

# Unitarian Universalist Sing-a-Long Songs

Companion Handbook



Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (ERUUF)

Durham, North Carolina

[www.ERUUF.org](http://www.ERUUF.org)

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The production of the CD and Handbook was funded by grants from the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Eno River Foundation, under the direction of Dr. Kevin Badanes, former ERUUF Director of Music.

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# HANDBOOK INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THESE RECORDINGS

Singing is an amazing part of the human experience. We sing alone; we sing together; we sing with babies, children, youth, and adults. We sing for joy and for sorrow, in solitude and in community. The Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Durham, North Carolina, conceived of this project to share the gift of song as widely as possible. Our main goals are:

- To cultivate a shared Unitarian Universalist musical tradition of songs that we all know
- To support singing and music-making by everyone, in our families, communities, and religious education classes
- To instill in our young people a musical and cultural sense of identity

The songs in this project were selected to be fun to sing, to project our Unitarian Universalist values, beliefs, and principles, and to be a core part of our community's traditions. The simple arrangements are easy to learn, and most of the songs have lots of repetition of both melody and lyrics. We chose a range of songs to fit different occasions and activities, from meditation and quiet reflection to enthusiastic, high-energy celebrations. We chose songs that children love to sing. And we chose songs that are traditionally used in a variety of different settings and rituals, from opening hymns for our Sunday services to sing-along favorites that our youngest children love.

Music sticks with us throughout our lives; songs we learn when we are young form a foundational part of our identity. We draw on them consciously and subconsciously for comfort, inspiration, courage, and reflection as years go by. We internalize their words and melodies in lasting ways. We often recall songs even when we have forgotten the specifics of a lesson, sermon, reading, or story. A culture of singing can enrich an entire lifetime. It is in this spirit that we have created these recordings.

## USING THE RECORDINGS

These recordings were designed so that you can sing along, as you play the recordings in your homes, car, church buildings, and classrooms. Bring audio speakers into a classroom so you can play the recordings with children and make music a regular part of your religious education experience. Once you have learned the songs, sing them freely with or without the recording, and then seek out other songs to add to your musical repertory. No one is too young or too old to listen to these recordings and join in.

## HOW TO SING

Unitarian Universalists believe that every person is important, and every person should have a voice in our communities and families. That principle applies to singing. Whatever your voice or musical background, you can participate in singing these songs. When you sing, regardless of whether your voice is polished or whether the notes match the music, you encourage others around you to feel confident about joining in. Conversely, when a person turns away from singing and says, "Oh, I can't sing," others who hear that sentiment might be discouraged from joining in, or think that only people with formal musical training or a particular type of talent should participate. When a person—especially a teacher, parent, or leader in a group—sings, others hear their participation as affirming and welcoming for everyone. In other words, it doesn't matter how "good" or "bad" a singer you are—your participation matters!

If you want to learn an unfamiliar song from the recordings, start by listening to it several times. Focus on the melody, then join in singing it quietly so you can hear the contours of the melody and follow them. Repetition is extremely important for learning new music. Sing the song several times in a row, and sing the same song each day while you are learning it. Then after you know it, reach out to someone else and teach it to them.

There are many different ways to "sing," especially in classes and groups. The following sections address some of these ideas.

## SING WITH YOUR BODY

One of the best ways to interact with music is to "sing" with your body. This approach also engages people who are not willing or able to sing conventionally with their voices, and works equally well with children and adults. Try tapping, clapping, or using a shaker to keep time to the song. Walk or march in time to the music, either in a circle or on a longer walk outdoors. Stand and sway in time to the music. Encourage pantomiming the lyrics, or learn American Sign Language signs for the words. Dance and spin, letting yourself express the sounds of the melody as your body moves through space. Sit quietly and focus on just breathing

slowly with each phrase of the song. Simply move in any way that is comfortable and feels right for your own body and mobility. Make singing with your body a routine part of your musical experiences.

## **SING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN**

These recordings are a great way to sing with babies and toddlers. One of the best ways to engage young children with a song is to give them something to manipulate—shakers or bells that they can shake, an object to pass around while the music is playing, simple hand motions to go with the lyrics, or colorful pictures or graphics to hold that tell what the song is about. The children are likely learning the song even if they don't sing it out loud when they are in a group setting or religious education classroom. Toddlers and young pre-schoolers may sit silently while listening to you sing the song, but then at home may surprise their parents by bursting into song and singing all the words. In other words, even if they aren't singing with their voices out loud when they are with you, they are most likely learning and remembering the song. And as they learn these songs, they will feel more a part of the community when they hear them in the Sunday service or in other gatherings.

## **SING THE WORDS**

Many of these songs are published in the standard Unitarian Universalist hymnals and songbooks. One can also find lyrics for most of these songs on the internet. We recommend learning the words by listening to the recordings over and over, though, as that helps internalize them and their meanings.

This collection of recordings includes several different languages and represents many different musical traditions and cultures. We encourage you to sing them in the languages that are present on the recordings. Try focusing on the sounds of the different syllables and their rhythms as you sing.

Don't worry if you don't know the words to a song. You can hum the song, skip words you don't remember, and sing on a nonsense syllable (like "la" or "doo") and still be making music and singing together.

Many of the songs in this collection are designed for you to make up new verses or add your own words to them. These are indicated in the songs' individual handbook entries. Feel free to write extra verses or new words for any song that moves you to do so. Encourage others, especially children, to add new lyrics to a song or alter them to match their own experiences, then have their friends sing their versions together.

In some settings, it will help a group learn the words more quickly if you write them out on a large poster. In other instances, groups will learn the song faster if everyone has their own copy of the words (such as in a hymnal). One technique to help teach the words is for the leader or teacher to speak one phrase at a time and have the group repeat that phrase out loud, going through the entire song and then singing it with the recording. And in some settings, it's most effective to let the group learn the words just from hearing the recording many times.

