

# Bulletin for Spiritual Practices

## Business

### Chalice Lighting

Into this place may we come  
to share, to learn, to speak, to listen

and to grow together  
in the spirit of peace and harmony and love.

*Frances Reece Day*

### Sharing of Joys and Concerns

**Silence** – holding ourselves and each other in silent support

### Shared Readings

In today's speeded-up ways of working and living, slowing down is an important spiritual discipline. In the modern world we are conditioned to live faster and faster with no time for inner reflection or sensitivity to others. We are only beginning to see that speed makes our lives tense, insecure, inefficient, and superficial. *Ekknath Easwaran*

The Sabbath as a day of rest is not for the purpose of recovering one's lost strength and becoming fit for the forthcoming labor. The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life. *Abraham Joshua Heschel*

The practice of fasting does not necessarily have to do with the abstinence of eating, but rather should be the result of asking, what do I do in excess? What attachments – be they people, things, ideas or habits – what attachments do I have that have an unhealthy control over me? Fasting is done to let go of something for a time to note how it changes your life. *Rev. Patty Hanneman*

The labyrinth opens the door to our inner symbolic world. . . . We are drawn to the labyrinth because it replenishes our imaginations and restores our natural rhythms. The literal path becomes the symbolic path leading us through life. *Lauren Artress*

If you are not sure what needs attention in your life, then you may need to begin simply by stopping for a while in order to listen to your body, to your soul, to the voice of your inner wisdom. They will guide you to what you need to do to care for yourself. *Andrew C. Kennedy*

One cannot begin to face the real difficulties of the life of prayer and meditation unless one is first perfectly content to be a beginner. . . . We do not want to be beginners. But let us be convinced of the fact that we will never be anything else but beginners, all our life! *Thomas Merton*

Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! *Henry David Thoreau*

Every spiritual discipline is designed to help us listen more deeply to our lives.  
*Kathleen McTigue*

## **Deep Sharing/Deep Listening**

### **Round 1**

What is one spiritual practice you have tried or are intrigued by?

### **Round 2**

Share more deeply feelings, stories, and experiences of spiritual practices as a result of doing the preparation.

### **Round 3**

As time allows, share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

## **Closing Activity and Words**

Within you there is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at anytime and be yourself.

*Herman Hesse*

## **Song**

## **The Covenant**

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

# Facilitator Notes for Spiritual Practices

## Before the Session

Practice reading the meditation for the silence period so that you are comfortable with the pacing.

## Business

### Chalice Lighting

Ask someone to light the chalice and another to do the reading.

Into this place may we come  
to share, to learn, to speak, to listen  
and to grow together  
in the spirit of peace and harmony and love.

*Frances Reece Day*

### Sharing of Joys and Concerns (each person about 2 minutes)

## Silence

Today we do a spiritual practice of meditation/silence. This meditation, Entering the Silence, is based upon a practice of the Seneca (Native American) nation, adapted from the words of Twylah Nitsch. At the ellipsis (...), pause for the space of three breaths.

Close your eyes. Breathe in and out three times.

Listen and hear the Silence

. . . Listen and see the Silence

. . . Listen and taste the Silence

. . . Listen and smell the Silence.

. . . Listen and embrace the Silence...

When you are finished, open your eyes.

## Shared Readings

In today's speeded-up ways of working and living, slowing down is an important spiritual discipline. In the modern world we are conditioned to live faster and faster with no time for inner reflection or sensitivity to others. We are only beginning to see that speed makes our lives tense, insecure, inefficient, and superficial. *Ekmath Easwaran*

The Sabbath as a day of rest is not for the purpose of recovering one's lost strength and becoming fit for the forthcoming labor. The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life. *Abraham Joshua Heschel*

The practice of fasting does not necessarily have to do with the abstinence of eating, but rather should be the result of asking, what do I do in excess? What attachments – be they people, things, ideas or habits – what attachments do I have that have an unhealthy control over me? Fasting is done to let go of something for a time to note how it changes your life. *Rev. Patty Hanneman*

The labyrinth opens the door to our inner symbolic world. . . . We are drawn to the labyrinth because it replenishes our imaginations and restores our natural rhythms. The literal path becomes the symbolic path leading us through life. *Lauren Artress*

If you are not sure what needs attention in your life, then you may need to begin simply by stopping for a while in order to listen to your body, to your soul, to the voice of your inner wisdom. They will guide you to what you need to do to care for yourself. *Andrew C. Kennedy*

One cannot begin to face the real difficulties of the life of prayer and meditation unless one is first perfectly content to be a beginner. . . . We do not want to be beginners. But let us be convinced of the fact that we will never be anything else but beginners, all our life! *Thomas Merton*

Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! *Henry David Thoreau*

Every spiritual discipline is designed to help us listen more deeply to our lives.  
*Kathleen McTigue*

**Deep Sharing/Deep Listening** During the rounds of deep sharing/deep listening, pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure all get to share at least once.

