



ITHACA

UUU Connections

2024/2025 Issue No. 5

January 2025

## Our Spiritual Journey

*The question is not so much 'What do I learn from stories?' as 'What stories do I want to live?'*

*David Loy*

As we step into the new year, we find ourselves in a place of uncertainty - longing for reasons to hold onto hope while at the same time feeling an inescapable tension and anxiety. We are left wondering what the stories of this year will bring.

As I myself wonder what lies ahead I am reminded that the stories that stick with us, that stand the test of time, are those of perseverance in the face of great hardship.

It's the story told in the diary of a young Jewish girl who lived a life too brief, in a time of unimaginable suffering, but whose words continue to touch us decades later.

It's in the tales of so many people who were a part of the unyielding struggle for the right of Black Americans to live and thrive with equality and justice.

And it's found in the histories of our own faith, such as the Unitarians who played a pivotal role in organizing relief for European refugees during World War II—where the symbol of the flaming chalice was first born.

It's also in the story of the first female Universalist minister, who was arrested for defying societal expectations and boldly preaching as a woman during that era.

And in so many others— names that come easily to our lips because they made a difference in the world when it was needed most. We remember these people because they lived through profound oppression, yet chose to write their own story as one who resisted. One who stood firm against the injustices they faced, refusing to accept the systems that sought to suppress them.

What will our story be?

*Emily Richards, Director of Congregational Life*

**First Unitarian is a  
UUA-recognized (LGBTQ)  
Welcoming Congregation**

**Sunday Services in the  
Sanctuary at 10:30 am**

*Live-streamed on our YouTube channel*

**Nursery childcare and Religious  
Exploration classes for children**

**Emergency  
Pastoral Care**

In case of pastoral need, call Kathy Hopkins at 607-592-3025. She will direct pastoral needs for weddings, memorial services and emergency pastoral care to Rev. Janet Shortall.

*Camp Aurora registration is coming soon!*



# Religious Exploration News

For information about Religious Exploration, please contact Emily Richards at [CongregationalLife@uuitbaca.org](mailto:CongregationalLife@uuitbaca.org).

## Greetings from Religious Exploration

This month we are *Living Love Through the Practice of Story*.

Stories are essential. Human beings are storytelling creatures, stories give us hope and help us to grow. Both collective stories and individual stories can help us to build our identities as individuals and communities. Stories gift us with a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

And our own stories can inspire the stories of others. Hearing others bravely tell their stories, we all gain the courage to share and proudly embrace our own.

Stories help us make sense of our world, we need them to help us create connection and understand how to live our values, how to center love, especially in times of uncertainty.

May the stories that we tell be stories of bravery, hope, and above all, love.

*There's always a story. It's all stories, really. The sun coming up every day is a story. Everything's got a story in it. Change the story, change the world.*  
- Terry Pratchett

## Classroom Sundays

**Elementary:** This month the upper elementary aged children will be focusing on our monthly theme of Story through stories, activities, crafts, and games. The younger elementary students will be starting to explore or UU Values with Legos.

**Middle School and High School:** The youth will continue to explore what role they will play in "Building A Better World", an RPG-based curriculum that will lead youth and adults through the process of creating a game setting as a faith development and community-building exercise reflecting Unitarian Universalist values. Please have participants bring a set of gaming dice to each session if they have them.

Please register your children below for the 2024-2025 Religious Exploration program! This information helps us to plan for the upcoming year.

[First Unitarian Society of Ithaca RE Registration Form 2024-2025](#)

## Religious Exploration Wishlist

If you are looking to support the RE program and would like to purchase a gift, here is a list of items that would be useful and deeply appreciated.

[RE Wishlist](#)

We have so much appreciation for all of the community members who enrich our community through participating in our Religious Exploration programming. Being a part of the lives of our young people is deeply meaningful and the effects last a lifetime. This important programming can only happen with the support of the entire community.

[FUSIT 2024-2025 RE Volunteer Sign Up](#)

Please join our [First UU Ithaca Parents Facebook Group!](#)

*Emily Richards CRE (Credentialed Religious Educator) - Director of Congregational Life*  
*Madeline Natale - Religious Exploration Coordinator*

## Religious Exploration Schedule for January

**January 5th** - Classroom Sunday

**January 12th** - Creative Sunday

**January 19th** - Classroom Sunday

**January 26th** - Multigenerational Service

The Nursery will be open every Sunday in January from 10 am-12 pm for young children between the ages of 0 and 4.

