rituals that a people either practice at a place or direct toward it mark its sacredness and differentiate it from other defined spaces. To understand the character of such places, Jonathan Z. Smith has suggested the helpful metaphor of sacred space as a “focusing lens.”

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/sacred-space>

“As frozen earth holds the determined seed,
this sacred space holds our weariness, our
worry, our laughter and our celebration.”

Laura Wallace

Dear Ones,

Several years ago, FirstLight Players, the resident drama group at First Unitarian of Rochester, produced “Leap of Faith,” a musical with a rocking gospel music score. We were so blessed to have as our Music Director Paul Boutte, who directs full gospel choirs at several churches in downtown Rochester. Paul recruited talent from his choirs. FirstLight Players recruited our usual folks who had little or no experience with gospel music. Our First Unitarian singers/players joked with Paul about how Rev. Richard Gilbert characterized us as “God’s Frozen People” – and we were mostly right about that! Where his recruits were experienced in learning gospel harmonies by ear, the UUs were accustomed to learning harmonies from musical notation. It was a struggle for us to memorize what we couldn’t see fixed to the page. Where the experienced gospel singers were used to moving their bodies with the music, the UUs were, well let’s just say, a little stiff. What an opportunity we had to learn to make holy space for the spirit of the music to move us. What fun we had along the way as we UUs thawed out among our new friends!

Looking around at this moment in Rochester and in the world, it’s not hard to feel frozen. Our surroundings are literally frozen. We are navigating in unprecedented times which may make us frozen with fear. So where do we find someone like our favorite gospel music director, Paul Boutte, who can encourage us to put down our fixed ideas and guide us to thaw out into the rhythm of this life?

This is where your faith community at First Unitarian can be of help. We believe that this moment is an opportunity to be with whatever has us frozen by making space for the holy. Merriam-Webster Dictionary says that the “holy” is that which is worthy of devotion. What is worthy of your devotion? The beauty of a snow-filled forest? A beautiful sound? Daily practice? The miracle that is your body?

We hope this season’s packet provides you with some ideas for creating and exploring your own holy space. We encourage you to see it as a buffet from which you may choose what speaks to you or challenges you in a way you feel ready to be challenged. If nothing on the buffet whets your appetite, we encourage you to launch your own expedition across the frozen landscape to create holy space, and then share that with your Soul Matters group.

In faith and love,
Mary Lyubomirsky
First Unitarian Church of Rochester

This Soul Matters packet was shepherded by Ira Srole & Mary Lyubomirsky, with significant contributions from Anne & Tom Perry and Suzy Farrell, and many thanks to the Rev. AJ and the Packet Writing Team.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First Unitarian of Rochester is situated where the Haudenosaunee Confederacy came into being. The Confederacy was formed when Skennenrahawi, the Peacemaker, walked among the Haudenosaunee over 800 years ago. His vision was to create a union of nations at peace.

In the Peacemaker epic there are four sites that are identified with his work and therefore considered sacred places. One of them is south of Rochester, NY at a location called Ganondagan where the Peacemaker met Jikonsaseh, the female leader who embraced his teachings and became the first clan mother.

To learn more, visit:

Seneca Art & Culture Center at Ganondagan State Historic Site

7000 County Road 41 (Boughton Hill Road) Victor, NY 14564

585-924-5848

<https://ganondagan.org/>

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Select one of the exercises below to practice and come prepared to discuss the experience and your thoughts and feelings about it with your group.

Exercise A: Lovingly Recommitting to Creating Sacred Space in my Soul Matters Group

Whether called “covenant groups,” “chalice circles,” or “soul matters,” small group ministries are the heart of adult spiritual development in numerous UU churches. Yet many congregations are finding that, as these groups increase and mature, keeping them vital takes a regular recommitment to making them a sacred space that invites the soul to show up.