## **SING THE RHYTHMS**

Rhythm is a powerful part of music, and one of the best ways to both connect with a song and express yourself individually. Clap along to a song, whether or not you're also singing. Snap your fingers in time to the song. Pat your thighs. Tap your feet. Try different rhythmic patterns of clapping, snapping, patting, and tapping to make your own music in time to the song. Try adding rhythmic instruments such as shakers or rhythm sticks (or any wooden sticks), spoons, tambourines, or bells to form an impromptu band. Improvise when it comes to finding instruments: you can make, find, or re-purpose all sorts of objects as musical instruments, and it's a great exercise for children to come up with their own.

## **USING THE HANDBOOK**

The handbook for this project provides extra resources for anyone who wants to sing along. It's important to note that this handbook is not a curriculum; rather, it is a collection of ideas for activities and discussion topics that you may choose to use with these songs. You may also choose to just listen to the recordings and sing along.

## **LEARNING OUR MUSIC**

The handbook lists a published source for each song where available, along with some brief information about the song's origins or traditional usage that contextualizes the song within our traditions and UU culture.

The songs in this collection come from cultures all around the world and from historically significant times and places, including African American slave spirituals, gospel songs from both Black and White Christian traditions including Southern Baptist, Pentecostal, and various others, a South African hymn, and songs in Spanish, Arabic, and Hebrew languages. We encourage you to explore the context of these songs in further detail than what is included in this handbook. This exploration both honors the integrity of the song, its composers, and history, and also offers the opportunity for you and your fellow singers to learn about different cultures, musical traditions, peoples, and places.

## **CONNECTING WITH A LESSON**

For each song, the handbook lists any of the six sources and seven principles of Unitarian Universalism that are prominently addressed by the song. The handbook also includes an index of songs by principles and sources. You can use the index to pick songs that align with a particular lesson or theme. The song's lyrics then become a reinforcing part of the lesson itself. Don't let these thematic connections limit your interactions with the songs, however. It's great when a song correlates with a lesson or sermon, but it's also great when it offers a different perspective or theme entirely, or simply brings joy to the participants.

## **PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS AND HOW-TO GUIDES**

Each song in the handbook has suggestions for how to sing it and how to prompt a discussion of its musical substance and meaning. The suggestions are sorted into ideas for Movement, Activities, and Discussion Topics, but all are considered supplemental to the primary activity of singing. Within each of these areas for each song, the suggestions are generally listed from most simple to more complex. The simpler suggestions are great for novice musicians, for teachers who haven't sung with their classes before, or for groups that are encountering a song they don't know yet. Many of the suggestions are at an intermediate level, highlighting concrete ideas in the song and offering chances to think about a song's meaning and personal connections while singing. The more complex suggestions provide approaches to the song for groups with more musical confidence and the ability to reflect more deeply and abstractly about a song's meaning. There are ideas for experimenting musically with a song. Discussion topics for each song range from questions that encourage a basic, concrete understanding of the ideas expressed by the song up through more conceptual discussion particularly suited to teens and adults. We anticipate that group leaders may pick one of the discussion suggestions for a particular group at a particular time, not that the group would move through all the discussion topics. We have road-tested these suggestions, and they are easy to adapt for groups of all ages and all levels of physical and cognitive abilities.

## **CREATING RITUALS**

All the recordings in this collection are well suited for incorporating into rituals and traditions. Many religious education classes open and close with a standard ritual. We encourage all teachers to add a song to both the opening and closing. Just as a class repeats chalice-lighting words each week, a class can choose a theme song and sing it at the beginning each week, in addition to singing songs that relate to the lesson's topic. Extend these ideas to any other activity or gathering: sing together at the start, and sing together before parting.

More broadly, pay attention to how music is used in all sorts of rituals, from our weekly church services to moments of transition in life, the celebration of holidays, and more. Find moments in your daily, weekly, and seasonal life where your own choice of songs can become part of the celebration and ritual.

The more we sing, the more our children, our neighbors, and our selves will forge a lasting and deep sense of who we are, what we celebrate, what we believe, and what we are hoping to become. Almost every culture calls out to lift up our voices and join in song. Heed the call, and may the melodies linger on.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The production of this CD and handbook were funded by grants from the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Eno River Foundation of the Eno River UU Fellowship in Durham, North Carolina under the direction of former music director, Kevin Badanes.

# Let Your Little Light Shine

Traditional Georgia Sea Island Spiritual

**Principle 1** Each and every person is important.

**Principle 3** We should accept one another and keep learning together.

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

This is a traditional song which means that a lot of people have been singing it in different forms for a long time. The people who first sang this song were enslaved African-Americans who sang this song to encourage themselves and each other.

## Movement

Hold one finger up like a candle. Start with it pressed against your chest and move it out and up (as if bringing the light from inside the body out into the world). Wave the "light" back and forth as you sing the song.

Add in hand movements with the verses.

## Discussion Topics

Have you ever been in a really dark place where you can't see anything? What happens if somebody holds up a light in the distance?

What light do you think the song is talking about? Is it only a real light such as a candle that you carry in your hand? What does it mean to shine our own light from deep inside us?

What do you think this song meant to the people who first sang it? What did it mean to them to try to "get home?" What would that mean to you? When has somebody shone a real or figurative light that helped you find your way? Can you think of ways that you have tried to shine a light for somebody else?

## Activities

Bring a battery operated chalice/ candle that you can pass around from person to person as you sing the song. Turn out the light so everybody can see the chalice shining through the dark.

If your group has made or drawn chalices in your RE classes, have each person hold up their creation while singing.

Harmony means that there are two tunes that are not the same but that fit together when they are sung at the same time. Listen for the harmony on the chorus of this song.

Try singing different parts each time you sing this song.

