



Soul Matters

What does it mean to be
a people of SANCTUARY?



What Does It Mean To Be A People of Sanctuary?

Just saying the word “sanctuary” brings one a sense of peace and safety. It can bring back conflicted memories for some, but for most of us the idea of sanctuary conjures up feelings of being protected. Like its close cousin refuge, it speaks to the universal longing for a space to retreat from the dangers and depletions of the world. One thinks of the family ties and friendships that protect, restore and heal us. The sanctuary movement and its refuge for immigrants is another powerful example of offering life-giving safe space. As the well-loved Irish proverb puts it, “It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.” So, certainly, the hunger for protection and the call to protect each other is central to this month.

But as we dig deeper, we are reminded that the sanctuaries in our lives do more than simply protect us. They also send us. They don’t just help us heal from our journeys; they also strengthen us for the new journeys ahead. In their fullest, they are not escape houses as much as fueling stations. They don’t just whisper “Come and rest,” but also “Be filled and go!” The archetypal image of a toddler leaving and returning their parent’s leg comes to mind. That “home base” is not a tether but the very thing that allows us to venture out. Having been blessed with shelter, we are strengthened to offer that same gift of shelter to others. In other words, sanctuary always comes with a calling. And so the question for all of us this month is not just “Where do you find shelter?” but “Having been empowered by shelter, how can you share that same gift with others?”

Along the way, we also discover that our sanctuaries need sheltering and protection themselves. It’s a paradox: our sanctuaries can’t protect and repair us unless we also protect and repair them. The green sanctuary movement is a great example of this. The solace of nature and the life-giving interdependent web needs us as much as we need them. The same is true for the sanctuaries in our personal lives. Friendship, silence, stillness: these are all things that wither if we don’t tend to and make space for them. So, in the end, maybe the most important question this month is “How are we caring for our sanctuaries so they can take care of us?”

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A : Share Your Umbrella

There's a beautiful UU children's story called "The Umbrella Sanctuary." Its message is for kids and adults alike. In it, the umbrella represents the many ways others offer us sanctuary from the storms of life as well as the many ways we can pass on that shelter to others. The story also gently reminds us that we overlook opportunities to offer shelter and sanctuary every day. If our attention is woke, we notice that all around us people are "wet with rain."

So this month, you are invited to use the story to wake up your attention and seek out opportunities to offer people "your umbrella." This exercise also asks you to go one step further and use a *literal* umbrella as your daily reminder. Yes, it may feel a little silly at first, but after reading the story, you'll feel differently. Find an umbrella and hang it by the door of your home so you are reminded every day as you head to work. Or take an umbrella with you and let it hang out near your desk as your daily reminder. You might even just let it lay in the back seat of your car for the month. Whatever you choose, use it as a reminder and meditative token of all times someone has noticed you in need and how your gratitude for that calls you to keep an eye out for those often subtle (and not-so-subtle) signs that someone else needs the gift of human shelter.

Here's the link to the story: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/story/umbrella-sanctuary>

Come to your group ready to share where you placed your umbrella and how it helped you notice those opportunities to be shelter and sanctuary for someone else.

Option B: Your Many Sanctuaries

Sanctuary comes to us in many forms during our lives. This exercise invites you to meditate on the gift of those many sanctuaries.

Over the few weeks leading up to your group meeting, make time to take stock of all the various places, spaces, relationships and experiences that function and have functioned as sanctuary for you.

Here's the crucial part: As you remember and notice them, identify a symbol or token that represents them. For instance, collect a picture of the person who has been sanctuary for you. If it's a physical space like your church sanctuary, grab a hymnal. If it's the arboretum near your work where you often take your lunch, then grab one of their brochures. Those of us who find sanctuary in music might pull out a CD cover. Those of us who find refuge in the woods might pick up and press a fall leaf. Or you might want to use your phone as your collection device and spend the month taking pictures of all of your sanctuaries.

However to do it, the point is to gather these symbols of sanctuary in one place and then see what that "pile of sacred support" says to you. Indeed noticing the size and diversity of the pile is the point: It's all too easy to go through life feeling vulnerable and alone. Pulling all our sanctuaries into one space, helps anchor us in the truth that life itself is more of a sanctuary than we sometimes think.

Bring your symbolic tokens and pictures to your group to share.

