

**SPIRIT IN PRACTICE:
TEN WORKSHOPS FOR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ADULTS**

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Adults



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This program and additional resources are available on the UUA.org web site at
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PREFACE

Developed in response to many Unitarian Universalist adults' desire to engage in life-giving spiritual practices, the ten workshops of *Spirit in Practice* provide avenues for deepening spirituality and affirming spiritual growth in the congregation. Participants are invited to reflect, share, and grow together, exploring ways to nurture their connections with the sacred in everyday life.

As one in a series of *Tapestry of Faith* curricula for adults, *Spirit in Practice* weaves Unitarian Universalist values, principles, and sources with four "strands:" spiritual development, ethical development, and Unitarian Universalist identity development, and faith development. Each of the strands is described below.

Spiritual Development. In the book *Everyday Spiritual Practice*, Scott Alexander defines spirituality as our relationship with the Spirit of Life, however we understand it to be. Our spirituality is our deep, reflective, and expressed response to the awe, wonder, joy, pain, and grief of being alive. In this sense, the *Tapestry of Faith* programs seek to form children, youth, and adults who:

- Know that they are lovable beings of infinite worth, imbued with powers of the soul and obligated to use their gifts, talents, and potentials in the service of life
- Appreciate the value of spiritual practice as a means of deepening faith and integrating beliefs and values with everyday life

Ethical Development. When we develop our ethics, we develop our moral values—our sense of what is right and wrong. We also enhance our ability to act on those values, overcoming oppressions and despair. In this sense, the *Tapestry of Faith* programs seek to form children, youth, and adults who:

- Realize that they are moral agents, capable of making a difference in the lives of other people, challenging structures of social and political oppression, and promoting the health and well-being of the planet
- Accept that they are responsible for the stewardship and creative transformation of their religious heritage and community of faith in the service of diversity, justice and compassion

Unitarian Universalist Identity. A person's participation in a Unitarian Universalist congregation does not automatically create Unitarian Universalist identity. Personal identification with Unitarian Universalism begins when people start to call themselves Unitarian Universalist and feel part of a Unitarian Universalist congregation or community. Identity is strengthened as individuals discover and resonate with the stories, symbols, and practices of Unitarian Universalism. As individuals find and give acceptance, as they cherish the community's people and values and messages, as they find sustenance for their holy hungers, they grow into Unitarian Universalists. In this sense, the *Tapestry of Faith* programs seek to form children, youth, and adults who:

- Affirm that they are part of a Unitarian Universalist religious heritage and community of faith that has value and provides resources for living
- Recognize the need for community, affirming the importance of families, relationships, and connections between and among the generations
- Accept that they are responsible for the stewardship and creative transformation of their religious heritage and community of faith in the service of diversity, justice, and compassion

Faith Development. When we develop in faith, we develop as meaning-makers. Faith is not about accepting impossible ideas. Rather, faith is about embracing life's possibilities, growing in our sense of being "at home in the universe." Faith is

practiced in relationship with others—it has personal dimensions, but it is best supported by a community of shared symbols, stories, values, and meaning. This strand—faith development—emphasizes each person's religious journey as a participant in a faith community and faith tradition, and each person's lifelong process of bringing head, heart, and hands to what is of ultimate meaning and value.

Each of these strands is woven, to some degree, in each of the *Spirit in Practice* workshops, even though the primary focus of this resource is spiritual development. May these workshops come to life in your hands and in the hearts, minds, and spirits of those you teach.

—Sarah Gibb Millspaugh, Developmental Editor, Unitarian Universalist Association Adult Programs Director

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THE PROGRAM

The idea of spiritual practices encourages individuals to take responsibility for their own spiritual development by spending time working on it, deliberating on its meaning and how best to pursue it, seeking to understand the sacred through reading and the counsel of others, and seeking to have contact with the sacred through personal reflection and prayer.

—Robert Wuthnow, scholar of American religious history

Spirit in Practice was created to help Unitarian Universalists develop regular disciplines, or practices, of the spirit—practices that help them connect with the sacred ground of their being, however they understand it. Spirit in Practice affirms religious diversity while seeking unity in our communal quest for meaning and wholeness. Whether participants follow a path they identify as Humanist, Jewish, Christian, Pagan, Theist, Atheist, Agnostic, Mystic, and/or any of the other paths we follow in our diverse congregations, the Spirit in Practice workshops offer a forum for learning, sharing, and growth that can enrich their faith journeys.

In *Everyday Spiritual Practice*, an anthology of writings by Unitarian Universalist clergy and laity about their own spiritual practices, the Reverend Scott Alexander wrote, "In our faith every individual is expected, with the help of clergy and community, to nurture and tend the garden of his or her own religious life each and every day."

Spirit in Practice helps Unitarian Universalists tend that garden. It helps our congregations offer support and challenge to members along their spiritual paths. It is one way to provide the practical support and guidance Unitarian Universalists need for spiritual growth to blossom.

In interfaith dialogue, and in our spiritually diverse congregations, the analogy of a mountain is often used—there are many paths up a mountain. Each path has its own plusses and minuses. The North Face may be faster but also more technically challenging; the South Face may meander more easily and provide more overlooks. Each will appeal to—or repel—different people.

One of the things that make our movement unique is that we do not insist that everyone take the same route. Rather, we encourage people to find the path that most suits them. And then we go a step further—at our best, we keep gathering together to discuss what we've seen and done on our journeys thus far. That means that the folks going up the North Face get a bit of the flavor of the trip they might have taken, and the folks going up

the South Face get to vicariously experience a different kind of climb than the one they're on. This mutual give-and-take, in the context of *conversation*, not *conversion*, can only enrich the experience of all who take part in it—even those who are just walking back and forth around the base camp.

The workshops that make up the Spirit in Practice series are predicated on three fundamental ideas:

- That the "free and responsible search for truth and meaning" that we affirm in our Unitarian Universalist principles is a spiritual quest
- That this search is more effectively and more evocatively carried out if we have some training and discipline—not to mention some *practice*, in both senses of the word—that helps us pay attention to the sacred
- That there is nothing in our lives that cannot serve as a tool for this work

Drawing on a model developed by the Zen Mountain Monastery in Mount Tremper, New York, for the training of its students, Spirit in Practice focuses on eight spheres of holistic and wholehearted spiritual practices. These eight spheres are:

- Personal spiritual practices
- Communal worship practices
- Spiritual partnerships
- Mind practices
- Body practices
- Soul practices
- Life practices
- Justice practices

The first workshop introduces this eight-sphere concept, and Workshops 2 through 9 examine each of these spheres in turn. The spheres can be explored as a complete series or as individual encouragements to try new lenses through which to view and engage the depth dimensions of our lives. The tenth workshop is designed to review and integrate the others, since an argument that runs through them all is that these various spheres work best when brought together.

GOALS

This program will:

- Nurture a deepening spiritual life and spiritual centeredness

- Consider the value of spiritual practice, in any variety of forms, as a means to deepen faith and enhance the quality of everyday living
- Cultivate individual and communal spiritual practices
- Develop participants' alertness to the wonder and mystery of existence
- Encourage experiences of the sacred through worship, ritual, wisdom of faith traditions, and spiritual disciplines
- Explore possibilities for deepening experiences of spirituality in the context of a Unitarian Universalist congregation

LEADERS

A team of two or more adults should lead the Spirit in Practice workshops. The same co-leaders need not lead each workshop. However, consistency in leadership has many advantages for congregations providing all or part of the Spirit in Practice program as a continuous series.

Leaders may be religious professionals, such as ministers or religious educators, or they may be committed laypersons. Consider using these criteria in choosing your Spirit in Practice leaders:

- Knowledgeable about Unitarian Universalism
- Involved in the congregation
- Trusted within the congregation
- Effective at speaking, teaching, and facilitating
- Engaged in regular spiritual practices
- Good listeners
- Responsible and respectful, with strong interpersonal boundaries
- Well organized and competent

Leaders need to be capable of creating and nurturing a supportive, respectful, and safe community within the workshops. If your congregation has a safe congregation policy, a code of ethics for leaders, or a covenant of right relations, make sure your Spirit in Practice leaders become familiar with and affirm it.

Leaders are expected to be facilitators of learning. As such, their motivations and behavior should be tuned toward the learning needs of participants. Leaders interested in their own gratification or celebrity, or leaders with a theological axe to grind, might present a workshop that is more a "show" about the leaders than a learning experience for and about the participants.

A leader can facilitate learning in these workshops without teaching experience or pedagogical knowledge.

Throughout each workshop plan, leaders will find detailed guidance to conduct activities in a way that facilitates participants' learning.

PARTICIPANTS

The Spirit in Practice program is designed for adult participants age eighteen and up. The workshops are equally suitable for a congregation's first-time visitors and its longtime members. To adapt a workshop for use with high school youth, leaders may need to revise some activities to make their concepts more concrete and less abstract.

Workshops can accommodate any number of participants, with six participants an ideal minimum. If you have six or more participants, you will be able to divide your group into the groups of two or three that several activities require.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

All ten workshops in the Spirit in Practice program follow a similar structure. Between an opening and a closing ritual, participants engage in up to five activities. The opening includes a chalice lighting, and the closing includes an extinguishing of the chalice. Each workshop features a central story and includes a time for sharing names.

All workshops offer enough activities for a one-hour session, plus one or more additional activities for extending the workshop to an hour and a half or longer. Leaders should decide in advance how long each workshop will be so that they and participants can schedule the time and arrange transportation and child care.

If you are reading the Spirit in Practice curriculum online, you can move as you wish among a workshop's elements—Opening, Closing, Activity 4, Resources, etc. Each element occupies its own web page. You can click "print this page" to print just the Opening, for example, or just the Resources section. You can also download a single entire workshop—or download the entire Spirit in Practice curriculum—to customize and print as you wish. See the instructions on the [front page of the curriculum](#) (included in this document).

Each workshop is structured with the following sections:

Introduction

The introduction provides a short summary of the workshop's content, along with guidance for leaders about implementing the workshop.

Goals

The Goals section provides general outcomes toward which the workshop is geared. Reviewing the goals will help you connect the workshop's content and

methodologies with the four strands of development that inform the overall Tapestry of Faith religious education series: ethical, spiritual, faith, and Unitarian Universalist identity development. As you plan a workshop, apply your knowledge of your group, the time and space you have available, and your own strengths and interests as co-leaders to determine the most important and achievable goals for the workshop and the activities that will serve them best.

Learning Objectives

The Learning Objectives section describes specific participant outcomes that the workshop activities are designed to facilitate. It may be helpful to think of learning objectives as the building blocks with which the Spirit in Practice program's larger, "big picture" goals are achieved. If particular learning objectives appeal to you as important for your group, make sure you select the activities for this workshop that address these outcomes.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

The "Workshop-at-a-Glance" table lists the workshop activities in order and provides an estimated time for completing each activity.

Workshop-at-a-Glance is not a road map that you must follow. Rather, use it as a menu for planning the workshop. You will decide which elements to use and how to combine these to best suit your group, your meeting space, and the amount of time you have.

Keep in mind that many variables inform the actual completion time for an activity. Whole-group discussions will take longer in a large group than in a small group. Remember to consider the time you will need to relocate participants to another area of your meeting room.

Spiritual Preparation

Each workshop provides suggestions that leaders may use to prepare themselves for leading the workshop. Take advantage of these suggestions as a way to experience the Spirit in Practice program yourself, to grow spiritually, and to grow as a leader.

Workshop Plan

The workshop plan presents every element of the workshop and a Resources section. The Resources section includes additional sources to help you, the leader, further explore the workshop topics.

Opening. Each workshop begins with a chalice-lighting ritual and an opening activity. Take the liberty you need to shape your opening ritual to suit your group, any space limitations, and the culture and practices of your congregation.

Activities. Up to five activities form the core content of each workshop. The variety of activities presented within each workshop helps you address different learning

styles you may find among your participants. In most workshops, one activity focuses the group's attention on a story that illuminates the workshop theme.

Presenting the activities in the sequence suggested for each workshop will help you provide a coherent learning experience. In general, workshops are structured to first activate participants' interest in and prior knowledge of the main topic, next offer hands-on engagement with the topic, and finally provide opportunities to process and apply new reflections and knowledge. The suggested sequence balances listening with talking and complements individual exploration with small group or whole group exploration.

As you mix and match activities to form a workshop that will work well for you, keep in mind your participants' journey of learning and the benefits of a well-paced workshop that includes different kinds of activities. In addition to the core activities, Alternate Activities are provided. If you are leading an hour-and-a-half or longer workshop, sequence in the Alternate Activities in an order that makes sense within the flow of the workshop.

Materials for Activity. Provided for each activity, this checklist tells you the supplies you will need.

Preparation for Activity. Review the "to do" list for each activity at least one week ahead of a workshop. If your group meets less frequently than weekly, review the preparation items several weeks ahead. The list identifies all the advance work you need to do for the activity, such as securing musical accompaniment for a hymn, creating a poster, or arranging supplies just before your participants arrive.

Description of Activity. This section provides detailed directions for implementing the activity with your group.

Read the activity descriptions carefully during your planning process so that you understand each activity and its purpose. Later, when you are leading your group, you can use the description as a step-by-step how-to manual.

Including All Participants. Adaptation to include all participants should always be part of your planning process. For certain activities, the Including All Participants section suggests specific modifications to make the activity manageable and meaningful for participants with limitations of mobility, sight, hearing, or cognition. This section is not exhaustive. The Unitarian Universalist Association provides more extensive accessibility information online; visit the [accessibility section of UUA.org](https://www.uua.org/faith-life/faith-practice/faith-practice-2020/faith-practice-2020-10-15-2020-10-15) to view the relevant materials.

Closing. Each workshop offers a closing ritual, extinguishing of the chalice, and introduction of the workshop's Taking It Home ideas.

The closing signals the end of your group's time together. Like the opening, the closing of a workshop grounds the experience in ritual. Use the curriculum as a resource to shape a closing that fits your group and the culture and practices of your congregation.

Leader Reflection and Planning. This section provides guidance, including some questions, to help co-leaders process the workshop after it is concluded and use their reflections to shape future workshops.

Taking It Home. The Taking It Home resources for each workshop are designed to help participants extend their Spirit in Practice experiences. These resources include conversation topics, journaling assignments, and other ideas for incorporating learnings from the workshop into participants' lives at home, in their workplaces and towns, in their congregations, and as members of other communities to which they may belong. Taking It Home is designed to be inclusive of all participants in any living situation or family configuration.

After you download the Taking It Home section, you can print out and photocopy it "as is" for participants to bring home, or you may customize it first.

Alternate Activities. Most workshops feature one or more alternate activities. You can use these to extend the total time of the workshops to an hour and a half or longer, or you can use them as substitutes for core workshop activities. Sometimes the alternate activities are simpler to implement than the core activities. Materials checklists, preparation steps, and descriptions for alternate activities appear in the same format as they do in openings, closings, and the core activities.

Resources. In a workshop's Resources section, find all the handouts and other materials you will need to lead every element of the workshop. You will also find supplemental resources to help you, the leader, further explore the workshop topics.

Under the heading "Stories," find resources that present the full text of stories that you will read aloud to participants. Making copies of these stories for all participants is optional.

Under the heading "Handouts," find any material that you need to print out and photocopy for all participants to use in the workshop.

Under the heading "Leader Resources," find materials such as guided meditations that are for the leader's use during the workshop.

Under the heading "Find Out More," find a list of books, videos, websites, and other resources to help you learn more about the workshop topics.

IMPLEMENTATION

Each congregation has its own approach to structuring adult programs. Some congregations offer programs on Sunday mornings, gathering adults before the service, after the service, during a second service, or between two services. Other congregations offer their adult workshops on Sunday afternoons or weekday evenings. Some offer single workshops here and there; others prefer to present workshops as a series. Some congregations charge money and require advance registration for adult courses. Many congregations open their adult programs to all who wish to attend, regardless of whether they've attended previous workshops in a series.

The Spirit in Practice program has a flexibility that allows you to offer it under any of these scenarios. The program design does not assume that the same participants will come to each workshop. Each workshop includes a time for leaders and participants to introduce themselves. The one-hour workshop length fits readily in the time slot typically available for a Sunday morning adult program. A 90-minute workshop, including one or more alternative activities, might better suit an afternoon or evening program. Congregations can use just one of these workshops, a few, or all of them. Program leaders and congregational leadership can decide how the Spirit in Practice program can best fit into your congregation's lifespan religious education program.

Making Spirit in Practice accessible to a full range of a congregation's adults requires provisions for adults with children. It is strongly recommended that congregations offer Spirit in Practice workshops during time slots when children's religious education programming and/or on-site child care are available. Even with on-site child care, evening workshops may still be a challenge for parents of young children whose bedtime comes before the workshop's end.

Evening workshops can also be a challenge for participants who don't drive, who don't drive after dark, or who live a long way from the workshop location. Arranging for carpools can help.

BEFORE YOU START

Determine the schedule. Decide whether you will offer the program for ten consecutive weeks, once a month for ten consecutive months, or on another schedule. Set the dates and times. Take holidays and three-day weekends into account to ensure that most participants can attend all scheduled workshops.

Choose a meeting space. Find a comfortable room that can accommodate chairs for participants, participants in wheelchairs, tables for artwork and writing, an altar or centering table, an easel, a microphone, and newsprint

posted on the walls. Reserve the space for all of the workshop dates and times you have chosen.

Arrange for child care. If you are meeting at a time when religious education programming is not available for participants' children, arrange for child care with qualified child care providers. Reserve a room for this use as well.

Promote the Spirit in Practice workshops. Use newsletters, websites, printed and spoken

announcements, visitor and new member packets, adult religious education brochures, and invitations to publicize the upcoming workshops. Promote them at worship, at other religious education program meetings, and at visitor and new member orientations. You may also choose to promote the workshops more broadly with a listing in your local newspaper or on your local community access television channel.

FACILITATOR FEEDBACK FORM

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

Faith Development Office
Ministries and Faith Development
Unitarian Universalist Association
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210-1409
religiouseducation@uua.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation:

Number of Participants:

Age range:

Did you work with (a) co-facilitator(s)?

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?

Did you enrich the program with any resources that you would recommend to others?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

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Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation or group:

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?

WORKSHOP 1: TOWARD A RICH AND MEANINGFUL UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SPIRITUALITY

INTRODUCTION

The things that are holy and sacred in this life are neither stored away on mountaintops nor locked away in arcane secrets of the saints. I doubt that any church has a monopoly on them either. What holiness there is in this world resides in the ordinary bonds between us and in whatever bonds we manage to create between ourselves and the divine.

—Patrick O'Neill, *Unitarian Universalist Views of the Sacred*

For our Unitarian Universalist congregations to reach their potential as spiritual homes, we need to provide rich and meaningful opportunities for spiritual development. The Eight Spheres of Spiritual Growth is one model, one structure upon which such an integrated program might be built. Inspired by the Eight Gates of Zen training developed at the [Zen Mountain Monastery](#) in Mount Tremper, New York, *Spirit in Practice* articulates eight spheres in which one can develop his/her spiritual life.

You can think of the eight spheres model as a spiritual analogue of the USDA's "food pyramid." To be well balanced in nutrients, you must eat from all of the different food groups in the food pyramid, yet not every meal need include food from every group. Similarly, engagement with each of the eight spheres over time can lead to a well-balanced spiritual life. To continue with the "food pyramid" analogy, our Unitarian Universalist tradition will not tell you specifically what foods you should eat, but the collective wisdom of the world's religions and the insights of modern psychology do point to a general outline of a "healthy diet" for spiritual well-being.

This opening workshop introduces the Spirit in Practice program and the concept of the eight spheres.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Familiarize participants with the scope of the Spirit in Practice program
- Convey the value of regular spiritual practice for adults' spiritual development

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Recognize the multi-faceted nature of spiritual practice
- Discuss the "eight spheres" of spiritual growth

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: Singing "Gathered Here"	5
Activity 3: The Story of the Wandering Teacher	10
Activity 4: Introduction to <i>Spirit in Practice</i>	15
Activity 5: Naming Our Experiences	15
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Filling In the Spheres	30
Alternate Activity 2: Introduction to Journaling	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by practicing centering, prayer, or meditation. Before the workshop, take some time to engage in a spiritual practice that helps connect you with the sacred, with the Spirit of Life, with the ground of your being. You may wish to spend extra time with that practice before you offer Spirit in Practice, allowing yourself to access the kind of groundedness or energy that you want to embody as a teacher of spiritual practices. What kind of energy do you want to share with your group? How do you want to be as a leader? Hold these questions, and your responses, in your mind as you engage in a practice that connects you with the Spirit of Life.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Copies of [Spirit in Practice Series Schedule](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer and digital projector
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Using Handout 1: [Spirit in Practice Series Schedule](#) as a template, create a schedule for your Spirit in Practice workshop series. Include the date, time, location, and description of each workshop. Make a copy for each participant.
- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the schedules, sign-up sheet, and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter

- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)

- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Invite a participant to light the chalice as you read these words by Unitarian Universalist minister Sarah Lammert:

The element of fire represents passion, veracity, authenticity, and vitality. If the chalice is the supporting structure of Unitarian Universalism, then we are the flame. We are the flame, fanned strong by our passion for freedom, our yearning for truth-telling, our daring to be authentic with one another, and the vitality we sustain in our meeting together. In all of this there is love.

Ask the group to find responsive reading 437, "Let Us Worship" by Kenneth L. Patton, in their hymnbooks. Read it responsively with the group.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: SINGING "GATHERED HERE" (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* (one per participant) or lyrics of "Gathered Here" written on newsprint or digital slides
- Optional: Computer and digital projector
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- If desired, list the lyrics of "Gathered Here" on newsprint or a digital slide and display them at the appropriate time.
- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "Gathered Here." The song can work well a *cappella* and as a round.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Gathered Here," 389 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them.

ACTIVITY 3: THE STORY OF THE WANDERING TEACHER (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of [Story 1: The Wandering Teacher](#) (included in this document) (one copy for facilitator, plus a several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "The Wandering Teacher" aloud. Provide photocopies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any

tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks. Ask:

- What are some of the things that make you feel most alive?
- Is doing those things a spiritual practice? How so, or why not?
- What makes a practice "spiritual" and not just "emotional" or "mental"?
- What does "spiritual" mean to you?

Conclude by explaining that Spirit in Practice, like Unitarian Universalism, affirms many definitions of spirituality. One need not believe in God or a supernatural "spirit" to be spiritual or to have a spiritual practice. In essence, our spirituality is our connection with the Spirit of Life—the energy and force that makes up the ground of our being, the ground of life itself. Spirituality can be felt and accessed by connecting to people, animals, the earth, the universe, tangible things, or intangible energies. Spirit in Practice seeks to help each of us grow in our connections to the sacred, however we define the sacred and however we define ourselves.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. You may wish to print out a copy of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 4: INTRODUCTION TO SPIRIT IN PRACTICE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 2: [Eight Spheres of Spiritual Growth](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer and digital projector
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Lectern or pulpit from which to speak

Preparation for Activity

- Read through the text of the activity and familiarize yourself with it so that you can deliver

the content in a way that feels comfortable and genuine for you.