# We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table

Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 407

**Principle 2** All people should be treated fairly and kindly.

**Principle 3** We should accept one another and keep learning together.

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

This is a traditional African-American spiritual that became a civil rights song in the 1960s with many variations on the verses. The biblical source is the Book of Revelations in the Christian Bible that describes the marriage feast of the Lamb saying that those who trust in Jesus will be welcomed in heaven.

## Movement

Have the group stand while clapping and moving to the music. Sit around a table and invite members to drum on the table to the beat of the song.

## Discussion Topics

Does your family ever have guests for dinner? What do you or could you do to make them feel at home?

Who do you imagine "all kinds of people" might be sitting around the welcome table?

How and when have you experienced being welcoming to others? When have you felt welcome in a new situation?

Who should our congregation be welcoming in to a "seat" at our table? Why is this important?

This song has been sung since the days of slavery and extensively during the civil rights movement with many variations on the verse. Invite participants to come up with a variation around the theme of radical hospitality.

## Activities

Use this song to welcome everybody as they enter the RE class.

This is a great song for shakers, rhythm sticks, tambourines.

Have your group come up with people who would be welcome at the table, and add those verses.

If anybody in the group plays guitar or ukulele, this is a fun song to play along with the recording or to lead in a sing-a-long without the recording.

# I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free

Bill Taylor and Dick Dallas

Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 151

**Principle 1** Each and every person is important.

**Principle 2** All people should be treated fairly and kindly.

**Principle 4** Each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.

**Source 2** Wise people of long ago and today whose lives remind us to be kind and fair.

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

Dr. Billy Taylor was a great jazz pianist, composer, advocate and educator. He wrote this spiritual song for his daughter in 1952. African-American musical legend Nina Simone made a famous recording of it in 1967, and it became an anthem in the Civil Rights movement throughout the 1960s and 70s.

## Movement

Make up your own hand movements or look up American Sign Language signs to use while singing this song

[www.handspeak.com/word/](http://www.handspeak.com/word/)

Listen to Nina Simone's recording (available on Youtube and elsewhere) to hear the jazz rhythms and syncopations from her band. Snap along with the snaps in her recording. Then listen for the syncopations and back beat in this recording, and match them in your own singing.

Teach younger children the last verse with the lyrics about being a bird soaring over the sea, and pantomime flying.

## Discussion Topics

What does it mean to be chained? What is the difference between real chains and chains that are made up of ideas or laws?

What are some of the ideas or beliefs that create chains in your own life? What chains have you imposed on yourself? What have been imposed on you by others? How about chains in the lives of other people or other groups of people?

What does it mean to be free? What can we do to free ourselves and other people from ideas and beliefs that hold us back from being our best selves?

What parts of this song resonate with Civil Rights activist ideas? Think beyond just the chains/freedom language.

## Activities

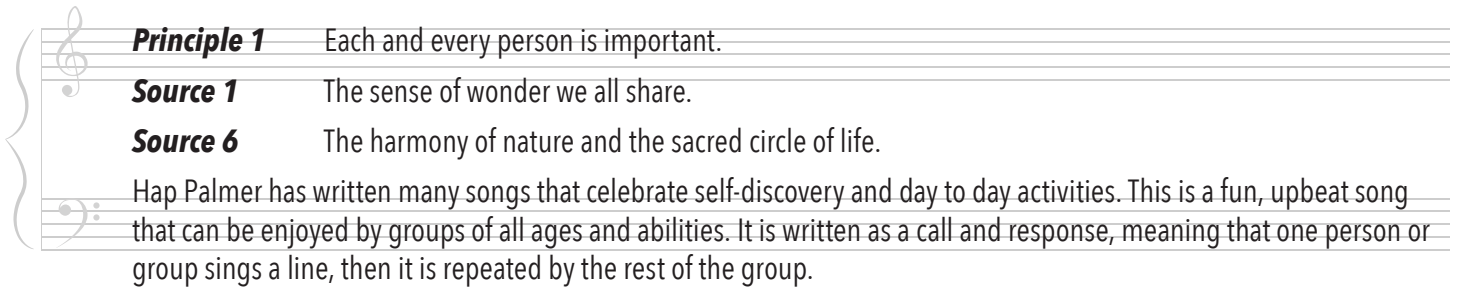
In the second half of the song, divide into two groups and have one group sing "Say 'em loud, say 'em clear for the whole world to hear" the first time it appears, then have the second group respond with the repetition of those lyrics. Expand that idea by singing the whole song alternating phrases between the two groups.

Make paper chains with construction paper links. Depending on the level of your group, have the participants think about ideas or concepts that act like chains such as greed, poverty or meanness and write those words on the chains. Break free of the chains as you sing along with this song.

# What A Miracle

Hap Palmer

This song is not in the UU songbooks but found at [www.happalmer.com](http://www.happalmer.com).



**Principle 1** Each and every person is important.

**Source 1** The sense of wonder we all share.

**Source 6** The harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.

Hap Palmer has written many songs that celebrate self-discovery and day to day activities. This is a fun, upbeat song that can be enjoyed by groups of all ages and abilities. It is written as a call and response, meaning that one person or group sings a line, then it is repeated by the rest of the group.

## Movement

Movements of each body part are described in the song. As each body part is named, point to it on yourself, then do the action. You can do this seated or standing.

## Discussion Topics

What makes you special?

What is a miracle? Why are everyday actions like clapping your hands or stamping your feet a miracle?

The song seems to assume that everybody has the same kind of bodies and can do the same movements, but does everybody have exactly the same abilities? Can I still be a miracle if I can't do some of the things that you can do?

## Activities

On the recording, an adult sings the call and a group of children sing the response. With your group, listen to the call and sing the response. Everybody joins in on singing "Oh what a miracle am I" and on the chorus.