Option C:

Sanctuaries of Silence Treasure Hunt

Like Exercise B, this one also invites you to go on a type of treasure hunt this month. But here we ask you to focus on silence. There is a special relationship between silence and sanctuary. Places and moments of restorative silence are as essential to us as breathing. Some even say it takes silence for us to find the breath of our souls. But in our loud and hurried world, spaces of silence are not easy to come by. They've been pushed to the far corners of our experience and in some case they've been eliminated and must be created again from scratch.

So during the weeks leading up to your group, seek out (or create) as many "sanctuaries of silence" and stillness as you can find. Think of it as a spiritual treasure hunt. Where are the hidden refuges of silence near your work? How might you create pockets of silence in the midst of your daily routine? What secret spaces of silence do your friends know about? Hunt down as many as you can. And then bring your "treasure map" to your group not only as a way of sharing your story but also reminding your group mates that they can find sanctuaries of silence too.

Here's a bit of inspiration for this exercise: **Sanctuaries of Silence**

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/10000005811102/sanctuaries-of-silence.html>
<https://emergencemagazine.org/story/sanctuaries-of-silence/>

Option D:

End Your Day with Sanctuary

Even if we don't refer to them as such, many of us have "morning rituals of sanctuary." We meditate, take the dog for a long walk, swim or read a devotional. It's all about getting the day off on the right foot. But psychologists tell us that ending the day with the experience of sanctuary can be even more important.

So this month, find a practice to "end you day with sanctuary." Here's a great article with a bunch of ideas and explanations why it's so key to spiritual centeredness:

https://www.bakadesuyo.com/2016/02/evening-ritual/?utm_source=pocket&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=pockethits

Come to your group ready to share your experience of engaging the article and the story of which evening sanctuary practice you picked.

Option E: Sanctuary From Your Cell Phone (and Email)

If there's one thing that most stands in the way of sanctuary these days, it our cell phones and email. They keep us stuck in storm of doing and cut off from the sanctuary of just being. They are the very opposite of stillness, silence and peace.

This exercise invites you to tackle this dilemma by following the advice of a wellness expert named Dave Radparvar. It's called "Toothbrush to Toothbrush." We'll let Radparvar explain the spiritual trick in his own words:

<https://www.holstee.com/blogs/reflections/toothbrush-to-toothbrush>

After reading the article, give it a try for a week or two. Or use the article to figure out a freeing habit of your own. Come to your group ready to share how sanctuary from your cell phone and email helped alter and enhance not only your time before and after brushing your teeth, but also all the time in between!

Option F: Find Sanctuary in Our Recommended Resources

Our recommended resources are full of wisdom about what it means to be a people of and a person of sanctuary. Engaging these resources and finding the one that especially speaks to you is a spiritual practice in and of itself.

So, if none of the above exercises call to you, engage the recommended resources section of this packet as your spiritual exercise for the month.

Set aside some regular time throughout a week to go through them and meditate on them until you find the one that most expands or deepens your understanding of sanctuary. After you've found it, consider printing it out and carrying it with you or pinning it up so you can continue to reflect on it throughout the weeks leading up to your group meeting. Come to your group ready to share where the journey led you.

Your Question

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of sanctuary means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"? Where is it trying to lead you?

1. Who has most shaped your understanding of sanctuary? Which of their "lessons" is most relevant to you today?
2. When did you first discover that "sanctuary" was more than a physical place?
3. Which of your homes has felt most like "home"? How are you recreating that experience in your life right now?
4. Who is sanctuary for you? Have you told them lately how great of a gift that is?
5. Have you ever found sanctuary for yourself in the midst of offering it to others? Might that again be the path back to sanctuary for you today?
6. What if sanctuary is something we build rather than something we find?
7. What do you want your children or grandchildren to know about "sanctuary"?
8. How is the season of fall offering you sanctuary? Or inviting you to think of sanctuary differently?
9. What if your place of sanctuary is not just saying "Come and rest" but also "Be filled and go"?
10. How would your life change if you visited your "sanctuary" twice as much as you do now?
11. Some say sanctuary is not a place but "the love between us." How that been true for you?
12. When was the last time you restored yourself with the sanctuary of silence?
13. When was the last time you restored yourself with the sanctuary of music?
14. When was the last time you restored yourself with the sanctuary of beauty?
15. What if sanctuary isn't a place, but that moment when you realize that you don't have to keep trying to prove yourself? What if sanctuary is the awareness that we've already "arrived"? That we're already enough?
16. When has someone saved you with the sanctuary of just sitting with you in silence rather than offering you advice or trying to fix things? Is someone in your life needing that same gift?
17. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. We will not analyze these pieces in our group. Instead they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of sanctuary.

