



# Soulful Home

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Finding the Sacred in  
Everyday Spaces

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# The Welcome Mat

## Exploring the Gift of ~~Pluralism~~ Pluralizing

Soulful Home families, I'm going to invite you into some impromptu editing here. Together, as a Soul Matters Sharing Circle last summer, we voted on themes that we were excited to explore together in 2023-2024. I was right there with you, head-over-heels for the chance to learn, play, and grow into pluralism, the idea that each of us can retain the beauty and uniqueness of our identities while also making something greater than any of us, as a whole. But as sometimes happens, what you think something is going to be like does not always match what it actually is like. And that's what happened to me with pluralism.

I began my research. I gathered sources. I spent weeks with sage voices, diverse perspectives, challenging ideas, and compelling stories, immersing myself in the theme—pluralism—that we chose together as a component of our UU faith development worthy of deeper knowing.

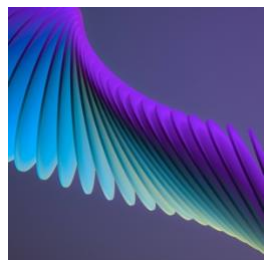
And here's one thing—a really important thing—that I learned:

We don't *arrive* at pluralism. We don't just suddenly become good at being ourselves together, and then stay there. We make it and remake it with every decision to open or close, to include or exclude, to engage or refrain from acting, to share or withhold, to change or remain the same. We don't ever arrive at pluralism. We *pluralize*.

And who is the "we"? That's the most interesting part! The "we" is not only us and our like-minded cultural siblings with similar demographics. It's not even only us and those with *different* ideas and *different* demographics! It's me today, in this moment, as well as later this afternoon, after I've had a mind-blowing conversation and my world is turned upside down. It's also you, as you are right now, and you in six weeks, when a life event has resolved, and you look around, blinking, and feeling as if you're just waking up. It's also the person neither of us has met and whose worldview hasn't yet been spoken into existence. Pluralizing takes us all, mid-swirl, into the ecstatic dance together.

Pluralism calls for each of us to welcome the concept of "in process" as a personal status and a collective one. It's adopting the discipline of almost continually wondering about, analyzing, naming, evaluating, unlearning, relearning, and integrating the myriad ways to be human. It's approaching the world with a curiosity about everyone around us. It's holding lightly onto conclusions and beliefs about who we are, and who everyone else is, too. For UUs, this is a faith imperative. To be the hands of the divine in the world, we have to be able to reorient toward and connect with the evolving divine in ourselves, and in each unique one of us.

In excitement to better know you, and me, and us,  
**Teresa**, on behalf of the Soul Matters team



# At the Table

## Exploring Pluralism Through Discussions

At the Table questions explore the monthly theme through a discussion for all ages. They are designed for a family gathering - maybe during a Friday night meal, a quiet moment in the living room or before a board game night.

### Introducing the Activity

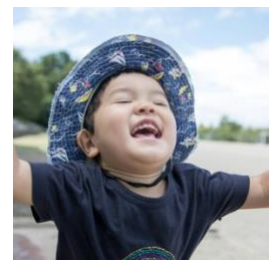
Family members who are readers can alternate who reads the questions. Those who are not readers are invited to share their own impromptu questions. Discussion partners might answer as thoughts come to them or take turns in a circle.

### Discussion Questions

1. Who among your friends is most like you, and in what way? Who among your friends is most different from you, and in what way?
2. When was the last time you were the “new kid”? Do you remember who the first person was to reach out and help you feel welcomed?
3. What’s the hardest part about doing things in a whole, big group? And what’s the best part?
4. When you disagree with a friend, how do you tell them so? How do they respond? Or, are you more likely to not say anything? If so, why not?
5. How does it feel to you when you realize that you think differently from the group? Is that energizing, uncomfortable, or somewhere in between?
6. Who taught you the most about accepting and seeking to understand new ideas?
7. How would our world be different if not only people and countries got voices, but also rivers, mountains, oceans, deserts, prairies, etc.?
8. Who in your family or friend group knows every last part of you, even the parts that can be hard to deal with, even for you? (Another way to ask this might be, who knows that sometimes you can be stubborn, unkind, selfish, etc., and loves you still, accepting that all people are made up of parts like that?)
9. How does technology help you learn about and connect with people who look, act, and think differently from you?
10. When you hear others speaking a language that you don’t know, how do you feel? What would it take for you to feel curious and interested rather than anxious or defensive?
11. We all have a ton of wonderful attributes. How many of your diverse attributes can you name in 30 seconds? (Think smart, creative, funny, artistic, careful, responsible, etc.)