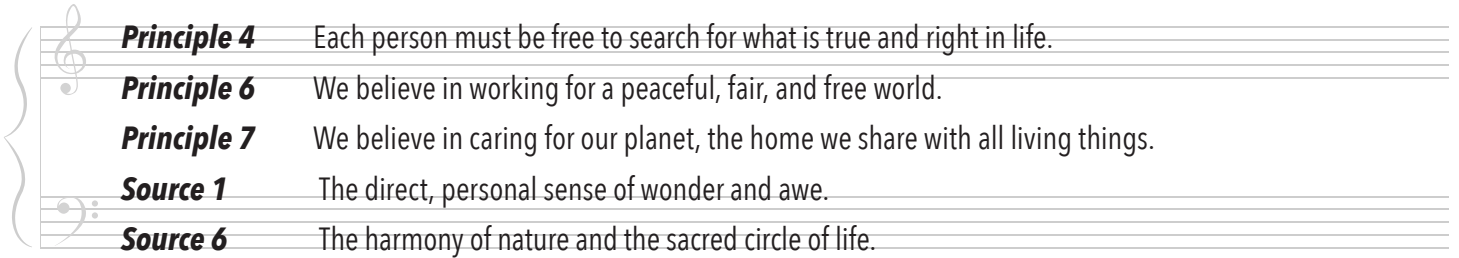
Take turns being the person who sings the call. The person singing the call can decide which body part to sing about.

See if you can come up with different body parts to sing about.

# I've Got Peace Like a River

Marvin V. Frey

Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 100



**Principle 4** Each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.

**Principle 6** We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.

**Principle 7** We believe in caring for our planet, the home we share with all living things.

**Source 1** The direct, personal sense of wonder and awe.

**Source 6** The harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.

The original composer of this song is contested, but a white Pentecostal minister named Marvin Frey is credited with writing the first three verses of this song while the last three verses were added anonymously over the years. It may originally have been an African-American spiritual. The repetitive nature of this song makes it fun and easy to learn for singers of all ages.

## Movement

Make up (or have the children make up) your own hand motions for peace, river, joy, fountain.

For older groups, look up the ASL signs for peace, joy, love, pain, tears on websites such as [www.handspeak.com/word/](http://www.handspeak.com/word/)

## Discussion Topics

What do you like about this song? What do you think "peace like a river" feels like?

This song reminds us of inner feelings or qualities that are being expressed as a part of nature. What other unsung qualities do you have inside yourself that you are proud of? What qualities do you need help growing or remembering you have inside yourself?

## Activities

This is a fun song for improvisation. Have the participants make up their own similes:

"I've got [what] like [what]."

Thoughtful and serious responses are great, but encourage play and spontaneity too. There are no wrong answers.

There are more verses in *Singing the Living Tradition* than on the recording. Look them up and add them in as you sing!

# Rainbow in the Sky

Art Hollander

This is an original song that has not been published.

**Principle 1** Each and every person is important.

**Principle 3** We should accept one another and keep learning together.

**Source 1** The sense of wonder we all share.

**Source 4** Christian and Jewish teachings which tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

This song was written by Art Hollander, an ERUUF member who is a lifelong singer/songwriter. This fun song highlights diversity and inclusiveness with a focus on love and respect for all. It was written specifically with young children in mind, but it is great to sing with groups of all ages.

## Movement

During the chorus, use hand movements to go along with the words such as opening hands apart in a circular motion to represent a "rainbow in the sky," waving hello and goodbye, pointing below and above, and crossing hands across the heart for "color me with love."

During the "silly willy" verse, jump up and down and wave arms around in a silly way.

This is a great song for rhythm instruments such as shakers or drums. It's also a nice song for guitar or ukulele and is recorded in the key of C.

## Discussion Topics

Why do you think the person in the song didn't want to be colored blue at first?

What do you look like when someone "colors" you with love?  
How does it feel to be "colored with love?"

## Activities

Use small fruits and vegetables or pictures of fruits and vegetables when singing the verses. If singing along with the recording, you can pull out the appropriate food and pass it around during the verse. Alternatively, give each person a different item and have that person stand up during the appropriate verse.

After your group has learned the song, you might want to sing it without the recording so that you can sing the color verses in any order, allowing group members to take turns picking the object for the next verse.

Instead of food props, use colorful crepe paper streamers or scarves to go with each verse.

# This Little Light of Mine

Henry Dixon Loes

Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 118

**Principle 1** Each and every person is important.

**Principle 4** Each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.

**Source 3** The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

This is a gospel song that is believed to have been written in the 1920s by a white music minister in Michigan. Many people who fought for civil rights in the 1950s and 60s sang this song and added new verses to tell the world that their light could not be put out by oppression; it has become a famous civil rights anthem.

## Movement

Hold an index finger upright like a candle. Start with it close to the chest and move it out as if moving the light from the self out into the world. Second verse, wave the candle finger back and forth over the head. Third verse, use both hands to make "candles" and start with them close to the ground; move them up overhead to symbolize "building up a world."

## Discussion Topics

Is this song only about a light we can see like a candle? What about a light that we hold inside ourselves?

How can we let our own lights shine?

This song was often sung by African-Americans during the civil rights movement. What were some of the ways that government and other people tried to suppress the light of these people? Has anybody ever tried to put out your inner light? How do you think singing a song like this might help people?

## Activities

Sing this for chalice lighting, and for lessons that focus on light or on individual rights.

Pass flashlights or battery operated candles around the group as you sing.

Use shakers, rhythm sticks, tambourines, drums to make a joyful noise!

Draw/color different kinds of lights (e.g., candle, flashlight) to use as props.

In addition to rhythm instruments, anybody who plays the guitar or ukulele might want to play along or accompany the group without the recording. The song was recorded in the key of G.

# Today Is a New Day

Jocelyn Neal

This song is an original composition and has not been published.

**Principle 2** All people should be treated fairly and kindly.

**Principle 6** We believe in working for a peaceful, fair and free world.

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

This song was written for a New Year's Day service in 2018, but it is appropriate for any time you want to motivate a group to do good work. The song's text inspires us to strive to be kinder and more loving, and to actively seek ways to help others.