1. Read the articles on Small Group Ministries in the Resources section.
2. What are three ways you can be with your Soul Matters group that would deepen the sacred nature of your circle of trust? Take some time to envision and write down your thoughts and share them with your Soul Matters group. Are there ways your covenant could be updated to include these ideas?

Exercise B: Watch the Disney Film “Frozen II” either on your own, or with friends and/or family members from another generation

There are many relevant themes to explore in “Frozen II:” Treatment of indigenous people by colonialist powers. Recognizing the damage caused by one people against another. Atonement. Reparations. How do we make holy space for healing?

After watching the movie together:

- Discuss the actions of King Runeard versus the Northuldra people.
- Engage the friend and/or child(ren) in discussing what would be the right thing to do to repair the damage caused by Runeard. Did Anna do the right thing by destroying the dam even though she risked destroying Arendelle?
- Did you notice that Elsa and Anna’s mother was a Northuldra person who saved their father when he was a young lad? Intermarriage between indigenous people and their ‘conquerers’ happens all over the world. How does that affect atonement and reparations?

Utilize the Links in the Resource Section to further explore the themes introduced by the movie with your intergenerational group. Share the highlights of your discoveries and discussion with your soul matters group.

Exercise C. Feast for the Soul – January 15 – February 23, 2022

What nine months does for the embryo
Forty early mornings
Will do for your growing awareness
- Jelaluddin Rumi



Every year since 2008, an online community has gathered for 40 days for daily practice. There are many resources on their website. Select a daily spiritual practice from their website or from your own resources. Make a goal for yourself as to the frequency of your practice during the forty days. Be kind to yourself as you reach for your goal. Let your Soul Matters group know how it felt to create this holy space.

<https://feastforthesoul.org/>

Exercise D. Create an Altar for your Home

Choose items and symbols that are meaningful to you as you create an altar for your practice. Use the sacred space you've created and share your experience with your group. Here is a link to help inspire some ideas for your altar:

<https://chopra.com/articles/sacred-space-how-to-make-an-altar-in-your-home>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions aren't "homework" that need to be covered entirely. Instead, simply pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The questions often lead not to answers, but more questions.

1. January follows a month of winter celebrations that may have found you overly busy or particularly tender. Are there ways you intend to care for yourself in the aftermath of the holidays?
2. Ice by its nature is reflective. Are there aspects of this frozen season which invite you to reflect in a deeper way than in other seasons?
3. Do you have a sacred space in your home or in the world that brings you closer to the holy?
4. Many Indigenous communities hold the land as sacred. What is your relationship to the land where you spend most of your time?
5. We often think of holy space as a physical place, but do you consider the space between yourself and someone you love sacred?
6. There is so much beauty and awe in winter. Is there a particular image of winter that you'd want to share?

7. When someone you love is gone, is there a particular nature to the space they held that remains in their absence?
8. Louis Kahn, the architect who designed our church building, said “Every building must have... its own soul.” Do you feel the soul of the building we worship in?



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Resources for Exercise A: Small Group Ministry

Small Group Ministry

Brief overview from the UUA and a useful set of links if you want to go deeper.

<https://www.uua.org/small-group>

Healing Community

Small group ministry creates a sacred time where the stories of our lives are heard.

Thandeka, UU World January/February 2005

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/small-group-ministry-creates-sacred-time>

The joys and challenges of covenant groups

Some groups don't work because they weren't set up as covenant groups to begin with.

Donald E. Skinner, UU World 1/30/2006 Winter 2005

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/the-joys-challenges-covenant-groups>

Circle of Trust Touchstones for Safe and Trustworthy Space

Parker Palmer's guidelines defining the boundaries that help create safe space for the soul.

<https://couragerenewal.org/wpccr/touchstones/>

Resources for Exercise B: 'Frozen II'

This blog post by a Sami writer is accessible and well-illustrated. Spoiler Alert – recommend reading AFTER seeing the movie.