### Return to the Discussion Throughout the Week

Thoughts develop with time. Find opportunities to bring up particularly compelling questions again during the month, maybe on walks, rides home, when tucking your child into bed, etc. If thoughts grew or changed, notice together how we are all evolving beings, opening ourselves to new truths and understandings as we live our lives and connect with others.



## From the Mailbox

Our "From the Mailbox" section is a monthly postcard to parents from the future world we want to create together. Each "postcard" is an invitation for families to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy culture, and all the social and environmental harm caused by it. The postcards lift up the life of brave and prescient souls whose work has manifested the Spirit of Love and Justice. They're meant to *inspire courage, create interest, and give adult caregivers a leaping-off point* to learn more themselves and start rich conversations at home.

### A Postcard of Pluralism:

#### Paolo Friere and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Dear travelers and homebodies,

I'm sitting at a small *mesa* in a big room with my classmates, people of all ages gathered to listen to Brazilian philosopher and *professor* Paulo Friere. Bring the ideas from the edges to the center, he tells us. Oh, you don't know the ideas from the edges? he asks. No wonder, he says. It's mostly the ideas of the powerful that make it into the classroom. You have to ask people who don't have power about their lives, their thoughts, their experiences. You have to lay out all the ideas, side by side, and discuss their merits together, live them together. That's how you know which ideas will liberate all of us together, the oppressed and the oppressor.

Where will you shine the bright light of your awareness today? With whom will you discuss what you find? And will you hold a space there for lesser-heard voices to speak their truths?

Love,

***the Awaiting World***



# At Play

## Playing Games with Pluralism

At Play activities and questions are a way to joyfully, playfully, and imaginatively experience the theme.

### Option A: Community Spot-It Challenge

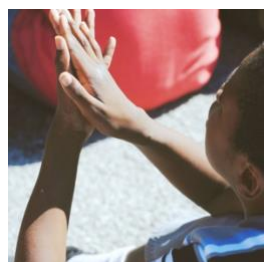
In the early days of Soulful Home, we included a monthly family scavenger hunt for theme-related sights around our neighborhoods. This month, we're bringing that idea back in an effort to get to know our communities a bit better. Look around your neighborhood and see if you can find...

1. A church marquis in a language other than the one(s) you speak
2. A Pride flag in the window of a business
3. A public building with a ramp in addition to stairs out front
4. A room set aside for nursing a baby
5. A "pets welcome" sign
6. Free, outdoor music that someone could get to without a car
7. Someone doing an act of kindness for someone they don't know
8. Children playing a game that you're unfamiliar with
9. A city house with a chicken coop in their yard
10. A public sign with Braille lettering on it

### Option B: Seven Playful Claps

One of the best ways to build camaraderie and connection in diverse groups, or simply between two people, is by using nonverbal communication. This list of seven playful claps allows you to celebrate your child, your neighbor, your friend, the troop you lead, the team you co-sponsor, etc. in joyful and unexpected ways!

<https://www.playworks.org/resource/seven-playful-claps/>



# On the Message Board

## A Monthly Reminder

The On the Message Board section lifts up a theme-related mantra, graphic, quote, or gesture for your family to carry with them throughout the month. Think of these “family sayings” or “family signs” as tools for the journey, reminders that help us refocus and steady ourselves and our kids as we navigate through life’s challenges and opportunities. Each month, write this mantra on your family message board, or on a sticky note to put on your bathroom mirror, or the fridge. Make it part of your routine to share the mantra each morning so that it becomes something you all carry with you throughout the day.