## Movement

Start sitting down, then with each verse move into a new body position:  
With "wake up," tap your toes. With "get up," stretch and snap fingers. With "stand up," stand up. With "reach up," extend arms upward with the beat of the music. With "rise up," clap and dance to the beat.

Step and clap while singing this song.

## Discussion Topics

What could you do to "help somebody" today?

What is "bounty"; how can you "lift your neighbor" without actually picking them up?

Why is it important to make a conscious decision or resolution every day to contribute positively to your communities?

## Activities

Sing just the "responses and refrains" where the children's voices are heard on the recording, and listen to the other voices.

Divide the group in half, and have one group sing the first phrases and the other group sing the responses with the children's voices. Switch which group goes first in each verse.

Have your class or group write new verses. Come up with a description of how you might start your day physically (such as "wake up" or "stand up"), and then come up with something you would do to contribute goodness to the world. Sing the new verses, and pick one to be a theme for your group or class.

Add percussion to the song with shakers and drums.

# Peace, Salaam, Shalom

Pat Humphries & Sandy O

This song is not in the UU songbooks; find sheet music at [www.emmasrevolution.com](http://www.emmasrevolution.com).

**Principle 6** We believe in working for a peaceful, fair and free world.

**Source 3** The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.

**Source 4** Christian and Jewish teachings which tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

This song was written by Pat Humphries and Sandy O of Emma's Revolution, folksingers and activists who work for social justice and peace. This song is based on the word "peace" in three languages: English, Arabic and Hebrew.

## Movement

Have the group sway back and forth to the music, first while seated, then standing. You may want to have everyone hold hands and move around in a circle in time to the music.

## Discussion Topics

What does it mean to feel peaceful? What does peace feel like?

Why do you think the song has the word for peace in three different languages? Do you know the word for peace in any other language?

How does singing songs about peace make a difference in people's lives? What else can we do to work for peace in the world?

## Activities

The basic song repeats the words Peace, Salaam, Shalom; a second part comes in as a round, then a third part adds a new melody saying "We believe in peace." To start, have your group sing the basic melody repeatedly and listen to the other parts singing along. Use shakers, rhythm sticks or drums to beat in time with the music.

As your group becomes more familiar with the song, divide into two groups and sing the basic Peace, Salaam, Shalom as a round. Go back to singing in unison as the new melody comes in.

Teach the whole group the section of the song that says "We believe in peace." Sing that as a group while listening to the recording. As both parts become more familiar, let group members choose which part to sing.

In addition to rhythm instruments, guitarists may want to learn to play this song in the key of D.

# Siyahamba

Traditional South African  
Found in *Singing the Journey* 1030

**Principle 3** We should accept one another and keep learning together.

**Principle 6** We believe in working for a peaceful, fair and free world.

**Source 3** The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.

This song is based on a South African folk song, sung in the Zulu language. This version was published in 1984 in a collection celebrating freedom and praise songs from South Africa. Today it is sung widely in many different traditions, always a favorite of children's groups!

## Movement

March or walk in a big circle in time to the music. Dance and spin freely while feeling the beat of this song.

Come up with a creative rhythmic pattern that you can repeat all the way through the song to accompany yourself while singing. Use clapping, patting your thighs, and tapping your arms and chest in different rhythms.

## Discussion Topics

What does it mean to do something "in the Light of God?"

Find South Africa on a map and talk about why songs about freedom and God sung in the Zulu language might have been (and continue to be) important to children living there.

## Activities

Use shakers and rhythm sticks or wooden sticks to create rhythms that go with this lively song. Listen to the drums on the recording and add a simple rhythm that feels good with what is already there.

Write out the Zulu lyrics on a poster and practice saying the syllables a few times before singing along with the recording: Si-ya-hamb' e-ku-kha-nyen' kwen-khos'.

The second and third verses talk about "marching" and "singing" in the Light of God. What other words could you use to create more verses? Sing them all!

The middle of each verse has some very long notes and then a fun, high "oo-oo." Notice how singing that section feels different than the other sections of the song that have short notes and fast rhythms. Practice the long notes and the "oo-oo" part.

This song has four different vocal parts, which have different melodies and sometimes different rhythms and words. Once you have learned the main melody, try singing some of the other vocal parts.

# Gracias Por El Amor (del Cielo)

Found in The UU Spanish hymnal, *Las Voces del Camino* 47

**Principle 3** We should accept one another and keep learning together.

**Principle 7** We believe in caring for our planet, the home we share with all living things.

**Source 1** The sense of wonder we all share.

**Source 6** The harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.

This is a Spanish language folk song; we don't know who first wrote it or sang it. It celebrates all the things we have to be thankful for: the love of the heavens, the immense ocean, the singing of the forest, beauty and friendship. You can find all the words to this song online.

## Movement

Put the fingertips of one hand up to your mouth, then extend that hand forward until it is palm up in front of you. That is the sign for "Thank you." Do that each time you sing "Gracias."

## Discussion Topics

Look up or ask a Spanish-speaker the meaning of 2 to 3 things that the song says thank you for. What is something that you are thankful for?

Did anybody in the group learn to speak a language other than English as a young child? Do you know any words in any languages other than English? If you don't understand Spanish, what does it sound like when you listen to the recording of this song? How does it feel when you don't understand what people are saying to you or asking you to do? How can we help people who speak different languages feel welcome?

Imagine the first people who started singing this song.

What kind of setting do you think they might have been in to inspire this song of thanks? Think of additional verses that you might want to add to this song. Ask Spanish-speakers in the group to help translate those words.

## Activities

Practice saying "Gracias" and "Alleluia." Start out by singing those two words along with the recording. Even those who can't understand any other words in the song will recognize that these two words come up frequently.

