



Our Whole Lives

LIFESPAN SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Worship and Education Resources

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Philippians 4:13

by Amy Johnson
Minister for Sexuality Education & Justice

April, 2020

I can do all things through the One who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13 (The Inclusive Bible) Dear ones,

I don't know about you, but I've been leaning on these words a lot lately. Living in and through a global pandemic takes a lot of different kinds of strength.

We need strength to be in relationship with each other right now, in new and different ways. We need strength to care for ourselves while we are also caring for others.

We need strength to keep our sense of identity—of who we know ourselves to be—safe and healthy while we are isolating.

We need strength to keep all the parts of our bodies as healthy as we can.

And we need strength to resist messages that are damaging to our body image, our sense of who we are, our relationships, our very beings.

We need all the strength the One can give!

When reflecting on these words, I think it's important to point out that they don't say "I will enjoy doing all the things I need to do." Or even, "I won't complain about doing all the things I need to do."

I did not enjoy recommending you all stop holding in-person OWL programs right now.

I didn't want to have to communicate with hosts and postpone or cancel OWL trainings through August.

I don't enjoy telling you no, please do not offer OWL classes or trainings online in any way.

I, like so many of you, have times of wondering how I'm ever going to do all that needs doing—and not doing—right now.

And yet, through the ups and downs, I've managed to find the strength to do what must be done and not do what can't be done now, just as so many of you are finding strength to do so many things right now.

Here are some tips to help us through this time together:

- Witness how folk you serve are feeling and coping
 - Resist urges to try to “fix” everything—some things are hard right now, and it’s ok to help youth and others know that we can do hard things together and with support
- Be creative, and at the same time, respect boundaries
 - Strive to use communications to connect with each other, and lift each other up, instead of using them to blame or complain
- Continue to practice much self-care and kindness with your body, mind, and spirit

We are also living into many new layers of consent in order to keep our bodies, minds, and spirits safer, which bring up new questions for us to ponder/discern:

- How do we consensually negotiate physical distancing in a crowded grocery store?
 - How do we practice informed consent regarding requests that may not feel like a choice (staying at home during a crisis while also trying to work, keep children learning and/or care for others)?
 - What new routines to bring a higher level of safety are now less or no longer negotiable (physical distancing, wearing masks, taking temperatures)?
- Whose needs are most important in our relationships at any given moment?
- How do those living alone feel comfort and intimacy right now?

I don’t have all these answers; however, I am with you in the struggle, the grief, and the discernment as we move forward.

May the One who gives us strength help us to continue to stay connected in ways that are meaningful to us, so that our relationships can continue to be the foundation of the work we do together: dismantling shame and stigma about bodies and relationships, and building a healthy, positive and sacred frame about what it means to be sexual beings.

May it be so, Amy

PS The national UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice and the UCC Minister for Mental Health and Disabilities put together some ideas of Self-Soothing Practices in Times of Physical Distancing. They have a whole lot to do with sensuality. [You can find the graphic here](#)

1 John 3:18

Sexuality and Our Faith Scripture Reflection

By Amy Johnson

Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice

July, 2020

My children, our love must not be simply words or mere talk--it must be true love, which shows itself in action and truth. 1 John 3:18 (The Inclusive Bible)

Beloveds,

Our Whole Lives is, at its core, about dismantling shame and stigma around our bodies and our relationships. When we do this work, it is transforming and life-giving. It is relational and revolutionary.

We take action to create space for truth-telling and meaningful conversations about what many find uncomfortable to discuss.

Right now, we are called to do this work not only in the midst of COVID-19 and various levels of physical shut down, but also to remember that we are in the midst of the pandemic of racism which has infected our country for hundreds of years.

As we acknowledge our complicity in Our Whole Lives being used in predominantly white spaces for and by predominantly white people, I invite those of us who are white to ask these questions—as individuals, as individual congregations, as associations, and as conferences, and as the national setting:

- Who might want to be a part of this ministry but cannot?
- Whose ideas am I/are we not taking seriously?
- What conditions do I/we have in place that maintain safety and comfort for some, while sacrifice and minimize the safety of others?

Will we tell the truth? Will we move beyond words and into actions of truth? And will we keep working so that our actions can continue to be true for all God's beloved children?

This scripture calls us to tell ourselves the truth, and to move beyond those words and into actions that will enroll us as co-creators of the kin-dom of God right here and right now.

I hope you will continue to accompany me on this journey towards wholeness. Our lives, our children's lives, our whole lives—depend on it.