- List proposed group guidelines (see Description of Activity) on newsprint or a digital slide.

Description of Activity

Present the following proposed guidelines for the workshop series by displaying them on newsprint or a digital slide.

- Everyone has the right to participate
- Everyone has the right to pass or be silent
- Treat one another with respect
- Aim to converse with—not convert—other participants

After presenting the proposed guidelines, ask the group if they would like to propose additional guidelines. If so, add them to the list and ask for the group's assent.

Explain the basic format of this workshop series. Indicate that eight workshops will explore practices that support eight different aspects of spiritual growth, each relevant to people with a variety of spiritual beliefs and traditions. Each workshop will have an opening and closing, a story relevant to its topic, time for reflection, time for discussion, and a variety of activities.

Distribute Handout 2: Eight Spheres of Spiritual Growth. Review the handout, taking time to highlight each sphere. Ask participants to listen to each sphere's description and to reflect on how they do or don't engage that sphere in their spiritual lives.

When the description of the spheres is complete, offer the following questions for discussion:

- Do these spheres describe a well-rounded Unitarian Universalist spiritual life? If so, how? If not, is there any area you would add to the model to round it out?
- What spheres have you found it easiest to tend to in your life? Which ones are harder to tend to?
- Which spheres have been enhanced by participation in this congregation?

Conclude by telling participants you look forward to exploring these spheres of spiritual growth in the workshops to come.

Including All Participants

All participants in your workshop, particularly those who are hard of hearing, will absorb the material better if you use a microphone, speak in an engaging manner, use body language, and make frequent eye contact.

ACTIVITY 5: NAMING OUR EXPERIENCES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint pad
- Easel
- Markers for writing on newsprint
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange the newsprint pad, easel, and markers for use during the activity.

Description of Activity

Invite the group to divide into groups of three and spend six minutes taking turns answering the question, "What brings you here?" Point out that this allows two minutes per person. Explain that it can be a powerful spiritual practice to fully and deeply listen to someone else—not to fill our heads with what we're planning to say when it's our turn or with judgments and responses to what we're hearing, but to simply listen to another person.

After six minutes, bring everyone back into one group. Ask for volunteers to respond to the following questions. Record responses on newsprint.

- Did you find that the individuals in your group had very different motivations for participation, or similar ones?
- What are some motivations that your small group had in common?
- What other motivations—perhaps less common—have brought you here?

Explain to the group that these sheets will be posted again during the last workshop so that they can assess whether they've gotten what they came for and whether their reasons for participation have changed over time.

Conclude by affirming participants' motivations for attending. Express your hope that this be a place where they can deepen and grow their spirituality.

Including All Participants

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their small groups, allow some groups to leave the room and find a quieter space. If you two to three participants require ASL interpretation and you have only one interpreter, put those participants in the same group. If you have more than three participants needing ASL interpretation, find a second interpreter to help.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.
- Review the closing words. Decide whether you wish to use these words or another closing. Print out a copy of the closing words you will use. Place your copy of the closing words near the chalice.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Offer an opportunity for the group to reflect back over the workshop, seeking what are sometimes called "like and wishes." Ask participants, if they wish, to briefly share something they particularly liked about their experience and one thing they wish for in the future. If the group is small or there is extra time, allow participants to speak freely. If the group is large or time is tight, limit people's sharing so that all who wish to will have the opportunity.

Distribute and explain your customized Taking It Home handout. Indicate that each workshop will include a similar handout with ideas for how to continue exploring the workshop's subject with friends and family.

Make any announcements concerning the next meeting, especially any changes to routine (such as a change in meeting time or place, a guest presenter, etc.).

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone

completely around the circle, and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended. Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

Share the "Eight Spheres of Spiritual Growth" model with a friend, housemate, or family member. Talk about the kinds of spiritual practices you have engaged in and those you wish to learn more about, and ask the same of your conversation partner.

If you have children in your life, discuss spirituality with them. Try coming up with a definition of spirituality that is meaningful to you and also makes sense to them. Talk with them about things you do, and things they can do, to connect with the Spirit of Life—things like prayers at the table or at bedtime, or sitting quietly to meditate.

Take some time in your journal to reflect on your lifelong spiritual journey. When you were a child, what (if anything) were you taught or shown about practicing

spirituality? What practices have you engaged in as a child, youth, and adult? How have your spiritual ideas and needs changed throughout your life? What practices might speak to those ideas and address those needs today?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FILLING IN THE SPHERES (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Eight sheets of newsprint
- Scissors
- Markers
- Wall space or table space for placing circles of newsprint
- Optional: Low-stick masking tape
- Optional: Large (5 x 7 in.) self-stick notes
- Optional: [Leader Resource 1: A Partial List of Possible Spiritual Practices](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Using the newsprint, cut out eight large circles. Label each with the name of one of the Eight Spheres of Spiritual Growth
- Post the circles on the wall or lay them flat on easily accessible tables.
- Place two or three markers next to each circular sheet.
- Optional: If you choose an alternative way of structuring this activity (described in the third paragraph below), write the names of spiritual practices from Leader Resource 1 on large self-stick notes. (Participants will not need markers.)

Description of Activity

This activity is designed to follow Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice.

Divide participants into eight groups. Invite each group to move next to one of the circles representing a sphere of spiritual growth. Ask the groups to use the markers to write down as many spiritual practices as they can think of that are related to the sphere they're considering. After three minutes, ask the groups to rotate to their right and take some time writing down more practices on another sphere. Rotate one more time, so that each group has had the chance to consider three spheres.

Alternatively, hand out the self-stick notes on which you have written the names of spiritual practices. Give several to each participant. Ask participants to affix the

notes to the circles. Point out that some practices will be hard to categorize.

When all of the practices have been identified, ask participants to take a few minutes to read what has been identified in the various spheres. Invite discussion with these or similar questions:

- What was it like to do this activity? (Ask follow-up questions to draw out participant responses. For example, if a participant says "It was hard," follow up with "What was hard about it?")
- Did anything you wrote or read surprise you? How so?
- Looking at these lists, what can you conclude about Unitarian Universalist spirituality?
- What criteria can help you choose a practice that's meaningful to you?
- How do you know when a spiritual practice "fits" you?

Conclude by addressing any questions or concerns that were brought up in the course of the activity. Affirm the good work of the group. Emphasize that spiritual practice, like spiritual growth, is something that can change and be adapted throughout our lives according to who we are and where we find ourselves.

Including All Participants

If some participants in your group are unable to move to the circular newsprint on the wall, bring the newsprint to them so that they can participate.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCTION TO JOURNALING (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Optional: Pens or pencils (at least one per participant)
- Optional: Sheets of writing paper (at least three per participant) or notebooks that can be used as spiritual practice journals (one per participant)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether or not you will encourage journaling throughout the Spirit in Practice workshop series. If so, this activity can provide

an introduction to the practice for the course. If not, this activity simply provides an introduction to journaling, which in itself can be a spiritual practice.

Description of Activity

If you choose, introduce the expectation that participants will journal regularly throughout the Spirit in Practice workshop series. (This would be a good time to pass out notebooks, if you are providing them.) Otherwise, simply introduce journaling as a time-honored, powerful, and fun spiritual practice.

Ask whether any participants already have a journaling practice. Encourage those who do to share briefly about it, noting especially any benefits they've observed in their own lives. Then elicit a list of hurdles and difficulties people have had with journaling. Record these on newsprint.

Emphasize that there is no one right way to journal. Entries can take the form of lists; disjointed thoughts doodled on the page; traditional narrative; a letter to God, a revered ancestor, a valued teacher, or a dear friend; ruminations on questions raised by the workshops; a record of dreams; or virtually anything else.

Encourage participants not to let assumptions about journaling keep them from the practice of journaling. Instead, encourage them to use the journal in whatever way keeps them using it, and to call *that* "journaling."

Note that these journals are for the participants' own private use—no one will be compelled to share anything they've entered. At the same time, everyone is strongly encouraged to make regular entries, at least for the duration of this course.

If time permits, invite participants to make their first entry now. If they would like, they can journal about what brought them here and what they hope to receive.

Including All Participants

Due to learning differences or personal preference, some participants may not enjoy writing. You can encourage these participants to draw in their journals or to simply sit in silent reflection during the journaling time.

STORY: THE WANDERING TEACHER

Once upon a time there was a Teacher who was known far and wide as one who had mastered all the great disciplines of a spiritual seeker. She wandered the country, and whenever people heard she was near, they traveled to seek her wisdom and her guidance.

“Great Teacher,” one would say, “I wish to get closer to God.” “By what path do you travel now?” she would ask. “I study the scriptures, diligently applying myself day and night to unlocking their mysteries,” might come the reply. “Then you should put down your books and walk in the woods—thinking nothing, but listening deeply.”

Another would say, “I do good to every person I meet, doing all that I can to serve their needs.” “Then for a

time,” the Teacher would reply, “consider yourself well met and strive to serve your own needs as you have so well served others.”

One day the Teacher noticed someone in the back of the crowd, someone not pushing his way to her as most of the others did. She went to him. “What is it I can do for you?” she asked.

“I do not know,” he replied. “I feel in need of something, but I do not believe in God and have nothing you could call a ‘practice.’” “When do you feel most alive?” the Teacher asked. “When I am playing with my children,” the man said without hesitation. “Then play with your children,” said the Teacher. “And you will find what you seek.”

HANDOUT: 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.

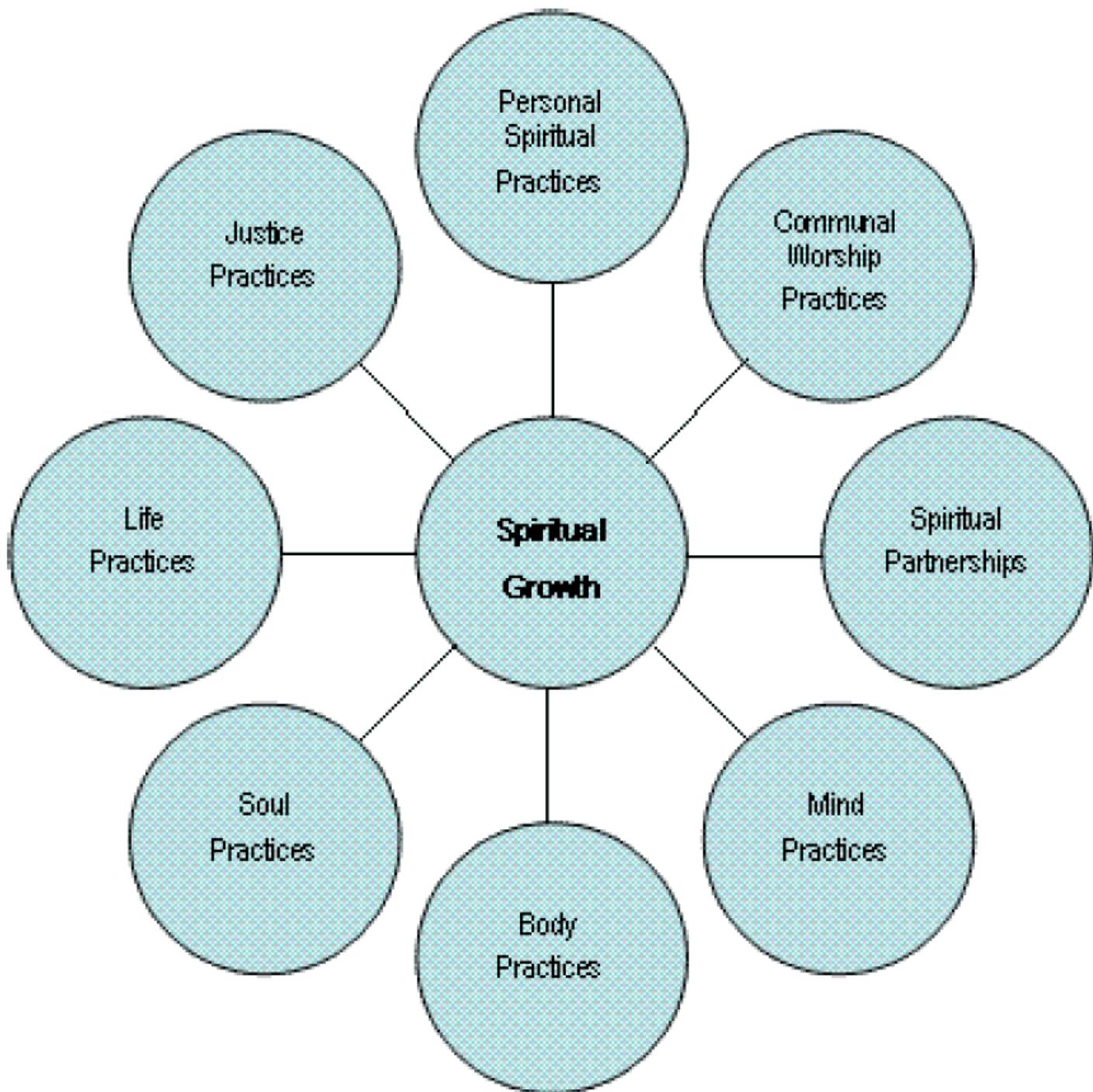
Mind Practices: Could a program of spiritual development be Unitarian Universalist without an intellectual component? This is a role of adult religious education: book studies, film discussions, lectures, adult forums, scripture studies, courses in UU history, and other RE offerings are all ways to fulfill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



HANDOUT: SPIRIT IN PRACTICE SERIES SCHEDULE

[Add location of workshops]

WORKSHOP 1: Toward a Rich and Meaningful Unitarian Universalist Spirituality

[Date and Time]

WORKSHOP 2: Personal Spiritual Practices

[Date and Time]

WORKSHOP 3: Communal Worship Practices

[Date and Time]

WORKSHOP 4: Spiritual Partnerships

[Date and Time]

WORKSHOP 5: Mind Practices

[Date and Time]

WORKSHOP 6: Body Practices

[Date and Time]

WORKSHOP 7: Soul Practices

[Date and Time]

WORKSHOP 8: Life Practices

[Date and Time]

WORKSHOP 9: Justice Practices

[Date and Time]

WORKSHOP 10: Looking Back and Moving Forward

[Date and Time]

LEADER RESOURCE: A PARTIAL LIST OF POSSIBLE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Spirit in Practice

Workshop 1

Leader Resource 1

journaling

meditation

UU prayer beads

fasting

peace vigils

listening to a friend

listening to music

serving on the congregation's Board of Trustees

needlepoint

antiracism work

writing letters to the editor

painting

therapy

volunteering in the community

cardio kickboxing

bath time with your kids

saying "hello" to cashiers and clerks

dancing

reflecting on the past week's sermon

teaching RE

going on retreat

washing dishes

taking a bubble bath

chanting

camping

sacred reading

running

random acts of kindness

creating sacred space

giving change to the homeless

pledging to the congregation

being respectful of others

tai chi

going to an art museum

making pottery

attending worship

living with cancer

caring for an ailing parent

living simply

taking time to meditate about family and friends

writing haiku

a book study

playing an instrument

playing with children

praying

yoga

reading poetry

keeping Sabbath

hosting coffee hour

having dinner with friends

studying astronomy

quilting

cycling

recycling

family dinners

tipping large

giving coworkers the benefit of the doubt

singing in the choir

nature walks

recognizing the seed of goodness in the people you
work with

working for social change

meditating at your workstation

reciting mantras

reflecting and journaling

e-mailing your governmental representatives

listening to a coworker who's grieving

grief
gardening

learning about the universe
studying evolution

FIND OUT MORE

[Spirituality and Practice: Resources for Spiritual Journeys](#)

[Zen Mountain Monastery's Eight Gates Training Program](#)

[The Council on Spiritual Practices](#)

Alexander, Scott, ed. *Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life*. Skinner House Books, 1999.

Andrew, Elizabeth. *Writing the Sacred Journey: The Art and Practice of Spiritual Memoir*. Skinner House Books, 2004.

WORKSHOP 2: PERSONAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

There is guidance for each of us, and by lowly listening, we shall hear the right word. Certainly there is a right for you that needs no choice on your part. Place yourself in the middle of the stream of power and wisdom which flows into your life. Then, without effort, you are impelled to truth and to perfect contentment.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

This workshop looks at the solitary component of the practice of spirituality. There is a Zen saying that no one else can eat your food for you, no one else can go to the bathroom for you, and no one else can live your life for you. And, of course, no one else can do your practice for you.

When the subject of personal spiritual practices comes up, one word seems to rise above all the rest: prayer. Prayer is an expansive concept that can be practiced in an endless variety of ways. Contemplatives and mystics have always argued that the real purpose of prayer is to quiet the chatter and remove the distractions that keep us unable to hear the "still small voice" that is within each of us. That voice can be called various things—God, Spirit, Life, our inner wisdom, our higher self. But many of us live in such a tumult of inner and outer noise that if such a voice were speaking to us, we could hardly hear it.

Prayer, then, can be understood as a tool by which we learn to quiet the noise and listen. What are we listening for, or to? That needn't be known at the outset. If something is speaking to us—if there is a spirit singing in us—then we will know it when we hear it. The problem with telling people what they should be listening for, as some institutional religions do, is that when we don't hear what we're expecting to hear, we may give up listening altogether. Ironically, one of the few things that all religions seem to agree on is that when the sacred speaks, it is usually in an unexpected way. This workshop teaches that the first thing to learn is to listen, and only then to discover to whom or what we are listening.

This notion of listening is also central to many "mindfulness" practices taught by various Eastern traditions. For in fact, all of the great personal spiritual practices can be seen as aiming toward the same target. They are all ways of putting us in touch with ourselves at

our deepest, with what the poet Mary Oliver calls our "one wild and precious life."

Our better selves, our higher wisdom, our inner knowing, the collective unconscious, the Spirit of Life, deity—whatever we call it, it is forever speaking to us, encouraging us to make healthy choices, to live up to our ideals, to take the way of the greatest good. All of the various practices that our human family has created are merely ways for us to discover this "voice" so that we might benefit from what it has to say.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Engage participants in discussing the personal spiritual practices of prayer and meditation
- Introduce participants to forms of prayer and meditation that are compatible with Unitarian Universalist beliefs and a wide variety of theological orientations
- Build community in the group by encouraging thoughtful speaking, listening, and discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify their own positive and negatives associations with prayer and meditation
- Analyze the group's views of prayer and meditation
- Experience meditation and prayer and process those experiences through discussion

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: The Story of Pablo Casals	10
Activity 3: Prayer and Meditation	35
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Experiencing Meditation	15
Alternate Activity 2: Experiencing Intercessory Prayer	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by practicing centering, prayer, or meditation. Before the workshop, take some time to engage in a spiritual practice that helps connect you with the sacred, with the Spirit of Life, with the ground of your being. You may wish to spend extra time with that practice before you offer Spirit in Practice, allowing yourself to access the kind of groundedness or energy that you want to embody as a teacher of spiritual practices. What kind of energy do you want to share with your group? How do you want to be as a leader? Hold these questions, and your responses, in your mind as you engage in a practice that connects you with the Spirit of Life.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Copies of [Spirit in Practice Series Schedule](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer and digital projector

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- If you have not already created a schedule for your Spirit in Practice Workshop Series, see the preparation for the Welcoming and Entering activity from Workshop 1. Make copies as needed.
- If you have not already created group guidelines, see Workshop 1, Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice. Display the guidelines.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the schedules, sign-up sheet, and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "Voice Still and Small."
- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Ask the group to turn to "Transcendental Etude" by Adrienne Rich, 665 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. You may wish to share with participants that Adrienne Rich is a contemporary American feminist, poet, teacher, and writer. Invite a participant to light the chalice as the group reads responsively.

After the reading, ask the group to turn to "Voice Still and Small," 391 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite the group to join in singing. If the group is largely unfamiliar with the song, you may need to teach them the tune.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag

materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY OF PABLO CASALS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Story 1: [Pablo Casals](#) (included in this document) (one copy for leader, plus several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "Pablo Casals" aloud. Provide copies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks. Ask:

- What, if anything, do you practice for five to six hours a day? (Answers might include work- or role-related practices, such as e-mailing, driving, or parenting.)
- What would you like to practice every day? How do you think that practice might shape you?
- How do you think you would be if you practiced prayer, meditation, or another spiritual practice with the same commitment that Pablo Casals practiced the cello?

Conclude by emphasizing the value of practice, whether it is just for a few minutes a day, an hour a week, or half an hour each morning. Practice can help us grow spiritually, deepening our connection with and commitment to the ground of our being.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the story. You may wish to print out copies of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 3: PRAYER AND MEDITATION (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: A [Unitarian Universalist Prayer Bead Practice](#) (included in this document) (one per person)
- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel
- Optional: A second easel
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Find a space in the room or an easel arrangement that will enable you to post two newsprint sheets side by side for the group's consideration.

Description of Activity

Explain that the group is now going to discuss two of the most common personal spiritual practices, prayer and meditation.

Ask the group to free-associate around the word "prayer." What words and phrases—positive and negative—come to mind when they think of "prayer"? Write the words and phrases on a sheet of newsprint labeled "Prayer." Spend a few minutes collecting these words and phrases until the group has generated enough to fill the sheet.

Now ask the group to go through the same process to free-associate around the word "meditation." Write these words and phrases on a second sheet of newsprint labeled "Meditation."

When the second newsprint sheet is full, ask the group to look at the two sheets side by side, comparing the words and phrases written for "prayer" and for "meditation." Ask:

- What do you notice about the words and phrases listed under "Prayer"?
- What do you notice about the words and phrases listed under "Meditation"?
- What do these words and phrases tell us about this group's experiences with prayer and meditation?
- Prayer is sometimes thought of as a conversation with God. How might prayer be a meaningful practice for someone who doesn't believe in God? How might prayer be meaningful for someone who believes in God but sees God as impersonal and inaccessible?
- What kinds of prayer do you see as compatible with Unitarian Universalism?
- What might Unitarian Universalist prayer look like? (Note: Responses to this question can come from participants' actual experience of prayer in Unitarian Universalist settings or from participants' hopes about what kind of prayer Unitarian Universalists might engage in.)
- What kinds of meditation practices do you see as compatible with Unitarian Universalism?
- What might Unitarian Universalist meditation look like?

You may wish to bring up some of the points made in this workshop's Introduction. For example, you might point out that contemplatives and mystics have always argued that the real purpose of prayer is to quiet the chatter and remove the distractions that keep us unable to hear the "still small voice" that is within each of us.

Explain that both prayer and meditation are highly compatible with Unitarian Universalist values and beliefs and can be meaningful to the practitioner regardless of his/her beliefs about divinity.

Close by distributing Handout 1: A Unitarian Universalist Prayer Bead Practice. The handout describes a form of prayer designed for Unitarian Universalists by the Reverend Erik Walker Wikstrom, author of these Spirit in Practice workshops. Explain that this practice is something that participants can explore on their own.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table

- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section of this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Offer an opportunity for the group to reflect back over the workshop, seeking what are sometimes called "like and wishes." Ask participants, if they wish, to briefly share something they particularly liked about their experience and one thing they wish for in the future. If the group is small or there is extra time, allow participants to speak freely. If the group is large or time is tight, limit people's sharing so that all who wish to share will have the opportunity.