## ***Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 8th-9th and 10-12th Graders***

Congratulations to our middle school OWL participants, who will be finishing up their program this month. The First Unitarian Society of Ithaca will be offering Our Whole Lives comprehensive sexuality education program to 10th-12th graders this spring. More details to come!

## **Religious Exploration Events for January**

### ***StUuffy Sleepover***

Saturday, **January 25th**, Starting at 4 pm

This year we invite you to join us for our Annual StUuffy Sleepover and then help us tuck your stuffy friends in and say good-night. There will be games, dinner, a movie, and story time.

Children and youth, and their stuffies, can be dropped off between 3:30 pm and 4 pm, and then picked back up at 8:30 pm. Parents and caregivers are also welcome! Stuffies are all invited to stay the night and get picked up in the morning at the Sunday service.

### ***Music for Little People***

**January 8th and 22nd** 10 am-10:45 am  
Arch Room

Share in the joy of music in this class which is free and open to the public. Children 0-5 and their caregivers are welcome to meet us in the Arch Room each month. Sing, play, dance, explore instruments, and connect through music.

### ***Small Group Ministry for Parents - Childcare Provided***

Sunday, **January 19th** 12 pm-1 pm  
FUSIT Library

A Small Group Ministry for individuals who are actively parenting. The group will follow the Soul Matters themes with a focus on how they are related to the journey and experience of being a parent. Gatherings will take place monthly on the third Sunday of the month from 12pm-1pm, with childcare available. We invite you to join us for an opportunity for fellowship and community within our larger First UU community, in a safe, confidential and nurturing environment.



## **January Worship Services**

The theme for January is "Living Love Through the Practice of Story" and the Celebrations Team is looking forward to speakers whose voices can help us to explore this theme as individuals and as a community.

### **Sunday, January 5, "What Story Shall We Choose?"**

*Emily Richards, CRE*

As we enter into this new year together, what are the stories that inspire us? How does our faith call us to create our own tales of perseverance, generosity, and resistance in times of adversity? What story do we want to live?

*Special music by Stephanie Ortolano*

### **Sunday, January 12, "One Person's Story is the Story of Many"**

*Rev. Peaches Gillette*

Our interrelatedness, our love of life and others, our place in our community, and our existence on this earth is inextricably bonded together. One story is the story of many.

*Special music TBA*

### **Sunday, January 19, "Envisioning Commitments for the New Year"**

*Rev. Janet Shortall*

As the new year post election is upon us, let us take time to reflect on what truly matters to us as Unitarian Universalists claiming the opportunity to align our values with actionable commitments that inspire growth, balance, fulfillment and develop a roadmap for intentional living.

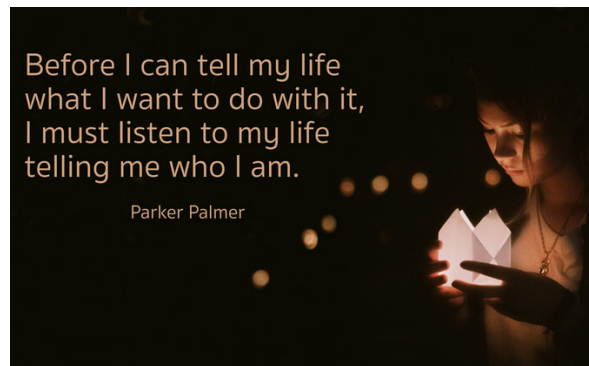
*Special music by Winter Gaspari, trumpet*

### **Sunday, January 26, "Tales of Connection and Inspiration"**

*Emily Richards, CRE*

Explore the way that stories touch and inspire us, creating connection and community, in this interactive and engaging multi-generational worship service.