In solidarity, Amy

Genesis 1:31

[Scripture Reflection](#)—October 2020

Isaiah 9:2

Lighting the Way

By Amy Johnson

Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice

February, 2021

“The people walking in darkness Are seeing a brilliant light—

Upon those who dwell in a land of deep shadows Light is shining!”

Isaiah 9:2

This is one of my favorite pieces of scripture for when I am struggling. It reminds me that though there are times of darkness and deep shadows, God is always shining a light. It may be a flicker or a shimmer or a pinpoint or a brilliant light, but it is always here. God is always here.

Shame and stigma envelop many of us in deep shadows. They work diligently to convince us there is no light left for our souls. No room at the inn of love and acceptance.

For many who are living in the shadows of shame and stigma about who they are and who they love, Our Whole Lives and Sexuality and Our Faith are truly about a life-giving and light-giving ministry of inclusion, sacredness and wholeness.

But does OWL shine the light even further?

In this [YouTube video](#), Tailar Matthews explains how comprehensive sexuality education can be used to combat some of the negative effects of racism in our society. While it doesn't end racism, it can help mitigate some of the negative effects people experience due to racism. And not offering comprehensive sexuality education? Well, that doesn't help at all, and in fact, is harmful to people.

Even though we are living through a time that has felt and can still feel like a great shadow over our work and lives, a pandemic that has cost too many lives and has caused us to physically distance and postpone too many things—even though we are living with a pandemic of racism and divisiveness in our country—we are doing good work by supporting OWL.

The work of Our Whole Lives and Sexuality and Our Faith is the work of shining a brilliant light. Doing this work helps delineate where those shadows are—to identify them as shadows, so we can all step forward into

the light of God, in all our beautiful and sacred diversity.

As we move from winter to spring, as vaccines become more available, and communities move into more openness and connection, as daylight literally grows longer each day, know you are held in light and love.

Be of good faith, beloveds. May we nurture the light, celebrate it, and shine the way forward for one another in solidarity and belief that we are people who shine in the very image of God.

Psalm 133

By Amy Johnson

Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice

May, 2021

See how good, how pleasant it is

for God's people to live together as one! It is like precious oil on Aaron's head running down on his beard,

running down to the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Mount Hermon, Falling on the hills of Zion.

for that is where Yhwh bestows the blessing—life that never ends. [The Inclusive Bible]

By Amy Johnson, UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice

It's Pride season, and I've been asked to preach at a local church in my area one Sunday in June. This Psalm is one of the lectionary readings for the day I am scheduled to give the message.

These words speak to me of that feeling I get when I glimpse what it could be like to live in a world where there is peace, and we all get along; where diversity is glorified, evil is vanquished, and curiosity triumphs over fear.

In a commentary about this passage, H. Macmillan writes, "The dew of Hermon and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, to which the psalmist referred — differs entirely from the ordinary dew of our country — and is a phenomenon peculiar to Palestine and the East. It is a soft mist that comes from the Mediterranean during the summer, when the heat is greatest, and the country is burnt up with the terrible sunshine..... It comes first of all to Mount Hermon, and helps to keep up its unchanging robe of snow, and to fill its springs, and feed its cedars, and then it flows down and makes the corn to grow green in the valleys, and the vines to swell out their purple grapes in the vineyards, and the lilies to unfold their crimson radiance in the fields. They are mutually dependent upon each other. The lowly plain does not envy the lofty mountain; nor does the lofty mountain look down in contempt upon the lowly plain."

I yearn for more glimpses of ways we can live together as one. Signs of relationships where we know deeply how interdependent we are. Times when one identity does not look down in contempt upon any other. When one religion does not look down in contempt upon another.

When our bodies do not look with contempt upon our spirits, nor our spirits look with contempt

upon our bodies. When I am lucky, I can imagine this for a few seconds, even feel it deeply in my soul.

Recently, I watched my colleague-friend, Rev. Davi Weasley in Bellingham, WA, lead a beautiful opening to a prayer time. They invited us to take oil and find a pulse point on which to place our oily fingers....to feel that pulse and hear “beloved....beloved...beloved” in time to the beating of our hearts.

The thing is, justice work around sexuality education is often not harmonious, or unifying, or conflict-free. This road often feels long, full of potholes and mine fields and detours and dead ends. It can be downright scary and dangerous to tread on avenues leading to preserving choice and bodily agency and the right to exist and celebration of diversity, particularly in a Christian context.

