

Some Ritual Formats for Before and After Elections

by Leslie Takahashi

The readings included are just an example—so many good things out there,
just in case you don't even have the moment.

I. Ritual for Before an Election

Gathering Music

Words of Welcome

Readings from the Common Bowl (quotes on steadfastness, commitment)

Time for Sharing and the Lighting of Silent Candles

Song such as #396, "I Know This Rose Will Open"

Shared Silence (a time for reflecting on what you wish to do to work for a more just and fair world)

Song such as, #155, Circle 'Round For Freedom

Prayer and Meditation

Recorded song, check out [Lea Morris'](#) site for possibilities (with a donation)

Check out: How will I transform anxiety into one action?

Song such as #168, One More Step

II. Ritual for After an Election (Relief)

Gathering Music

Words of Welcome

Responsive Reading

Time for Sharing and the Lighting of Silent Candles/Dropping of Stones in Water

Song such as "How Could Anyone"

Shared Silence (a time for reflecting on what you wish to do to work for a more just and fair world)

Song

Prayer and Meditation for Those Still In Danger

Song

Closing Words such as Labyrinth (see below)

Song such as "Peace Before Me"

Labyrinth, by Leslie Takahashi

Walk the maze

within your heart: *guide your steps into its questioning curves.*

This labyrinth is a puzzle leading you deeper into your own truths.

Listen in the twists and turns.

Listen in the openness within all searching.

Listen: a wisdom within you calls to a wisdom beyond you and in that dialogue lies peace.

III. Ritual for After An Election (Hard Outcome)

Gathering Music

Words of Welcome

Responsive Reading from 5 Smooth Stones

Time for Sharing and the Lighting of Silent Candles/Dropping of Stones in Water

Song

Shared Silence (a time for reflecting on what you wish to do to work for a more just and fair world)

Song

Prayer and Meditation for Those Still In Danger

Song

Closing Words

Song

Responsive Reading — Five Smooth Stones

This responsive reading is based on James Luther Adams' essay "Guiding Principles for a Free Faith" in On Becoming Human Religiously: Selected Essays in Religion and Society, Max Stackhouse, ed. Beacon Press, 1976, pp. 12-20.

Leaders read the regular text, and participants read the italicized text.

We gather as Unitarian Universalists to understand, articulate, and live our liberal religion. David brought down the giant Goliath with five smooth stones, but we use our five smooth stones to build a more just, loving, and free world.

Our first stone reminds us that we are part of a living tradition in which revelation is continuous. *Together we engage in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.*

Our second stone reminds us that we freely choose to enter into relationship and community with one another.

Together as people of conscience, we build relationships of justice, equity, and compassion that further the wholeness of the interdependent web of all existence.

Our third stone reminds us that we have a moral obligation to work toward establishing a just and loving community.

Together we speak and act prophetically with the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Our fourth stone reminds us that good things happen as a result of human effort.

Together, as beings with inherent worth and dignity, we create goodness and virtue.

Our fifth stone reminds us that the divine and human capacities for achieving meaningful change are reason for optimism.

Together we may be hopeful that change will occur toward a more just, loving, and free world.

The roots of our living tradition have been developed over centuries, but new ideas and understandings are still being revealed.

Some stones are smooth and polished, while others are newly found and rough.

We are part of this living tradition. Through it, we become whole, and through us, our tradition becomes whole.

Prayer for When Words Fail, Leslie Takahashi

This is a prayer for when words fail, for when they are not big enough or small enough to slip into the little cracks left in our hearts by life's unbearable pressures.

This is a prayer for when the biggest noun cannot know the enormity of joy, or when the most active verb is paralyzed in the face of grief unuttered, horror undescribed, or loss beyond accounting.

This is a prayer for when words, precious emblems though they are, cannot take into their embrace the hugeness of experience or the expanse of indebtedness or the many tangles of complexity and confusion.

This is a prayer for when we must sit with our breath, kneading the small truths we can touch as if they were therapy for our restless hands. This is a prayer for all who have known the large void of hope which is trauma.

This is a prayer for wounded hearts and bodies, for those whom we ought to always remember and sometimes choose to forget.

This is a prayer that begins with gratitude for what we can understand and know, and ends with humility which reminds us that not all is ours to do.

This is a prayer for those times when words fail and all is left is the “yes” and the “no” of it all, and our ability to let the cord of the breath lead us from this moment to the next.

This is a prayer for all who have been lost that in our memory, they might be found.
May we be the ones to make it so.

Responsive Reading, by Leslie Takahashi

We celebrate our desires to stretch our wings towards where we wish to fly and soar free.

And thus, we make a bridge.

We affirm our commitment to remain connected to those who are still earth-bound and captive, remembering that a bridge may be a footpath or an umbrella.

And thus, we offer a bridge.

We acknowledge our own desires and also our interconnections with one another.

And thus, we build stronger bridges.

We honor our own hearts and also the hearts of our neighbors, friends, and fellow inhabitants of this ever-perplexing world.

And thus, we are a bridge.