<https://www.fairychamber.com/blog/frozen-ii-the-sami-culture-and-scandinavian-myths>

Frozen 2 anti-colonial / reparations message for today.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/12/05/kids-love-anna-elsa-frozen-iis-lesson-is-adults/>

Excerpt from the Washington Post opinion piece:

“Elsa’s magic gives her access to memories stored in water. These poetically frozen moments reveal that the dam was in fact a ruse, part of Runeard’s plot to dominate the Northuldra. Worse, it was he who initiated war by killing the unarmed leader of the Northuldra.”

READINGS FOR CHALICE LIGHTING

Chalice Lighting

Determined Seed

By Laura Wallace (UUA WorshipWeb)

As frozen earth holds the determined seed,
this sacred space holds our weariness, our
worry, our laughter and our celebration.
Let us bring seed and soul into the light
of thought, the warmth of community,
and the hope of love.
Let us see together, hear together,
love together.



The Courage to Lay Ourselves Bare



By Evan Young (UUA WorshipWeb)

In our reckless yearning to be safe,
we turn again and again away
from the blessed security of having nowhere left to hide.
Give us the courage to lay ourselves bare.
Amen.

Closing Words

With what benediction shall I leave you?

By Mark Mosher DeWolfe (UUA.org)

With what benediction shall I leave you?

This: In your life, may you know the holy meaning, the mystery that breaks into it every moment.
May you live at peace with your world and at peace with yourself.
And may the love of truth guide you in your every day. Amen.

What If?

By Ganga White (author of *Yoga Beyond Belief*)

What if our religion was each other?
If our practice was our life?
If prayer was our words?
What if the temple was the Earth?
If forests were our church?
If holy water – the rivers, lakes and oceans?
What if meditation was our relationships?
If the teacher was life?
If wisdom was self-knowledge?
If love was the center of our being?

QUOTATIONS



A city is the place of availabilities. It is the place where a small boy, as he walks through it, may see something that will tell him what he wants to do his whole life.

Louis Kahn, Jewish American architect of Rochester First Unitarian's building

May you grow still enough to hear the small noises earth makes in preparing for the long sleep of winter, so that you yourself may grow calm and grounded deep within.

May you grow still enough to hear the trickling of water seeping into the ground, so that your soul may be softened and healed, and guided in its flow.

May you grow still enough to hear the splintering of starlight in the winter sky and the roar at earth's fiery core.

May you grow still enough to hear the stir of a single snowflake in the air, so that your inner silence may turn into hushed expectation.

Brother David Steindl-Rast, Benedictine monk, author, lecturer

Defrosting a frozen memory can get the present all wet.

Khang Kijarro Nguyen, multidisciplinary photographer/artist/performer

The magical way the wintertime warms you up is through its frozen beauties!

The most amazing thing about the winter is that even a frozen world may be perceived as a heaven.

Mehmet Murat ildan, Turkish playwright and novelist

Stars are always dancing. Sometimes they dance twinkling away with the rhythm of your joyful heart and sometimes they dance without movement to embrace your heartache as if frozen sculptures of open-armed sadness.

Munia Kahn, international author and poet

This moment humanity is experiencing can be seen as a door or a hole

White Eagle, Hopi Indian Chief

<https://www.pressenza.com/2021/08/hopi-indian-chief-white-eagle-this-moment-humanity-is-experiencing-can-be-seen-as-a-door-or-a-hole/>

The water's edge he had traversed with his light canoe and with every point and islet on the lakes he was familiar. He had followed the rivers to where they came bubbling up from their rocky bed amid mountain elevations, and there was not a tributary stream or run by whose side he had not rested, or by whose music he had not been charmed, keeping pace with it, as it went innocently busying and babbling along its downward way. With any or all of these landmarks he was familiar, and when fixed upon as boundaries, he could readily recur to and religiously keep them; for they had been made by the Great Spirit, and it was his life study to know them.

John Niles Hubbard, American Biographer (1815-1897) *An Account of Red Jacket and His People, 1750-1830*

Church architecture describes visually the idea of the sacred, which is a fundamental need of man.