And maybe, we need not wait for the dew to come while we navigate these hot spots, because God has already sent the dew, and it is flowing through our veins, where we can find it any time we need it, by stopping....breathing.....finding a pulse....and listening for that still small voice whispering “beloved” over and over and over again.....

Matthew 18:20

Where Two or Three Are Gathered.... By Amy Johnson

UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice

August, 2021

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst.” Matthew 18:20, The Inclusive Bible

Where two or three are gathered in these times, there are questions. Are all who are gathered vaccinated? Are they wearing masks? Are they gathered indoors or outdoors? When we gather in groups, even small groups, during the unfolding of this pandemic, there is a certain amount of uncertainty and risk.

As Christians, we remember that when we gather, Christ is in our midst. This doesn't mean that there is no risk because Christ is there. It means that we are not alone in our uncertainty, in our suffering, in our anxiety, in our frustration, in our humanity. Christ--Emmanuel--God with us---is just that. With us.

Recently, the Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer wrote an eloquent Witness for Justice. You can read it [here](#). In it, he talks about getting vaccinated and wearing a mask as a way of living out Matthew 22:39, to love your neighbor as yourself. Recognizing there is a small percentage of folks who cannot safely be vaccinated or who cannot wear a mask for health reasons, he implores the rest of us to care for our neighbors, especially those the most vulnerable among us, by getting vaccinated and wearing a mask. By doing so, we create a safer community. We acknowledge Christ and Christ's love in our midst.

What does this have to do with Our Whole Lives?

The OWL national staff in both the UCC and the UUA are receiving messages constantly from those who think we are under concerned and those who think we are overly concerned about Our Whole Lives programs and trainings. There are those of you who are upset that there are not more training options currently available, and those of you who are appalled there are any in-person trainings and programs

happening at all. Some of you had discerned that providing programming in person was safe and have subsequently changed your plans due to changing information and circumstances.

We understand. We, too, are weighing options, and shifting our plans as we have new information. We don't have all the answers, but we are looking to our sacred texts and our faith to guide us. We strive to love our neighbors as ourselves and encourage you to do the same.

We ask that you consider deeply who your neighbors are, and act by holding those who are most vulnerable as being more important than a schedule or desire to "get back to normal."

We encourage you to embody the Our Whole Lives value of responsibility, and to discern and practice enthusiastic consent from all parties when it comes to offering OWL. And we hope that when you are uncertain, you can slow down, take a deep breath, and feel Christ in your midst—even with all of the uncertainty that shows no sign of ending soon.

In the meantime, please know that we are working diligently to provide you support. One of the ways we do that is through our [monthly webinars](#). Our [July webinar](#) focused on slowing down and considering all that is involved in beginning or re-starting OWL programs considering our current realities, adolescent development, and more. Our [September webinar](#) will include information about why we do things the way we do in Our Whole Lives, and our [October webinar](#) will include a sneak peek at the online trainings we will be offering in 2022.

Please care kindly and lovingly for yourselves and those among you. Gather safely, take a moment to be still, breathe, and feel the presence of Christ in our midst.

Jeremiah 8:22

Balm in Gilead By Amy Johnson

UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice

November, 2021

"Is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there?

Why then has the health of my people

not been attended to?" Jeremiah 8:22, The Inclusive Bible

When I was a social worker in public and tribal schools, working with young children who couldn't help but carry their woundedness into school each day, I learned to ask them when they were upset, "If we had a band aid, where would we put it?" It might be their heart, because they were sad, their stomach if they were anxious, their head or hands if they were angry. It was a gentle tool to remind both of us that some wounds aren't visible, but they are still very real.

Many of us carry around wounds that have to do with our sexuality. Perhaps our bodies have been harmed, our souls crushed, or our thoughts taken over with shame. Where would you put the band aid?

Naming our wounds can set us on a path of healing. Yet, healing can be a long and winding path, full of traffic jams and potholes, detours and temporarily closed roads that cause re-routing. There is a place on a healing journey where our wounds may heal enough to form a scar. And from that place, we may have enough energy to shift our focus from our own wound to that of our family, or community, or world. What wound is being carried that has not yet been healed that led to the damage we suffered? That is when we hear and resonate with the cry from Jeremiah: Is there no balm in Gilead? Where are you? Why have you not attended to the family/community/nation/world?