Distribute your customized Taking It Home handout. Review the ideas for how to continue exploring the workshop's subject with friends and family.

If you have chosen to encourage journaling throughout the Spirit in Practice workshop series, remind participants to write in their journals. (See Workshop 1, Alternate Activity 2: Introduction to Journaling.)

Make any announcements concerning the next meeting, especially any changes to routine (such as a change in meeting time or place, a guest presenter, etc.).

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone completely around the circle and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended. Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a

family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

Read Handout 1: A Unitarian Universalist Prayer Bead Practice. Experiment with it. You may wish to create your own set of prayer beads as described in the handout. You can also use the handout to compose your own personally meaningful prayer, with or without beads. Practice praying in this way daily and see how it shapes you.

Journal about your experiences of meditation and prayer. Which have you engaged in? What was it like for you? What are the most personally meaningful forms of meditation and prayer you've experienced? Where would you like to go with a personal spiritual practice?

Discuss personal spiritual practices with friends, family, co-workers, or housemates. What practices have they found meaningful? If they don't engage in personal spiritual practices, why not? What needs and longings might be fulfilled by engaging regularly in prayer, meditation, or other personal spiritual practices?

Follow these tips for developing your personal spiritual practice:

- *Establish a regular time for your spiritual practice.* Try your best to stick to it. Make an appointment with yourself, put it on your calendar or in your date book, and treat it like any other appointment. If you try to "find time" for spiritual practice somewhere in your day, you're likely to find this universal truth—you're busy! Remember that making a decision to spend time with your spirit is the first step of every practice.
- *Create a special place for your practice.* If you're lucky enough to have a free room that you can devote to prayer, meditation, painting, or whatever it is you're doing, great. But you can also just free up a corner of a room. Creating a space is like creating a time—when the appointed time comes and you move into your sacred space, you'll already be on your way.
- *Set a time limit.* Decide in advance how much time you intend to spend on your practice. This way you don't have an excuse for giving up too easily if it's boring or difficult, and also you don't have to worry that you're going to "lose yourself." Remember, this is a practice. No one who is serious about exercise would go to the gym intending to work out until she/he drops from exhaustion. The same principle applies here.
- *Be gentle with yourself.* Recognize that being distracted from your practice is similar to being distracted within your practice. Simply notice that you've fallen out of the habit and, without any recriminations, begin again.
- *Remember to be grateful.* The Christian mystic Meister Eckhart said, "If you only manage one prayer in your life, and it is 'Thank you,' it will suffice."

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: EXPERIENCING MEDITATION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Pillows and cushions for participants' use
- [Leader Resource 1: Breathing Meditation](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Practice reading Leader Resource 1: Breathing Meditation so that you can deliver it calmly and clearly.

Description of Activity

Explain that meditation is one form of personal spiritual practice. It's a spiritual "practice" not only because it's something that we engage in for centering, but also because it truly takes practice to sit still and quiet the mind. Use these or similar words to introduce the meditation:

Nearly all forms of meditation involve paying more attention to your breathing than usual. Even though we breathe in and out more than twenty thousand times per day, most of us go through our lives without being very conscious of our breath. Practitioners of meditation find that in becoming conscious of each in-breath and out-breath, they become more centered and peaceful. If they have practice, they are able to quiet their minds as they focus on their breathing. In many ways, it's the opposite of how we normally think: normally, we pay attention to our thoughts and ignore our breath. Some Buddhist forms of meditation use this focus on the breath to help the practitioner focus on the present moment, simply being in the here and now. Other forms encourage practitioners to sit and breathe in a certain way so that they transcend the present moment and experience an elevated realm of pure consciousness.

Invite participants to sit in their chairs or move to the floor where they can sit or lie down as they feel comfortable. Make pillows and cushions available to participants who would like them.

Lead the guided meditation in Leader Resource 1: Breathing Meditation. Read slowly and clearly with a calm voice. Pause between sentences so that listeners can visualize each image and action you describe.

When the meditation is through, invite participants to return to the large group for discussion of these questions:

- What did it feel like to meditate in this way?
- What was new for you in this experience? Did anything surprise you?
- How many participants have meditated before? What styles of meditation have you experienced?
- What aspects of this personal spiritual practice do you see as valuable—for yourself, for your community, and for the world?

Including All Participants

Offering several options for posture and positions during meditation includes people of all abilities and mobility levels. When you read the meditation, use a microphone and/or choose to stand or sit near participants who are hard of hearing so that they can hear you better.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: EXPERIENCING INTERCESSORY PRAYER (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 2: Guided Intercessory Prayer](#) (included in this document)
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Practice reading Leader Resource 2: Guided Intercessory Prayer so that you can deliver it calmly and clearly.

Description of Activity

Tell the group that they are going to experience a contemplative approach to intercessory prayer. For anyone unfamiliar with the term, "intercessory prayer" is prayer on behalf of someone else. For those who are familiar with it, the term may conjure up images of "prayer lists" and the rote recitation of the names of people "who are in need of prayer." Encourage people to keep an open mind and heart.

Explain that you are about to lead the group in a silent, meditative form of prayer. This prayer has three parts.

Ask participants to find a comfortable position in their seats. After a moment or two, guide the group in prayer with the words from Leader Resource 2: Guided Intercessory Prayer.

After sounding the bell at the end of the guided prayer, allow a few moments for participants to refocus their attention. Then ask the group to divide into pairs. Invite each pair to spend five minutes discussing their experiences: What was it like to pray for these three people in this way? Participants will take turns being speakers and listeners. You may wish to ring the bell halfway through (after two and a half minutes) to signal speakers and listeners to switch.

When the sharing is through, invite participants to return to the large group for discussion of these questions:

- What did it feel like to pray in this way?
- What was new for you in this experience? Did anything surprise you?

- How many participants have prayed an intercessory prayer before?
- What aspects of this personal spiritual practice do you see as valuable—for yourself, for your community, and for the persons you pray for?

Including All Participants

When you read Leader Resource 2: Guided Intercessory Prayer, use a microphone and/or choose to stand or sit near participants who are hard of hearing so that they can hear you better.

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their pairs, allow some pairs to leave the room and find a quieter space. If two participants require American Sign Language interpretation and you have only one interpreter, pair up those participants. If more than two participants need ASL interpretation, find a second interpreter to help.

STORY: PABLO CASALS

Pablo Casals, born in Vendrell, Spain to a Puerto Rican mother, is thought by many to be the greatest cellist who ever lived. His recordings of the Bach Cello Suites, made between 1936 and 1939, are considered unsurpassed to this day.

Casals' prodigious musical talent became evident early. By the age of four he could play the violin, piano, and flute (having been taught by the church organist and choir director). When he first heard a cello at the age of 11, he decided to dedicate himself to that instrument, and he had already given a solo recital in Barcelona three years later at the age of 14. Five years later he

was on the faculty of the renowned Municipal School of Music in Barcelona and was principal cellist of the Barcelona Opera House. He gained international acclaim in a career of such length that he performed in the United States for both President Theodore Roosevelt and President John F. Kennedy.

Yet even having attained such unquestionable mastery of his instrument, throughout his entire life Casals maintained a disciplined regimen of practicing for five or six hours every day. On the day he died, at the age of 96, he had already put in several hours practicing his scales. A few years earlier, when he was 93, a friend asked him why, after all he had achieved, he was still practicing as hard as ever. "Because," Casals replied, "I think I'm making progress."

HANDOUT: A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRAYER BEAD PRACTICE



What follows is not intended to dictate how to pray, but rather is a suggested structure onto which you can hang your own developing prayer practice. It draws upon the prayer practices of a number of religious traditions and seeks to put together a pattern of prayer that you can tailor to your own needs and understandings. This practice uses the image of a journey, one form of prayer moving into the next.

Preparation: The first, largest bead provides a way into this prayer journey. While touching it, you might gently breathe in and out a few times, sing a favorite hymn, or recite a passage of scripture that centers you and creates a space within for the prayer that is to follow.

Entering In: With the four small beads at the beginning of the prayer circle, you enter into this “journey” of prayer. With each bead you might recite the verses of a Buddhist *gatha*, such as:

Breathing in, I relax body and mind.

Breathing out, I smile.

Dwelling in the present moment,

I realize this is the only moment.

You might call on the spirits of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. Or you can create your own entering prayer. I say:

Open my eyes, that I might see your face in everyone I encounter this day, myself included.

Open my ears, that I might hear your voice in whatever forms it takes.

Open my hands, that I might freely give whatever is mine to share.

Open my heart, that I might live and love more fully in you.

Take the time here to be fully intentional about this time.

Naming: The first medium-size bead is for naming the sacred and the holy as you encounter it. In traditional prayer terminology, this is praise and thanksgiving. You can think of it as naming the places in your life where miracles abound, a chance to “count your blessings,” or a way of beginning your prayer centered in the awareness of the ways in which the holy is happening in your life.

The Small Beads: The three sets of five small beads between the medium-size beads are for “breath prayer.” Many of the world’s religious traditions encourage a short, repetitive prayer tied to the breath. You say one line on the in-breath and a second on the out-breath. You can use two lines from tradition or scripture—the classic from the Christian tradition is “Jesus Christ / have mercy on me”—or you can create your own. Once you settle on a two-part phrase, keep saying the same thing. Part of the power of a breath prayer is its repetition. Live with it long enough for it to become a part of you.

Knowing: The second medium-size bead is for giving voice to the broken, wounded, worried places in your soul. (Traditionally, this is called a prayer of confession.) It is the chance to take a “fearless moral inventory” and to give voice to what lurks in the shadow. Prayer calls on us to be authentic, whole people, and knowing where we are weak and wounded is essential.

Listening: The third medium-size bead is for listening to “the voice of quiet stillness” within. This is a chance to sit in the Mystery, gently breathing. (Depending on the tradition, this is called meditation or contemplation.) Far too often, people think of prayer as “talking to the sacred,” forgetting that in any good conversation we must make room to listen as well as speak.

Loving: If your prayer journey is just for your own sake, then it is ultimately hollow. The fourth and last medium-size bead provides a place to bring the concerns of others—family, friends, communities, the world—into your prayer. These prayers of intercession, as they are traditionally called, are a chance to encourage your prayer to move outward. Call to mind people and situations you know who are in need, or sit quietly and see who (or what) comes to mind.

Closing: Whatever you said to enter into your prayer time, repeat with the four beads at the end of the circle.

Putting It All Together: You can take the journey of this prayer practice all at one time (expect to spend at least 30 minutes), or you can spread it out during the day (for example, *Naming* after breakfast, *Knowing* at lunch, *Listening* before dinner, and *Loving* before bed). Some people carry their beads with them everywhere, like “worry beads,” and find that simply touching them—while in line at the bank, or when waiting for a friend—brings them into a prayerful place.

This practice is expanded—and a Unitarian Universalist perspective on prayer is more fully explored—in Erik Walker Wikstrom’s [*Simply Pray: A Modern Spiritual Practice to Deepen Your Life*](#) (Skinner House Books, 2005).

LEADER RESOURCE 1: BREATHING MEDITATION

Kevin Durkin

Lie on your back in a comfortable position with arms and legs extended. If there is any pain in your back, place a pillow under your knees. Move your legs so that the distance between your feet is slightly greater than the width of your hips. Move your arms so that your hands are about nine inches from your sides. Please be comfortable.

Let yourself feel the weight of your body. Trust that the earth is there to support you. Trust that the weight of the body will be supported by the earth. Accept the support of the earth.

Listen to the sound of your breath. Listen to the sound of the breath as it enters the body. Be completely absorbed in listening to the sound of the breath. Does the breath have a soft sound, or does the breath have a harsh sound? Tune the sound of your breath as a musician would tune an instrument. Let the sound of your breath be soft and full.

Notice how your breath flows in. Does the breath come in one side of the nose more than the other? Is one nostril more open than the other? Notice if it changes as you continue breathing.

Feel how the breath flows up into the head. What does it sound like?

Mentally trace the path of the breath as it enters the nose and flows up into the head and then down the throat. How does the sound change? Is the throat open and soft? Relax the throat. Let it feel warm and open as the breath flows down the throat and into the chest.

Mentally trace the path of the breath down the chest and into the lungs. What does the breath sound like as it enters the chest? Be soft as you let the chest fill to the brim with breath.

Notice how the breath enters the chest. Do both sides of the chest fill equally? Does one side of the chest expand more than the other side of the chest? Fill both sides of the chest equally and listen to the sound of the breath as it fills the lungs.

Now listen to the sounds of the breath as it leaves the lungs. Keep the chest full as you exhale, and listen to the sound of the exhalation.

Mentally follow the path of the breath out of the chest, the throat, and the nose, and keep listening to the sound of the breath.

Keep breathing consciously and listening to the breath as the mind comes to a restful place.

[Allow two or three minutes of silence for continuation of conscious breathing.]

Notice where the mind has gone. Is it still on the breath, or did it wander off? Where did it go? Bring the mind back by listening to the breath.

Deepen each breath and bring the mind back into your body. Now roll to the right side and let your eyes softly open. When you feel ready, come up to a seated position.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: GUIDED INTERCESSORY PRAYER

I invite you to close your eyes. Breathe in and breathe out, slowly and gently. Bring quiet to your mind—gently bring stillness to your thoughts, to that sometimes racing internal monologue. Prepare yourself to find a stillness—to hear “a still small voice” or “a voice of quiet stillness” within.

While in this quiet place, allow the thought of a person you know very well—someone you know and love—to come into your consciousness. Do not force it. Allow it to come on its own. This person can be living or long gone.

And when someone comes to mind, don't hang on to them. Let the thought of this person quietly flow on, just as you're letting thoughts about other things flow out on the current of your breathing.

Other people may come to mind. Or one may just keep coming back. Either way, do not become attached to any of the thoughts, but notice if there are any which have particular energy.

Eventually the thought of one person should distill out and you'll realize that this is who you want to pray for.

Now ask—God, your higher power, your own inner knowing—what it is you should be praying for. You might “hear” words; you might become aware of a feeling; you might get an idea for something you should do. Whatever it is, notice it, but don't hold on to it too tightly. Keep returning to your quiet breathing.

Pray that prayer. You can say “This is what I wish for you,” “This is what I pray for you,” “This is what I hope for,” or any other words that feel genuine to you. Focus on your intentions and hopes for this person, allowing yourself to feel all the emotions that come with your intentions and hopes.

[Allow two minutes of silence.]

I now invite you to repeat the same process, this time thinking of a person you don't know well.

Allow the thought of a person you don't know very well to come into your consciousness. Do not force it. Allow it to come on its own.

Now ask—God, your higher power, your own inner knowing—what it is you should be praying for. You might “hear” words; you might become aware of a feeling; you might get an idea for something you should do. Whatever it is, notice it, but don't hold on to it too tightly. Keep returning to your quiet breathing.

Pray that prayer. You can say “This is what I wish for you,” “This is what I pray for you,” “This is what I hope for,” or any other words that feel genuine to you. Focus on your intentions and hopes for this person, allowing yourself to feel all the emotions that come with your intentions and hopes.

[Allow two minutes of silence.]

I now invite you to repeat the same process, this time thinking of a person you are in conflict with. This can be someone who is close to you or someone you know only from afar.

Allow the thought of a person you are in conflict with to come into your consciousness. Do not force it. Allow it to come on its own.

Now ask—God, your higher power, your own inner knowing—what it is you should be praying for. You might “hear” words; you might become aware of a feeling; you might get an idea for something you should do. Whatever it is, notice it, but don't hold on to it too tightly. Keep returning to your quiet breathing.

Pray that prayer. You can say “This is what I wish for you,” “This is what I pray for you,” “This is what I hope for,” or any other words that feel genuine to you. Focus on your intentions and hopes for this person, allowing yourself to feel all the emotions that come with your intentions and hopes.

[After two minutes, sound the bell.]

I invite you to slowly open your eyes and return your attention to our group.

FIND OUT MORE

Wikstrom, Erik Walker. [*Simply Pray: A Modern Spiritual Practice to Deepen Your Life*](#). Skinner House Books, 2005.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. [*The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual on Meditation*](#). Beacon Press, 1987.

Easwaran, Eknath. [*Meditation: A Simple 8-Point Program for Translating Spiritual Ideals into Daily Life*](#). Nilgiri Press, 2004.

Hallman, Laurel. *Living by Heart*, a guide to a daily devotional practice of reflection and reading poetry. Video and workbook.

WORKSHOP 3: COMMUNAL WORSHIP PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

The miracles of... church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces or voices or healing power coming suddenly near to us from afar off, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always.

—Willa Cather

In most Unitarian Universalist congregations, the central activity of the week is the Sunday service. It is the time when the greatest number of people are together in one place for one purpose.

Or so it might seem. In truth, if you asked any twenty people in a Unitarian Universalist congregation why they come to Sunday services, you'd probably get twenty answers—or more! Some people are looking for intellectual stimulation, wanting to learn something new or to see things in a new way. Some are there for a feeling of belonging to a community. Some want a liberal religious education for their children, and some seek solace during hard times. Some want encouragement to continue working to bring more justice to the world. Some want to see their friends; some want to hear great music; some want a little quiet in their week; and some aren't sure why they are there.

Not only do Unitarian Universalists have different reasons for worshipping, we have different understandings of what worship is. In 1983, the UUA's Commission on Common Worship wrote:

Worship is a human activity. Though it is often defined as reverence given to a divine being or power, worship need not have supernatural implications. The origin of the word "worship" is in the Old English *weorthscippen*, meaning to ascribe worth to something, to shape things of worth. We worship, then, whenever we ascribe worth to some value, idea, object, person, experience, attitude, or activity—or whenever we give form or shape to that which we have already found to be of worth.

A worship experience can occur at any time: while one is alone or part of a group. Whenever something beautiful is perceived; whenever there is a deep sense of connectedness with other persons, with the natural world, or with the transcendent (however you might define it); whenever one gains insight or a new sense of

wholeness; whenever one perceives an ethical challenge; whenever life is deliberately focused or ordered—in all these situations one can be said to be worshipping.

Some in our movement don't talk about Sunday worship, but instead of weekly "services" or a "Celebration of Life." The latter phrase is intended to bypass the question of what "worship" means while providing a unifying core. You and I may come on any given Sunday for our own personal reasons, but we—the whole community—have gathered in celebration of life.

Whatever we choose to call it, communal worship is, in and of itself, a valuable part of one's spiritual growth. Time spent alone in nature can be transformative; time spent meditating or in prayer is valuable; time spent in service to and with others is important; but none of these can replace the act of coming together in community with others on a regular basis.

The inherent value of gathering with others in communal celebration might be a new idea for some Unitarian Universalists, whose faith tradition has so often touted the importance of the individual. The traditional Unitarian values of freedom, reason, and tolerance, as well as past prophets such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, are often interpreted to esteem the individual more than the community. But Emerson, as well as his reputedly solitary friend Henry David Thoreau, was in constant contact with his own community of learning and spiritual growth.

Being among other people—truly being with them—can be a profound experience. The Trappist monk Thomas Merton described a powerful moment of spiritual insight he experienced while standing on a corner in New York City. With hundreds of people hurrying past him, he suddenly realized that he was connected to each and every one of them—all were members of the same human family, living on the same fragile planet. Communal worship gives us the opportunity for the same realization, week in and week out. We can see that our own personal lives exist within a larger context. This cannot be done in isolation.

In a Unitarian Universalist context, when we come together in communal worship we remind ourselves that our own lives exist in a wider context, and we join with others in a celebration of life—our own lives, the life of our community, the lives of other species on our planet, Life itself. We come together to explore the "Big Questions" we humans have always wrestled with, as well as the particular questions of people alive in the twenty-first century. We come together to celebrate the joys of life and to commemorate life's sorrows—our own

and each other's. We come together to tap into the wisdom of those who have gone before and to leave our own markers for those who come after. This, my friends, is a deeply spiritual practice.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Encourage participants to reflect upon and discuss meaningful experiences of worship
- Explore ways to enhance the experience of communal worship as a spiritual practice

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Name advantages and benefits of practicing spirituality in a community
- Identify attitudes and behaviors that help make worship a spiritual practice

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: The Story "She'd Had Enough"	10
Activity 3: Worship as Spiritual Practice	35
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Experiencing Worship	30
Alternate Activity 2: Discussion with the Minister	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by engaging in communal worship as an intentional spiritual practice. Arrange to experience worship in your congregation or elsewhere—in a place where your spirituality will be nourished. Allow the words, music, arts, and community of a worship service to reach you, ministering to your deepest self in all its joys and sorrows. You may wish to journal about the experience afterwards, describing the ways that worship has nourished your spirituality in this instance and in other instances.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Copies of [Spirit in Practice Series Schedule](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer and digital projector

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- If you have not already created a schedule for your Spirit in Practice Workshop Series, see the preparation for the Welcoming and Entering activity from Workshop 1. Make copies as needed.
- If you have not already created group guidelines, see Workshop 1, Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice. Display the guidelines.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the schedules, sign-up sheet, and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "Here We Have Gathered."
- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Ask the group to turn to "To Worship" by Jacob Trapp, 441 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. You may wish to share with participants that Jacob Trapp was a twentieth-century Unitarian Universalist minister. Invite a participant to light the chalice as the group reads responsively.

After the reading, ask the group to turn to "Here We Have Gathered," 360 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite the group to join in singing. If the group is largely unfamiliar with the song, you may need to teach them the tune.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag

materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY "SHE'D HAD ENOUGH" (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Story 1: [She'd Had Enough](#) (included in this document) (one copy for leader, plus several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "She'd Had Enough" aloud. Provide copies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks. Ask:

- Does this story sound familiar to you?
- What are some of the ways that worship has encouraged your spiritual growth?
- What are some advantages of practicing spirituality with a community?

Conclude by emphasizing the value of communal worship as a spiritual practice. You may wish to draw on the text from this workshop's Introduction to make your points.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the story. You may wish to print out a copy of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 3: WORSHIP AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- (included in this document) Paper for writing or drawing
- Pens or pencils
- Markers, colored pencils, or crayons
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell
- Copies of Handout 1: [Tips for Making Communal Worship a Part of Your Spiritual Regimen](#) (included in this document) (one per person)
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)
- Optional: Clipboards, books, or other hard surfaces (see Preparation)

Preparation for Activity

- Determine whether participants will be able to sit at tables for writing and drawing. If not, provide clipboards, books, or other hard surfaces they can use to support their papers as they write or draw.

Description of Activity

Introduce a time of quiet reflection with these words, written by the UUA's Commission on Common Worship:

Worship is a human activity. Though it is often defined as reverence given to a divine being or power, worship need not have supernatural implications. The origin of the word "worship" is in the Old English *weorthscippen*, meaning to ascribe worth to something, to shape things of worth. We worship, then, whenever we ascribe worth to some value, idea, object, person, experience, attitude, or activity—or whenever we give form or shape to that which we have already found to be of worth.