Look up the lyrics to this song. Teach the group to say some of the phrases one verse at a time. Start adding in some of these phrases in addition to gracias.

Rhythm sticks or shakers would be good with this song.

# Meditation On Breathing

Sarah Dan Jones

Found in *Singing the Journey* 1009

**Principle 6** We believe in working for a peaceful, fair and free world.

**Source 1** The sense of wonder we all share.

**Source 3** The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.

This song was written by Sarah Dan Jones, an active Unitarian Universalist musician who believes in using music to spread and support the UU faith. This song is intended for meditation and calming. It is sung in three parts: the melody starts first and repeats throughout until the end of the song; then a low drone part (on one note) is added in; finally a high descant joins in. The group can choose to sing melody only or to add in one or both of the other parts!

## Movement

As you breathe in deeply, open your arms wide to the side; as you breathe out, bring your hands back together in front of the body, palms up as if offering a gift to the world. Try it for a few breaths, then use these motions with singing the song.

Look up the American Sign Language (ASL) signs for Peace and Love. Teach these signs to the group, and use the signs as you are singing the song.

[www.signingsavvy.com/sign/PEACE](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/PEACE)

[www.signingsavvy.com/sign/LOVE](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/LOVE)

## Discussion Topics

What does it feel like in your body when you take a deep breath then blow it out? What does it sound like when you blow air out of your mouth? Does it remind you of any sounds you hear in nature?

What does it mean to breathe in peace?  
To breathe out love?

This song describes a spiritual practice that involves our physical bodies and our minds and spirits.

What effect do you think this practice could have on how you feel in the moment? On your overall well-being? On your interactions with other people around you?

## Activities

Use props such as feathers or cotton balls that can be easily moved by blowing. Sing "When I breathe in," then take a deep breath. Sing "When I breathe out" then blow the air out, blowing the feathers or cotton balls.

Gather the group around a small parachute or a sheet, making sure everybody has a firm grip on the edge. Practice lifting the parachute all together, so that the air billows it upwards, then moving it down to the ground so that the air swooshes out. As you sing along with the recording, start with the parachute on the ground. Lift it up as you sing "Breathe in peace," and bring it back to the ground as you sing "Breathe out love."

# Spirit of Life

Carolyn McDade

Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 123

**Principle 2** All people should be treated fairly and kindly.

**Principle 4** Each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.

**Source 1** The sense of wonder we all share.

**Source 6** The harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.

Carolyn McDade is a singer/songwriter who is a longtime Unitarian Universalist and has written several beloved UU songs. This song focuses inward on our individual spiritual development in the world. It celebrates justice, compassion and spirit, and it honors the roots and wings that UU congregations aim to offer all our members, especially children.

## Movement

Sway back and forth in time to the music. Add hand and arm motions such as raising both hands up and out for "come unto me," wave hands back and forth for "sing," cross hands over heart for "heart," hands holding onto ankles for "roots," and gently flapping arms for "wings."

Look up the ASL signs for

*Spirit:* [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SPIRITUAL](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SPIRITUAL)

*Sing:* [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SING](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SING)

*Compassion:* [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/COMPASSION](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/COMPASSION)

## Discussion Topics

What do you like about this song? What does "spirit of life" mean?

What does the phrase "roots hold me close, wings set me free" mean? What are your roots? Your wings?

When have you had the spirit of life "come" to you? What does "giving life the shape of justice" mean? When have you created the shape of justice?

## Activities

Turn off the lights, light candles, or close your eyes while you try humming the song all together. How does this song make you feel?

This is a great song for a mindful, peaceful moment. For example, you could sing this as you light a chalice or candle, or after participants share personal joys and concerns.

This is a song that creates a sense of reverence, so it pairs well with earnest conversation, and sincere contact with one's own heart and the others' in the group. This song could help participants process difficult emotions or growing edges. It could serve well as the closing to a conversation around injustice, death, mystery, or to inner and interpersonal challenges.

# The Garden Song

David Mallett

Found in *Earth and Spirit Songbook* 152

**Principle 7** We believe in caring for our planet, the home we share with all living things.

**Source 6** The harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.

This song was written by David Mallett in 1975 when the environmental movement was in full swing. The first Earth Day was celebrated in 1970.

## Movement

Act out planting a garden while singing the song. Wiggle fingers while moving hands from high to low for rain falling down.

## Discussion Topics

If you have planted seeds in a garden at home, what did you do to make sure your plants would grow? What happened when the plants started to grow?

In what ways do you give love and help to Mother Earth?  
In what ways does Mother Earth make you strong?

In what ways do you feel "in tune" with nature?

This song is about planting seeds and growing a garden, but what else might the garden represent? What do we "sow" or plant in the world around us? What could "fertile ground" refer to?

## Activities

Bring in garden tools to use as musical instruments: tap on a trowel or drag a rake across the floor. Make a shaker using sunflower seeds and/or small stones. Add a rain stick.

Invite singing in harmony to fit the theme of being in harmony with nature.

# Come and Go with Me

African-American Spiritual  
Found in *Singing the Journey* 1018

**Principle 2** All people should be treated fairly and kindly.

**Principle 4** Each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.

**Principle 6** We believe in working for a peaceful, fair and free world.

**Source 2** Wise people of long ago and today whose lives remind us to be kind and fair.

This Spiritual is from the time of African-American enslavement. It reminds us that we must still keep moving toward making the world a better place for all people.

## Movement

Hand motions gesturing for "Come," hands up to either side freely waving for "Freedom," two hands held out in front (like scales of justice) for "Justice," hands waving back and forth in front of the body for "Singing."

You may want to look up ASL signs for

*Freedom:* [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/FREEDOM](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/FREEDOM)

*Justice:* [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/JUSTICE](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/JUSTICE)

*Singing:* [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SING](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SING)

## Activities

This is a good song for rhythm sticks, shakers and clapping in time.

Sing all the current verses and add new verses based on your group's ideas.