Our Whole Lives and Sexuality and Our Faith are tools that encourage healing. The trainings can help us reflect and learn where we have more to heal and if we are ready to help young people or our peers learn about sexuality. The materials guide us to have conversations so that our families and communities will be healthier—even places that provide balm instead of needing caravans of it to heal wounds. None of it is perfect. Because we are all human and have our individual and communal ways of being broken, we will encounter traffic jams and potholes, detours and re-routing. That's why it's good to gather our community, learn some basics about how to navigate the road, wear our seatbelts, and put our phones down so we can attend to the task at hand.

I invite you, as you close out this year and look ahead, to join us in finding ways to offer OWL in your faith community. It's worth the time and effort. It's a heckuva spiritual journey. And I am convinced it's a key ingredient in the balm of Gilead, to heal our wounded souls.

Exodus 3:15

Reimagine

By Amy Johnson

UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice

February, 2022

¹⁵ God spoke further to Moses: "Tell the children of Israel: 'YHWH, the I AM,' the God of your ancestors, the God of Sarah and Abraham, of Rebecca and Isaac, of Leah and Rachel and Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my Name forever; this is the name you are to remember for all generations."

Exodus 3:15, The Inclusive Bible

The personal name for God, Yaweh, revealed to Moses in the scripture above, is a remarkable combination of both female and male grammatical endings. The first part of God's name in Hebrew, "Yah," is feminine, and the last part, "weh," is masculine.^[i]

God transcends gender. The still-speaking, non-binary God who created us and called us very good; the God who is always and everywhere, who set themselves free in human form to teach us; the God who is—transcends gender. And we, whom God created and called very good, were created in God's image. It follows, then, that we as humans also transcend gender.

Gender as a construct has very real effects and consequences on each of us. These vary in type and by intensity depending on who our families are, in which communities we live and engage, where in the state or country or world we live, if and how we practice religion, and whose voices we listen to.

The next thing on my plate today is a meeting to plan for the Reimagine Youth Ministry event, where I am presenting a workshop about Reimagining Sacred Bodies and Relationships. So I invite you to reimagine with me. Reimagine biblical translations, like the one above, which include more than male names for our ancestors. Reimagine young people who are grounded in the knowing that whatever gender they are, they are created in the very image of God, and they are very good. Reimagine a society where power structures and institutions reflect this honoring of all genders, and treat each human being with respect and dignity, in all the ways they identify, express themselves, and engage in loving and consensual relationships with one another.

And then remember. Remember that this is entwined with our work with Our Whole Lives and Sexuality and Our Faith. Creating places where conversations about bodies, relationships, gender, and consent are welcome. Places where we acknowledge harm that has occurred and work to repair that harm-- in our own OWL programs, in our faith communities, in our country, and in our world.

May it be so.

[i] (<https://theconversation.com/what-the-early-church-thought-about-gods-gender-100077>); David Wheeler-Reed. Aug 1, 2018. "What the early church thought about God's gender").

Luke 7:36-38

[Scripture Reflection](#): **Beloved Witness—June, 2022**

Romans 12:21

[Scripture Reflection](#): **Change for Good—September, 2022**

Colossians 1:17

[Scripture Reflection](#): **Hold Together—November, 2022**

Romans 8:13

[Scripture Reflection](#): **Beacon of Love—March, 2023**

Romans 8:9

[Scripture Reflection](#): **Loving Louder—June, 2023**

Exodus 1:20

[Scripture Reflection](#): **Bold Creativity in Time of Oppression --August, 2023**

Exodus 33:14

Scripture Reflection

By Rev. Amy Johnson

UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice

December, 2023

“My presence will travel with you, and I will give you rest.”

~Exodus 33:14, The Voice translation

In this passage, God, the Eternal One, I Am that I Am, is talking to Moses, who is, frankly, a bit argumentative. Moses mildly threatens God (If you don't travel with us, then don't lead us away from here....and if you're really who you say you are, show me!) and gets a bit pouty and whiny (How are people gonna trust that I have your trust??)

I mean, who among us can't relate a bit? When we get tired, when justice seems to have left the building/community/nation/world, we can get cranky. When things aren't going the way we want them to, or the way we think they should, or the way we think God wants them to, we can be tempted to bargain and threaten too. Show me a sign! Give me strength! Help me carry on!

The desire to create a just and equitable world on earth as it is in heaven is strong, and fuels the faith of many of us. Yet, we are human, so we get tired and are prone to cry out to God for help to keep going.

And.

Sometimes, what we really need is to rest.