Mario Botta, Swiss architect

FROM UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

Coming Home Like Rivers to the Sea

Carolyn McDade and Lucile Schuck Longview

Making holy space in the creation of a new ritual
Excerpt from Beginnings: "The water ceremony became the central part of a religious service that broke with tradition in significant ways. It was created by lay women, women who had long been silent in the pews. The ritual space was also made sacred by the women themselves. We gathered to worship in a way authentic and liberating to us, not as in a church but in a semicircle around a large common earthen bowl.

It was a ritual of women's being connected by a universal symbol, water, a ritual of women being connected to the totality of life."

<https://www.uuwr.org/new-store/40-books/253-coming-home>



Sermon: Rev. Tina Simson "The Sacred Space Between Us":

Excerpt: "The sacred space between us is the most available ground for blessings... These are the spaces in our lives where there is ripe opportunity to practice our faith in humanity and choose to bless the world. All it takes is for you to notice, to choose life and love and kindness and to be grateful." <https://rochesterunitarian.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Sermon-The-Sacred-Space-Between-Us-Tina-Simson-1.docx.pdf>

Rev. Richard Gilbert's Meditation, "The Eternal Now" (excerpt)

This is sacred time.

This moment – poised between past and future,
Nourished by what has been, hungry for what is to be.

Every hope of our spirit, every dream of our heart, every anticipation of our soul shapes our future.

...

This is our time.

Our immortality is not in some time after time.

Our task is to create an eternal now,

In the vibrancy of this curious intersection

Of past and future.

Be present to the eternal now.

FROM SACRED TEXTS

Comparative Mythology

In 20th-century [comparative mythology](#), the term axis mundi — also called the cosmic axis, world axis, world pillar, center of the world, or world tree — has been greatly extended to refer to any mythological concept representing "the connection between [Heaven](#) and [Earth](#)" or the "higher and lower realms."

For more information on this: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axis_mundi

Hebrew Bible, Exodus 3:5

“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

Context: This holy ground would become the location of the calling of Israel’s greatest leader, as well as the place he would return with the people of Israel later on (Exodus 3:12; also Acts 7:30). This holy “place” referred specifically to Mount Horeb, the entire mountain where God would reveal Himself to Moses and the people of Israel.

<https://www.bibleref.com/Exodus/3/Exodus-3-5.html>

Tao Te Ching 11

Wu is nothingness, emptiness, non-existence

Thirty spokes of a wheel all join at a
common hub
yet only the hole at the center
allows it to spin

Clay is molded to form a cup
yet only the space within
allows the cup to hold water

Walls are joined to make a room
yet only by cutting out a door and a window
can one enter the room and live there

Thus, when a thing has existence alone
it is mere dead-weight
Only when it has wu, does it have life.

POETRY

SNOWFALL

By Nancy Brush, Winter 2012

Gently falling, like confetti
From the winter sky;
So clean, so soft, so white,
Celebrating the winter season.
The first snowfall, so eagerly anticipated
And joyfully received
By children, poets and winter athletes.
It floats as gentle as a feather,
Obliterating the ugly remains of fall

And still it falls -
No longer into welcome arms.
Rather, it becomes insidious,
Slowly piling up, it swirls in drifts
As winds gust and howl.
And yet, it is still clean, soft and white.
It is we who have changed.
We see it differently
As days go by
With no letup in its falling.