*Special music by FUSIT Choir*



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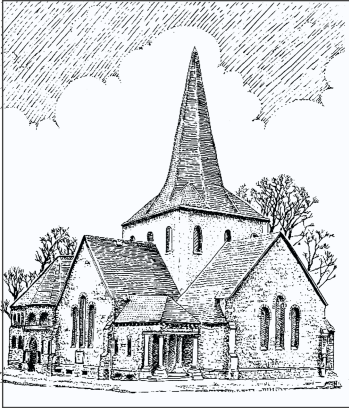
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Visit our Website and get  
your newsletter:  
[www.uuithaca.org](http://www.uuithaca.org)

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## Possible Ponderings

*The theme for January is Living Love Through the Practice of Story*

*Possible Ponderings is an offering of ways you might consider engaging more deeply with the theme or reflecting on the ways the idea of **Living Love Through the Practice of Story** shows up in your life.*

**January 1-4:** What story told by or about your ancestors has shaped or supported you the most?

**January 5-11:** Have you ever been healed or saved by a story?

**January 12-18:** What stories of survival, hope and connection are carried in the scars, aches and shape of your body? What might it mean to thank your body for the stories it has carried?

**January 19-25:** Is it possible that your story of facing headwinds is blinding you to the many winds at your back?

**January 26-31:** What is one story you hope will be told at your funeral?

## ***UUA Disaster Relief Fund***

This fund allows the UUA to respond flexibly to current disaster needs as well as to new emergency situations as they arise.

The Disaster Relief Fund disburses grants to UU congregations and recognized UU non-profit entities.

The Fund is part of a covenant between the UUA and congregations, between congregations who give generously and those in need, and with our community partners. Through this work, we are able to embody our faith and values.

Donations can be made online at [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org) or checks made payable to UUA Disaster Relief Fund, can be mailed to UUA Gift Processing, 24 Farnsworth St, Boston, MA 02210.

*Did you know you can text  
in your donations to the offering plate on  
Sundays? Simply text 607-260-6616  
with the amount + offering  
(eg: \$5 offering) to donate by phone.  
It's super easy!*

## **Social Justice**

*We hope you will consider joining us in our social justice efforts and encourage you to reach out and learn more about how you can get involved. Find more information about various teams on our website.*

### **Side with Love and Shared Plate**

Teams, Committees, and Small Groups are invited to sponsor a month for our Side with Love and Shared Plate Collections. The group would be responsible for choosing the organization, communicating with that organization about needed items for Side with Love, delivering goods, and communicating any pertinent information to Michelle and Loretta for the Newsletter, Weekly Announce, and Order of Service.

This is a wonderful opportunity to lift up and support local or national organizations that do work that is meaningful to your team or group. Sign up information can be found below.

[Side With Love and Shared Plate 2024-2025](#)

For the month of January, the *Advocacy Center* has been chosen by the 8th Principle Action Ministry Team and will be the recipient of the Side with Love collection. Clothing is kept on hand at CMC for youth and adults who have forensic medical exams after a sexual assault and have to give their clothing for evidence. At this time, they are in need of the following items:

NEW t-shirts, sweatpants with drawstring, leggings, socks, bras and plain underwear in all sizes: no writing on t-shirts or sweats, etc.

### **8th Principle Action Ministry**

The 8th Principle Action Ministry (8PAM) will no longer be meeting on a monthly basis. Look for future program offerings including book discussion and film viewing opportunities.

Contact joAnn kowalski for inquiries or to offer ideas or suggestions at [jmkowalski10@gmail.com](mailto:jmkowalski10@gmail.com).

### **The Environmental Interest Circle (EIC) Meeting**

January meeting date TBA due to the New Year's holiday 7:00 pm in the Parlor and over Zoom

The Environmental Interest Circle meets to discuss/exchange ideas and actions that further sustainable living for each one of us, for the FUSIT congregation, and for our congregation's role in the greater community. This group usually meets the first Wednesday of the month in the parlor and over Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/8164475324?pwd=SDBqaTN5eIM3ejltbGdJeGhPa3QxQT09>

Meeting ID: 816 4475 3524

Passcode: 894885



## **LGBTQ+ Group Meets Monthly**

This Small Group is especially for FUSIT's LGBTQ+ community and meets monthly. **All who identify on the LGBTQ+ continuum are welcome.**

Come enjoy this opportunity for fellowship and community within our larger FUSIT community, in a safe, confidential and nurturing environment. Please reach out to Ely at [eleanorwillard97@gmail.com](mailto:eleanorwillard97@gmail.com) for more information.