Tricia Heresy, Founder of [The Nap Ministry](#), repeats over and over in her manifesto that rest is resistance. Rest resists capitalistic culture, which uses and discards bodies like machines. Rest resists cultural messages to do more, be more efficient, create results for someone else's bottom line. Rest resists the pull to define ourselves by how much we have achieved or how much we own. Rest brings us into connection with our bodies. Rest allows us space to dream, to wonder, to be.

This Advent, as we wait for Christ, as we wait for God to be born in a human body, as we wait for the justice and light we hope once again will be born into our world, let us remember to rest. Let us remember that newborn babies sleep. A lot.

God has promised to travel with us and give us rest—and we need to pull the veil of “have to’s” and “shoulds” away from our eyes so we can see that it’s there.

So take a nap. Slow down. Create quiet time for yourself—even if it is a few moments staring out a window on your way somewhere else, or breathing outside air and noticing the nonhuman world around you for 30 seconds.

You are worthy of rest. Your body needs rest, and we need you to be your fully divine self in this work.

Rest is resistance. Merry Christmas.

2 Corinthians 4:4

Finding the Splendor of the Gospel through Our Whole Lives By Rev. Amy Johnson

UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice March 2024

⁴ Their unbelieving minds have been blinded by the god of the present age, so that they do not see the splendor of the Gospel showing forth the glory of Christ, the image of God.

~2 Corinthians 4:4

I had cause recently to say, “Yes, I do think Jesus would teach Our Whole Lives. OWL is about dismantling shame and stigma about our bodies and relationships, and Jesus was all about that.”

From speaking to a woman at the well and charging her with spreading the news, to having a woman wipe oil from his feet, to telling those who had no sin to throw the first stone, Jesus constantly challenged the views and norms of the day. Those norms are created by humans, and Jesus brings us back, over and over, to looking for the image of God—in each other, and in what we are doing.

The gods of the present age—the small “g” gods—of patriarchy, and white supremacy, and misogyny—those gods are not the gods we are called to follow or worship. It can be messy and scary when we follow God’s message of love and inclusion in a world that is saying we should be afraid of diversity, and exclude anyone who might make us feel uncomfortable. Yet, the splendor of the Gospel and the Glory of Christ is that we can find transformation, community-building, and spectacular connection when we do the work of dismantling shame and stigma in our own communities.

Our Whole Lives is about understanding our bodies, our relationships, our families, and our communities in expansive and loving ways. When we do this, we experience the splendor of the Gospel. We see the Glory of Christ. We embody image of God. May it be so.

Living Psalm 139

[Scripture Reflection: Weave Us Together](#) –June 2024

Proverbs 22:6

Worth the Effort

By Rev. Amy Johnson

UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice August 2024

⁶ *Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.*

~ Proverbs 22:6

While there are many perspectives on the “right way” to bring up our children, most of us—especially those of us who identify as Christian--agree we want our children to be able to live in a world where they are valued as part of God’s beautiful creation, where they have safe places to live and go to school, where they have enough healthy food to nourish their bodies, enough beauty and grace to nourish their souls, and enough challenge to strengthen their minds and hearts.

Our Whole Lives ministries take these things seriously. We strive diligently to create resources that support adults in creating spaces for children and youth to explore their humanity and divine beauty, to understand their bodies and relationships, to respect themselves and one another, and to model all these things in the world outside of an Our Whole Lives program.

In Our Whole Lives, we value curiosity, and trust; science and faith; bodies and spirits. We tend to each strand in a fabric of humanity that is woven together throughout lifetimes, and is stronger together than any one of its threads. We wonder together, learn together, hold each other in community—together.

Our Whole Lives is an investment of time and energy, of talent and patience, of meetings and consent and spirit and covenant. Yes, it takes effort. And yes, it is worth that effort, for as scripture says, ⁶ *Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.* ~ Proverbs 22:6

John 10:10

Abundantly

By Rev. Amy Johnson

UCC Minister for Sexuality Education & Justice November 2024

¹⁰
I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

~John 10:10 NRSVUE

Jesus tells us that he came so that we may have abundant life. Not so that we can live in fear and trepidation, but so that we can live fully into who we are and do that with abundance. Abundance of faith. Abundance of community. Abundance of love and care.

The work of comprehensive sexuality education in our faith communities creates pathways to abundant life. It is the work of us coming together in community to understand about the beauty and diversity of all kinds of bodies. Bodies that are different sizes and colors. Bodies that are able to do different things in different ways. None better or worse than another—an abundance of bodies in community together.