Word Roots

Sanctuary comes from the Latin *sanctus* meaning “holy”, a place set aside for holy worship. In modern times it also refers to "place of refuge or protection" as in a bird sanctuary. The English word “holy” is from Old English *hālig*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch and German *heilig*, or whole. So sanctuary implies a sense of wholeness, integration.

Wise Words

Sanctuary is where we perform the job of taking care of our soul.

Christopher Forrest McDowell

When I was a kid, “sanctuary” meant only one thing. It was the big room with the stained-glass windows and hard wooden benches where my family worshipped every Sunday. Church attendance was not optional for my sisters and me, so that sanctuary was where I learned to pray — pray that the service would end, and God would release me back into the wild. I also learned that not all prayers are answered, no matter how ardent. Today, after 77 years of life in a world that’s both astonishingly beautiful and horrifically cruel, “sanctuary” is as vital as breathing to me. Sometimes I find it in churches, monasteries, and other sites designated as sacred. But more often I find it in places sacred to my soul: in the natural world, in the company of a trustworthy friend, in solitary or shared silence, in the ambience of a good poem or good music. Sanctuary is wherever I find safe space to regain my bearings, reclaim my soul, heal my wounds, and return to the world as a wounded healer. It’s not merely about finding

shelter from the storm: it’s about spiritual survival. Today, seeking sanctuary is no more optional for me than church attendance was as a child.

[Parker Palmer](#)

Worshippers never leave church...we carry our sanctuary with us wherever we go.

Aiden Wilson Tozer

We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been — a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power.

Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Somewhere where we can be free.

Starhawk

Your sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again.

Joseph Campbell

Our churches are clearings in the wilderness of this time: places of refuge and sanctuary for the bruised and tired, and also places of healing and renewal. They are ‘workshops for common endeavor,’ and schools for learning and enlightenment, transmitters and celebrators of a heritage, tools for breaking down barriers. tools for building new bridges.

[Rev. Charles Grady](#)

Everyone has a sanctuary, if only in the mind. Even if we can't say what it is, we know of its power. It is a place where we feel grounded, unhurried, and renewed. We go there whenever we can, which never seems often enough. Or that's what we tell ourselves.

[Terry Hershey](#)

[The sanctuary of] Sabbath and sabbatical is time stepping outside of working for the "food that perishes," and instead deliberately seeking the "food that endures for eternal life." - which is tricky since this food you can't work for; this food can only be received.

[Kara Root](#)

Stop

Rev. Steve Garnaas-Holmes

<https://www.unfoldinglight.net/reflections/6tk5wjbzbg14tx3sbl2gn8frtgepcg>

"Take these things out of here!

Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

—John 2.16

In fact, stop everything.
Get rid of all the Stuff,
even religion itself.
Shut down the hubbub.
Enter into the stillness
at the heart of everything,
the Sabbath that is the real temple,
the silence that is God.
Don't run in the sanctuary,
you can't hear the silence when you're busy.
There's no substitute for stillness.
The offering God desires is your presence.
Stop
and wait upon the Beloved.
Breathe. This is the holy of holies.
Destroy the temple of doing
and let the temple of being
rise up from within.

Remember, the entrance door to the sanctuary is inside you.

Rumi

But most of all, above everything else, who in the Bible besides Jesus knew—knew—that we're carrying the kingdom of heaven around with us, inside, where we're all too goddam stupid and sentimental and unimaginative to look?

J.D. Salinger, Franny and Zooey.

Deep within us all, there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life. It is a dynamic center, a creative Life that presses to birth within us. It is a Light Within which illumines the face of God and casts new shadows and new glories upon the face of humanity.

Thomas Kelly, from A Testament of Devotion

How the Stars Get in Your Bones (The sanctuary inside that cont

Jan Richardson

Full poem found at

<http://sanctuaryofwomen.com/blog/>

...See how the sorrow in you
slowly makes its own light,
how it conjures its own fire...
I tell you, this blazing in you —
it does not come by choosing the most difficult way,
the most daunting;
it does not come by the sheer force of your will.
It comes from the helpless place in you
that, despite all, cannot help but hope,
the part of you that does not know
how not to keep turning
toward this world,
to keep turning your face
toward this sky,
to keep turning your heart
toward this unendurable earth,
knowing your heart will break
but turning it still.
I tell you, this is how the stars get in your bones.
This is how the brightness
makes a home in you...