PODCASTS, SONGS, ARTICLES, FILMS, & BOOKS

Children's Books:

[The Lamp, The Ice, and the Boat Called Fish](#) by Jacqueline Briggs Martin

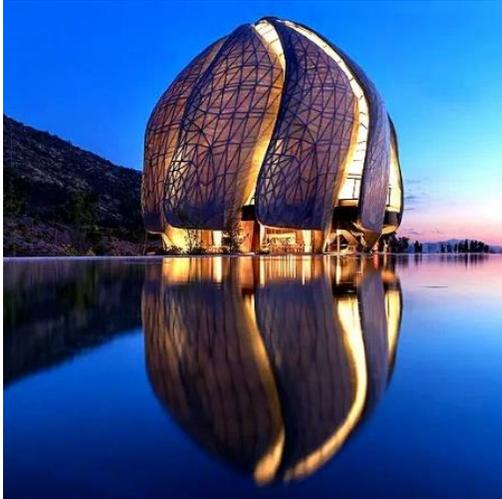
[Snowflake Bentley](#) by Jacqueline Briggs Martin

[The Mitten](#) by Jan Brett

[Moonbeams, Dumplings & Dragon Boats](#) by Nina Simonds & Leslie Schwartz, illustrated by Meilo So, supported by The Children’s Museum, Boston

Song:

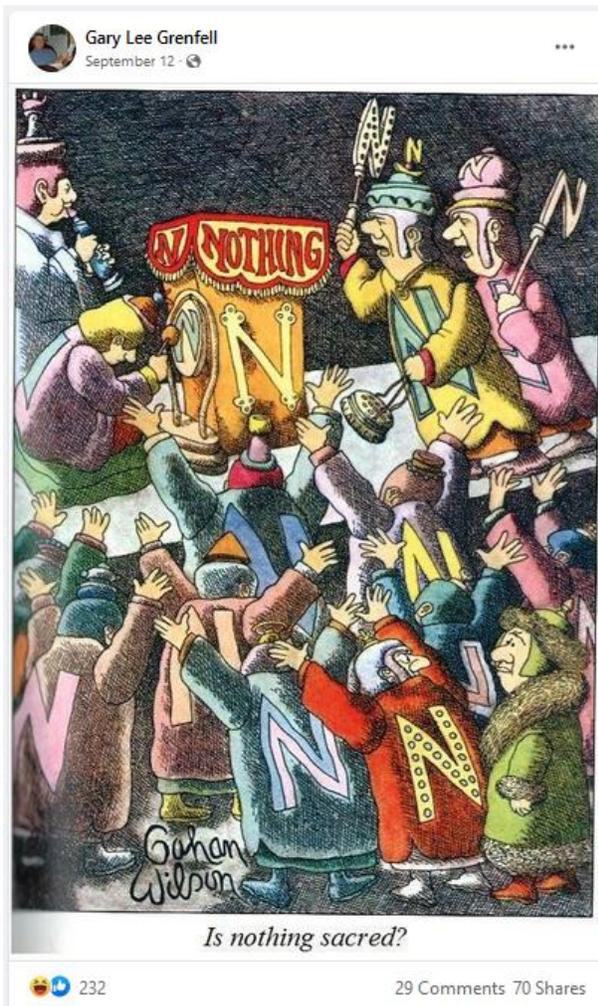
“Everything is Holy Now” by Peter Mayer <https://youtu.be/KiypaURysz4>



TED Talk: How do you build a sacred space? (Siamak Hariri | TEDNYC)
https://www.ted.com/talks/siamak_hariri_how_do_you_build_a_sacred_space?utm_source=tedcomshare&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tedsread

We would encourage you to update your knowledge on our church building after listening to this TED talk (12:37) in which our architect, Louis Kahn is referenced. Here's an article in Wikipedia written by church member Bill Fugate:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Unitarian_Church_of_Rochester_\(building\)#Interior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Unitarian_Church_of_Rochester_(building)#Interior)

Humor



“Is Nothing Sacred?” Posted recently to the *Unitarian Universalist Hysterical Society* group on Facebook.

Gahan Wilson, American Cartoonist

I used to jog but the ice cubes kept falling out of my glass.

David Lee Roth, American Rock Musician, Lead Singer for Van Halen

My advice to you is not to inquire why or whither, but just enjoy your ice cream while it's on your plate.

Thornton Wilder, American Playwright and Novelist