

## Why Wonder?

### Worship Words for 12 18 22

#### Guided Meditation

I invite you into a time of quiet and reflection with a guided meditation based on the book *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen.

Let's settle our mind and body just as it is in this moment. Get your wiggles out as best you can. Close your eyes or simply soften your gaze. Imagine that you are bundled into your warm winter coat. Your warm hat and mittens and boots, with a scarf wrapped loosely around your neck and tucked in snugly. Are you feeling cozy and, in your imagination, ready to go outside?

In your mind, you put your hand in the hand of a beloved elder—a mom or dad or grandparent or auntie or uncle or special grownup who takes care of you and who loves you so that you always feel you are loved through and through. That love makes you as warm as your coat and hat and boots and scarf do. Together, hand in hand, you step out into the night and the cold. You and your beloved adult, you've gone out to find the great horned owl and see if it will visit with you for a while. And to find the owl, you have to be very quiet.

It is night and it is cold, but it is not dark. The earth is covered with snow and the moon is full. "There is no wind. The trees stand still as giant statues. The moon is so bright the sky seems to shine. Somewhere behind us a train whistle blows, long and low." "A dog answers the train, and then a second dog joins in. They sing out, train and dogs, for a long time. And when their voices fade away, it is as quiet as a dream." And you walk slowly and carefully along together, hand in hand, lit by the brightness of snow and of moon. And you move along in quiet.

Together, hand in hand, you walk into the tall dark trees, trees like black letters across a white piece of paper. The shadows of the trees are dark, too. Together, you and your beloved grown up, you tilt your heads up to the sky and cup your hands around your mouths and you hoot, calling the great owl to come down and visit with you. Who-who-who. Who-who-who. And you wait for the owl to call back to you. And then you wait in quiet.

At first you don't hear any sound among the trees. No train singing. No dogs singing. No owl hooting back at you. Together, with your beloved adult holding your hand tightly and with gentleness, you walk deeper into the dark trees, the trunks and branches and shadows black like letters on white paper. Once more, together, you and your beloved grown up, you tilt your heads up to the sky and cup your hands around your mouths and you hoot, calling the great owl to come down and visit with you. Who-who-who. Who-who-who.

And you wait in quiet for the owl to call back to you. And this time the owl does come to visit. The owl announces themselves with a hoot back to you. Who-who-who. Who-who-who. And as the owl calls and calls back to you, as you call to it, who-who-who, the owl flies closer and closer to you until the

owl perches on a branch in a tree right above your head. The owl and the owl's shadow black like letters on white paper. And together, you and your beloved grown up and the owl, you gaze at each other, in quiet.

When the owl decides it is time to go, the owl goes on silent wings. You know you can talk now, you could sing out, you could laugh or cry with joy. But you hold yourself quiet. And your beloved grownup holds themselves quiet as you walk home, slowly and carefully and silently. What you had hoped for, that the owl would visit with you in the bright reflection of the moon and the snow, your hope has come to pass. And you hold that joy in your heart, as you return to this time together, in our Fellowship sanctuary together, where you are all and you are always held in warmth and care, loved through and through, just as you are. May you feel it so, and Amen.

### **Opening Words**

Since many Unitarian Universalists are not Christian believers, and many are not theists, you might wonder why we would celebrate Christmas in this Fellowship. I offer you three brief reasons, connected and informing each other. Some food for thought.

First, Unitarian Universalism emerged in religious context and not out of whole cloth. We celebrate to acknowledge that Unitarian Universalism has roots in Christianity. Both Unitarians and Universalists were Christians, though heretical and not cleaving to the dominant orthodoxies of particular times and places. By celebrating Christmas, we recognize and honor our past.

Second, we acknowledge that while church and state are mercifully separated in this country, the majority of our citizens continue to identify as Christian, perhaps religiously and certainly culturally. Further, many of us came from Christian backgrounds that felt fulfilling and sustaining for a time. Our commercial life is saturated with the Christmas ethos. And so, while we may not be worshipping a god who became a baby who eventually would become a king and savior, we acknowledge in a celebration of Christmas that we are part of the American fabric of life.

Third, while we might not worship the baby Jesus as the emergent Christ of ultimate salvation, the new and potent promise of a child in this hurting world is worth our loving attention and even veneration. Every child is precious, every child has the potential to save us from meaninglessness, from the meaningless and spirit-destroying pursuit of money and things and selfish expression. Salvation can come to each of us through the promise of a child new to the world, new to the realities of the senses and all the beauty and grace that comes from loving other people and holding the world and all its beings in compassionate relationship.

So, let today be a celebration of our children, of all children. Let today be a celebration of the hope and the wonder that shines through the eyes and the spirits of children, renewing world-weary vision and renewing faith that life is good and full of promise, for as long as it last.

Link to the No-Rehearse Pageant adapted for this service:

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/script/interactive-no-rehearsal-christmas-pageant>

Hear these words, adapted from famed Religious Educator,  
the Rev. Sophia Lyon Fahs:

We gather in the wonder of this moment  
The wonder of being together, so close and still apart—  
Each hidden in our own secret chamber,  
Each listening, each trying to speak, each trying to understand  
Yet none fully understanding, none fully understood.

We gather in reverence before all intangible things—  
That eyes see not, nor ears can detect—  
That hands can never touch  
that space cannot hold,  
and time cannot measure.

We gather in reverence before all tangible things—  
Costumes and props and prompts  
Laughter and singing and shouting and running.  
We gather before all these tangible things,  
shaping our time and space into a sharing of love and light.

We gather in reverence before the wonder of life,  
before the wonder of our children—  
learning from old stories how they might bring helpfulness and hopefulness in all our lives.

May we see these children and all children as a blessing to us.  
May we bless their lives with our attention and our care.  
May you remember for yourselves, and  
help our blessed children to know, that  
you are loved,  
you are worthy,  
you are welcome, and  
you are needed.  
May you feel it so. May it be so. And may the Fellowship say together, “Amen!”

[https://www.amazon.com/s?k=owl+moon+book&gclid=Cj0KCQiA-oqdBhDfARIsAO0TrGEq3yEnhTYsLWVa8zfa8Wh46E-otUmuQacQofEyyv-GFwrV9aVbs6MaAkO7EALw\\_wcB&hvadid=241919173874&hvdev=c&hvlocphy=9019865&hvnetw=g&hvqmt=e&hvrnd=13893687736016390683&hvtargid=kwd-1059287797&hydadcr=22532\\_10344436&tag=googhydr-20&ref=pd\\_sl\\_9kwhfrk9er\\_e](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=owl+moon+book&gclid=Cj0KCQiA-oqdBhDfARIsAO0TrGEq3yEnhTYsLWVa8zfa8Wh46E-otUmuQacQofEyyv-GFwrV9aVbs6MaAkO7EALw_wcB&hvadid=241919173874&hvdev=c&hvlocphy=9019865&hvnetw=g&hvqmt=e&hvrnd=13893687736016390683&hvtargid=kwd-1059287797&hydadcr=22532_10344436&tag=googhydr-20&ref=pd_sl_9kwhfrk9er_e)