### **Women's Circle on January 27**

Women's Circle usually meets via Zoom on the 4th Monday of the month from 7-8:30 pm. All who identify as women are welcome. This is a drop-in group, so no need to sign up; just come. Anyone is welcome to bring a poem or a reading. For information or questions contact Nancy Miller at [ananda7733@gmail.com](mailto:ananda7733@gmail.com) or 607-539-7733.

Zoom Link: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/82169260621?pwd=ZDkyaRKMmo2czhqSWgrSVhmbGFqdzo9>

Meeting ID: 821 6926 0621. Passcode: 015515

### **Pub Theology**

Tuesday, **January 28th** 6:30 pm

Liquid State Brewing

Join us at Liquid State Brewing for an evening of good fellowship and conversation at our favorite local brewery (owned by FUSIT members!). We will gather at 6:30 pm and reflect together on our monthly theme of Story. Non-beer and non-alcoholic drinks options available! 21 and over please. Bring your friends! Hope to see you there! Pub Theology takes place on the 4th Tuesday of every month. 620 W. Green St., Ithaca.

### **Nametags**

If you would like a nametag, please fill out the **nametag request form** at the Welcome Table or contact [adminasst@uuihaca.org](mailto:adminasst@uuihaca.org) and we'll make one for you. Then look for your new nametag in the Narthex nametag cabinet (corner of Buffalo and Aurora Sts.).



**Beacon on Aurora - An Evening with Peter Mulvey, Sunday, January 12, doors open at 6:30 pm, concert begins at 7 pm**

Peter Mulvey has been a songwriter, road-dog, raconteur and almost-poet since before he can remember. Raised working-class Catholic on the Northwest side of Milwaukee, he took a semester in Ireland, and immediately began cutting classes to busk on Grafton Street in Dublin and hitchhike through the country, finding whatever gigs he could. Back stateside, small shows led to larger shows, which eventually led to regional and then national and international touring.

Nineteen records, an illustrated book, thousands of live performances, a TEDx talk, a decades-long association with the National Youth Science Camp, opening for luminaries such as Ani DiFranco, Emmylou Harris, and Chuck Prophet, appearances on NPR, an annual autumn tour by bicycle, emceeing festivals, hosting his own boutique festival (the Lamplighter Sessions, in Boston and Wisconsin)... Mulvey never stops. He folds everything he encounters into his work: poetry, social justice, scientific literacy, & a deeply abiding humanism are all on plain display in his art.

*\$20 suggested donation at the door. Cash preferred. Electronic payment options (direct to artist) will also be available.*

**FUSIT Choir**

Come sing with us! The FUSIT Choir rehearses on Thursdays, from 7-8:30 pm in the Annex. Join in this wonderful, joyful and important part of our community service. Text Jayne at 607-256-9488.

**Soul Matters Material for January**

The Soul Matters theme for January is *Living Love Through the Practice of Story*. This month's packet includes a few short readings, spiritual exercises, and discussion questions for you to consider.

The material can be found at:

<https://tinyurl.com/SoulMattersJan2025>

**Care Cafe - January 12 and 26**

*2nd and 4th Sunday of each month in the FUSIT Library*

Rev. Peaches Gillette invites you to the Care Cafe. During our time in the 'cafe', we openly express our thoughts, reaching into ourselves and deeply touching upon and sharing what it means to be fully human in a complicated world. Each gathering will focus on a loosely structured theme around spirituality, encouraging participants to freely explore all aspects of their spiritual journeys. Past groups have been excellent and enriching, as the flow of participants from week to week has created perfect cross-currents of relationships, broadening and securing FUSIT's sense of community. Time together in the Care Cafe allows many of us to meet and know one another more intimately.

Rev. Peaches Gillette [pgfreedom09@gmail.com](mailto:pgfreedom09@gmail.com)

**Joys and Sorrows**

*Joys and Sorrows are now shared during Sunday Service. Please send notices to the team at [joysandsorrows@uuiithaca.org](mailto:joysandsorrows@uuiithaca.org). When considering what is shared in Joys and Sorrows, please note, these services are live streamed and available to the public on our YouTube Channel.*

**Appreciations**

*As we nurture a culture of appreciation at FUSIT, let's sing praises to the many people who help make our community the wonderful place it is. Who here at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca have you noticed doing something above and beyond, who has been a quiet unsung hero, or who is doing an exceptional job? It can be a member or staff or friend to our community. Send your submissions to [joysandsorrows@uuiithaca.org](mailto:joysandsorrows@uuiithaca.org).*

-Thank you so much to everyone who participated in the wonderful Sage Chapel Candlelight Christmas services!

