



# Welcome to RE!

This month's theme is Deep Listening

## Week 6: Listening to our Elders and Ancestors

Listening to the voices of wise people in our lives is part of the second of our UU sources: "Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love." Those who are older than us, our elders, have many years of experience and listening to their journeys helps us to navigate our own. We also honor our ancestors and the wisdom and life they have passed down through the generations.

For UU's, late October can be a time for remembering those who have passed on, recently and a long time ago. Many cultures and traditions honor their beloved dead at this time of year. For instance, Halloween was born from Samhain, an ancient Pagan holiday, still observed today when the boundary between the living and the dead grows thin. And the Day of the Dead is a Mexican holiday to remember and honor ancestors who have died. Remembering those who have died is a way of listening to and letting their voices live on. It's a way of saying "Their light never fully goes out."

### Gathering Together: Listening to a special grandma

[In this week's video](#), a special guest from the congregation joins me! She is James and Leo's grandma, a respected elder of this congregation, and an artist: Linda Whyte Burrell. Come listen to stories from her family as she shares photographs, stories and special family heirlooms.

### Stories for RE: Listening to Elders

These stories help us remember to listen to the voices of our elders. They have so much to teach and so many stories. We can honor them by listening. And when they have passed on, we can continue to learn from their stories.

- [Grandad's Prayers of the Earth](#) by Douglas Wood. In this beautifully illustrated story, a boy learns the wisdom of listening to the Earth from his Grandad. Then his Grandad dies and he slowly understands more about what his grandpa was teaching, giving him a path towards healing.
- [The Keeping Quilt](#) by Patricia Polacco celebrates the connection to family history and tradition in a true story about the author's family and a quilt made from scraps of clothing passed through the generations.

### Songs of Joy: Ancestor's Song

This beautiful chant runs through my head at this time of year. I invite you to sing it many times through, changing the last word if/when you feel called to.

[Here's an audio](#) of me singing it.

[Here is the original](#), by Kellianna, with beautiful verses overlaid on top of this simple refrain:

Honoring the ones who came before us (*sung three times*)  
Honor them with song

### ***Mindful Moment: Ancestor Wisdom***

I invite you to spend some quiet time this week, listening for the wisdom of the ancestors to come through. Take some long, deep breaths, either in silence, or [as you listen to this chant](#). Imagine you are sitting in a beautiful place. As you sit, surrounded by this natural beauty, imagine that one of your ancestors comes to visit you. You may or may not recognize them, but they have a special message for you. Sit and listen until words or images form in your head. Now draw or write what you have seen and heard.

More on this from the SoulMatters curriculum: “When we think of those who have died, long ago, or more recently, one way to remember them is to imagine them now through memories. Memories are the stories about that person and the wisdom we were given from that person - their life and words. We are made strong for our own lives when we listen to what we have learned from that person’s life. Listen now to this chant. While listening, draw a picture of a memory you have of a loved one who has died. Remember animals are also loved ones. So it’s great if you draw them too.”

### ***Soulful Connections: Collecting Stories***

This week, I invite you to light a candle and create a special place in your house to honor your ancestors. This can be extremely simple or lavishly decorative. Whatever calls to you. Consider placing photos or items that remind you of loved ones who have passed.

Then pick a night this week to share stories of your family lineage. These can be stories about specific people that you knew, stories passed down through your family, and stories of family traditions and heritage that are meaningful. Practice deep listening as you take turns sharing and remembering.

And, if you’d like, call up an older relative or special older person in your life and ask for one of their stories! Now is the time to collect stories from the special elders in our lives.

**We hope you are able to weave some of these offerings into the tapestry of your family days.**

**May they bring you joy and connection.**

Please feel free to email Lee with any questions, comments or feedback! We would love to hear how you are using these offerings and any other ideas you have for what would be supportive for you and your kids.

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