We come together to learn about abundant types of relationships and to learn how to be in relationship with one another in healthy, life-giving, abundant ways.

We come together to understand the abundance of scientific information that helps keep us safer and more informed. We come together to practice communicating with one another when it's awkward and challenging

and important all at once.

We come together to learn about and understand identities different from our own, cultures different from our own, lived experiences different from our own—because all of these are abundant in our faith communities and in our world.

Jesus told many stories like the one in which this piece of scripture resides, and he did so to help us understand relationships and faith and what is really important to pay attention to. Jesus did not admonish a woman for pouring out her extremely valuable perfumed oil on him—he responded with generosity of spirit. He acquiesced and shifted to a generous healing when the Syrophenician woman reminded him that even the lowliest deserved crumbs. He created an abundance of community by sharing meals with people other had been taught to fear. He

helped people understand they weren't any better than the woman who they came to stone. He came that we might learn more about the abundant worthiness of humanity and be in community with one another.

An Our Whole Lives ministry is important, now more than ever. May you be inspired to create communities full of all that Our Whole Lives has to offer, so that we all may have life, and have it abundantly.

Proverbs 4:5

[Scripture Reflection:](#) **Where in the World is Wisdom? February, 2025**

Love Your Neighbor

James 1:8

Luke 10:27

Matthew 22:39

Leviticus 19:18

1John 4:21

John 13:34

Mark 12:31

Galatians 5:14

[Scripture Reflection:](#) **Love Your Neighbor, June 2025**

Hebrews 11:1

Hope

By Rev. Amy Johnson

UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice August 2025

Faith is the reality of all that is hoped for; faith is the proof of all that is unseen.

~Hebrews 11:1

As I write this, I am freshly home from co-leading an Our Whole Lives training in Louisville, KY. The same weekend included three trainings in North Carolina. On the books for fall are trainings in Texas, Rhode Island, Illinois, New York and Michigan. 2025 has also included trainings in Maine, South Dakota, and Louisiana, among other areas that regularly host OWL trainings.

This summer, 25 years of Our Whole Lives was celebrated at both the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ. There was main stage time, videos, workshops, cake and a spectacular owl costume, which became known as “OWLivia.” We laughed, we cried, we heard testimony of the importance of this ministry over and over and over again.

The transformation that occurs during Our Whole Lives trainings remains significant and life-changing. The commitment we are noticing from people all over the country to begin or restart or strengthen Our Whole Lives ministries in their congregations and communities is phenomenal. It’s inspiring. It is evidence of all that is hoped for; proof of all that we have not yet seen.

The violence of these times is real—and so is the hope. Jesus lived in a time when empire dehumanized people and used its power to crucify him. Yet, he taught love and inclusion and caring for one another and building communities where that care could be extended. He did not overthrow the Roman empire. He did what he knew to be the next right thing and brought others along with him.

And that is what we are doing with Our Whole Lives. Building communities that care for one another, that create and open space for the fullness of humanity to gather, learn, and love each other. Doing this in the midst of all the violence and upheaval in the world is a journey of faith, an journey that leads to all that is hoped for.

May it be so.

Psalm 98:4

[Scripture Reflection](#): **Joy! December, 2025**

Isaiah 60:4

[Scripture Reflection](#): **Look Up—February 2026**

Prayer Resources

[Book of Love: Liturgy/Poetry/Devotionals for Loving Our Neighbor Out Loud](#) (free download)

[Anti-purity Culture Prayer \(enfleshed\)](#) [Beatitudes Remix \(enfleshed\)](#)

“For the Mirror” from *Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human*. Cole Arthur Riley. Convergent Books, New York, 2024

[Body prayer based on Julian of Norwich](#)

Peace for All Bodies

By Rev. Amy Johnson, UCC Minister for Sexuality Education & Justice Holy Creator and
Author of *Life*,

We pause amidst the busyness of our days to Still our bodies

Hear our hearts beat

Feel breath move in and out of us with your Spirit. We pray for peace for all bodies.

For bodies ravaged by legislation removing choices

For bodies needing care that has been villainized and vanquished

For bodies healing from physical, emotional, spiritual, medical and political assault

For bodies shamed and stigmatized for their size, their shape, their parts, their color, their experiences

We pray for peace for all bodies.

For young bodies, old bodies, teen bodies, middle aged-bodies, bodies of all ages
For black bodies, brown bodies, indigenous bodies, Asian bodies, Latine bodies and bodies descended from every corner of the globe and all ethnicities and cultures

For queer bodies and intersex bodies and cis bodies, disabled bodies and bodies that are temporarily able to do what we want them to do, bodies of faith and those who have lost faith or never had any to begin with

We pray for peace for all bodies.