-A big thank you to all those who contributed items and/or money for Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard last month. They send their huge appreciation, as the need is great – each day they have 40-50 people getting food from the free table, and 15-20 individuals and families getting a monthly allotment of 3 days' worth of meal staples. *From Wendy Wolfe*

-Recently Babies First had a delivery of car seats on a day we didn't expect and for which we did not have coverage. Melissa Heslop, FUSIT's Childcare Coordinator got wind of the problem and came to FUSIT to bring them in off the porch. This is that special kind of caring that warms our hearts. We wanted everyone to know the kindness and care Melissa offers our community. *Thank you from the Babies First Team*

**Pub Theology**

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**Expanding Community**

For many this charged political time can bring about increased feelings of isolation and division. We always welcome new members to our community and faith and hope to provide a safe space of connection and learning for all. Please continue to invite any and all people that you know that you believe could find meaning by exploring what the Unitarian Universalist faith can offer.

### ***Don't Take Bricks!***

If you are reading this, please spread the word that the loose bricks we are storing around the parish house are not free and have real value for FUSIT! We will be reinstalling them in the spring and selling the rest. If you are interested in buying any spare next spring, please contact Sara Catterall [sara.catterall@gmail.com](mailto:sara.catterall@gmail.com)

### ***Spiritual Yoga Class - January 17***

Please join our FUSIT exclusive Spiritual Yoga class with Madeline Natale. Yoga will be held at Yoga Farm Ithaca (509 N. Meadow St., Ithaca) on the 3rd Friday of the month from 5:30-6:30 pm with tea to follow! Bring your own mug, and maybe a snack to share. For further information, contact Madeline at [reasst@uuithaca.org](mailto:reasst@uuithaca.org).

### ***Crochet and Knitting Circle***

Are you looking to join a tight knit group? Meet us in the Annex Youth Room from 12-1 pm every Sunday to exchange blissful stitches. This is an unstructured crochet and knitting circle. All ages are welcome, children under 12 years old must be accompanied by a designated adult.

### ***Openings in Small Group Ministry***

Small Group Ministry (SGM) is a great way to form significant connections within FUSIT and in the wider Ithaca community for both new and long-time members and friends. US Surgeon General Murthy has described the epidemic of isolation and loneliness in the US, and he calls on us to strengthen our own connections and to help others and our communities to do so. Below is a list of our small groups and their current openings. We hope you join us! If you have any questions or would like to join a small group, call or email Marsha Kardon at (607) 592-2520 or [mfkardon@gmail.com](mailto:mfkardon@gmail.com).

Meets: Sunday once or twice a month at 7 pm on Zoom (3 openings)

Meets: 9-10:15 am on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at FUSIT (currently full)

Meets: Sunday monthly from noon - 1 pm at FUSIT, for those actively parenting, childcare available (new members welcome)

Meets: 7 pm on the first and third Monday of the month on Zoom (1 opening)

Meets: Monthly, first Tuesday at 6:30 pm either outside in member's backyard or on Zoom (1 opening)

Meets: Wednesday 6 pm at FUSIT, LGBTQ+ associated group (2 openings)

Meets: 10:30am on first and third Fridays, one in person, one on zoom (2 openings)

### ***Office Hours in January***

The office is generally open 9 am - 4 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and 8 am - 3 pm on Sundays. Michelle works remotely on Wednesdays.

The office will re-open on **January 2nd**.

### ***Thanks to Your Generosity***

Thanks to those who donated to the weekly Sunday offertory plate, these organizations received the following:

September 29 - ***Village of Ithaca*** \$1643

October 27 - ***UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) Disaster Relief Fund*** \$578

November 24 - ***Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard*** \$607

### ***Welcome New Member***

Please give a warm welcome to Dorothy Stansel who recently signed the Membership Book.

### ***People of Color Affinity Group***

Are you a person of color looking to connect with other UUs of color? Please consider joining a newly formed group dedicated to growing a multicultural community and promoting diversity here at FUSIT. For more information, please contact [poc@uuithaca.org](mailto:poc@uuithaca.org).