## Discussion Topics

What other good things could be in that land?

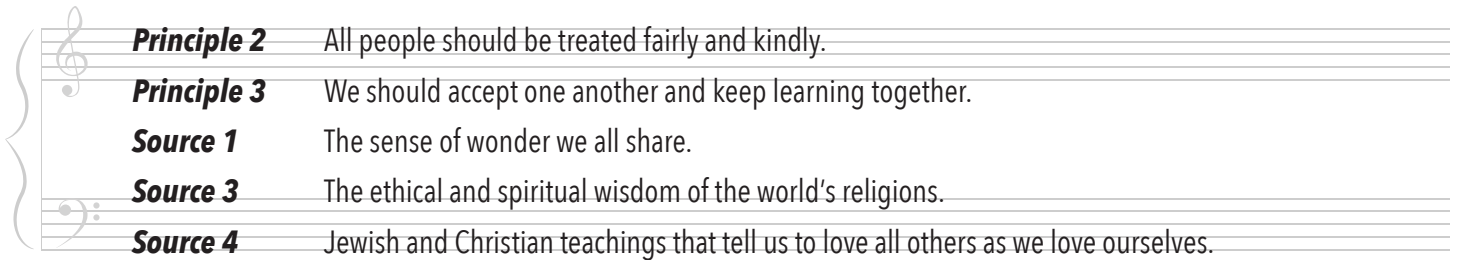
The people who first sang this song were not free to leave the terrible land of slavery where they were forced to live. How do you think it might have helped them to sing this song? What verses could we add that would have been true for those people and true for us today?

Are there people in the world today who are still enslaved? How about those who are technically free but don't have freedom of movement, freedom from violence or economic freedom? Can songs like this make a difference in the world?

# Come Sing a Song with Me

Carolyn McDade

Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 346



**Principle 2** All people should be treated fairly and kindly.

**Principle 3** We should accept one another and keep learning together.

**Source 1** The sense of wonder we all share.

**Source 3** The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

Carolyn McDade is a singer/songwriter who is a longtime Unitarian Universalist and has written several beloved UU songs. This song encourages us to share our lives with others and to support each other.

## Movement

As you sing, use common hand/arm gestures for "Come", "Dream" ("Sleep"), or other words in the song. Sway back and forth to the rhythm of the song.

Look up the American Sign Language signs for

*Sing*: [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SING](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SING)

*Dream*: [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/DREAM](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/DREAM)

*Rain*: [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/RAIN](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/RAIN)

*Share*: [www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SHARE](http://www.signingsavvy.com/sign/SHARE)

## Activities

Bring a velvety rose, a real flower (no thorns!), or a special toy. Pass it around the group as you sing.

Try humming the song all together. How does it sound and feel different?

Listen to this song and see if you hear a harmony that goes along with the melody. Try singing that part.

## Discussion Topics

What does it mean to share something with another person? What do you like to share with other people? What do you like other people to share with you?

Why is it special to have a rose in the wintertime?

Lots of songs rhyme. Where are the rhymes in this song, and where does it not quite rhyme? Why do you think the words are repeated so much in this song?

How do you bring somebody hope?

What does it mean to know somebody else's mind?

# For the Earth Forever Turning

Kim Oler

Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 163

**Principle 6** We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.

**Principle 7** We believe in caring for our planet, the home we share with all living things.

**Source 1** The sense of wonder we all share.

**Source 6** The harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.

Originally "The Blue Green Hills of Earth" by Kim Oler, this song was used by the Paul Winter Consort in the Missa Gaia/Earth Mass. Jim Scott was a co-writer of the Earth Mass, and is best known to us now as the editor of the Earth and Spirit Songbook and as a UU singer-songwriter. Find out more about Jim at [www.Jimscottmusic.com](http://www.Jimscottmusic.com).

## Movement

This song lends itself to making up hand and body motions for earth, turning, skies, sea, and other words.

Use blue and green scarves or streamers as props to wave around or for dancing during the song.

## Activities

Find images on the internet or from a photography book of the sky, the sea, mountains, pastures, stars, the whole earth from space, and other natural wonders that show the majesty of nature.

## Discussion Topics

What do you notice about the composition of this song? When and how does the tune vary/change? What is the rhythm like? How do these qualities enhance the message of the song?

Where have you experienced the majesty of nature? What made it so striking and beautiful? What feelings and emotions did you experience while in that place?

# Love Will Guide Us

Sally Rogers

Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 131

**Principle 6** We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

Sally Rogers is a UU singer/songwriter and educator. The melody of this song is originally from a white Southern Baptist hymn called "I Will Guide Thee." Sally wrote new words in keeping with UU teachings focusing on love. This is now a beloved UU hymn that we sing in our congregations frequently.

## Movement

This song has a rhythm that is great for swaying from side to side in time with the music. Add colorful scarves or streamers to dance with.

This song lends itself well to sign language. There are only two different verses as the third verse is a repeat of the first. You can learn the signs for key words in the song at [www.signingsavvy.com](http://www.signingsavvy.com) or make up gestures that fit the words.

## Discussion Topics

What is hope inside us, and how can it lead us? What does greed mean? How can we move from greed to giving?

What gifts do you bring to the world? How can you use those gifts to change the world with your love?

The lyrics are very poetic without rhyming: What lines or phrases speak to you and why?

What is the overall message of this song?

## Activities

With your group, create a symbol of love. It could be a small heart or picture of a heart, pictures of different people, a collection of snuggly stuffed animals, or anything that you come up with. Make a curvy trail on the floor by putting down a jump rope, a long streamer, or a series of carpet squares. As you sing the song, follow along the trail with either the line leader or each person carrying a symbol of love as a representation of love guiding us.

# Magic Penny

Malvina Reynolds

This song is not in any UU songbooks but is in *Rise Up Singing*, page 240.