And we remember, how you created humanity in your image, with abundant diversity And as you breathed breath into each of us in the beginning

You declared every single body to be very good. Amen.

A Reflection of Psalm 139 for Trans Day of Visibility

By Rev. Amy Johnson, UCC Minister for Sexuality Education & Justice

You have searched me,

God of all ages and all genders, God who created transcestors.

You have searched me and you know me. You know when I blend in and

When I stick out.

You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my coming out

And my retreat to safety.

You are familiar with all my ways.

Before an inclusive word is on my tongue, You know it completely.

You surround me with your presence

And you ask before you lay your hand upon me. Such reverence is too wonderful for me;
It is too lofty to attain anywhere but with you. Where can I go from your spirit?
Where can I flee from your care and love?
If I go to spaces that welcome my authentic self, You are there.
When I enter public restrooms with trepidation, You are there.
If I rise on the wings of dawn, grounded in strength and authenticity,
If I stumble navigating transphobic systems in my nonbinary body, Even there, your hand will guide
me,
Your right hand will hold me fast.
If I pull the covers back over my head,
paralyzed by fear of hateful words and legislation, Saying "Surely the darkness will hide me.
And the light become night around me," You remind me there is
No erasure in you.
Your Spirit surrounds me and whisper shouts The multitudes you hold with delight
And the honor you bestow on all you create. For you created my inmost being,
You knit me together in the womb,
Each stitch purposefully connected in a pattern
Of awe and wonder.
Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
My whole self was not hidden from you When I was woven together
In the holy depths of your love.

Litany Suggestions

[Book of Love: Liturgy/Poetry/Devotionals for Loving Our Neighbor Out Loud](#) (free download)

A Litany to Remember Those in Pain and to Pray for Healing (adapted from Sexuality and Our Faith, grades 7-9, UCC section)

If online, Voice one and Voice two should have two candles lit in their frame, a way to extinguish them, and a way to re-light them. Voice three should have one candle lit, a way to extinguish it, and a way to relight it.

If in person, Voices should have lit candles, a way to extinguish them, and a way to relight them.

VOICE ONE: Every day someone is told that they are ugly. Every day someone is told that they are stupid. Every day someone is told that they are worthless.

(Extinguish one candle)

VOICE ONE: Hear us now, God, as we lift up to you, either out loud or silently, the names of those we know who have suffered this.

(allow 10-15 seconds of silence if no one speaks)

VOICE ONE: "Heal us, O God."

VOICE TWO: Every day someone's sexual health is assaulted and violated.

(Extinguish one candle)

VOICE TWO: Hear us now, God, as we lift up to you, either out loud or silently, the names of those we know who have suffered this.

(allow 10-15 seconds of silence if no one speaks)

VOICE TWO: "Heal us, O God."

VOICE THREE: Hundreds of children are born each year to people who cannot care for them or who do not want them. New HIV cases continue to grow, even though there are effective ways to prevent and treat this condition. Everywhere, there are people who do not --or do not know how to-- take responsibility for their own sexuality.

(Extinguish one candle)

VOICE THREE: Hear us now, God, as we lift up to you, either out loud or silently, the names of those we know who have suffered this.

(allow 10-15 seconds of silence if no one speaks)

VOICE THREE: "Heal us, O God."

VOICE ONE: Each day thousands of people are subjected to sexist, racist, homophobic and transphobic remarks or jokes. Every day people are made fun of because they do not act in stereotypical ways. In schools and online and in workplaces around the world, people are harassed for being who they are. The battle continues to rage in our society over reproductive rights. Justice is not served.

(Extinguish one candle)

VOICE ONE: Hear us now, God, as we lift up to you, either out loud or silently, the names of those we know who have suffered this.

(allow 10-15 seconds of silence if no one speaks)

VOICE ONE: "Heal us, O God."

VOICE TWO: In cities and towns all over the world, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and nonbinary people are harassed and discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. People are harassed and experience discrimination because of their race. People in wheelchairs and with other physical or mental challenges are treated as if they have no sexuality.

(Extinguish one candle)

VOICE TWO: Hear us now, God, as we lift up to you, either out loud or silently, the names of those we know who have suffered this.

(allow 10-15 seconds of silence if no one speaks)

VOICE TWO: "Heal us, O God."