### May’s Mantra:

“We are many, we are one.”

Our mantra this month comes from the title of a beloved [UU religious education curriculum](#) written for preschoolers. Broadly speaking, the aim of the curriculum is to engage young children in nurturing and joyfully exploring their religious community. However, as a meditation and awareness tool, we might take its title as a way to understand the paradox of pluralism.

This month, we challenge you to make time each day for two weeks in a row to contemplate this sentence. Chant it or write it on a card and focus your gaze on it. Make an audio file of yourself saying this calmly, clearly, and listen to it for five or ten minutes. Let it help you grow in your acceptance of the difficult but valuable place where we come together not despite of but *in the living embodiment of our differences* and choose to nurture our connection and our power in unity.

Not everyone you meet is going to share this value. Many people want to be separate and independent. Some people even seek chaos and destruction, because they do not feel secure in their place in their societies, so tearing the old society down seems preferable. As now-retired Southern District Executive Susan Smith used to say, “We UUs are in covenant with people who are not in covenant with us.” That is because through our faith we pledge to love the world as it is, not only our favorite or familiar people in that world.

See what comes up for you as you sit with this phrase. In what ways do you resist this idea? In what ways do you experience it as truth? After your two weeks of meditation, consider posting your take-aways on our Soul Matters Sharing Circle social media pages.



## At the Bedside

At The Bedside activities engage the theme through storytelling. This takes place during the dreamy, almost otherworldly hour or so before children or youth drift off to sleep. Through stories and the questions and realizations that they prompt, we come to understand the nature of and our own place in the cosmos. But also, these selections invite you to remember, shape, and share stories from your own past, using thoughtful narratives to help your child weave the tale of who they are and whose they are.

## The Tree in the Ancient Forest

This month's bedtime story by Carol Reed-Jones bridges last month's theme of interdependence to this month's theme of pluralism. It's a simple, repeating story that describes the relationships between the creatures--the fungi, the plants, and the animals-- that all occupy the same space: a very big, very old tree. Each being depends on the other, and yet, they are not always symbiotic. The same can be said of all of us!

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/trees/workshop1/the-tree>

Note that this story comes from a lovely picture book available used online for very little money at several online retailers.

### Stretching the Story

- When is it hard to share your space?
- How do you depend on those with whom you share space?
- How do you each contribute to your space functioning well?
- What would you miss if any one person wasn't in a space where you spend a lot of time (home, school, church, etc.)?





# On the Porch

## Raising a Child of Delight Together

On the Porch supports sharing realizations and hopes around the theme with other supportive adults. Perhaps this happens on a literal porch or front stoop, but it could happen wherever parents and their circle of support gather and talk (online or in person) about soulful parenting. The “A Sip of Something New” section invites you to engage a new idea shared by someone else. The “Spiritual Snacks” section stimulates personal storytelling and the sharing of your own wisdom and experience.

## A Sip of Something New

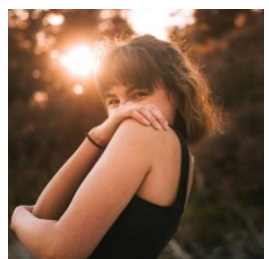
### We Are Legion

Many of us experience internal dialogues that speak in many voices. Sometimes we can identify the origin of these voices, and sometimes not. Many meditation practices include allowing voices to come up, speak their piece, and then fade to the background.

In this video, a resource borrowed from our Soul Matters Small Group packet, Karen Faith, an anthropological researcher, takes this practice in a new direction by welcoming these voices, asking them what she needs to hear from them, and then telling them that she loves them.

Take a listen, and be prepared to learn something new about yourself and everyone else:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUV5DJb6KGs>



## Spiritual Snacks to Share

Bring these questions with you when the time comes to hang out with your co-parent or buddies. Don't treat the questions as a list to go through one by one. Instead pick the one or two that speak to you the most. Treat the questions less as a quiz and more like doorways inviting you into the world of storytelling and memory.