**Principle 2** We believe all people should be treated fairly and kindly.

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

Malvina Reynolds was a Unitarian Universalist who became a prolific songwriter with the rise in popularity of folk music during the 50s and 60s. Some of her songs were sung by famous white folksingers like Pete Seeger and Joan Baez.

Magic Penny has been used in several of our RE curricula.

## Movement

Use hand motions such as:  
draw a heart in the air for "Love;"  
hands reach forward for "Give it away;"  
make a fist for "Hold it tight;" pretend  
to give pennies to others in the circle for  
"Lend it, spend it;" make a rolling motion  
with hands for "roll all over the floor."

## Discussion Topics

How do you show someone in your family that you love them? How does it make you feel inside when you do that?

What does it mean to give love away? Is it the same thing as giving away a toy or a gift?

This song is based on the idea that giving love creates more love. Does giving hatred or meanness have the same effect, that is, to create more hatred or meanness? When we go out into the world beyond our own families, how can we approach other people in order to create love?

## Activities

Use pennies to fill different types of containers to make shakers to play while singing the song. Cupped hands will also work! Notice the different sounds.

Have a variety of percussion instruments available to play along with the song. A tambourine could be especially "jingling, penny-like" as an accompaniment.

Try making up your own chorus with different words. What other positive words can you substitute for "love" in the song that are meaningful in terms of giving away to end up with more?

This is a popular song to play on guitar or ukulele. Have any group members or leaders play along with the recording; after the group knows the song well, just sing along with your own instruments without the recording.

# Gonna Lay Down My Sword and Shield

African-American Spiritual  
Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 162

**Principle 6** We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.

**Source 3** The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

This song, known by several titles including "Down by the Riverside," was originally an African-American spiritual. In the early 20th century, it was published in songbooks and recorded by a number of Black gospel artists. The words "study war no more" come from a line in the book of Isaiah in the Hebrew Bible. The image of the riverside was often present in songs sung by enslaved people seeking freedom. This song has been sung in civil rights and anti-war movements.

## Movement

Snap fingers in time to the music. Then clap and/or step in time to the music.

Hold hands in a circle and move inward for one phrase of the music, then outward, then repeat. When the chorus starts "I ain't gonna study...," switch to going around in a circle to the left, then to the right.

## Discussion Topics

What does it mean to "study war?"

A burden is something that feels heavy and hard to carry. It could be a real object or a thought or feeling. What kind of burdens might people have wanted to lay down? When have you felt a heavy feeling like sadness or anger that you wished you could put down?

The song talks about laying down or putting away the tools of war like the sword and shield. What stories do you know about real people who have been brave enough to put away weapons and respond to violence in peaceful protest?

What is the riverside that we are singing about in this song? What other songs do you know that use the image of the river?

## Activities


Have one person sing the first line (or listen to it on the recording), and the group answer with "Down by the riverside," repeated three times.

Learn some of the many additional verses that have been used with this song such as "Gonna climb up that mountain," or "Gonna lay down my sleepy head." Make up your own verses.

# Enter, Rejoice and Come In

Louise Ruspini

Found in *Singing the Living Tradition* 361



**Principle 2** All people should be treated fairly and kindly.

**Principle 3** We should accept one another and keep learning together.

**Principle 4** Each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.

**Source 3** The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.

**Source 4** Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

The first verse of this song is based on Psalm 100 from the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. This is an upbeat song that is easy to learn and familiar in many UU congregations. It's great for welcoming people to a service or a classroom.

## Movement

Hand/arm gestures for "Come in", hands open and pointing to ears and heart for "Open your ears" and "Open your hearts," head shake and hands waving for "Don't be afraid."

## Activities

Clap along. This is also a good song for rhythm instruments such as shakers or rhythm sticks.

If anybody in the group plays an instrument such as the guitar or ukulele, this song is a great one to play along with. It is in the key of C, so the chords are C, F and G.

## Discussion Topics

How does singing this song make you feel?  
When you come to RE or to the service, what makes you feel happy and welcome?

As Unitarian Universalists, we like to welcome all people into our services. What can we do to make each other feel welcome and happy? How about newcomers who are coming for the first or second time?

This is an upbeat song that sounds happy, but there is a verse about being afraid. What kinds of changes might we see in ourselves or others by coming to RE or a service? Why might people be afraid of those changes?

# Index of Songs by UU Principle

## **Principle 1: Each and every person is important.**

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Let Your Little Light Shine  
Rainbow in the Sky  
This Little Light of Mine  
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## **Principle 2: All people should be treated fairly and kindly.**

Come and Go with Me  
Come Sing a Song with Me  
Enter, Rejoice and Come In  
I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free  
Magic Penny  
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## **Principle 3: We should accept one another and keep learning together.**

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## **Principle 5: All persons should have a vote about the things that concern them.**

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### **Source 2: Wise people of long ago and today whose lives remind us to be kind and fair.**

Come and Go with Me  
I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free

### **Source 3: The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.**

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### **Source 4: Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.**

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I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free  
Let Your Little Light Shine  
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Magic Penny  
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### **Source 5: The use of reason and the discoveries of science.**

### **Source 6: The harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.**

For the Earth Forever Turning  
Gracias por el Amor (del Cielo)  
I've Got Peace Like a River  
Spirit of Life  
The Garden Song  
What a Miracle

## Songwriter Credits

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We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table	Traditional, arr. by Mary Allen Walden, ©1992 UUA
I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free	Billy Taylor and Dick Dallas, ©1967 Duane Music Inc
What A Miracle	Hap Palmer, ©1990 Hap-Pal Music <a href="http://www.happalmer.com">www.happalmer.com</a>
I've Got Peace Like a River	Marvin V. Frey, ©1974 Marvin V. Frey
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# Unitarian Universalist Sing-a-Long Songs

Companion Handbook



Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (ERUUF)

Durham, North Carolina

[www.ERUUF.org](http://www.ERUUF.org)

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