A worship experience can occur at any time: while one is alone or part of a group. Whenever something beautiful is perceived; whenever there is a deep sense of connectedness with other persons, with the natural world, or with the transcendent (however you might define it);

whenever one gains insight or a new sense of wholeness; whenever one perceives an ethical challenge; whenever life is deliberately focused or ordered—in all these situations one can be said to be worshipping.

Explain that today's workshop focuses on worship done in community and its role in spiritual growth. Invite participants into a time of silent reflection with these or similar words:

In the minutes of silence that follow, I invite you to reflect on a meaningful experience of worship in community. Several experiences might come to mind at first. Choose one and reflect on it. What made it meaningful? How is that meaning related to your spirituality?

Allow two or three minutes for quiet reflection, then ring the bell.

Invite participants to rise in silence and gather materials for reflecting on this experience by writing or drawing.

Allow three to five minutes for writing or drawing, then ring the bell.

Invite participants to find a partner, preferably someone with whom they have not spent time before. Instruct the pairs to take turns sharing about their significant experiences of communal worship. Explain that each person will have three minutes to speak without interruption while the other listens attentively. A bell will ring when it is time to switch speaker and listener. Emphasize that these are moments of precious sharing and confiding, during which we offer one another our mutual trust and regard.

Keep time and ring the bell after three minutes. Ask participants to pause and let there be a moment of silence between them. Then invite them to switch roles. Keep time and ring the bell after another three minutes.

Bring the whole group back together for discussion with these questions:

- Was it easy or hard for you to recall meaningful experiences of communal worship? (To draw out participant responses, ask follow-up questions such as "What was hard about it?")
- What did it feel like to recall these powerful moments?
- How do you think the presence of a community affected your meaningful experience in worship?
- What do you appreciate most about worshipping with a community?
- What can you do to help yourself experience worship more deeply? (Encourage participants to focus on what they themselves can do, rather

than on what the congregation or minister could do to improve worship experiences.)

Distribute Handout 1: Tips for Making Communal Worship a Part of Your Spiritual Regimen. Review the handout if you have time, or encourage participants to read it at home. Conclude by encouraging participants to bring their whole selves to worship, allowing themselves to be fully present to the words, music, arts, and community.

Including All Participants

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the large-group discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their pairs, allow some pairs to leave the room and find a quieter space. If two participants require American Sign Language interpretation and you have only one interpreter, pair up those participants. If more than two participants need ASL interpretation, find a second interpreter to help.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section for this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Offer an opportunity for the group to reflect back over the workshop, seeking what are sometimes called "like and wishes." Ask participants, if they wish, to briefly share something they particularly liked about their experience and one thing they wish for in the future. If the group is small or there is extra time, allow participants to speak freely. If the group is large or time

is tight, limit people's sharing so that all who wish to share will have the opportunity.

Distribute and explain your customized Taking It Home handout. Review the ideas for how to continue exploring the workshop's subject with friends and family.

If you have chosen to encourage journaling throughout the Spirit in Practice workshop series, remind participants to write in their journals. (See Workshop 1, Alternate Activity 2: Introduction to Journaling.)

Make any announcements concerning the next meeting, especially any changes to routine (such as a change in meeting time or place, a guest presenter, etc.).

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone completely around the circle and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended. Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?

- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

Reflect in your journal on the question, "How can (or how does) participation in communal worship enhance my spiritual journey?"

Talk with friends, family, co-workers, or housemates about significant spiritual experiences they have had (or have longed for) in worship. Tell them about your experiences and longings.

Explore the Unitarian Universalist [WorshipWeb](#), finding readings and rituals that are meaningful to you. Use them in your own prayer or meditation, or use them to plan a worship with friends, family, or the congregation.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: EXPERIENCING WORSHIP (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Bell, chime, or gong
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Tray of sand and candles (see Preparation)
- Optional: Additional items for altar or centering table (see Preparation)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Read through the description of the activity. Decide whether to follow the worship plan described there or create your own. You may wish to collaborate with participants to plan the worship.
- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "Gathered Here."
- Set chairs in a circle.

- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.
- Place the altar or centering table within the circle. Set it up with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or lighter. You may add anything else that feels appropriate to you, such as items from nature.
- Prepare a tray of sand with small candles that can stand in the sand. (If your congregation has another way of setting up candles of joy and concern, you can use that method.) Be sure to test the setup before the workshop so you know that the candles can stay standing.

Description of Activity

Tell participants that in this activity, they will experience worship as a group. Dim the lights slightly, if possible, and ask the group to enter into a space of worship.

Ask participants to close their eyes, quiet their breathing, and let go of whatever they don't need for the next twenty minutes—the cares, the concerns, even the joys that might get in the way of their being fully present.

After a few moments, sound the bell, chime, or gong. Invite participants to sing "Gathered Here," 389 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Sing the song at least three times through. (You may wish to sing it as a round.)

Read "We Gather in Reverence," a passage by the Unitarian educator Sophia Lyon Fahs (439 in *Singing the Living Tradition*).

Introduce the next part of worship with these or similar words:

In our religious tradition, our own lives are considered sacred texts in which we find truths as profound and as powerful as in any religion's scriptures. Here, in the "mystery of this hour," we would share with one another. First, we are each invited to take a candle, light it, and speak aloud something in our lives or in the world that fills us with sadness, sorrow, or pain. It may be large or small—all that matters is that it be real. No one will be compelled to speak, but each of us is invited.

After everyone who wishes to has lit a candle, invite participants to join in reading "From the Fragmented World," 440 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Following this reading, invite the group to spend a few moments in silent prayer and meditation.

Invite participants into a second period of sharing with these words:

Now we are each invited to light a candle and speak aloud something in our lives or in the world that gives us real hope. Again, no one is

compelled to share, but each of us is invited to do so.

After the last person who wishes to has lit a candle, ask for another few moments of silence.

Conclude with words such as these:

In that place between joy and sorrow, despair and hope, our lives are lived. May we go forth from this place holding one another's pain, sharing in one another's hope, and knowing that we are not alone.

In the name of all that is holy and in all the holy names: Blessed be. Namaste. Asher. Shalom. Salaam. Amen.

If time permits, invite participants to reflect silently or journal about their experience of this worship.

Including All Participants

Encourage participants to speak loudly and clearly. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them.

If some participants are unable to move to the candles to light them, invite those participants to speak from their seats while you light a candle for them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSSION WITH THE MINISTER (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Invite your congregation's minister to this workshop several weeks in advance. Share the Description of Activity (below) with him/her so that she/he can prepare for the discussion.

Description of Activity

Ask the minister to share his/her understanding of the purpose and structure of worship at your congregation. Questions that can guide the discussion include:

- What is the intent of weekly worship?
- Why do we do the things we do?
- As a minister, what do you particularly like about worship?
- What might you wish for in worship?

Invite questions from participants. Conclude by thanking the minister for his/her participation.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the minister.

STORY: SHE'D HAD ENOUGH

After many years in a congregation, she'd had enough. Knowing the people as well as she did, she knew that what they said on Sunday and what they did on Monday did not always equate. More often than not, Sunday was the one day of the week on which you could tell that people believed what they said they did. The rest of the week, she could see little difference between the other members of the congregation and the hypocrites they denounced.

And the words of the hymns no longer spoke to her—they talked of things she had long ago given up believing, or were words that had no real meaning in her life. And the sermons weren't much better—entertaining perhaps, sometimes giving her something to think about, but a good book or independent film could do the same. And besides, she'd had to go when she was a kid and when her kids were young, but now?

No, she'd had enough. And so she began walking in the woods on Sunday mornings. Alone with her thoughts and the rustling leaves, she felt a freedom she had not known in a long time. She got more from the sunshine than from a year of sermons, and the birds surpassed any anthem she'd heard. This was good. This was right. The woods were her sanctuary. The wind was all the preaching she needed.

This continued for some time, until one day she realized that the birds sang together, and the trees swayed as one, but she was by herself. No squirrel cared that she had a new grandchild; no rhododendron could help her wrestle with her mother's Alzheimer's. The flora and fauna did not face what she faced as a human, and so could not offer their understanding. Nor could she really offer herself to any of them.

So she returned to her congregation. And she saw herself in the people who were trying to live what they believed. And she heard her life in the hymns and the readings and the sermons. (Or, at least, some of the time.) And she never gave up her walks in the woods, but she realized she needed both.

HANDOUT 1: TIPS FOR MAKING COMMUNAL WORSHIP A PART OF YOUR SPIRITUAL REGIMEN

Try to get to worship services with the least amount of stress possible. If you're always rushing out the door, fighting with family members and cursing the traffic as you try to get there "on time," you might arrive in time, but it's unlikely that you'll be truly present.

Use the prelude. Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote in his journal, "I prefer the silence before the service begins to any preaching." It's nice to catch up with friends, but that can be done outside the sanctuary or, better still, during coffee hour. Use the time in the sanctuary before the first words are spoken to center yourself, to let go of whatever you don't need for the next hour, and to prepare yourself to truly participate in a celebration of life.

Don't overanalyze. This can be hard for us Unitarian Universalists. Have you heard the joke that we're such poor hymn singers because we're always reading ahead to see if we agree with the words? Instead of analyzing and critiquing, open yourself up to simply *experiencing* the service.

Appreciate your fellow congregants. Take at least one moment each week to look around and remember that you're all in this together. Each and every person in that sanctuary with you has his/her own joys and sorrows, celebrations and concerns, and is as wounded—and as wonderful—as you are. As Francis David said, "We need not think alike to love alike."

Make an offering. The traditional language talks about the collection of "tithes *and* offerings," which suggests that the collection plate is for more than your pledge envelope. Experiment with being even more generous, if you can afford to. Put in a dollar or two (or five!) not because you have to—because you've pledged—but simply because you want to, out of the largeness of your heart.

When something turns you off, say a silent "thank you." Wouldn't it be boring to simply hear your own views and see your own preferences week after week? It's often in our encounters with the unexpected that the "magic" really happens. Ask yourself, "What can I learn from this? How can this help me to expand?" Then really listen for answers.

Use the "coffee hour"—and not just for congregational business. We have the telephone, the Internet, and committee meetings for conducting business. Coffee

hour is for engaging with other people. If the worship service included a sharing of joys and sorrows, at coffee hour talk with someone whose sharing touched you. Seek out someone you haven't seen in a while or haven't yet met. Talk about the service with people—ask them what they think and how it affected them.

Come back to the service between services. If you journal, make a practice of reflecting back on the service midweek. If you don't journal, set aside some time to think about what you heard—and what you felt—and whether it's had any impact on you in the days since.

Attend services as regularly as your circumstances allow. In Unitarian Universalism there is no threat of hell for people who miss worship, but there is the very real danger of disconnection. Regular weekly attendance at religious services has been shown to lower blood pressure, among a number of other health benefits. Perhaps more important, it has been shown to increase a person's sense of connection to other individuals and to the congregation as a whole. And for any spiritual practice to provide the most benefit, it must be frequent, regular, and disciplined.

FIND OUT MORE

[WorshipWeb](#)—an online resource for Unitarian Universalists.

The Congregation of Abraxas [Worship Reader](#)—includes several writings by Unitarian Universalist ministers.

Arnason, Wayne, and Rolenz, Kathleen. [Worship That Works](#). Skinner House Books, 2007. A guidebook for revitalizing our worship life, *Worship that Works* provides practical, specific advice to improve the key elements of the service and increase the spiritual resonance of worship through symbols, music, cultural sensitivity, inclusion, and more.

Driver, Tom F. [The Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites That Transform Our Lives and Our Communities](#). HarperSanFrancisco, 1991. This book is not so much a "how to" as it is an exploration of "why"—why worship can be, and should be, so much more than a concert and a lecture.

Neufer Emswiler, Thomas and Sharon. *Wholeness in Worship: Creative Models for Sunday, Family, and Special Services*. Harper & Row, 1980. While definitely Christian in orientation—the authors are United Methodist ministers—this book can show Unitarian Universalists a thing or two about creativity.

Proctor-Smith, Marjorie. *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition*. Abigndon Press, 1990. When this was published, it was considered a landmark in the study of worship from and within a feminist perspective. While Unitarian Universalists have done much in this regard, there is always more to learn.

WORKSHOP 4: SPIRITUAL PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

Listening is a creative force. Something quite wonderful occurs when we are listened to fully. We expand, ideas come to life and grow, we remember who we are. Some speak of this force as a creative fountain within us that springs forth; others call it the inner spirit, intelligence, true self. Whatever this force is called, it shrivels up when we are not listened to and it thrives when we are.

—Kay Lindahl

In the majority of the world's religious traditions, spiritual aspirants seek out a teacher, a guru, a master, a guide—someone who has already traversed the spiritual terrain and who can, because of his/her own experiences, help another make the journey. In the West, the most common term for such a person is "spiritual director."

Unitarian Universalists who are not familiar with the rich history of spiritual guides or directors, or who have negative associations with the term, may not be immediately drawn to the concept.

Yet a number of Unitarian Universalists are seeking spiritual directors, and a Unitarian Universalist Spiritual Directors' Network has come into being. This workshop helps dispel common misconceptions about spiritual direction and introduces participants to the role it can play in Unitarian Universalist spiritual growth.

As practiced today, spiritual direction helps people listen to the inner voice, the inner wisdom, the "inner director" that we all have within us. Directors, then, are not spiritual geniuses who lead the unenlightened, but sensitive companions who know something of the journey and can helpfully guide others by pointing out some of the signs and markers, the flora and the fauna, that might otherwise go unseen or unexamined. The term "spiritual director" may then be misleading, because you direct yourself more than your spiritual director directs you. Other terms to describe this relationship include "spiritual companion" and "soul friend." These terms might be more useful in the context of this workshop, because the goal is to explore an emerging model of spiritual friendship, one that draws on the example of the peer counseling movement.

Peer counseling, which has been around since at least the mid-1960s, is most commonly found in high schools and colleges. Students trained primarily in listening skills offer counseling to their peers. Boundaries are clearly

established, and giving advice is discouraged. Yet simply being deeply listened to by someone who knows what it's like to be at your stage of life can be extremely powerful. Decades of experience have proven one of the foundational premises of the peer counseling movement: a great many people have a great many problems that do not require the advanced training and expertise of mental health professionals.

There can be therapeutic benefits in nonprofessional relationships that are built with something approximating professional boundaries. The relationship is clearly defined, each person can have clear expectations of the other, and the relationship as a whole has a focus and an intent.

This workshop does not train participants to be spiritual friends. It does open participants to the possibility of finding a spiritual partnership to deepen their spiritual journeys, and provides an experience of spiritual reflection, sharing, and listening that approximates the kind of discussions they might have with spiritual friends.

An alternate activity in the workshop discusses what a spiritual peer program might look like in your congregation. It could be as simple and informal as one parishioner getting together with another on a regular basis to discuss the demands and discoveries of their spiritual lives. This could be an open, mutual conversation, or each person could take turns listening and talking.

If a more formal network were to be created, once or twice a year the congregation could offer a workshop/training on both the intent of spiritual friendship and the necessary skills of active listening, boundary setting, focusing questions, and the like. People interested in the program could sign up and either pair themselves with someone else or be paired by the minister or lay leader who oversees the program. Each pair would establish their own expectations of when to meet, for how long, and how often, and whether their relationship will be for a set period of time or open ended. Then, periodically throughout the year, the person who is overseeing the program would check in with each pair of friends to see how the program is going.

This is new territory, but very exciting and in keeping with our Unitarian Universalist emphasis on shared ministry. A midway point between personal spiritual practices and communal worship experiences, spiritual friendship can be a powerful way to help keep a person "on track" with his/her journey.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present participants with the idea of deepening their spiritual practice by working with a "spiritual friend"
- Engage participants in reflecting on their own experiences of the sacred and their current spiritual needs
- Build community among participants with meaningful sharing and listening experiences

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Write and speak about their experiences of the sacred
- Articulate some of their current spiritual needs
- Actively listen to other participants, offering reflections and insight in response

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: The Story of the Shape of the Spirit	10
Activity 3: Reflecting with a Partner	35
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Considering a Spiritual Peer Program	30
Alternate Activity 2: Deeper Sharing and Reflection	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by completing the reflection and sharing from Activity 3, and possibly also from Alternate Activity 2, with one another or with a friend or colleague. You may wish to journal about the experience afterwards.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Copies of Spirit in Practice Series Schedule (see Preparation)
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer and digital projector

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- If you have not already created a schedule for your Spirit in Practice workshop series, see the preparation for the Welcoming and Entering activity from Workshop 1. Make copies as needed.
- If you have not already created group guidelines, see Workshop 1, Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice. Display the guidelines.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the schedules, sign-up sheet, and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "Come Sing a Song with Me."
- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Ask the group to turn to "The Larger Circle" by Wendell Berry, 646 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite a participant to light the chalice as the group reads responsively.

After the reading, ask the group to turn to "Come, Sing a Song with Me," 346 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite the group to join in singing. If the group is largely unfamiliar with the song, you may need to teach them the tune.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY OF THE SHAPE OF THE SPIRIT (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Story 1: [The Shape of the Spirit](#) (included in this document) (one copy for leader, plus several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "The Shape of the Spirit" aloud. Provide copies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks.

Ask:

- Does this story sound familiar to you? Why or why not?
- Is spiritual partnership something you see many examples of?
- How do you think society would be different if people paid as much attention to being spiritually healthy as they do to being physically healthy?
- How do you think having a "spiritual buddy" or spiritual friend would affect your own spiritual practices?

Conclude by emphasizing the value of spiritual friends. You may wish to draw on the text from this workshop's Introduction to make your points.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the story. You may wish to print out a copy of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 3: REFLECTING WITH A PARTNER (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Questions listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Writing paper (at least one sheet per participant)
- Pens or pencils (at least one per participant)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell
- Optional: Computer and digital projector
- Optional: Participants' journals
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- List the following questions on newsprint or a digital slide: How and when do I experience the sacred? What mindsets and practices help me experience the sacred? What else would help me at this point in my spiritual development?
- If you have more than one hour to present this workshop, review Alternate Activity 2 for ideas on how to expand this sharing experience to one hour in length.

Description of Activity

Explain that most of this workshop will be spent working with one another as "spiritual friends," peers who can help each other along the way.

Display the newsprint or digital slide with the three questions for reflection:

- How and when do I experience the sacred?
- What mindsets and practices help me experience the sacred?
- What else would help me at this point in my spiritual development?

Invite participants to take five minutes to reflect on and write their responses to these questions. They can write in their journals or on paper you have provided. Explain

that they will have the opportunity to share their responses with a partner later on in the activity.

After five minutes, ring the bell to draw participants' attention back to the leaders. Divide the group into pairs. (You can have participants form their own pairs, but using a random method to assign the pairings can yield some surprising synchronicities.) If you have an odd number of participants, then one of the leaders can partner with a participant.

Explain that each partner will get to be a "spiritual friend" to the other. Emphasize that the "friend" is primarily there to listen deeply to the other person and to respond as a helpful peer. Giving advice and deep analysis are not the goal. Rather, this activity is about "listening someone into their truth." This doesn't mean that the friend can't make any comments at all, but she/he should focus his/her energy on listening and should speak only those things which must be said.

Each person will have up to five minutes to share his/her responses to the three questions while the spiritual partner listens. The spiritual partner will then have up to three minutes to ask clarifying questions, share helpful ideas, and discuss the sharer's experiences further.

Remind the group of the workshop's ground rules, emphasizing respect and that the goal of this sharing is conversation, not conversion.

Ring the bell at five and eight minutes to signify when it is time for partners to move to the next phase of the exercise.

Invite partners to trade roles and repeat the exercise.

When the sharing has concluded, ring the bell and bring the group back together to discuss the experience. Affirm that this activity might have felt more or less comfortable to various participants, as some of us are introverts, some are extraverts, some have had conversations like this before, and some are just learning how to talk about their spiritual lives. Ask:

- Have any of you ever done something like this before? In what context? Would you recommend that context to others for their spiritual growth?
- What are some of the benefits of having regular check-ins with peers about our spiritual growth?
- Could you see yourself engaging in this kind of dialogue with someone regularly?
- What would hinder you in having this kind of dialogue? What would help you?

Conclude by sharing your perspectives on the value of spiritual friends. Thank participants for their reflections and sharing, especially those who ventured outside of their comfort zones to complete the exercise.

Including All Participants

If some pairs are having difficulty hearing one another, make another space available where they can talk. If two participants require American Sign Language interpretation and you have only one interpreter, pair up those participants. If you have more than two participants needing ASL interpretation, find a second interpreter to help. You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the whole-group discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section for this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Offer an opportunity for the group to reflect back over the workshop, seeking what are sometimes called "like and wishes." Ask participants, if they wish, to briefly share something they particularly liked about their experience and one thing they wish for in the future. If the group is small or there is extra time, allow participants to speak freely. If the group is large or time is tight, limit people's sharing so that all who wish to share will have the opportunity.

Distribute your customized Taking It Home handout. Review the ideas for how to continue exploring the workshop's subject with friends and family.

Make any announcements concerning the next meeting, especially any changes to routine (such as a change in meeting time or place, a guest presenter, etc.).

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we

cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone completely around the circle and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended. Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

Continue to explore some of the questions brought up by the workshop, either on your own or with a friend. These questions include:

- How and when do I experience the sacred?
- What mindsets and practices help me experience the sacred?
- What else would help me at this point in my spiritual development?

- What has been my greatest challenge on my spiritual journey?
- What am I wrestling with right now in my spiritual life?

If you are interested in having a "spiritual friend," think about what qualities you might want in that person. For example, you probably want the person to be a good listener and an ethical person. You might want someone who is a peer—perhaps someone who's already a friend, or someone in your congregation whom you're just getting to know. Or you might want someone with special training who could be a mentor and guide, such as a minister, therapist, spiritual director, or meditation teacher. (Note that most ministers serving Unitarian Universalist congregations won't have time in their schedules to meet with an individual member more than a few times about the same issue; therefore, someone other than your congregation's minister is more likely to be available for spiritual guidance on an ongoing basis.) If you approach someone about being a spiritual friend to you, make sure that the relationship is clearly defined, with each party having precise expectations of the other, and that the relationship as a whole has a specific intent.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CONSIDERING A SPIRITUAL PEER PROGRAM (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Easel
- Markers
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- If you are not on the staff of your congregation, consult with your minister and religious educator before deciding whether to conduct this activity. Learn whether a spiritual friend program is feasible in your congregation this year, and learn about what steps it would take to gain approval and launch such a program.

Description of Activity

If the group got excited about the idea of spiritual friendships, you could spend time talking about how an intentional program could be developed in your congregation. Use these questions to focus discussion:

- How would a spiritual friendship program serve the mission or vision of the congregation?
- What needs could it help meet?
- How might it be structured?

- Would "friends" self-select or be assigned?
- What guidelines or training would help you feel confident and safe as a spiritual friend?
- What steps would need to be taken to launch such a program?

Record participants' ideas and comments on newsprint.