Finding Sanctuary

[Rev. Steve Garnaas-Holmes](#)

Pilgrims come seeking
their separate peace in it,
but they can't find it...
It isn't here, or there,
it isn't in a place,
it isn't a thing.
It is empty space.
It is the love between us...

It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.
Irish Proverb

I thought he'd run if he knew. Instead, he offered help, not that I believed he could possibly help. I thought he'd turn his back, close his heart, slink away. Instead, he promised sanctuary."
Ellen Hopkins, from Burned

Perhaps the most important thing we bring to another person is the silence in us, not the sort of silence that is filled with unspoken criticism or hard withdrawal. The sort of silence that is a place of refuge, of rest, of acceptance of someone as they are. We are all hungry for this other silence. It is hard to find. In its presence we can remember something beyond the moment, a strength on which to build a life. Silence is a place of great power and healing.
Rachel Naomi Remen

Our listening creates a sanctuary for the homeless parts within another person.
Rachel Naomi Remen

Everyone is asleep
There is nothing to come between
The moon and me.
Enomoto Seifu-jo

The Peace of Wild Things

Wendell Berry

Full poem and reading by author:

<https://onbeing.org/blog/wendell-berry-the-peace-of-wild-things/>

When despair for the world grows in me...
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great
heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things...

Music, I discovered that night, was a sanctuary, a safe place to hide, a place where scars didn't matter, they didn't exist.
Len Vlahos, The Scar Boys

Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.
Maya Angelou

The term stumbling stone is introduced in Isaiah: "[YHWH] is both your sanctuary and your stumbling stone" (see 8:14, The Jerusalem Bible). What an amazing juxtaposition of images. Most of us first experience God as love, security, and the foundational rock that holds everything. But often that very rock seems to get in your way and you stumble over what once sustained you. This is the paradox of the full God encounter. God is the rock that will bring you down. God is a trap that will also snare you, Isaiah goes on to say (8:14). This is not what you expected. This is not what you wanted. But, of course it's not a snare to destroy you; it's a snare to save you. It's not a rock to bring you down into evil; but a rock to bring you down into a larger freedom from your small self.

[Richard Rohr](#)

Worship God by reverencing the human soul as God's chosen sanctuary. Revere it in yourselves, revere it in others, and labor to carry it forward.
William Ellery Channing

I have told you that, no matter how many times you have refused to enter the sanctuary, you have only to knock and the door will be opened to you. I have said to you Ask and it shall be given you, but you refuse to believe in me. You think that someone is counting your sins, your moments of indecision or recalcitrance, but it is not true. You are the only one counting. I say to you brother, stop counting, stop making excuses, stop pretending that the door is locked. I am here at the threshold. Reach out and take my hand and we will open the door and walk through together. I am the door to love without conditions. When you walk through, you too will be the door.
Paul Ferinni

I take sanctuary in an honest mediocrity.
Jean de la Bruyere

To seek approval is to have no resting place, no sanctuary. Like all judgment, approval encourages a constant striving. It makes us uncertain of who we are and of our true value. Approval cannot be trusted. It can be withdrawn at any time no matter what our track record has been. It is as nourishing of real growth as cotton candy. Yet many of us spend our lives pursuing it.

Rachel Naomi Remen

We go to sanctuaries to remember the things we hold most dear, the things we cherish and love. And then—the great challenge—we return home seeking to enact this wisdom as best we can in our daily lives.

William Cronon

Hurricane

Yona Harvey

Full poem found at

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/hurricane-0>

Mama, let me go—she speaks
What every smart child knows—
To get grown you unlatch
Your hands from the grown...

On the Sanctuary Movement, Immigration and the Journey of Refugees

No one leaves home if the hurt that will come is greater than the hurt that they will leave behind. No one leaves if the ocean will swallow them up. No one leaves home, if there is peace. As a refugee there is only ever half of you in one place; because you have left of you where you have come from, and half of you is rejected where you arrive.

[*JJ Bola*](#)

The Arabs used to say,
When a stranger appears at your door,
feed him for three days
before asking who he is,
where he's come from . . .
That way, he'll have strength

enough to answer.
Or, by then you'll be
such good friends
you
don't care...