**Round 1** (about 2 minutes each person)

What is one spiritual practice you have tried or are intrigued by?

**Round 2** (about 5 minutes each person)

Share more deeply feelings, stories and experiences of spiritual practices as a result of doing the preparation.

**Round 3**

As time allows, share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

## **Closing Activity and Words**

Invite group members to join into a circle and each say one or two words about how they are feeling or share an insight they have had at this gathering. Be prepared to go first, and proceed around the circle.

Read: Within you there is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at anytime and be yourself. *Herman Hesse*

## **Song**

## **The Covenant**

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit

- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

## Preparation for Spiritual Practices

Most of us spend no time on spiritual maintenance at all. This doesn't mean that we don't have a spiritual life. . . . But we can derive immeasurable benefit from spending just a little bit of time each day nurturing our spiritual life. . . . It means getting in touch more often with the deep currents and purposes of our lives. *Arvid Straube*

There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground. *Rumi*

Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow.  
*Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.*

What I found in the rigorous exercise of karate was a doorway back to wholeness.  
*Sarah Lammert*

Our real enemy is forgetfulness. If we nourish mindfulness every day, and water the seeds of peace in ourselves and those around us, we become alive, and we can help ourselves and others realize peace and compassion. *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Contemplation, meditation, prayer, rituals and other spiritual practices have the power to release the "life force" in the deepest levels of the human psyche. *David Elkins*

Psalms 42:7 reads "Deep calls to deep." Perhaps somewhere in the subterranean chambers of your life you have heard the call to deeper, fuller living. . . . Every now and then you have caught glimpses, hints of something more than you have known. Inwardly you long to launch out into the deep. *Richard J. Foster*

### What is a spiritual practice?

A spiritual practice is an activity done regularly to connect you with your spiritual/religious life. It is a way to move beyond everyday life and act in a way that can make you more spiritually aware and grounded. Activities such as meditation, prayer, and fasting are used, although many other activities can be included such as jogging, even gardening. Many people use spiritual techniques from other religions, such as yoga and tai chi. The point is that it is not so much what you do as how you do it, the attitude with which you approach the activity. And, of course, consistency.

### Eight Spheres of Spiritual Growth

*Personal Spiritual Practices:* These are practices done alone and, perhaps, daily—such as meditation, dream work, journaling, prayer, and so on. They're what most people think of when they hear the words "spiritual practice."

*Communal Worship Practices:* Although Unitarian Universalists affirm the uniqueness and individual nature of a person's spiritual path, our movement is also founded on a belief that community is essential to that journey. Regular engagement with communal worship—the ongoing and collective search for truth and meaning—is one way of supporting this belief.

*Spiritual Partnerships:* Spiritual development is hard work, and most faith traditions affirm the usefulness of companions on the journey. A spiritual partnership can take the form of participation in a small group, a one-on-one relationship with another congregant, spiritual guidance with a minister, or one's own personal therapy. What matters most is the intentional relationship with another person and a mutual commitment to the journey.

*Mind Practices:* Could a program of spiritual development be Unitarian Universalist without an intellectual component? This is a role of adult religious education: book studies, film discussions, lectures, adult forums, scripture studies, courses in UU history, and other RE offerings are all ways to fulfill this dimension of a "rich, integrated program."

*Body Practices:* We know that mind, body, and soul are interconnected. Doesn't it make sense, then, that a well-rounded spiritual practice includes some kind of physical practice? It might be running, sitting, gardening, tai chi, massage, or virtually anything else that keeps us in touch with the miracle of our physical selves.

*Soul Practices:* These are the practices that exercise our creative selves—drawing, painting, sculpting, music, poetry, and other creative endeavors. It has been said that the Biblical expression that humans are "made in the image of God" means that we are made to be creative.

*Life Practices:* Religious traditions from around the world agree that we eventually need to take what we do in private and in our congregations and bring it out into the rest of our lives—in our relationships with our family members, in our workplaces, in our interactions with strangers.

*Justice Practices:* A fully mature spirituality does not stop at the goal of transforming oneself, but must extend beyond oneself—to others—and include a vision of transforming the world.

From [www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/practice/workshop1/workshopplan/handouts/60806.shtml](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/practice/workshop1/workshopplan/handouts/60806.shtml)

## **A Few Spiritual Practices**

Praying	Personal Sacrifice	Giving of Money
Meditation	Service	Tai Chi or Yoga
Sacred Reading	Journal Writing	Retreats
Walking	Mindfulness	Silence
Hospitality	Fasting	Listening
Gardening	Communal Worship	Social Justice

## **Questions to Ponder**

1. Think about a spiritual practice you have tried or are currently engaged in. What works for you and what doesn't?
2. What spiritual practice intrigues you, one that you'd like to explore? What is one step toward trying out this practice?
3. If your life is full now, how might you create time for a spiritual practice? What obstacles are in the way?