Including All Participants

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: DEEPER SHARING AND REFLECTION (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Questions listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Writing paper (at least one sheet per participant)
- Pens or pencils (at least one per participant)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell
- Optional: Computer and digital projector
- Optional: Participants' journals
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether your group is sufficiently well bonded for most participants to feel comfortable responding to these questions in pairs. If they are not, you could turn this into a journaling exercise.
- Add these two questions to the newsprint or slide for Activity 3: What has been my greatest challenge on my spiritual journey? What am I wrestling with right now in my spiritual life?

Description of Activity

If you have a well-bonded group that respects confidentiality, you may wish to take Activity 3: Reflecting with a Partner deeper by expanding it for an additional half hour.

Display the newsprint or slide with the questions from Activity 3 plus these additional questions:

- What has been my greatest challenge on my spiritual journey?
- What am I wrestling with right now in my spiritual life?

Allow an additional ten minutes for individual writing and reflection.

Allow additional time for sharing in pairs, for a total of eight minutes per partner for sharing and five minutes per partner for responding.

Allow an additional ten minutes for whole-group discussion at the end.

Including All Participants

The questions in this exercise are deeper questions that may tap into unresolved pain and grief in some participants. Some partners will be able to handle this; others might not. Be alert to any pairs in which one partner seems to be "dumping" on the other or a partner doesn't seem to be acting as a good listener. Check in with those partners afterward. You may wish to refer any participants with unresolved issues to the congregation's minister(s) or pastoral care team.

STORY: THE SHAPE OF THE SPIRIT

After many years of being out of shape, he decided it was time to do something about the state of his body. With great excitement and enthusiasm, he went to the local gym, got a membership, and began a circuit-training routine. He felt good. And he kept at it, going to the gym several times a week.

For the first couple of months. And then a business trip intervened. And then he had to work late. And then it was one of his kids' birthday. And soon he was hardly going at all. Then he could barely remember the last time he'd gone.

So he went back to the gym and asked the trainer for a suggestion. "Have you tried finding a workout buddy?" she asked. He hadn't. But the idea made sense, so he talked to a couple of his friends who went to the same gym and found one who agreed to "buddy up."

The two went to the gym together sometimes, but often they continued working out alone. But they checked in with each other. They talked about the difficulties they were having staying motivated; they celebrated each others' achievements. They gave each other ideas to "spice things up." They commiserated over aches and pains. And soon he could hardly imagine *not* working out. His "buddy" helped keep him moving.

After a few years of being back in shape, he decided it was time to do something about the state of his spirit. With great excitement and enthusiasm, he went to his local Unitarian Universalist congregation, became a member, and began taking part in small group ministries and adult education opportunities. And he felt good.

For the first couple of years. But then the freedom and diversity of the congregation weren't new to him anymore, and the Principles and Sources that had once excited him were now taken for granted. He felt he'd reached a bit of a plateau on his spiritual path and that he needed some new energy and direction. So he went to the minister and presented his dilemma to her. In the conversation, he happened to mention that he worked out regularly and had a workout buddy.

"Workout buddy," the minister said. "What a nice idea. Have you ever thought of finding a 'spiritual buddy'—one who can be a companion and support to you in your spiritual practices? Someone who can challenge you, support you, and help you stay focused like your workout buddy does?"

"A spiritual buddy!" he said. "Just what I need!" That night he called up his friend, the fellow who had introduced him to Unitarian Universalism. And they

became spiritual buddies. They met for coffee a couple times per month to discuss their spiritual practices and their theological ideas. Sometimes they meditated together. Once, on the solstice, they hiked up a hill to see the sun rise. Another time they both read the same book about evolution and spirituality. Their friendship grew deeper, and their spiritual lives flourished. He participated in his Unitarian Universalist congregation with renewed excitement, knowing he was on a rich spiritual path and delighting in the company of fellow travelers.

FIND OUT MORE

[Unitarian Universalist Spiritual Directors' Network](#) —A loose association of Unitarian Universalist clergy and laity who provide spiritual direction to others.

[Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation](#) —One of the leading trainers of ecumenical spiritual directors, the Shalem Institute maintains a geographical list of directors to aid the search for one.

Addison, Howard. *Show Me Your Way: The Complete Guide to Exploring Interfaith Spiritual Direction*. Skylight Paths Publishing, 2000. Rabbi Addison, who received spiritual direction from Catholic sisters and who studied with the ecumenical Shalem Institute, provides one of the few books on spiritual direction that truly comes from an interfaith perspective.

Lindahl, Kay. *The Sacred Art of Listening: Forty Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice*. Skylight Paths Publishing, 2002. Emphasizes the "three essential qualities of deep listening": silence, reflection, and presence. Also offers instruction in sharing heartfelt emotions with clarity and compassion.

Wheatley, Margaret J. *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002. This wonderful book explores the power of simple conversation. The first half reminds us why this is so important; the second offers ten "conversation starters."

WORKSHOP 5: MIND PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

I call that mind free, which escapes the bondage of matter, which, instead of stopping at the material universe and making it a prison wall, passes beyond it to its Author, and finds in the radiant signatures which everywhere bears of the Infinite Spirit, helps to its own spiritual enlightenment....

I call that mind free, which is not passively framed by outward circumstance, which is not swept away by the torrent of events, which is not the creature of accidental impulse, but which bends events to its own improvement, and acts from an inward spring, from immutable principles which it has deliberately espoused.

—William Ellery Channing, "Spiritual Freedom" (1830)

We can sometimes get the impression that "spiritual" and "intellectual" are mutually exclusive characteristics, or that we need to "get out of our heads" to experience spiritual growth. This perception may come, in part, because the modern emphasis on spirituality often calls for types of experience other than the purely intellectual. It may stem, also, from expressions like this one, from Taoism's *Tao Te Ching* (chapter 48)—"In pursuit of knowledge, every day something is added. In the practice of the Tao, every day something is dropped"—or Zen patriarch Bodhidharma's famous dictum, "no reliance on words or letters." Christian monks such as St. Francis of Assisi again and again emphasized their own simple nature as opposed to the learned people with whom they were often in conflict. And so, in the popular imagination, people often equate "spirituality" with contemplative practices such as silent meditation rather than, say, reading a good book on astrophysics or engaging in a lively debate on the psychology of politics.

Yet throughout time and across cultures, it has long been recognized that reason and rationality are among many paths to the discovery of deep truth. In Hinduism there are said to be five primary paths, or *margas*, leading to the same goal: realization. These are *Hatha Yoga* (body), *Karma Yoga* (willing), *Bhakti Yoga* (feeling), *Raja Yoga* (mind), and *Jnana Yoga* (knowing). According to Rabbi Rifat Sonsino, Judaism embraces six different spiritual paths: transcendence, study, prayer, meditation, ritual, and good deeds. The Zen Mountain Monastery in upstate New York has a schema with eight "gates," among which is the discipline of academic study of scripture. (These eight gates provide

the framework for the Eight Spheres of Spiritual Growth that undergird this program.) Evelyn Underhill, a well-known British expert in mysticism, said in her book *The Essentials of Mysticism* that "reason has a well-marked and necessary place in the soul's approach to God."

While it may indeed be true that many people can get "stuck in their heads" and miss out on what Margot Adler calls "the juice and the mystery," it is by no means a direct correlation that the use of the intellect requires one to be blinded to the miraculous. Consider Albert Einstein, who said that he knew his special theory of relativity was correct not because all of the equations added up but because it was so "beautiful," and who opined that "the most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious." Many of the world's most rational thinkers find that the more they learn, the more their appreciation for the majesty and magnificent mystery of life grows as well. And isn't this at least a workable definition of "spirituality"—that which deepens your appreciation of the magnitude of life?

So along with personal spiritual practices, communal worship, spiritual partnerships, body practices, soul practices, life practices, and justice practices, the schema that informs these workshops—the Eight Spheres of Spiritual Growth—includes also the importance of actively involving our minds. This, too, is essential if we are to have a whole and well-rounded spiritual life.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Encourage participants to see their intellectual explorations as part of a fully rounded spirituality
- Familiarize participants with a model of six stages of spiritual growth
- Help participants discover their own understanding of their stage of spiritual growth

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify one or more topics of interest to explore as part of a spiritual practice of the mind
- Engage in a discussion of the value and limitations of one model of spiritual growth stages

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5

Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: The Story of the Mystic and the Scientist	10
Activity 3: What Fascinates You?	20
Activity 4: The Mind and the Religious Journey	15
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Where Are We Now?	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by completing the reflection and sharing from Activity 3, and possibly also from Activity 4, with one another or with a friend or colleague. You may wish to journal about the experience afterwards.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Copies of [Spirit in Practice Series Schedule](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- If you have not already created a schedule for your Spirit in Practice workshop series, see the preparation for the Welcoming and Entering activity from Workshop 1. Make copies as needed.
- If you have not already created group guidelines, see Workshop 1, Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice. Display the guidelines.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the schedules, sign-up sheet, and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "With Heart and Mind."
- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Ask the group to turn to "The Free Mind" by William Ellery Channing, 592 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite a participant to light the chalice as the group reads responsively.

After the reading, ask the group to turn to "With Heart and Mind," 300 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite the group to join in singing. If the group is largely unfamiliar with the song, you may need to teach them the tune.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY OF THE MYSTIC AND THE SCIENTIST (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Story 1: [The Mystic and the Scientist](#) (included in this document) (one copy for leader, plus several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "The Mystic and the Scientist" aloud. Provide copies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks. Ask:

- Did this story sound familiar? If so, how?
- What resonated for you?
- What roles have knowledge and critical thought played in your own spiritual development?

Conclude by emphasizing that the path of the mind is deeply connected with the paths of the heart and the spirit. Sometimes spirituality is associated with purely emotional, non-rational ways of being; however, rational thought has an important role in spiritual practice, especially in Unitarian Universalism.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the story. You may wish to print out a copy of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 3: WHAT FASCINATES YOU? (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: [Identifying a Mind Practice](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)
- Pens or pencils (one per participant)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Review the handout in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Share these or similar words to introduce the activity:

Many of the world's most rational thinkers find that the more they learn, the more their appreciation for the majesty and magnificent mystery of life grows as well. And isn't this at least a workable definition of "spirituality"—that which deepens your appreciation of the magnitude of life?

Point out that the mind can play a large role in our understanding of our own spirituality and our practices. Share this quote by Albert Einstein, modified for gender inclusiveness:

One cannot help but be in awe when [one] contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.

Invite participants to explore their own "holy curiosities" with a worksheet that will help them identify what fascinates them. Distribute Handout 1: Identifying a Mind Practice. Explain that participants will have five minutes to fill out the worksheet on their own, followed by discussion. If participants need some prompting to complete the worksheet, explain that they can write about anything that fascinates them: machines, the Milky Way, birds, bread dough, electromagnetic radiation—anything!

Allow participants to write for five minutes. Then invite volunteers to share one thing they are fascinated by that they will explore as part of a spiritual practice.

Including All Participants

Due to learning differences or personal preference, some participants may not enjoy writing. You can encourage these participants to draw pictures representing things that fascinate them or to silently reflect on what fascinates them.

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the sharing time so that participants can hear one another better.

ACTIVITY 4: THE MIND AND THE RELIGIOUS JOURNEY (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 2: [Stages of Spiritual Growth](#) (included in this document) (one per participant)
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Read Handout 2: Stages of Spiritual Growth. Familiarize yourself with the six stages of spiritual growth so that you will be comfortable presenting them. For more information, explore Unitarian Universalist minister Scotty McLennan's book *Finding Your Religion: When the Faith You Grew Up with Has Lost Its Meaning* (Harper San Francisco, 1999).
- Remember that you are not expected to be an expert in this field (unless you actually are!). Your primary role is to facilitate the conversation, not to have the answer to every question.
- If you have more than one hour to present this workshop, review Alternate Activity 1 for ideas on how to expand this activity to 45 minutes in length.

Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:
In this activity we'll be using our minds to explore together, and the focus of our exploration will be the idea that the spiritual journey has something of a predictable course. We'll look at a road map, a model that describes the spiritual evolution of a person.

Distribute Handout 2: [Stages of Spiritual Growth](#) (included in this document). Ask participants to consider the stages described in Handout 2 and think about which of those stages they may have experienced. They can also consider the role that their minds played in moving from stage to stage. For example, perhaps

learning the truth about Santa Claus helped move some participants from the Magic stage to the Reality stage, or learning about world religions moved them from Dependence to Independence. Allow a few minutes for reflection on the handout.

Facilitate discussion with the whole group, considering these questions:

- Did you see yourself in this model? If so, how?
- How do you react to this and other models of human development?
- In what ways can a model like this be helpful?
- In what ways can a model like this be misleading?
- Can you imagine any other model of spiritual growth stages that would make more sense to you? What is it, and why?

Including All Participants

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section for this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Offer an opportunity for the group to reflect back over the workshop, seeking what are sometimes called "like and wishes." Ask participants, if they wish, to briefly share something they particularly liked about their experience and one thing they wish for in the future. If

the group is small or there is extra time, allow participants to speak freely. If the group is large or time is tight, limit people's sharing so that all who wish to share will have the opportunity.

Distribute your customized Taking It Home handout. Review the ideas for how to continue exploring the workshop's subject with friends and family.

If you have chosen to encourage journaling throughout the Spirit in Practice workshop series, remind participants to write in their journals. (See Workshop 1, Alternate Activity 2: Introduction to Journaling.)

Make any announcements concerning the next meeting, especially any changes to routine (such as a change in meeting time or place, a guest presenter, etc.).

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone completely around the circle and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended. Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?

- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

Use your responses on Handout 1: Identifying a Mind Practice to engage with something that fascinates you. If you journal, take some time afterward to write about the experience and its relationship to your spirituality.

Talk with friends, family, housemates, and co-workers about the roles of reason and intellect in their spirituality. Do they use their reason regularly? Do they come from religious traditions that encourage reasoning and rationality? What you find might surprise you!

Read a good book on Unitarian Universalist theology to consider the ways in which intellect and reason inform our religious tradition. Such books include—but are certainly not limited to—[Reason and Reverence](#) by William R. Murry, [Faith Without Certainty](#) by Paul Rasor, [Proverbs of Ashes](#) by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, [Blessing the World: What Can Save Us Now](#) by Rebecca Ann Parker, and [A Chosen Faith](#) by Forrest Church and John A. Buehrens.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WHERE ARE WE NOW? (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Questions listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- List the following questions on newsprint or a digital slide: In what way(s) have you experienced any of these stages in your own life? Where do you see yourself now? How has education, thought, or fascination helped you move between stages?

Description of Activity

This activity extends the discussion begun in Activity 4: The Mind and the Religious Journey.

Display the newsprint or digital slide with the questions for reflection:

- In what way(s) have you experienced any of these stages in your own life?
- Where do you see yourself now?
- How has education, thought, or fascination helped you move between stages?

Invite participants to spend ten minutes reflecting individually on these questions.

After ten minutes, ring the bell. Invite the group to form pairs. Explain that each person will have up to five minutes to share his/her responses to the three questions while the other partner listens.

After five minutes, ring the bell to invite the pairs to switch speakers.

After an additional five minutes, ring the bell to conclude the pairs' discussions.

Invite the group back together for full-group discussion.

Ask:

- What was it like to reflect on and discuss your spiritual development in this way?
- What has the role of education and thought been in your spiritual development?
- What has the role of fascination been? What things fascinated you at earlier ages that fascinate you less now, and vice versa?
- Do you think our congregation could be described as operating from one of these stages of faith? If so, which one?

Including All Participants

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their pairs, allow some pairs to leave the room and find a quieter space. If two participants require American Sign Language interpretation and you have only one interpreter, pair up those participants. If you have more than two participants needing ASL interpretation, find a second interpreter to help.

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the full-group discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

STORY: THE MYSTIC AND THE SCIENTIST

One day a Religious Man approached a Mystic and asked, “Does God exist?” “Allow me to go within for an answer,” the Mystic replied.

After meditating for quite some time, expanding her heart-consciousness to embrace the totality of existence, she answered, “I do not know what you mean by the word ‘God,’ but I do know that this world is more mysterious and more wonderful than I could ever imagine. I know that you and I are part of something so much larger than our own lives. Perhaps this ‘something larger’ is what you seek.”

Then the Religious Man approached a Scientist. “Does God exist?” he asked. “Let me think,” the Scientist replied.

And so she thought. She thought about the vastness of the universe—156 billion light-years, or something like 936 billion trillion miles, in diameter—and the almost immeasurable smallness of a quark. She thought of how

the energy of the Big Bang fuels the beating of her own heart. And then she answered, “I do not know what you mean by the word ‘God,’” but I do know that this world is more mysterious and more wonderful than I could ever imagine. I know that you and I are part of something so much larger than our own lives. Perhaps this ‘something larger’ is what you seek.”

The Religious Man then thought to himself. He thought of what he knows and what he does not know. He thought about how he knows what he knows, and how he knows he doesn’t know what he doesn’t know. He thought about his experience of the world and how it is but one tiny, infinitesimal fraction of all experience. He thought about his dependence on forces larger than himself, and he thought about the interdependence of all existence. He experienced wonder and pondered mystery. And then he knew—he knew in his soul the truth of what the Mystic and the Scientist said—that he is part of something so much larger than his own life.

And then, only then, did he think about what he’d call it.

HANDOUT 1: IDENTIFYING A MIND PRACTICE

This exercise is designed to help you develop and nurture spiritual practices of the mind. Respond to the following questions:

1. What fascinates me?
2. What is it about those things I named that fascinates me?
3. What else do I think might fascinate me if I heard more about it?
4. Which of these fascinating things would I like to explore as part of a spiritual practice? (List up to three.)
5. How will I explore them? Who and what can help me along the way?

HANDOUT 2: STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

WHAT STAGE ARE YOU IN?

A Faith Stage Checklist

from *Finding Your Religion* by Scotty McLennan (HarperSanFrancisco, 1999)

Reprinted with permission.

Stage One (Magic)

Is your world full of spirits and demons?

Are fairy tales your favorite kind of literature?

Do you think God makes everything happen, for good and bad?

Stage Two (Reality)

Do you spend a lot of time trying to determine what's real and what's not?

Are scriptures true in a concrete and literal sense, rather than being stories and maxims that may or may not be real?

Do you feel that you can influence God's actions by being good?

Stage Three (Dependence)

Do you have a very important peer group or leader who is primarily responsible for shaping your faith?

Is it important to you to understand and follow religious doctrine and moral rules?

Is your main image of God that of a perfect parent?

Stage Four (Independence)

Is your spiritual life unique and personal?

Do you often find yourself wanting to demystify scripture?

Do you think of God or Ultimate Reality primarily as an impersonal force or spirit (or as nonexistent)?

Stage Five (Interdependence)

Do you find a spiritual community important to you at the same time that you maintain your own distinctive faith?

Do you experience spiritual power in religious symbols and myths that you can also analyze objectively?

Do you conceive of God or Ultimate Reality both as a person and as an impersonal force?

Stage Six (Unity)

Do you sense yourself in community with religiously committed people of any and all traditions?

Is your consciousness ego-free and beyond paradox and ambiguity?

Do you often feel that God or divine spirit is in everything and that everything exists in God or divine spirit?

FIND OUT MORE

McLennan, Scotty. *Finding Your Religion: When the Faith You Grew Up With Has Lost Its Meaning*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1999.

Murry, William. [*Reason and Reverence: Religious Humanism for the 21st Century*](#). Skinner House Books, 2006.

Rasor, Paul. [*Faith Without Certainty: Liberal Theology in the 21st Century*](#). Skinner House Books, 2005.

WORKSHOP 6: BODY PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

Embodied spirituality views all human dimensions—body, vital, heart, mind, and consciousness—as equal partners in bringing self, community, and world into a fuller alignment with the Mystery out of which everything arises. Far from being an obstacle, this approach sees the engagement of the body and its vital/primary energies as crucial for not only a thorough spiritual transformation, but also the creative exploration of expanded forms of spiritual freedom.
—Jorge N. Ferrer

What would a truly "embodied" spirituality look like in the twenty-first century? Unitarian Universalists have much awareness of modern—and ancient—assertions that our minds and bodies are one. We understand that the two cannot be separated and that, in fact, any attempt to do so would almost certainly lead to a corruption of both.

However, the style of worship bequeathed to us from our Unitarian and Universalist forebears is generally sedentary: at our Sunday services we tend to sit in one place listening to readings and sermons, moving only when we stand to sing. In most of our congregations, we don't wave our arms, stomp our feet, kneel, or even clap; we certainly don't dance in the aisles. On the other hand, some Unitarian Universalist groups, such as the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans and Young Religious Unitarian Universalists, have more movement-oriented worship. We can appreciate movement during worship as a way to put our whole bodies into the service. And beyond worship, we can explore ways to engage our bodies in spiritual practice.

This workshop is focused on having participants come to understand their spiritual journey to be not separate from their own physical experiences, but deeply rooted in them. An obvious choice would be to introduce one of the more well-known physical practices such as yoga or tai chi. Instead, in this workshop participants will be invited to have an experience of pure movement: what does it feel like to move your body freely, without purpose or intent, to move for movement's own sake? This will probably generate discussion, and perhaps even some discomfort!

Then a common, everyday physical experience—eating—will be engaged in with a meditative, reflective attitude it is rarely given. Such an attitude could be

applied to any of the physical tasks we do. In his book *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment: Mindfulness Verses for Daily Living*, the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh offers meditative verses from the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition for such things as brushing one's teeth and washing one's hands.

If a group has access to someone who can demonstrate one of the physical spiritual practices, that could be done in this workshop too (or instead). But the goal of this workshop is to help participants discover that something as normal as tying one's shoes or walking to get the morning paper can be used as a tool for spiritual experience and growth.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Help participants recognize the importance of a fully embodied spirituality
- Emphasize that no "special practice" is necessary to involve the body in spiritual work

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Experience movement as a possible spiritual practice
- Have an experience of paying mindful attention to their senses

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: The Story of Mind Meets Body	10
Activity 3: Body Practices Brainstorm	10
Activity 4: Moving Meditation	10
Activity 5: Mindful Eating	15
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Body Practice Demonstration	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by engaging in a body practice. Such practices include body awareness, dance, yoga, tai chi, breath-centered meditation, or whatever your spirit and physical abilities allow. You may wish to journal about the experience afterwards.

Take some time to consider the spirit with which you will approach the workshop's body movement and mindful eating activities. Focus on bringing an attitude of open generosity that gives participants permission to be less inhibited as they move and eat.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Copies of [Spirit in Practice Series Schedule](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- If you have not already created a schedule for your Spirit in Practice workshop series, see the preparation for the Welcoming and Entering activity from Workshop 1. Make copies as needed.
- If you have not already created group guidelines, see Workshop 1, Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice. Display the guidelines.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the schedules, sign-in sheet, and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "Let It Be a Dance."
- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Ask the group to turn to "Let Us Worship" by Kenneth L. Patton, 437 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite a participant to light the chalice as the group reads responsively.