[*Naomi Shihab Nye*](#)

For Refuge

Pippa Little

Full poem found at

<http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/refuge>

Use no names. Roads
have been whited out,
redacted. Hone your oldest sense.
Learn the wind...
Trust the earth
with your bandaged feet...

About the Poem

"This beautifully expressed poem about the utter loneliness of a child refugee is a timely reminder of fragile humanity lost and endangered. Author's note: 'I wrote this poem after watching the news and reading about refugees, both those of today and those from earlier wars in other countries. I wondered how it might feel to arrive somewhere completely unknown in such circumstances. The disjuncture between the official story of the masses which appears timeless, unchanging, and individuals' urgent experiences of loss and displacement, haunted me.'"

Home (poem)

Warsan Shire

Video Reading:

<http://seekershut.org/blog/2015/09/home-warsan-shire/>

"No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark..."

Refuge (poem)

JJ Bola

Video Reading:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=102&v=0uWqV31QqLo

"We came here to find refuge / They called us refugees / So we hid ourselves in their language / until we sounded just like them. / Changed the way we dressed / to look just like them / Made this our home / until we lived just like them."

Songs and Music

Lady of the Harbor

Brother Sun

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3gOoySyNII>

Would You Harbor Me?

Sweet Honey in the Rock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0XBXJjoXJ4>

When You've Got Trouble

Liz Longley

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nylqy5slDYw>

Make Us Aware, We are a Sanctuary

Sung by the Sanctuary Boston

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3ql77itGvc>

Sanctuary

feat. Charles Esten & Lennon & Maisy by Nashville Cast

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQH-wF9Nqz0>

Gimme Shelter

Songs Around The World, cover of original by Keith Richards / Mick Jagger

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJtq6OmD-Y>

Shelter from the Storm

Bob Dylan

<https://vimeo.com/149992621>

Cover by Joshua Hyslop:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYt8uAjdUhc>

Sanctuary

Carrie Newcomer

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=148&v=HjOioWTVAl4

Videos & Online

Sanctuary

Mahogany L. Browne

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgvU1mfOZ2Y>

The sanctuary of sisterhood...

2018 Ware Lecture by Brittany Packnett

https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2018/ware?mc_cid=618646f958&mc_eid=6237a64832

An inspiring call and challenge to resist the temptations of “moderation” as we work to build true sanctuary and disrupt the structures of racism in our society and congregations

What Does Home Mean to You? - All ages answer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWt76WqRCVs>

The Art of Stillness - An On Being interview with Pico Iyer

<https://onbeing.org/programs/pico-iyer-the-art-of-stillness/>

A celebration of the sanctuary found in stillness... “Pico Iyer is one of our most eloquent explorers of what he calls the “inner world” — in himself and in the 21st century world at large. The journalist and novelist travels the globe from Ethiopia to North Korea and lives in Japan. But he also experiences a remote Benedictine hermitage as his second home, retreating there many times each year. In this intimate conversation, we explore the discoveries he's making and his practice of “the art of stillness.”

Sanctuaries of Silence

A video meditation on sound, silence and listening as the gateway to sanctuary. A guide to finding silence and sanctuary in a loud and busy world.

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000005811102/sanctuaries-of-silence.html>

<https://emergencemagazine.org/story/sanctuaries-of-silence/>

The Monastery - BBC

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ch0SY2pHkDg>
(episode 1 of 3)

Hit show in England. Five ordinary men spend 40 days in a British monastery. An experiment in sanctuary and self-discovery.

When I Say That I Came Up Poor

Jared Paul

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dg4x8vjbuA4>

A more complex (and real) sense of home and sanctuary

“What some folks derisively call hood, somebody else calls home... Where on any given day you can walk up to three separate stoops and be greeted as family by three different groups of friends...”

Immigration and Family Separation From the Eyes of a Daughter

<https://www.facebook.com/CBSNews/videos/10155911312580950/>

A 12-year-old girl sobs at a press conference while talking about her father, who was taken to a detention center by ICE.

Can Trump Supporters And Immigrants See Eye To Eye?