### Questions

1. Winona LaDuke talks about people's tendency to relate to one another as categories rather than as people. In the areas of your life where you spend the most time—home, work, social groups, volunteer work, church—what categories do people relate to you through? How has this been helpful and harmful to you?
2. When do you intentionally avoid getting multiple perspectives on something in order to hone in on that quiet voice within?
3. How does it feel in your body to be the one person in the room who does not agree with what's being said? How do you respond to that feeling?
4. When you walk through your neighborhood and smell food that is different from what you cook at home, what are your first, unfiltered thoughts?
5. When you suspect you have very different values from the person with whom you are interacting, where do you go for common ground? What's your go-to connection point?
6. As a people, how do we make the leap from valuing diversity to valuing pluralism?
7. What would it be like for you if your child grew up to follow a different religion or worldview than the one in which you're raising them? How about if their chosen religion or worldview was in conflict with their rearing?
8. UUs can be found among moral absolutists, [moral pluralists](#), and moral relativists. Are you more likely to 1) generally feel there is one right answer to complex problems, 2) generally feel there are several right answers to complex problems, or 3) generally feel there is no absolutely wrong answer to complex problems?



# The Extra Mile

The Extra Mile section is for families who want to continue exploring the theme of the month through larger adventures, more complex projects or simply through additional modalities not otherwise included in the packets. The Extra Mile suggestions often surpass what is considered an “everyday moment” in a family, and may involve more preparation, planning, or time to accomplish. A bit more effort, but well worth it!

## A People of Many Accents

It’s common for children to believe that they, themselves, and their community members do not speak with an accent, while others do. Help your child to learn or remember that everyone feels like this, no matter where we grew up, but that there is no such thing as a “neutral” accent. This is a foundational concept for understanding pluralism. There is no blank, central point from which others deviate. The ability to experience connection across difference is actually something people everywhere have in common!

Make this lesson a little more interesting by spending some time in the Library of Congress’ collection of American English dialect recordings:

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/american-english-dialect-recordings-from-the-center-for-applied-linguistics/about-this-collection/>



# Blessing of Pluralism for the Unwelcome Legion Within Each of Us

Note: The blessing this month invites us to welcome the unwelcomable, to make room within for those qualities we would actually rather excise from ourselves. In the name of truly integrating the fullness of our humanity, that we may, in turn, understand and come to love others, we must acknowledge all parts of ourselves—shadows, too.

*Blessed are you, anger—may you burn away distraction and show us the core of our need.*

*Blessed are you, pettiness—may we recognize that your emergence means we feel powerless to engage our conflicts directly, and thus, we have found an opportunity for growing in courage.*

*Blessed are you, selfishness and greed, may you point us toward appreciating the abundance around us.*

*Blessed are you, bigotry, for you have shown us where we long for belonging and comfort.*

*Blessed are you, fear—may you help us heed our intuition, and thank our ancestors for their own acts of self-preservation.*

*Blessed are you, laziness—may your prompt us toward rest act as an antidote to our collective obsession with being productive.*

*Blessed are you, longing for validation—may you show us the power we have to lift others up with affirming words.*

*Blessed are you, gluttony—may you, along with your sibling qualities of relishing, savoring, and delighting—help us to appreciate having bodies in a sensual world.*

*Blessed are you, schadenfreude—may you remind us of our deeper desire for justice, and may we seek it in helpful and compassionate ways.*

*Blessed are you, superiority—may we extend your sense potential and confidence to all people, everywhere.*

*Blessed are you, tribal mentality—may we grow in camaraderie-building as we experience your gift.*

*Blessed are you, apathy—in your stillness, may wisdom and prudence emerge.*



## Connect with more Inspiration for your family, and for you!

Parents can Join our Facebook and Instagram pages for  
daily inspiration on our themes:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/?ref=settings>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/soul\\_matters\\_circle/](https://www.instagram.com/soul_matters_circle/)

Parents and youth will want to check out our [YouTube](#) music playlist on the monthly theme.

### Credits

Soulful Home packets are prepared by  
Teresa Youngblood,  
Our Soul Matters [Family Ministry Coordinator](#)

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