After the reading, ask the group to turn to "Let It Be a Dance," 311 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite the group to join in singing. If the group is largely unfamiliar with the song, you may need to teach them the tune.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY OF MIND MEETS BODY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Story 1: [Mind Meets Body](#) (included in this document) (one copy for leader, plus several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "Mind Meets Body" aloud. Provide copies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks.

Ask:

- What's it like to live only in our heads?
- What's it like to live only in our bodies?
- In what ways do you remind yourself (or in what ways has life reminded you) that you are a unity: mind, body, heart, soul, and spirit?

Conclude by emphasizing that our bodies as well as our minds can be spiritual teachers. We can learn from physical ability and disability, from wellness and disease. Physical experiences like dancing, mountain climbing, lovemaking, and giving birth can offer spiritual revelation.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the story. You may wish to print out a copy of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 3: BODY PRACTICES BRAINSTORM (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel
- Masking tape (or other means for posting sheets of newsprint)
- Optional: Microphone

Description of Activity

Invite the group to brainstorm ways in which the body can be an integral part of spiritual practice. Some possibilities include a martial art such as tai chi; fasting once a week or once a month; running, cycling, or swimming; sex; a tea ceremony; an evening bath; eating a meal with family or friends; cuddling with children. Write the group's ideas on newsprint.

If you fill more than one sheet of newsprint, post the sheets on the wall where everyone can see them.

Discuss with participants:

- What conclusions can you draw from looking at this list?
- Would anyone who engages in one of these practices like to talk about how the practice has contributed to your spirituality?
- Are there any practices listed here that you'd consider adding to your life? If so, which?

Keep the sheet(s) posted to refer to in Activity 5.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 4: MOVING MEDITATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Recorded music (see Preparation)
- Music player with speakers
- Bell

- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Select music for use in this activity. Choose something up to five minutes in length that is accessible to adults of all ages. The music need not be "dance music"—something New Age or a slow classical piece like Pachelbel's Canon would be ideal. Much of the music produced in the 1980s and '90s on the Windham Hill record label would likely work well.

Description of Activity

Ask participants to find a space in the room where they can move without bumping into anyone else. Explain that in a moment you're going to put on some music. Ask participants to listen to the music, with eyes closed, and allow their bodies to respond. Eyes are closed so that all participants can express themselves in a less inhibited way—this isn't dance class, and no one will be judged or even seen! This is a time for participants to simply let their bodies move in response to the music they're hearing.

Start the music. Invite participants to close their eyes and begin moving. When the piece has concluded, or after five minutes, turn down the music and sound the bell.

Ask participants to reflect on their experiences. Ask:

- What was it like to move like that? Did anyone feel inhibited? Physically stiff? Ecstatic? Joyful? Embarrassed?
- Did the experience change over time?
- What, if anything, can you take from this experience that will help your spiritual practices?

Including All Participants

The "Moving Meditation" exercise can be adapted for people with limited mobility. Encourage participants to put their whole bodies and souls into the movement even if they cannot move with their whole bodies.

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear your instructions. Check to make sure the music is amplified adequately so that all hearing participants can hear it. Deaf participants may enjoy moving to the rhythm of the music's vibration or simply moving.

ACTIVITY 5: MINDFUL EATING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Two types of fruits or vegetables (see Preparation)
- Cutting board and knife

- Trays or plates for serving
- Newsprint sheet(s) with list of body practices from Activity 3
- Marker
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Check in with participants ahead of time to find out whether any of them have food allergies or sensitivities.
- Choose two types of fruit(s) or vegetable(s) that all participants can eat. The directions below use strawberries and carrots, but you may substitute others. Obtain enough for each participant to have one of each.
- Wash the fruit(s) or vegetable(s), slice them if necessary, and arrange them on the trays or plates. Use a separate tray or plate for each type of fruit or vegetable.

Description of Activity

Invite everyone to move silently into a circle and sit down. Bring out the trays or plates of carrots and strawberries.

Pass the strawberries around. Invite each person to take one and to slowly and silently chew it. Encourage participants to take their time, to chew thoroughly and deliberately, to try to fully and deeply experience all the flavor and texture of the strawberry. Encourage participants to think of the earth, the sun, the water, the air that nurtured this strawberry. Encourage them to taste the sunlight in their strawberry.

When everyone is done, pass the plate of carrots with the same instructions. When everyone is finished, sound the bell.

Engage the group in discussion:

- What was it like to eat such simple foods in silence?
- Could you imagine ever eating a whole meal like that? Why or why not?
- Having had the experiences of moving meditation and mindful eating, can you now think of other body practices in addition to those listed earlier? (Add these to the newsprint sheets from Activity 3.)

Including All Participants

This exercise can be adapted to accommodate food allergies or issues. Participants with braces, dentures, or missing teeth might have trouble eating carrots, apples, or other crunchy fruits and vegetables. Others might

have trouble with berry seeds. Use your creativity to come up with substitutions for the suggestions here.

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear your instructions.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section for this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Offer an opportunity for the group to reflect back over the workshop, seeking what are sometimes called "like and wishes." Ask participants, if they wish, to briefly share something they particularly liked about their experience and one thing they wish for in the future. If the group is small or there is extra time, allow participants to speak freely. If the group is large or time is tight, limit people's sharing so that all who wish to share will have the opportunity.

Distribute and explain your customized Taking It Home handout. Review the ideas for how to continue exploring the workshop's subject with friends and family.

If you have chosen to encourage journaling throughout the Spirit in Practice workshop series, remind participants to write in their journals. (See Workshop 1, Alternate Activity 2: Introduction to Journaling.)

Make any announcements concerning the next meeting, especially any changes to routine (such as a change in meeting time or place, a guest presenter, etc.).

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we

cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone completely around the circle and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended. Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

Follow these tips for using your body as part of your spiritual regimen:

Move. This means more than just exercise. Look for every opportunity to put your body into motion—to walk, dance, run, jump, stretch, reach. Move as much as your spirit and physical abilities allow.

Use your senses. Commit to making better use of all your senses in your quest to engage more deeply with

life. Walk barefoot in the grass or the sand; take the time to smell an orange before you eat it; luxuriate in the warm water and soap while you wash the dishes; feel the warmth of the cup while you drink your morning coffee or tea; light a scented candle. You can practice mindfulness by stopping at different points in the day and getting in touch with each of your five senses: what am I seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling with my skin?

Develop a healthful and balanced way of eating. An entire industry is dedicated to helping people find the right diet, and an even larger industry is dedicated to making sure that we don't. Try mindful eating—taking care to notice and savor every bite during a snack or a meal each day.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: BODY PRACTICE DEMONSTRATION (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Special equipment as needed (see Preparation)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Several weeks in advance, contact a participant in the group, or someone from the congregation or wider community, who is experienced in a body practice such as tai chi or yoga. Invite him/her to give a brief demonstration of the practice during the workshop.
- Find out what special equipment, if any, the presenter will require. Make arrangements to have it available.

Description of Activity

In some groups there may be someone who knows a practice such as tai chi, karate, or yoga and would be willing to give a demonstration. Perhaps there is someone in the congregation or the wider community who could be called on to visit. Ask the person to give a brief (20-minute) introduction to the basics of the practice. If time allows, invite participants to ask questions at the conclusion of the presentation.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the presenter.

STORY: MIND MEETS BODY

Once upon a time there was a head. Just a head. By sheer force of will—or maybe it was some kind of psychokinetic energy—the head was able to move itself around, open doors, pick things up. In fact, the head could do just about anything you or I can do.

And to hear the head tell of it, life is pretty good when you're a head. No stubbed toes. You never hit your funny bone. No love handles. No stomachaches. No tense shoulders.

Of course, there are also no dips in a hot tub. No lazy days in freshly washed sheets. And while the head could

eat food, and taste it just as well as you or I, it could never feel satisfied and full. After a while, the head came to realize that it was incomplete.

So when one day the head saw a body that had no head of its own, the head got really excited. It floated over and suggested that the two might get together. Of course, the body had no ears, and could use only body language to communicate, but eventually the two of them made a connection. And when the head felt what it was like to have a body, and the body felt what it was like to have a head, what else could they do? And the two have been dancing through life ever since.

FIND OUT MORE

[Practicing Our Faith](#), the website connected to Dorothy Bass's book, *Practicing Our Faith*. Includes sections on honoring the body, healing, and dying well.

Alexander, Scott, ed. [Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life](#). Skinner House Books, 1999. Includes body practices for UUs.

Beyer-Nelson, Kimberly. [The Little Book of Wholeness and Prayer: An Eight-Week Meditation Guide](#). Includes body practices for UUs.

WORKSHOP 7: SOUL PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

Our creative souls need nurturing and understanding. How do we remain creatively open? Where does our inspiration come from? How can we embrace our negative selves? What can we say to our internal judges and critics? How can we best share our creativity? I believe that we are each highly creative with important gifts to share, words to speak and write, lights to shine on ourselves and others. In order to do this work we need tending, planting, weeding, nourishing. This is all work we must do in our interior gardens.

—Sark, *Living Juicy: Daily Morsels for Your Creative Soul* (Celestial Arts, 1994)

"Soul practices" are those spiritual practices that engage our creative selves. As the quote above claims, each of us is a creative person; but as adults fulfilling various roles in society, many of us don't often feel creative. When it comes to creating art, we feel even less so. Long ago too many of us accepted the notion that "I can't draw" or "I don't have an artistic bone in my body." At some point—often in childhood—we came to believe that other people could be artistic, but not us. It's hard for many of us to put ourselves in such company as poets, painters, photographers, authors, and dancers—our creativity doesn't seem to match up.

It might be helpful, then, to first expand our assumptions about what is creative. Think about cooking, storytelling, decorating, or gardening. All of these are creative acts; all of these bring into being something that would not naturally have emerged.

For that matter, think about starting a friendship, rearing a child, or nurturing a long-term relationship. These, too, are acts of creation—there is no blueprint to follow, no instruction book with step-by-step directions. Healthy, loving relationships require you to respond in the moment, to "make it up as you go along," to take what's in front of you and transform it. In other words, they require you to create.

So all of us are, in fact, creative. Yet even if we limit ourselves to thinking of creation in the terms with which most of us are most familiar—that is, artistic creation—we still can claim our own as creative beings. Not everyone will compose music as well as Duke Ellington, or write poetry like Nikki Giovanni, or paint like Georgia O'Keefe. But why should that be our goal?

What if we detached ourselves from the outcome and instead focused on the process? Our attachment to outcomes is a problem that hinders more than just our ability to express ourselves creatively. Over and over again in our lives, this issue is a stumbling block. It could even be said that the core of the spiritual traditions of humankind is the encouragement to become free from such attachments. Worry about how someone will respond—the outcome—keeps us from speaking up. Concern about failure keeps us from taking a risk and trying something new. Again and again we find ourselves hampered by our attachment to the outcome of a given situation.

So even if there were no other benefit, engaging in a regular practice of artistic creation provides opportunities to practice releasing our attachment to an outcome, and does so in a safe way. If at the end of a painting session you really don't like what you've done, you can always paint over it or throw it away. But you'll have had the experience of painting, and that in itself is a good thing.

This workshop encourages engagement in creative expression for the purpose of the engagement itself. Time spent immersed in clay, paint, or pencil on paper can be just as profound and powerful as time spent in prayer. Creativity can be a spiritual practice.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Encourage participants to recognize and express their own innate creativity
- Highlight the value of creative expression in a regimen of spiritual practices

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Discuss the role of creativity in their own lives
- Create art with the encouragement to focus on process, not product

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: The Story of a Painter's Creative	10

Process

Activity 3: In What Ways Are You Creative?	15
Activity 4: The Way of the Artist	20
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Creativity Stations	30
Alternate Activity 2: Art Show	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by engaging in a soul practice—something that engages your creativity. You may wish to consult one of the resources listed in Find Out More.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Copies of [Spirit in Practice Series Schedule](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- If you have not already created a schedule for your Spirit in Practice workshop series, see the preparation for the Welcoming and Entering activity from Workshop 1. Make copies as needed.
- If you have not already created group guidelines, see Workshop 1, Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice. Display the guidelines.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the schedules, sign-in sheet, and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "Dear Weaver of Our Lives' Design."
- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Ask the group to turn to "O Spinner, Weaver, of Our Lives" by Barbara Wells, 431 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. You may wish to share with participants that Barbara Wells TenHove is a contemporary Unitarian Universalist minister. Invite a participant to light the chalice as the group reads together.

After the reading, ask the group to turn to "Dear Weaver of Our Lives' Design," 22 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite the group to join in singing. If the group is largely unfamiliar with the song, you may need to teach them the tune.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag

materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY OF A PAINTER'S CREATIVE PROCESS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Story 1: [A Painter's Creative Process](#) (included in this document) (one copy for leader, plus several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "A Painter's Creative Process" aloud. Provide copies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks.

Ask:

- What responses did this artist's process evoke in you?
- What would happen if we let go of outcomes and finished products and focused only on the creative process? Do you think you would be more creative?

- What creative processes do you engage in regularly? (If necessary, remind participants that these need not be art-centered. Cooking, gardening, decorating, and relating to other people all have creative elements.)

Conclude by emphasizing that we all have the capacity to be creative. When we can let go of whether the finished product "measures up," we can experience the real spirituality of creating. You may wish to draw on the text from this workshop's Introduction to make your points.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the story. You may wish to print out a copy of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 3: IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU CREATIVE? (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell
- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Description of Activity

Invite the group to divide into pairs and take turns answering the question, "In what way—or ways—are you creative in your life?" Each person will have three minutes to answer as deeply and fully as possible while the other person listens.

After three minutes, ring the bell and invite the pairs to switch speakers.

After another three minutes, ring the bell and bring everyone back into one group. Ask volunteers to share one way they are creative in their lives. Record these responses on newsprint.

When the group has generated a list, discuss:

- Do you see any common themes? Any surprises?
- How can practices such as these enrich one's spirituality? In what ways have they enriched yours?

Including All Participants

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their pairs, allow some pairs to leave the room and find a quieter space. If two participants require American Sign Language interpretation and you have only one interpreter, pair up those participants. If you have more than two participants needing ASL interpretation, find a second interpreter to help.

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the full-group discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

ACTIVITY 4: THE WAY OF THE ARTIST (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1: [Guided Meditation on Art](#) (included in this document) (included in this document) "Art box"—a large cardboard box containing many different kinds of art supplies (see Preparation)
- Tables (see Preparation)
- Newspaper, plastic tablecloths, or other means of covering the tables
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange the room—or arrange *for* a room—so that participants have tables on which they can do their art projects. Cover the tables with newspapers or plastic tablecloths.
- Gather together the supplies for the "art box." Possibilities include watercolor paints, markers, crayons, art paper, construction paper, old magazines, scissors, glue, glitter, clay, and so on. The religious education program might have some art supplies to share (be sure to obtain permission); otherwise, a quick trip to a local arts and crafts store should do the trick. Remember: nothing fancy. Look for the kinds of things you'd give to kids.
- Read over Leader Resource 1: [Guided Meditation on Art](#) (included in this document) so that you're familiar and comfortable with it.
- If you have more than one hour to present this workshop, review Alternate Activity 1 for ideas on how to expand this art experience to 50 minutes in length.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to close their eyes and get comfortable. Lead the meditation in Leader Resource 1: Guided Meditation on Art. Read slowly and clearly with a

calm voice. Pause where indicated so that listeners can visualize each image and action you describe.

After the meditation is finished, when everyone's eyes are open, show participants the art box. Invite them to go to it and take out some materials that appeal to them. Explain that they will use the materials to create not an image of what they saw, but an impression of what they *felt* during the guided meditation. What did it feel like to be in that special place? What did it feel like while they were doing their art there? What did it feel like to come back to the room? The intention of this assignment is not to be representational, but rather to be impressionistic—to try to express the feelings, not the facts.

After 10-15 minutes, ask volunteers to comment on their experiences. (You can choose to bring participants back into a group or, if people are still working, to have the discussion right where they are.) Ask:

- How did it feel to be creative like this?
- Were you surprised by your experience?
- Could creativity be part of your spiritual practice?

Including All Participants

Provide a variety of art materials that can be used by participants with varying physical abilities.

Offer several options for posture and positions during the guided meditation to include people of all abilities and mobility levels.

When you read the meditation, use a microphone and/or choose to stand or sit near participants who are hard of hearing so that they can hear you better. You may wish to pass a cordless microphone when participants comment on their experiences so that they can hear one another better.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section for this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.

- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Offer an opportunity for the group to reflect back over the workshop, seeking what are sometimes called "like and wishes." Ask participants, if they wish, to briefly share something they particularly liked about their experience and one thing they wish for in the future. If the group is small or there is extra time, allow participants to speak freely. If the group is large or time is tight, limit people's sharing so that all who wish to share will have the opportunity.

Distribute your customized Taking It Home handout. Review the ideas for how to continue exploring the workshop's subject with friends and family.

If you have chosen to encourage journaling throughout the Spirit in Practice workshop series, remind participants to write in their journals. (See Workshop 1, Alternate Activity 2: Introduction to Journaling.)

Make any announcements concerning the next meeting, especially any changes to routine (such as a change in meeting time or place, a guest presenter, etc.).

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone completely around the circle and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended. Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

As a way of continuing to explore the themes from this workshop, follow these tips for using your creativity as part of your spiritual regimen:

Take time to look at the art already around you. Often we begin to take for granted the art in our lives—in our homes, in our places of work, in public places we pass regularly. Take time—each day, each week—to really stop and look at it. If you find there isn't much art—or if you don't particularly like what you see—make a plan to do something about it.

Take an art course at a local community college or continuing education program. It could be an art appreciation course or a "how to" workshop. Either way, the experience will expose you to art in new ways.

Create! There's no substitute. If you're really hesitant, start out small and simple—finger paints, crayons, clay. Don't worry about what it looks like—focus your attention on how it feels to be doing it. Try to increase the pleasure you get from the act of creating, without regard to the finished product.

Go to museums. See some of the art that we humans have been making for millennia. And if you already know you favor the impressionists, take in a show of modern art just to stretch yourself.

Don't limit yourself to the visual arts. While this workshop has focused on the visual arts, creativity is found in music, poetry, dance, and other art forms as

well. Explore them as you have visual arts, and these same tips can apply.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CREATIVITY STATIONS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Several different sets of art supplies for "creativity stations" (see Preparation)
- Tables (see Preparation)
- Newspaper, plastic tablecloths, or other means of covering the tables
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange the room—or arrange *for* a room—with several tables on which to create creativity stations. Cover the tables with newspapers or plastic tablecloths.
- Gather together the supplies for the creativity stations. Possibilities include a watercolor station, a collage station, a finger paint station, a glitter station, a clay station, and more. Choose papers and supplies that correspond with the stations you choose to create. The religious education program might have some art supplies to share (be sure to obtain permission); otherwise, a quick trip to a local arts and crafts store should do the trick.
- Set up the creativity stations on the room's tables, leaving enough room for participants to sit at the tables and create.

Description of Activity

This activity can be led independently, or you may wish to combine it with Activity 4 to create a 50-minute art experience. If you choose to combine the two activities, have the creativity stations set up in advance of the meditation so that participants can go directly to the station of their choice when the meditation concludes.

Invite participants to explore the creativity stations. Encourage them to let go of judgment and ideas about outcomes and to just let themselves create for the sake of creating. Let participants know that it is fine to move between stations as they create.

Approximately ten minutes before the activity concludes, invite participants to regather for discussion and sharing. Ask:

- How was that process for you?
- Was it easy to focus on process rather than outcome?

- Would anyone like to talk a little bit about your creative process?
- What can be spiritual in this process?

Including All Participants

Some participants might find it difficult to move between stations. Offer assistance to those who need it—either assistance with movement or assistance with carrying supplies to participants.

Some participants might be shy about letting others see their work. This is fine; do not force sharing.

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone when participants comment on their experiences so that they can hear one another better.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: ART SHOW (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Easels, tables, or other ways to display artwork (see Preparation)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- In advance, invite participants to bring their favorite artwork to share—either the artwork itself or a photograph of it.
- Set up an "art gallery" display of the artwork that participants bring in.
- Plan how much time to spend on the different parts of this activity based on how many works of art you have. For example, if participants bring eight works of art, you might allow five minutes for participants to look at all the art in silence and about three minutes to discuss each piece.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to move around the "art gallery" as they wish and look at the art in silence. Let them know how many minutes they will have for this part of the activity.

At the end of the designated amount of time, ring the bell. Gather the group around one work of art. Invite everyone but the person who brought that piece to discuss it. Emphasize that the purpose is not to critique the artist or the work, but to explore what feelings or associations the art evokes in the viewer. Then ask the person who brought that work of art to discuss what it means to him/her.

Move on to the next piece and invite discussion in the same way. Continue until all the works of art have been discussed.

Including All Participants

If some participants are unable to move around the "art gallery," adapt the activity by having the group stay seated in front of an easel while you display one work of art at a time.

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

STORY: A PAINTER'S CREATIVE PROCESS

A contemporary painter named Debora Jones-Buck has what many consider an unusual approach to her work. She prepares a canvas and then paints a picture on it. Then, when the paint has dried, she paints an entirely different image on top of it. And then another, and another. Eventually she puts the canvas aside, sometimes with five or six paintings on top of one another. Then she prepares a new canvas and starts all over again.

She does not keep a record of the various images she paints and then covers up—she takes no photographs, keeps no sketches. She says she just has so many images in her head that she has to get them out, even if no one ever sees them. Having gotten the image out and onto a canvas, she no longer needs it and is free to paint another picture on top of it.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: GUIDED MEDITATION ON ART

Let yourself relax. Take in a nice, slow, deep breath. And then let it out. Breathe in. And out. Deep. Slow. Breathing in. And breathing out. (Pause)

And let your bodies relax. Let your muscles relax. Let your face relax. Let your mind relax. Whatever you've been carrying around with you all day that you don't need right now, let it go. Let all of you—body, mind, and spirit—deeply and fully relax. Keep breathing. (Pause)

And now, in your mind's eye, imagine a place that you love. A place where you feel loved. A place that is special. A place that feels safe. And happy. It might be a real place that you know from your own experiences. It might be somewhere that you've seen in a picture or that you've heard about. It might be somewhere imaginary. Wherever it is—whatever it is—call it to mind. Try to see, to feel, all the little details. (Pause)

And when you feel that you've noticed all there is to see about this place, imagine that next to you there is a large basket that's full of paper, and crayons, and chalk, and paints, and clay, and every other kind of artistic media you've ever heard of. And imagine that in this special place you know you have the ability to create. So create. Draw a picture. Or paint. Or sculpt. Or do whatever it is that you feel called to do, but try to capture the sights, the sounds, the mood, the feel of this place. Take your time. You can do it; you have no limitations here. It's as if the artistic expression is making itself. (Pause for at least 30 seconds.)

If you finish one piece, make another. (Pause for at least 30 seconds.)

Now bring the piece you're working on to a close. Step back and look at it. Take in what you've created. And then slowly, as you're ready, come back to this room and open your eyes.

FIND OUT MORE

Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992.