Middle Ground

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0SpzIIHEaE&t=454s>

Video and musical meditation on the world-wide refugee crisis

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=273&v=5gWLQhCSv2l

DACA explained - Vox video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzYDqQDNFzc>

TED talk: What we are missing in the debate about immigration (7 min.)

https://www.ted.com/talks/duarte_geraldino_what_we_re_missing_in_the_debate_about_immigration

A powerful call to rethink the immigration debate. Learn more about the wider impact of forced removal (deportation) as Geraldino explains how the sudden absence of a mother, a local business owner or a high school student ripples outward and wreaks havoc on the relationships that hold our communities together. His is a call for us to change the immigration debate from a discussion about individuals to one of the social circles that are broken and damaged when individuals are removed. The cost of deportation is much higher than we all assume.

Sanctuary Through the Eyes of a UU Minister

<https://vimeo.com/156501172>

Articles

Seeking Sanctuary in Our Own Sacred Spaces

Parker Palmer

Full article found at

<https://onbeing.org/search/?s=sanctuary>

“I believe, only if we know when and where to seek sanctuary, reclaiming our souls in order to engage the world in life-giving ways. When service emerges from whatever kind of sanctuary nurtures the root of one’s inner wisdom, it’s much less likely to be distorted by the violence of activism and overwork. Once we understand that, we are moving toward [the heart of nonviolence](#) — the only way of being that has a chance to transcend and transform the violence of our culture...”

Reviving the Sanctuary Movement

Erin Guzmán

<https://www.christiancentury.org/blog-post/revivingsanctuary>

While it might seem like an ambiguous term, Sanctuary as a practice of solidarity has a deep past with theologically robust roots. The Torah is filled with examples of providing hospitality for “the stranger” and society’s most vulnerable. God repeatedly reminds the Israelites that they were once strangers in the land of Egypt and therefore should not harm the “foreigners” seeking shelter or refuge in their communities (Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:33; Deut. 10:19).

In the New Testament, Jesus reminds us of stories (e.g. The Good Samaritan) where unlikely people help those who are in critical need to illustrate how small signs of grace and hospitality serve as powerful acts of resistance against societal norms. He challenges his followers to provide unconditional hospitality to the “least of these” by saying, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matt. 25:35-40). Christ himself was just an infant when his family fled to Egypt as refugees escaping infanticide (Matt. 2), and this aspect of his birth narrative is often a powerful source of hope for migrants and refugees facing persecution...

These narratives and so many others provide a foundation upon which Judeo-Christian practices of hospitality and justice stand... Sanctuary is not a theoretical gesture but a tangible witness of God’s

justice-seeking love. It is the very fabric of the Torah and teachings of Jesus. It gives new meaning to the Incarnation by pushing us to confront the reality of God's presence in those who are vulnerable and seeking protection. Sanctuary reveals that religious spaces are far from politically powerless but instead are actually positioned on the frontlines of where important struggles might take place.

UUs & The New Sanctuary Movement - UU World
<https://www.uuworld.org/hashtag/new-sanctuary-movement>

Missing Voices (Seeking a sanctuary for "our voices")
[Connie Simon](#)

Full reflection at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/promise-and-practice-missing-voices-reading>

Excerpt: "When I started attending a UU church, I was excited by the promise of worship that would draw from the arts, science, nature, literature and a multitude of voices. Indeed, some of the voices that Unitarian Universalists hear in worship each week belong to Thoreau, Emerson, Ballou, and others. Their words are beautiful, but they come from a culture and experience that's foreign to me. When do I get to hear voices from my culture?... I don't hear those voices in UU churches, so I have to supplement... Will we always have to go "outside" to hear our voices? If that's the case, maybe there's no place for us in Unitarian Universalism..."

Words Matter

Carol Thomas Cissel

Full reflection found at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/promise-and-practice-words-matter-reading>

Excerpt: "Diverse. Multicultural. Inclusive. Welcoming. If I made a list of every single Unitarian Universalist congregation I have served, visited or worshipped at, they would have a few things in common—including the use of these words... I love those words. I want what they promise. But I have been repeatedly disappointed. It is simply not enough to print them on an Order of Service or in a newsletter; they must have meaning and intention at their core. A desire for multicultural worship is wonderful, but it will not flower if that seed of yearning is not nurtured by a commitment and a plan."

White threat in a browning America

Ezra Klein

https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/7/30/17505406/trump-obama-race-politics-immigration?mc_cid=283167d1dd&mc_eid=cb4e45abe0

An analysis of what happens when the "sanctuary" of majority racial status is threatened.