VOICE THREE: God, give us the strength to work for the self-worth of all your people {re-light candle},

VOICE ONE: to work for the sexual health for all your people [re-light candle],

VOICE TWO: to take responsibility for our own sexuality [re-light candle],

VOICE THREE: to work for justice and to strive to be inclusive of all your people [re-light candle].

VOICE ONE: Help us keep your light alive in our world [re-light candle]. Amen.

Sermon Topic Suggestions

[Liturgy for Song of Solomon 2:8-13 from enfleshed](#)

See [Scripture Reflections](#) in this doc

Love is Louder (than hate, than ignorance, than disagreements, than binary thinking...) Body-shame is not holy or godly

There are many ways to be family

Who we are is not hidden from God, and God calls us very good

Caring for one another includes caring for our bodies and relationships

Jesus trusted women and so should we

Our Whole Lives Values are Christian Values: Respect, Relationship, Responsibility, Self-Worth, Sexual Health, Justice & Inclusivity

Videos to Show in Church or Watch Together and Discuss

[Our Whole Lives 25 Year Anniversary Video](#)

[Our Whole Lives Taking Flight Webinar Series Playlist](#)

[May is Sex Ed for All Month: Rev. Amy Johnson, Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart & Rev. Tandi Rogers](#)

[Integrating Sex Education in Faith Communities \(SIECUS\) with Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart, Rev. Amy Johnson, and Dr. Melanie Davis](#)

[United Church of Christ "Under Your Wing" Parent Hub](#)

Music Suggestions



The following songs are some suggestions to use in a worship service about Our Whole Lives, sexuality, bodies, and/or relationships. Please be sure to check you have the necessary permissions if you use any of these in worship.

Songs

These
Bodies

The Many

[Link](#)

Love is
Greater
than Fear

The Many

[Link](#)

In God's
Hands

Tracy
Howe/The
Restoration
Project

[Link](#)

Where
You Go

Shoshana
Jedwab

[Link](#)

We Have
Come

Christopher
Grundy

[Link](#)

Hidden
Halleluja
h

Christopher
Grundy

[Link](#)

Lovely
Needy
People

The Many

[Link](#)

Love , Love,
Love,

Mia Schuster

[Link](#)

Imago Dei

In Sing! Prayer
and

Praise #118

[Link](#)

(note: this is a dated video but the audio is clear and gives you an idea of how it can be sung)

Bring
Many
Names

New Century

Hymnal #11

[Link](#)

I was
There
to Hear
Your
Borning
Cry

New Century
Hymnal #351

[Link](#)

Part of
the
Family

Voices United
#395

[Link](#)

Good Day

Flamy Grant

[link](#)

The Love
Canon

[link](#)

We are One
in The Spirit

(They Will Know We are
Christians by Our Love)

The Book of
Praise
#471

[link](#)

Jesu,
Jesu, Fill
Us With
Your Love

The New
Century
Hymnal #498

[link](#)

Resources* worth checking out

*While Our Whole Lives does not oversee these organizations, social media accounts, and resources, some in our community of sex-positive educators and practitioners have found these helpful. If you have other resources that you'd like to share on this page, email them to owl@ucc.org.

- [Advocates for Youth](#) Advocates for youth partners with young people and their adult allies to champion youth rights to bodily autonomy and build power to transform policies, programs and systems to secure sexual health and equity for all youth. @advocatesforyouth on Instagram
- [Sexual Violence Prevention | SafeBAE](#) SafeBAE is a survivor-founded, youth-led organization working to end sexual violence before it starts. Our programs are free for students and designed to shift school culture, backed by growing evidence of impact. @safe_bae on Instagram
- [Vibe Check](#) by SafeBAE - A self-reflection and accountability space for those who fear they may have crossed a line sexually and want to do some anonymous processing.
- [Amaze Jr.](#) The AMAZE Parent Playlist, specifically designed to help parents engage young children (ages 4-9) in open, honest conversations about bodies and growing up in a fun, engaging, and age-appropriate way. @amazeorg on Instagram
- [Queer Kid Stuff](#) Lots of short videos about gender identity, transgender, and non-binary topics. Gender Studies 101 meets Mr. Roger's Neighborhood.
- [Family Diversity song](#) Family (Love is Love) by the Teeny Tiny Stevies
- [Great Conversations](#): Classes for preteens and their families on puberty, sexuality, communication, decision-making and other important topics. Supports parents as primary sexuality educators and offers additional resources to initiate and maintain these important conversations about growing up.