Sark. *Sark 's New Creative Companion: Ways To Free Your Creative Spirit*. Celestial Arts, 2005.

JacksonPollock.org—A website that lets you be Jackson Pollock on your computer screen! Move the mouse to begin "painting"; click to change colors. To erase your artwork and start over, press the space bar.

WORKSHOP 8: LIFE PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

"Tell me, why do we require a trip to Mount Everest in order to be able to perceive one moment of reality? I mean ... is Mount Everest more 'real' than New York? Isn't New York 'real'? You see, I think if you could become fully aware of what existed in the cigar store next door to this restaurant, I think it would just blow your brains out! Isn't there just as much 'reality' to be perceived in the cigar store as there is on Mount Everest?"

—Wallace Shawn

The 1981 movie *My Dinner with Andre* consists primarily of one long dinner conversation between two friends, Andre and Wally. While they are discussing Andre's several years in esoteric spiritual seeking, Wally speaks the words in the quote above, concluding, "Isn't there just as much 'reality' to be perceived in the cigar store as there is on Mount Everest?"

Too often we think of spiritual experiences as somehow different from the rest of our experiences, perhaps even their opposite. We attribute to spiritual experiences an aura of peace and tranquility that seems foreign to the everyday lives of most contemporary people.

Yet even monastics have to shop, cook, clean up, try to get into the shower before their housemates use up all the hot water, and run the business that supports their monastery. Then there are all those tricky personality issues that don't go away just because everyone is wearing the same color of robe. An American Zen monastery advises potential monks that if they're thinking of coming to the monastery to get away from the problems of life, they should think again. Life in the monastery, they say, has a way of bringing life's problems into even sharper relief.

And this really should be no surprise. The same kinds of issues will come up for people whether they're living in monastic communities, cities, subdivisions, or the country. Stresses are manifested in different ways, perhaps, but the issues are real and important. They will come up wherever human life is taking place. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we explore these big issues: What really matters in life? What is of ultimate importance?

It may seem obvious that religious leaders and monastics wrestle with such questions. Yet don't parents also wrestle with them whenever they have to decide

whether to attend to the needs of their children or the demands of their own schedules? Aren't these exactly the issues being weighed when considering whether to put in another weekend of overtime to impress the boss or to spend time with a partner who's going through a rough patch? Aren't these the very values hanging in the balance when choosing whether to speak up about a racist or homophobic joke or to "go along to get along"?

Each and every moment of each and every day presents us with opportunities for engaging in spiritual practice. Raising kids, making a living, choosing how to spend money (however much or little of it we have), choosing how to spend our time, the kind of car we drive, the food we eat, the way we care for our bodies, the way we care for our significant relationships, the way we treat our housemates and co-workers—each of these provides us with opportunities to be conscious in the way we live our lives. Each offers opportunities to make choices, to "walk our talk," and to engage in our lives and our living with integrity and intention. These opportunities are at the heart of spirituality.

There is a danger, of course, in proclaiming that "everything I do is prayer" or that "my life is a meditation." It can be, but it requires intention, discipline, commitment, and accountability to make it so. As an illustration: you could pick up a musical instrument that you've never touched before and declare that whatever you play is music, and in a certain sense you would be right. Yet most everyone else would more than likely call the result not music, but noise. Only with at least some amount of regular, disciplined practice can we increase the ratio of music to noise. The same is true of the spiritual life.

This workshop adds an important dimension to the Spirit in Practice series. All of the other spheres of spiritual growth—personal practices, communal worship, spiritual partnerships, mind practices, body practices, soul practices, and justice practices—could be things we see ourselves doing as a separate segment of our lives. This workshop encourages us to see every moment of our regular, daily lives as an opportunity to deepen our spiritual awareness and connections—whether we are giving medicine to an ailing parent or flossing our teeth, dealing with a co-worker or discovering that we've burned our dinner. In short, it encourages us to recognize that our trip to the corner drugstore can be as mystical an experience as a trip to the top of Mount Everest.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Help participants see ways to integrate their outer lives with their inner work
- Present a variety of means for experiencing the spiritual aspects of everyday tasks and life situations

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Articulate a personal definition of "spirit"
- Identify ways to connect with and experience that spirit in everyday living

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: The Story of the Wise Fool	10
Activity 3: Three Practices	35
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: The Presence of Spirit	30
Alternate Activity 2: Further Exploration of Three Practices	20

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by engaging in a spiritual "life practice." You are encouraged to spend at least a day paying mindful attention to the spirit in your everyday tasks and reflecting on the experience. Was it easy to perceive the spiritual in the everyday? If so, why? If not, why not? Consider ways that you can bring more spiritual awareness to the things you do every day—eating, cleaning, relating, sleeping, waking, watching TV, and so on. Record your thoughts in your journal or share them with your co-leader.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Copies of [Spirit in Practice Series Schedule](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- If you have not already created a schedule for your Spirit in Practice workshop series, see the preparation for the Welcoming and Entering activity from Workshop 1. Make copies as needed.
- If you have not already created group guidelines, see Workshop 1, Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice. Display the guidelines.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the schedules, sign-in sheet, and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "For All That Is Our Life."
- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Ask the group to turn to "For You" by Walt Whitman, 659 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. You may wish to share with participants that Walt Whitman was a famous and controversial 19th-century poet who is widely believed to have been gay. Invite a participant to light the chalice as the group reads responsively.

After the reading, ask the group to turn to "For All That Is Our Life," 128 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite the group to join in singing. If the group is largely unfamiliar with the song, you may need to teach them the tune.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag

materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY OF THE WISE FOOL (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Story 1: [The Wise Fool](#) (included in this document) (one copy for leader, plus several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "The Wise Fool" aloud. Provide copies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks. Ask:

- In what ways have you perceived the sacred in your everyday places and everyday experiences?
- What makes it hard to pay attention to spirituality in the everyday?
- What can help you be mindful of the spiritual aspects of your everyday experiences?

Conclude with the quote from *My Dinner With Andre* that introduces this workshop. You may also wish to make some of the points found in this workshop's Introduction.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the story. You may wish to print out a copy of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 3: THREE PRACTICES (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- At least one copy of Handout 1: [Sacred Rest](#) (included in this document)
- At least one copy of Handout 2: [Spirituality and Money](#) (included in this document)
- At least one copy of Handout 3: [Eating in Community](#) (included in this document)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- If you have more than one hour to present this workshop, review Alternate Activity 2 for ideas on how to expand this experience to 55 minutes in length.

Description of Activity

Invite the group to self-select into three smaller groups. Explain that each one will look at a spiritual practice that integrates spirituality and everyday living. The first is *Sacred Rest*. The second is *Spirituality and Money*. The third is *Eating in Community*. If one of the groups is considerably larger or smaller than the others, ask if anyone would be willing to switch groups for better balance.

Once the groups are formed, give each group the handout for their topic. Invite participants to spend 15 minutes discussing the questions on the handouts, or anything else the topic brings up for them. If a group truly believes it is finished discussing before the time is up, members can join other groups in progress.

After 15 minutes, ring the bell. Invite everyone back into one group to spend the remaining time (about 15 minutes) discussing anything that came up. If participants are willing, invite them to share with one another any commitment they might like to make regarding integrating a new "daily life practice" into their lives.

Including All Participants

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their small groups, allow some groups to leave the room and find a quieter space.

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the whole-group discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section for this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Offer an opportunity for the group to reflect back over the workshop, seeking what are sometimes called "like and wishes." Ask participants, if they wish, to briefly share something they particularly liked about their experience and one thing they wish for in the future. If the group is small or there is extra time, allow participants to speak freely. If the group is large or time is tight, limit people's sharing so that all who wish to share will have the opportunity.

Distribute your customized Taking It Home handout. Review the ideas for how to continue exploring the workshop's subject with friends and family.

If you have chosen to encourage journaling throughout the Spirit in Practice workshop series, remind participants to write in their journals. (See Workshop 1, Alternate Activity 2: Introduction to Journaling.)

Make any announcements concerning the next meeting, especially any changes to routine (such as a change in meeting time or place, a guest presenter, etc.).

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone completely around the circle and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended. Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

The following tips can help you develop spiritual awareness in the everyday.

Celebrate what you're already doing. Look for something you're already doing that you can begin to think of as a spiritual practice, in spite of (or perhaps because of) its mundane quality.

Add gently. Don't try to make yourself conscious of spirituality 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You'll make yourself crazy! Instead, choose one thing that you do regularly and commit to using that as a practice. The aim is not changing the activity so much as changing your consciousness while doing it.

Find a reminder. The Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh suggests letting the brake lights on the car in front of you stand in for a meditation bell. Whenever you see the car in front of you brake, remember to breathe in and be thankfully aware. Anything you encounter regularly could serve the same function. You could even set an alarm to go off at regular intervals throughout the day, calling you back to awareness.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: THE PRESENCE OF SPIRIT (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Questions listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

Preparation for Activity

- List the following questions on a newsprint sheet or digital slide: What way of thinking about "spirit" do you find meaningful? Where in your everyday life do you find the presence of spirit?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to reflect on the ways that they find spiritual connection in their everyday lives. Explain that people think of "spirit" in different ways: as a feeling of peace and connection, the human spirit, a unifying force, the force of life, the Holy Spirit, God or Goddess, or the ground of being.

Display the newsprint or digital slide with these questions for reflection:

- What way of thinking about "spirit" do you find meaningful?
- Where in your everyday life do you find the presence of spirit?

Invite participants to spend about one minute silently reflecting on these questions.

After about a minute, ring the bell. Invite participants to form pairs for speaking and listening. Explain that each partner will have three minutes to speak while the other person listens. They might tell stories of times when the daily and the divine intersected in a particularly clear

way, or they might talk about the kinds of activities in which they find meaning and spiritual sustenance.

After three minutes, ring the bell to invite the pairs to switch speakers.

After another three minutes, ring the bell and bring everyone back into one group for discussion. Ask:

- What was that experience like for you?
- What attitudes and mindsets have helped you be open to and connect with spirit in your everyday life?
- What practices have helped you make the connection?
- What general conclusions can you draw about how to make everyday life a more consciously spiritual experience?

Including All Participants

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their pairs, allow some pairs to leave the room and find a quieter space. If two participants require American Sign Language interpretation and you have only one interpreter, pair up those participants. If you have more than two participants needing ASL interpretation, find a second interpreter to help.

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the whole-group discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THREE PRACTICES (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Three copies of Handout 1: [Sacred Rest](#) (included in this document)
- Three copies of Handout 2: [Spirituality and Money](#) (included in this document)
- Three copies of Handout 3: [Eating in Community](#) (included in this document)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Description of Activity

You may wish to extend Activity 3: Three Practices by an additional 20 minutes, for a total of 55 minutes, by having each group explore all three of the practices. Give the groups ten minutes to discuss each topic, sounding the bell when it is time to switch topics.

Expand the whole-group discussion to 20 minutes (or whatever time remains).

Including All Participants

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their small groups, allow some groups to leave the room and find a quieter space.

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the whole-group discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

STORY: THE WISE FOOL

Once the great Sufi holy man and wise fool Nasreddin Hodja was walking down the street when a group of women came running up to him. Obviously distressed, they cried out to him, "Help us, Hodja! Help us."

"What can be done I will try to do," the Hodja replied. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"Our husbands," the women cried. "They've all decided that they must go out into the desert in order to dedicate themselves to finding Allah. Our children and we have been abandoned."

"This should not be," the Hodja declared, and he set out after the pilgrims as fast as his donkey could carry him.

As he approached the band of men, he began to shout, "Help me! Help me, my brothers."

"What seems to be the trouble, Hodja?" the men called back.

"My donkey," he said. "I've lost my donkey and can't find him anywhere. Oh, help me search. I must find him!"

"But he's right there," the men replied, laughing. "Can't you see that you're sitting right on top of him? You don't have to go anywhere to look for him."

"And why do you," the Hodja said, pulling his donkey to a stop, "feel that you must go anywhere to look for Allah? Go back to your wives; go back to your lives." And that's just what they did.

HANDOUT 1: SACRED REST

Nearly every religious tradition encourages taking times of pure rest. In the Jewish tradition this is called “Sabbath,” a complete break from all work. Christians also observe Sabbath, yet differently: one Episcopal priest calls Sabbath a time to do whatever you truly feel called to do and nothing you feel you “should” do.

During the next 20 minutes, discuss questions such as the following (or whatever else this topic brings up):

- Have you ever known times such as this? When? What made them “sacred rest” for you?
- Do you regularly schedule such times in your life today? Why or why not?
- If you do, how do you manage to do it? What’s it like for you?
- If you do not, how might you begin to create such times?
- What do you see as the benefits of Sabbath time or sacred rest?
- What do you see as its challenges?
- What else do you want to talk about in relation to this topic?

HANDOUT 2: SPIRITUALITY AND MONEY

People often think that money and spirituality are unrelated or even contradictory. We recall the sayings “Money is the root of all evil” and “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Yet money is just a means of ascribing value or worth to things, and our modern word “worship” comes from an Old English word that means “to ascribe worth to.” Money has spiritual power—for good and for bad.

During the next 20 minutes, discuss questions such as the following (or whatever else this topic brings up):

- How conscious are you of your choices around how you spend your money?
- Does the way you spend your money reflect your values?
- If so, how have you managed to achieve this?
- If not, how might you begin to create such a reflection?
- What are some of the spiritual challenges you associate with money?
- What is a spiritual antidote to greed—in ourselves and in others?
- What is a spiritual antidote to envy—in ourselves and in others?
- What else do you want to talk about in relation to this topic?

HANDOUT 3: EATING IN COMMUNITY

When people hear the word “communion,” they usually think of the Christian service of sharing bread and wine (or grape juice) in commemoration of Jesus’s last supper with his friends. Yet the first definition of the word in the American Heritage Dictionary is not in the least religious at all: “The act or an instance of sharing, as of thoughts or feelings.” The word “communion” comes from a Latin word meaning “mutual participation,” and it has the same root as such words as “common” and “community.” So a family eating dinner together—an act that for many families has become rare—can be seen as a kind of spiritual communion.

During the next 20 minutes, discuss questions such as the following (or whatever else this topic brings up):

- Did people in your household eat together when you were growing up? Either way, what was that like?
- Do you regularly share meals with other people today? Either way, what is it like?
- How might shared food enhance spiritual connection?
- What do you see as the benefits of eating in community?
- What do you see as its challenges?
- What else do you want to talk about in relation to this topic?

FIND OUT MORE

Alexander, Scott W., ed. [*Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life*](#). Skinner House Books, 1999.

Bass, Dorothy C., ed. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997.

Brussat, Frederic and Mary Ann. *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*. Touchstone, 1998.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment: Mindfulness Verses for Daily Living*. Parallax Press, 1990.

WORKSHOP 9: JUSTICE PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

What we would like to do is change the world—make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended for them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, of the poor, of the destitute... we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing that we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as well as our friend.
—Dorothy Day

The sixth workshop in this series—"Body Practices"—encouraged healing the split that is often thought to exist between the body and the spirit. The eighth—"Life Practices"—focused attention on the seeming dichotomy between spirituality and our everyday lives. These are really two examples of the same fundamental misunderstanding about spirituality—that spirituality is somehow apart from, or different than, regular life. Things "of the spirit" are seen as somehow more ethereal than our physical bodies and more miraculous than our mundane experiences.

There is another common example of this same essential error: the separation of religion and politics. You might hear individuals in our congregations complain that there is too much talk about politics on Sunday morning and not enough spirituality—or conversely, that there's too much spirituality and not enough politics. Either way, the two are often thought of as separate spheres.

Mohandas Gandhi—known by the Indian people as both "Great Spirit" (Mahatma) and "Papa" (Bapu)—is remembered as saying that those who say religion has nothing to do with politics understand neither religion nor politics. The Unitarian Universalist minister Mark Morrison-Reed has said, "The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice." At its best—at its deepest, its most full—religion always decreases separation and increases connection. It is not

narcissistic navel gazing. We discover that we all have Buddha nature, or are all members of the body of Christ, or that we are all—along with the animals, the trees, and the stars—children of "Mother Earth."

One way or another, all of the great religious and spiritual traditions we humans have ever developed point to a fundamental commonality that absolutely *requires* us to care for one another. As the well-known Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh puts it, we "inter-are"; we are not truly independent, but rather are interdependent. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., puts it this way in his sermon *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution*: "We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality." Our own Unitarian Universalist Association's Statement of Principles and Purposes tells us that we UUs affirm the idea that all of existence is an interdependent web. And, as the Reverend Morrison-Reed says, once you fully embrace this interconnectedness you are compelled to act.

And we Unitarian Universalists have a proud history of action. In fact, for many adults who find our movement, our activism is the first level of engagement. As Unitarian Universalists, our personal faith is not necessarily connected with a belief in a supernatural deity. Faith is meant to convey our connection and commitment to whatever we hold most real and most true. We may have faith in God. We may have faith in the essential goodness of humanity. We may believe in the brokenness of humanity, yet have faith in our ability to grow beyond it. We may have faith that peace is worth fighting for, that one day people will see that it matters not so much whom you love as that you love, or that it is indeed possible for us all to learn to get along. Each of us has some kind of faith, and none of us ever acts without those actions being informed by our faith.

This workshop encourages us to realize that our religious/spiritual faith and our social engagement must not only co-exist, but must be fully integrated, because they are, in essence, one and the same thing. After all, what is social action but ministry to a hurting world? And as the minister and author Frederick Buechner notes, our ministries, our place of service, our action in the world will be found where our deep passion and the world's deep hunger meet. Finding such a place is a spiritual task; responding to it is as well.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Encourage participants to recognize social justice work as an integral part of a robust spirituality
- Identify ways that participants can bring spiritual intention to their work for good in the world

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Discuss their ideas of, and experiences with, spirituality and social justice
- Learn about ways of taking social action as Unitarian Universalists

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: The Story of Siddhartha's Awakening	10
Activity 3: Twenty-one Thoughts	10
Activity 4: Justice Work as Spiritual Practice	25
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: The Congregation's Justice Work	45
Alternate Activity 2: Social Justice Project	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by engaging in a justice practice—something that puts your hopes for a better world into action. This could involve advocating, demonstrating, or serving the community. Reflect on the experience afterwards, thinking of how it expressed and/or informed your spirituality and beliefs. You may wish to consult one of the resources listed in Find Out More.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Copies of [Spirit in Practice Series Schedule](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- If you have not already created a schedule for your Spirit in Practice workshop series, see the preparation for the Welcoming and Entering activity from Workshop 1. Make copies as needed.
- If you have not already created group guidelines, see Workshop 1, Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice. Display the guidelines.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the schedules, sign-in sheet, and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create name tags, and pick up a schedule for the workshop series if they have not already done so. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "This Little Light of Mine."
- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Ask the group to turn to "To Be of Use" by Marge Piercy, 567 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. You may wish to share with participants that Marge Piercy is a contemporary poet, novelist, and activist. Invite a participant to light the chalice as the group reads responsively.

After the reading, ask the group to turn to "This Little Light of Mine," 118 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite the group to join in singing. If the group is largely unfamiliar with the song, you may need to teach them the tune.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag

materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY OF SIDDHARTHA'S AWAKENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Story 1: [Siddhartha's Awakening](#) (included in this document) (one copy for leader, plus several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "Siddhartha's Awakening" aloud. Provide copies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks. Ask:

- Siddhartha was able to choose whether to awaken to the world's suffering or go on living in bliss. Are you able to choose?
- What in your life has awakened you to the world's suffering?
- How has your spirituality been shaped by injustice—either your own experience of injustice or that of others?

Conclude by emphasizing that spirituality and justice are interrelated. You may wish to draw on the text from this workshop's Introduction to make your points.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the story. You may wish to print out a copy of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 3: TWENTY-ONE THOUGHTS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1: [Twenty-one Thoughts on Peace and Justice](#) (included in this document) (see Preparation)
- Small basket
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Cut Handout 1 into strips—one quote per strip—and place them in the basket.
- If desired, make extra copies of Handout 1 for people who want to take home all the quotes.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to sit in a circle. Explain that you will pass around a basket of quotations. Participants can pick a quotation to read aloud, or let the basket pass by them if they prefer to just listen.

Going around the circle, have participants read the quotations slowly and loudly. Take a moment or two of silence between each quotation. Continue around the circle until all of the quotations have been read.

Discuss the quotations with the group:

- Which quotations particularly spoke to you? Why?
- Were there any you disagreed with? Why?
- Do you know any other quotations about peace and justice that you'd like to share?

Including All Participants

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the reading and discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

ACTIVITY 4: JUSTICE WORK AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Description of Activity

Introduce the activity by telling the group that Felix Adler, a humanist who founded the Ethical Culture Movement, said that "spirituality is consciousness of infinite interrelatedness." In this sense, working for justice is a spiritual practice—it increases our awareness of the interrelatedness of all people and the interdependence of all life.

Ask participants to name some other ways in which working for justice can be a spiritual practice. Invite them to speak from their own experience and the experience of people they know well. This helps demonstrate that one need not be Gandhi or Mother Teresa for justice work to be spiritual. List the group's ideas on newsprint.

Introduce the ideas of "praxis" and "theological reflection" if they haven't already been introduced. Here's a description of each:

- *Praxis* means action and reflection. It is a cycle—we act, we reflect on the action, we act again with our new understanding, we reflect on that new experience, and so on.
- *Theological reflection* is a model that uses praxis to deepen our spiritual and theological beliefs. For example, suppose we start volunteering with at-risk youth. We help them with their homework and get to know them. Afterwards, in another setting, we reflect on how this experience informs our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Then we can return to our volunteer work with the additional insights gained from this reflection.

Ask participants if they have experience using tools like these for spiritual reflection or in other contexts. Invite participants to consider the ways that praxis and theological reflection can contribute to their spiritual growth as they work for justice in the world.

If there is time, ask participants to identify a time when work for justice affected their spiritual growth or changed their beliefs. Participants can share in pairs or as a whole group.

Including All Participants

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the whole-group discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section for this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Offer an opportunity for the group to reflect back over the workshop, seeking what are sometimes called "likes and wishes." Ask participants, if they wish, to briefly share something they particularly liked about their experience and one thing they wish for in the future. If the group is small or there is extra time, allow participants to speak freely. If the group is large or time is tight, limit people's sharing so that all who wish to share will have the opportunity.

Distribute and explain your customized Taking It Home handout. Review the ideas for how to continue exploring the workshop's subject with friends and family.

If you have chosen to encourage journaling throughout the Spirit in Practice workshop series, remind participants to write in their journals. (See Workshop 1, Alternate Activity 2: Introduction to Journaling.)

Make any announcements concerning the next meeting, especially any changes to routine (such as a change in meeting time or place, a guest presenter, etc.).

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we

cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone completely around the circle and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended. Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

In the days and weeks to come, try these tips for using social justice work as part of your spiritual regimen.