Excerpt: "So here, then, is what we know: Even gentle, unconscious exposure to reminders that America is diversifying — and particularly to the idea that America is becoming a majority-minority nation — pushes whites toward more conservative policy opinions and more support of the Republican Party... White political identity is "conditional." It emerges in some periods and is absent in others. The periods it emerges in are periods like this one...When the dominant status of whites relative to racial and ethnic minorities is secure and unchallenged, white identity likely remains dormant. When whites perceive their group's dominant status is threatened or their group is unfairly disadvantaged, however, their racial identity may become salient and politically relevant..."

Books

The Shelter of Each Other

Mary Pipher

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01BL3226Y/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1

"Psychologist Pipher provides a sharp, often unsettling critique of many of the values that currently define our lives, coupled with solid advice for rebuilding families... She contends that what people really need is "protected time and space" and the need to reconnect with one another and the outside world... Lively, straightforward, and somewhat subversive, *The Shelter of Each Other* offers hope for the American family in a time that challenges its viability." -Kirkus reviews

Sanctuary: Creating a Space for Grace in Your Life

Terry Hershey

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/27882>

"In the latter years of her life, in the backyard of her home in northern Florida, my grandmother had a porch swing... I am here today because of that porch swing. I am here today because of a sanctuary... Everyone has a sanctuary, if only in the mind. Even if we can't say what it is, we know of its power. It is a place where we feel grounded, unhurried, and renewed. We go there whenever we can, which never seems often enough. Or that's what we tell ourselves..."

Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal (book)

Aviva Chomsky

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00GQA28LM/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1

"Immigrant rights activist Aviva Chomsky shows how "illegality" and "undocumented-ness" are concepts that were created to exclude and exploit. With a focus on US policy, she probes how people, especially Mexican and Central Americans, have been assigned this status—and to what ends. Blending history with human drama, Chomsky explores what it means to be undocumented in a legal, social, economic, and historical context. The result is a powerful testament of the complex, contradictory, and ever-shifting nature of status in America."

Movies

Short Term 12

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/short_term_12_2013/

The journey of a young woman offering sanctuary to others but struggling to find it for herself.

Sanctuary (2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-OUx3mclac>

"Thoughtful, nuanced and fun, Sanctuary subverts received ideas about disability in its very approach to filmmaking." "Both hilarious and heartbreaking, Sanctuary is a truly subversive piece of cinema about two young people trying to be together, in a world doing everything to keep them apart."

Review: <https://www.rte.ie/entertainment/movie-reviews/2017/0704/887369-sanctuary/>

The Visitor

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/10008820_visitor?

Sin Nombre

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/10009823_sin_nombre?

"The story about a Honduran immigrant girl named Sayra and her harrowing trip to the U.S, which also follows a gang member named Casper who joins Sayra on her trip but struggles to escape his past. Here are captured both archetypes of the immigration debate: the earnest opportunity-seeker, and the criminal gang member. Fukunaga offers no glib solutions, but rather the expanded perspective.."

Children of Men

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/children_of_men/

Review: "the film describes a massive refugee crisis that sweeps not merely the so-called "third-world" but the whole of Europe. Virtuoso work from DP Emmanuel Lubezki highlights the environment in every scene, forcing the audience to reflect on our own ignorance of what's going on around us. The images of white European refugees in cages are both damning and starkly clarifying: but for a change in historical circumstance, the makeup of the refugee class could change. The solution? Get to work building a world you'd want to inhabit if you had no idea where you'd be born."

Room

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/room_2015

The Road

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/10009460_the_road?

A post-apocalyptic thriller about a father and his son finding sanctuary and refuge in each other in a world that has grown cold and cruel.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame - Disney

<https://www.common-sense-media.org/movie-reviews/the-hunchback-of-notre-dame-1996>

"Disney's recreation of Victor Hugo's novel is rich in visual and musical sensation. But deeper beneath the rich production lie questions about normalcy, how sanctuary confines us as well as protects us, and what punishment is."

- Common Sense Media Review

Get daily inspiration
on the monthly theme by liking our
Soul Matters Facebook inspiration page:

<https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Find musical inspiration
on each theme by following our monthly

Spotify lists:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>



© 2018-19 Soul Matters ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Packets are for use only by member congregations of the Soul Matters Sharing Circle.

Learn how to join at <http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com>