### ***Ways to Engage***

Curious about events and happenings at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca? Check out our Facebook page and stay current with what's going on in the community! <https://www.facebook.com/FUSofI>

### ***Current Volunteer Opportunities***

Volunteering is a great way to meet others in the First Unitarian Community and give back at the same time! Current Volunteer Opportunities are <https://unitarian.ithaca.ny.us/index.php/connection/volunteer/>

### ***Hearing Loop***

The sanctuary has a Hearing Loop System which is an ADA approved technology that transmits sound wirelessly directly to hearing aids. If you wear hearing aids and your T-coil is activated, you can pick up the signal from the sound system (if you have hearing aids, but your T-coil is not activated, please speak with your audiologist). There are also sound amplifying headphones (available on the credenza in the Parlor or from one of the ushers) if you do not have hearing aids but could benefit from amplified sound.

## January News from the Board of Trustees

We can't know the future, but we have seen the 47th President in action, heard his campaign rhetoric, and know his cabinet picks. We can count on significant changes in how the federal government operates and its relationship with state governments.

How can we prepare and respond? Through millennia, when faced with a societal threat, the proven response was to find strength by coming together in community.

Unfortunately, many of our community structures have suffered in recent decades from a focus on individualism, the isolation response to the pandemic, and divisive, judgmental language being normalized. To create a strong, resilient community we should recognize these impediments and then lean into community activities.

Should you feel the need for strength in the coming months, please consider saying yes to community activities at FUSIT. This is a generous community that shares your values and principles, the foundation for a supportive community.

*Submitted by Don Barber*

## January Board of Trustees Meeting

The Board will meet on the third Tuesday of the month, on **January 21**, at 6:30 pm. Board meetings are a hybrid format, taking place in the Parlor and through Zoom.

All FUSIT members are invited to attend these meetings.

Ten minutes are set aside at the beginning of the meeting for congregation feedback. Please join us!

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/8825877699?pwd=VUxUTUMraVZDUFRQzQndSVFRraFIPdz09>

Meeting ID: 882 5877 6990

Passcode: 602445

## Ministry Visioning Team (MVT)

The Ministry Visioning Team is thrilled to welcome JoAnn Kowalski back onto the team.

MVT has been collaborating with leadership, including the Board of Trustees and Stewardship, to help plan a pathway forward that ensures a healthy thriving spiritual community, including financial stability.

As we begin a new year together we encourage you to consider how you might become more deeply involved, whether that means joining a team or committee, volunteering to help feed individuals who are housed in the Code Blue Shelter, becoming a Steward, getting to know our kids in Religious Exploration, or connecting with others around issues of justice and equity.

If you would like to become more involved in social justice conversations and teams you can use this form to share contact information in regards to the issues that you're feeling called to lift up.

[Social Justice Teams Interest Spreadsheet](#)

## Our Mission

Our mission is to create connection,  
find inspiration and engage the world.  
Connect. Inspire. Engage.

## A Prayer for When Everything Crumbles to Dust

*Great Mystery which Grounds and Surrounds us,  
Small spark of Life and Possibility  
that lives within us even when all else is crumbling to dust...  
Be with us in our confusion, fear, and even despair.  
Lead us to navigate them as slowly as possible,  
Resisting the impulse to soothe, to blame, to seek things  
that feel better than the hurt and the heaviness  
But which ultimately leave us isolated, or complacent,  
or too suspicious of each other.*

*Let us not flee from our grief,  
but allow our hearts to be broken open again and again,  
Grieving for all that has already been lost  
And all that is threatened now.  
Spirit of Life and Love and Regeneration,  
Help us to feel the wisdom in our bodies.  
Even with so much going so wrong,  
our hearts beat with gratitude for blessings:  
For beauty and joy stubbornly breaking through;  
For the compassionate companionship of Community  
Which welcomes all that we bring with us in these times  
and doesn't ask us to be smaller than we really are;  
For solidarity and mutual aid;  
For the trees and the wind and the stars—  
Their cosmic witness soothing our animal souls,  
Reminding us of the deep impermanence—  
And the deep interconnectedness—  
of all things.*

*Spirit of Transformation,  
May our hearts break open and stretch out  
to join with the hearts of others  
who yearn for a freer world.  
Each heart, a building block of a better society.  
Each life lived for hope and resistance, a prayer for a nobler  
world.*

*Amen and Blessed Be.*

*by Af van Tine*