Don't try to do it all. Remember the definition of ministry offered by the Protestant minister and novelist Frederick Buechner: "the place where your deep passion and the world's deep hunger meet." Another great reminder comes from theologian and civil rights leader Howard Thurman: "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the

world needs is people have come alive." Explore what causes and aspects of justice work give you the most passion, energy, and purpose, and get engaged with those. Go in the direction that your heart and the world call you to go.

Remind yourself, and those you work with, why you are doing what you are doing. Don't get so caught up in the task that you forget the task's deep meaning. Frequently ask yourself what inspires you about what you're doing; ask how it makes you "come alive."

Act. Reflect. Act. Reflect. Explore ways of intentionally deepening the spiritual experience of justice work. Take time to reflect after actions you take, whether they are as simple as signing an online petition or as challenging as building homes for a week on the Gulf Coast. Reflect on your own, and reflect with companions. If you're looking for specific tools, several books on theological reflection are available online and at religious-themed bookstores.

Remember to refresh yourself. As Thich Nhat Hanh says, "Life is full of suffering. But it also has sunshine, blue skies, and the eyes of a baby. It would be a shame if all we saw was the suffering."

Even small steps move the cause forward. You don't need to start a homeless shelter; simply taking the time to say "hello" and to look into the eyes of a homeless woman as you pass is something. Writing a letter to the editor or to a legislator, bringing something to your congregation's canned food drive—these are not as drastic as selling all that you have and giving it to the poor, but they are steps in the right direction. And every step counts.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: THE CONGREGATION'S JUSTICE WORK (45 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the social justice activities of your congregation or of nearby UU congregations, your district, or the national Unitarian Universalist Association.
- Invite guest speakers who are involved in these activities to serve on a panel. Explain that they will be asked to talk about the UU-related social justice work that they are involved with and how it relates to their spirituality and Unitarian Universalist identity.

- Prepare some questions for the panelists in advance—questions you can use if participants don't think of questions right away.

Description of Activity

Introduce the panelists you have invited. Ask each one to introduce him/herself and to share a little bit about the UU-related social justice activities she/he is involved with. Ask panelists to speak about the ways their social justice work connects with their spirituality and their Unitarian Universalist identity.

After each panelist has spoken, invite participants to ask questions of the panelists. If participants don't immediately have questions, ask some of the questions you prepared in advance.

Including All Participants

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone between panelists so that participants can hear them better.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the social justice projects of your congregation or of nearby UU congregations.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to plan a social justice project together—one in which they can build time for spiritual reflection. You can approach this discussion from many angles. Suggested questions for discussion are:

- What kind of project would meet a need in our community?
- What kind of project would be new to you, and might even take you out of your comfort zone?
- What organizations and projects do we know of that we could get involved with? (List ideas on newsprint.)
- How could the project ideas we've listed provide opportunities for spiritual deepening?
- Which project ideas are you the most interested in?
- Are we headed toward consensus on a project we might do together?

- What next steps do we need to take to make it happen?

If the group agrees on a project, ensure that someone (or a group of people) takes responsibility for making it happen.

Including All Participants

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the discussion so that participants can hear one another better.

STORY: SIDDHARTHA'S AWAKENING

Young prince Siddhartha had been raised in complete luxury. His life had been so arranged that he knew no suffering, no lack, no want. So when he first encountered suffering—in the form of a sick person, an old person, and a dying person—he was determined to find its cause and its solution. For six years he endured the most extreme self-denial the Hindu tradition of his day encouraged. Eventually he sat himself down beneath the Bodhi tree, determined to remain in deep meditation until he solved the problem of suffering.

For six days he sat, and then he had an awakening through which he saw the deep truth of reality. He entered a state of perfect oneness and bliss—nirvana. And he was tempted to remain in this state, for here there was no suffering, no struggle, no sorrow, no strife.

But what good would it do for him to have found the solution to merely his own life's suffering? What would be the result of his determination if he alone attained nirvana while all other beings suffered on?

Siddhartha roused himself and stood. It was the beginning of a new day, and there was much work to be done.

HANDOUT 1: TWENTY-ONE THOUGHTS ON PEACE AND JUSTICE

Cut each statement into strips.

1. Nothing could be worse than the fear that one had given up too soon, and left one unexpended effort that might have saved the world. - Jane Addams
2. How can one not speak about war, poverty, and inequality when people who suffer from these afflictions don't have a voice to speak? - Isabel Allende
3. No matter how big a nation is, it is no stronger than its weakest people, and as long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold him down, so it means you cannot soar as you might otherwise. - Marian Anderson
4. This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in. - Theodore Roosevelt
5. The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life. - Jane Addams
6. Bullets cannot be recalled. They cannot be uninvented. But they can be taken out of the gun. - Martin Amis
7. Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about a reform. Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation, and publicly and privately, in season and out, avow their sympathy with despised and persecuted ideas and their advocates, and bear the consequences. - Susan B. Anthony
8. Action is the antidote to despair. - Joan Baez
9. Politics should be the part-time profession of every citizen who would protect the rights and privileges of free people and who would preserve what is good and fruitful in our national heritage. - Lucille Ball
10. When someone steals another's clothes, we call them a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor. - Basil the Great
11. Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. - Martin Luther King, Jr.
12. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children. - Jimmy Carter
13. Sometime in your life, hope that you might see one starved man, the look on his face when the bread finally arrives. Hope that you might have baked it or bought or even kneaded it yourself. For that look on his face, for your meeting his eyes across a piece of bread, you might be willing to lose a lot, or suffer a lot, or die a little, even. - Daniel Berrigan, SJ
14. This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before. - Leonard Bernstein
15. If you want peace, work for justice. - H. L. Mencken
16. Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. - Margaret Mead
17. Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. We have seen the future, and the future is ours. - César Chávez
18. I swore never to be silent whenever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. - Elie Weisel
19. The challenge of social justice is to evoke a sense of community that we need to make our nation a better place, just as we make it a safer place. - Marian Wright Edelman
20. Thou shalt not be a victim. Thou shalt not be a perpetrator. Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander. - From the Holocaust Museum, Washington, D.C.

21. Past the seeker as he prayed came the crippled and the beggar and the beaten. And seeing them, he cried, "Great God, how is it that a loving creator can see such things and yet do nothing about them?" God said, "I did do something. I made you." - Sufi saying

FIND OUT MORE

Bowens-Wheatley, Marjorie, and Nancy Palmer Jones, eds. *Soul Work: Anti-racist Theologies in Dialogue*. Skinner House, 2002.

Kivel, Paul. *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*. New Society, 2002.

Leonard, Richard D. [*Call to Selma: Eighteen Days of Witness*](#). Skinner House, 2001.

Parker, Rebecca Ann. [*Blessing the World: What Can Save Us Now*](#). Skinner House, 2006.

Reckford, Jonathan. *Creating a Habitat for Humanity: No Hands But Yours*. Augsburg Fortress, 2000.

Stout, Linda. *Bridging the Class Divide and Other Lessons for Grassroots Organizing*. Beacon Press, 1997.

WORKSHOP 10: LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD

INTRODUCTION

To live with soul is to live deeply rooted in knowing and feeling that we are connected to one another and to the earth, that our life is held in the embrace of something larger than ourselves—a wisdom, a presence, a grace "whose beatitude is accessible to us," says Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay "The Over-Soul." To have soul is to hear life's deep music and to move in response to its pulse, rhythm, and harmony. To have soul is to be awake to life. To have soul is to live with a sensitive awareness of the real presence of other human beings and the earth. It is turning your hands to the work of justice and compassion, your mind to the call of wisdom, your heart to decisions for life. It is making your whole being an act of praise.

—Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker

It's often said that people do not learn new things until they have some kind of conceptual "hook" on which to hang them. This is the basis of the adage that you must communicate something at least five times before it's really heard; the first four times create the hook on which the person hangs the message when they (finally) hear it the fifth time.

With that in mind, it can be beneficial to look back over a series of workshops on the premise that something discussed in the first workshop might have deeper, or perhaps simply different, meaning many weeks later. This workshop is intended for groups that have done at least a few of the other workshops in the Spirit in Practice series; it will be especially important for those groups that have done the entire series in one form or another.

It has often been suggested that it is important for us to tend to our spiritual growth in four different time scales. There are some things we should do on a daily basis. Others we should make time for once a week. Some things should be done each month. And there are some things we should do on a yearly basis.

For example, you might want to pray or practice tai chi every day, while having conversations with a spiritual partner only once each week. You might decide to spend a day a month abstaining from food or from talking, as well as go on an overnight retreat each year. A variation of this framework encourages us to develop

a spiritual regimen that includes practices that we do for one hour each day, one day a week, and one week a year.

A commitment to one's spiritual growth does indeed take discipline and persistence. Henry David Thoreau famously observed that most people "lead lives of quiet desperation," and in this he struck an all too contemporary chord. For himself, he noted that he did not want to "live what is not life" and "when I come to die, discover that I have not lived." This desire to live, and live life to its fullest, could well be said to be the core of the spiritual quest, its fuel and its fire. Isn't this worth a little work?

The first workshop in this series presented a structure for a holistic program of spiritual growth in eight "spheres": personal spiritual practices, communal worship practices, spiritual partnerships, mind practices, body practices, soul practices, life practices, and justice practices. A person who engages all eight spheres will be stretched and opened in so many ways and will find that each of these spheres nurtures and supports the others.

The next eight workshops in the series focused on each of these eight spheres, providing opportunities to see how each might fit into participants' own lives. This final workshop returns to the eight spheres as a whole—rather than as discrete parts—and encourages participants to find ways to engage all eight on a regular and consistent basis. This might be the end of this workshop series, or it might be the beginning of an ongoing small group through which members support and celebrate one another's practices.

There is no end to this work. As the poet T. S. Eliot wrote in his *Four Quartets*—the source of the reading used in this session's opening activity—"the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." The place we will return to again and again is our own lives. May this journey be fruitful.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Prompt participants to look back at what they've experienced in previous workshops to see what new (or different) insights they might have developed in retrospect
- Encourage participants to look ahead to how these experiences will be integrated into their lives

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Summarize their learning experiences from the Spirit in Practice workshop series
- Identify spiritual practices they can engage in on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis
- Write a letter to their future selves to encourage their future attention to spiritual practice (optional)

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Sharing Names	5
Activity 2: The Story of Understanding the Elephant	10
Activity 3: What Will You Carry Forward?	15
Activity 4: Where Do We Go From Here?	15
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Notes to Myself	15
Alternate Activity 2: Exploring the Spheres with Peers	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Leaders are encouraged to prepare for the workshop not only by gathering supplies and reviewing the workshop's activities, but also by practicing centering, prayer, or meditation. Before the workshop, take some time to engage in a spiritual practice that helps connect you with the sacred, with the Spirit of Life, with the ground of your being. Recall your intentions for leading this workshop series—the hopes and energies you brought to leadership. Reflect on your intentions for the workshops' participants as they go forth from this final workshop. Hold these intentions in your mind and heart as you prepare for and facilitate this final workshop of *Spirit in Practice*.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Sign-in sheet (see Preparation)
- Pen or pencil
- Name tags
- Bold markers
- Group guidelines listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Workshop agenda listed on newsprint or a digital slide (see Preparation)
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and screen

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses.
- If you have not already created group guidelines, see Workshop 1, Activity 4: Introduction to Spirit in Practice. Display the guidelines.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, list the agenda for this workshop on newsprint or a digital slide. Before the group arrives, either post the newsprint agenda or set up the computer and digital projector and display the agenda slide.
- Set up a station with name tags and markers for participants to create their own name tags. Provide large name tags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's name tags from a distance.
- Place the sign-in sheet and pen or pencil at the name tag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create name tags. Direct their attention to the agenda for this workshop.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Matches or lighter
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)

- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "Just as Long as I Have Breath."
- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants to Spirit in Practice.

Ask the group to turn to "The End Is Where We Start From" by T. S. Eliot, 685 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. You may wish to share with participants that T. S. Eliot was a Nobel Prize—winning poet, dramatist, and literary critic. Although Eliot converted to the Anglican faith as an adult, he came from a family of prominent Unitarians, including several ministers. Invite a participant to light the chalice as the group reads.

After the reading, ask the group to turn to "Just as Long as I Have Breath," 6 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite the group to join in singing. If the group is largely unfamiliar with the song, you may need to teach them the tune.

Including All Participants

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

ACTIVITY 1: SHARING NAMES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that participants have made name tags. If they have not, you may pass around name tag materials while participants introduce themselves.

Description of Activity

Introduce yourself and your co-leader(s), and invite participants to take turns sharing their names. As participants introduce themselves, invite them to stand (if they are willing and able) and to speak loudly or use the microphone so they can be better seen and heard.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear one another.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY OF UNDERSTANDING THE ELEPHANT (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Story 1: [Understanding the Elephant](#) (included in this document) (one copy for leader, plus several copies for participants who may wish to read along)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or lectern
- Optional: Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story in advance so that you can present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Read the story "Understanding the Elephant" aloud. Provide copies of the story to people who prefer to read along.

After sharing the story, invite participants to take a moment to quietly center themselves, to let go of any tension or emotions that are not needed for the next hour, and to breathe deeply. You may ring a bell at the beginning and end of this silent time, or simply invite people into the silence and then gently bring them out.

After the silence, invite participants to discuss their responses to the story. Keep the discussion brief and focused, allowing time for your own concluding remarks. Ask:

- Personal, direct experience of the elephant played a large role in this story, as did the group's more objective assessment of the elephant at the end. What roles do objectivity and direct experience play in your understanding of Unitarian Universalist spirituality?
- The story concludes, "It was only when they combined their descriptions that they began to understand the elephant." What parallels can you draw between this story and your spiritual understandings?
- Is a spiritual practice valuable to you even if you can't always see the big picture?

Conclude by emphasizing the value of spiritual practice as a way to understand the "elephant" of the sacred,

whether we get to know just the tail or the tusk, or the whole creature.

Including All Participants

Be sure that all participants can hear the story, or have the story interpreted for them. Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear the story. You may wish to print out a copy of the story in advance for participants who are hard of hearing or who prefer to read along.

ACTIVITY 3: WHAT WILL YOU CARRY FORWARD? (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint sheets from Workshop 1, Activity 5: Naming Our Experiences
- Low-stick masking tape (or other means for posting newsprint sheets)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Bell
- Newsprint
- Markers
- Easel
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Preparation for Activity

- If you have them, locate and post the newsprint sheets from Workshop 1, Activity 5: Naming Our Experiences.

Description of Activity

Remind the group that they began the workshop series answering the question "What brought you here?" Now it is time to focus on what they will carry forward with them. Invite participants to form groups of three and spend six minutes taking turns answering the question, "What will you take from here?" Point out that this allows two minutes per person. Note that it can be a powerful spiritual practice to fully and deeply listen to someone else—not to fill our heads with what we're planning to say when it's our turn or with judgments and responses to what we're hearing, but to simply listen to another person.

After two minutes and four minutes, ring the bell to invite participants to switch speakers.

After six minutes, bring everyone back into one group. Ask for volunteers to respond to the following questions. Record responses on newsprint.

- Did you find that the individuals in your group had very different things they were taking with them, or similar ones?

- What are some take-homes that your small group had in common?
- What other things—perhaps less common—will you take home?

Show the group the newsprint sheets from the first workshop listing participants' responses to "What brought you here?" Invite participants to compare the two lists. Ask:

- How did the group's reasons for participation change over time?
- What couldn't you have predicted at the outset about the things you're taking home?

Conclude by affirming participants' motivations for participation. Express your hope that this workshop series has been a tool for deepening and growing their spirituality.

Including All Participants

You may wish to pass a cordless microphone during the discussion so that participants can hear one another better. You may also choose to read the Workshop 1 newsprint sheets (answering "What brought you here?") aloud so that people who cannot read the sheets can know their content.

ACTIVITY 4: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: [Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly](#) (included in this document) one per participant)
- Pens or pencils (one per participant)
- Clock, watch, or timer
- Optional: Microphone

Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 1: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly. Note that this handout presents an organizational structure that can help us ensure that spiritual practices are included in our lives on a regular basis.

Ask participants to take five minutes to consider the grid and to start making specific plans for the coming year. Provide pens or pencils and invite participants to fill in their grids.

After five minutes, invite participants to find a partner and share their ideas for two minutes each.

Conclude the activity by pointing out that something as concrete as this handout works well for some people and not so well for others. The handout is intended as

an entry point for establishing long-term spiritual practices once this workshop series is done.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone helps more people hear your instructions. If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their pairs, allow some pairs to leave the room and find a quieter space. If two participants require American Sign Language interpretation and you have only one interpreter, pair up those participants. If you have more than two participants needing ASL interpretation, find a second interpreter to help.

CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the customized [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout (see Preparation)
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook (one per person)
- Optional: A piano, guitar, or other form of accompaniment
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section for this workshop and decide whether you wish to add any other resources. Check the links to websites to make sure they are still accurate.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and make a printout or photocopy for each participant.
- Place copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* on or next to participants' chairs.
- Arrange for musical accompaniment if you believe it will be necessary for singing "Go Now in Peace."

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop series.

Distribute and explain your customized Taking It Home handout. Review the suggested resources for continuing to explore spiritual practices on one's own or with friends and family.

Close the workshop with this ritual: The leader takes the hand of the person on his/her right while saying, "I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we cannot do alone." That person, still holding the leader's hand, then takes the hand of the person on his/her right, saying the same thing. When this saying has gone completely around the circle and everyone is holding hands, the workshop has ended.

As a benediction, offer the song "Go Now in Peace," 413 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Your group may have the song memorized, especially if your congregation has a tradition of singing this song to the children during worship services. Ask participants to consider the lyrics to the song and to sing them to one another as a blessing for the journey home.

Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone for this activity helps more people hear you.

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

You may wish to adapt the closing ritual to make it more comfortable for people who are averse to holding hands. You can change the words to "I reach out to you so that we might do together what we cannot do alone" and change the accompanying gesture to reaching rather than holding hands.

If your congregation has large-print and/or Braille versions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, make those copies available for participants who might need them.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and the workshop series. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop series?
- What were some of our most challenging moments of the workshop series?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?

- What will each of us carry forward from this experience?

TAKING IT HOME

These UU-friendly resources can be helpful as you continue to grow in spiritual practice.

Addison, Howard A. *Show Me Your Way: The Complete Guide to Exploring Interfaith Spiritual Direction*. Skylight Paths Publishing, 2000. Rabbi Addison, who received spiritual direction from Catholic sisters and who studied with the ecumenical Shalem Institute, provides one of the few books on spiritual direction that truly comes from an interfaith perspective.

Alexander, Scott W., ed. *Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life*. Skinner House Books, 1999. An anthology of writings by nearly forty Unitarian Universalist clergy and laity describing the varied spiritual practices that they themselves use to "tend the garden of their souls"—from reading scripture to running, family time to fasting. There is nothing else on the shelves with this breadth.

Andrew, Elizabeth. *Writing the Sacred Journey: The Art and Practice of Spiritual Memoir*. Skinner House Books, 2005. Readers will discover how to construct a well-crafted spiritual memoir—one that honors the author's interior, sacred story and is at the same time accessible to others. Provides practical advice on how to overcome writing obstacles and work through drafts.

Arnason, Wayne, and Kathleen Rolenz. *Worship That Works: Theory and Practice for Unitarian Universalists*. Skinner House Books, 2007. A guidebook for revitalizing our worship life. Provides practical, specific advice to improve the key elements of the service and increase the spiritual resonance of worship through symbols, music, cultural sensitivity, inclusion, and more.

Bass, Dorothy C., ed. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998. This book contains twelve essays looking at practices ranging from "honoring the body" to "household economics" to "forgiveness" to "dying well" to "singing our lives."

Beach, George Kimmich. *Questions for the Religious Journey: Finding Your Own Path*. Skinner House Books, 2002. Based on the belief that "an authentic religion is a questioning religion," this book offers tools for religious introspection. Useful as a starting point and as a resource to revisit as our perspectives shift.

Bowens-Wheatley, Marjorie, and Nancy Palmer Jones, eds. *Soul Work: Anti-racist Theologies in Dialogue*. Skinner House Books, 2002. Papers and discussion transcripts from the UUA Consultation on Theology and Racism held in Boston in January 2001. Addresses such questions as: What theological or philosophical beliefs

bind us together in our shared struggle against racism? What are the costs of racism, both for the oppressors and the oppressed?

Brussat, Frederic, and Mary Ann Brussat. *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*. Touchstone, 1998. Attempting to answer the question of how to live a spiritual life each day, the Brussats present over 650 readings about daily life from present-day authors—spiritual teachers, essayists, novelists, filmmakers, poets, naturalists, and social activists. They also introduce their "spiritual alphabet"—from "attention" to "zeal."

Collins-Ranadive, Gail. *Finding the Voice Inside: Writing as a Spiritual Quest for Women*. Skinner House Books, 2002. Forty practical yet imaginative writing exercises invite women to explore their uniquely feminine spirituality. Includes writing samples, resources, and suggestions for tailoring the exercises to group and individual use.

DelBene, Ron. *The Breath of Life: A Simple Way to Pray*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005. The first of three books in the "Breath of Life" series, this one explores and explains the powerful practice of "breath prayer." (The other two books in the series are *The Hunger of the Heart* and *Alone with God*.)

DePew, Alfred. *Wild & Woolly: A Journal Keeper's Handbook*. Dog Star Press, 2004. A marvelously enjoyable book on journaling for those who might never consider keeping a journal.

Ford, James Ishmael. *In This Very Moment: A Simple Guide to Zen Buddhism*. Skinner House Books, 2002. The history, philosophy, and practice of Zen for beginners. Includes illustrative stories from Zen masters, helpful discussion of the different schools of Buddhist thought, instruction for sitting *shikantaza* (sitting Zen), and suggestions for newcomers.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. HarperOne, 1995. A classic look at faith development as an evolution through predictable stages.

Henry, Gray, and Susannah Marriott. *Beads of Faith: Pathways to Meditation and Spirituality Using Rosaries, Prayer Beads and Sacred Words*. Carroll & Brown, 2003. A beautifully illustrated book, *Beads of Faith* provides a look at prayer bead rituals from around the world and gives a flavor of these practices.

LeShan, Lawrence. *How to Meditate: A Guide to Self-Discovery*. Little, Brown and Company, 1999. A classic in the field, this was one of the first books to seek to articulate a "core teaching" of meditative technique, removed from the culture conditioning of any specific religious tradition.

Loori, John Daido. *The Eight Gates of Zen: A Program of Zen Training*. Shambhala, 2002. This book explores in detail the "eight gates" that provide the foundation upon which are built the "eight spheres" explored in this workshop series.

Montley, Patricia. *In Nature's Honor: Myths and Rituals Celebrating the Earth*. Skinner House Books, 2005. Artfully and thoroughly explores the eight solar holidays that mark the turning of the Wheel of the Year. Includes seasonal activities for individuals, families, and small-group worship, plus formal celebrations for congregations and classrooms.

Nieuwejaar, Jeanne Harrison. *The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children*. 2nd ed. Skinner House Books, 2003. Drawing from her personal stories and experiences, the author encourages parents to communicate their beliefs in words and in actions and to become part of a religious community that supports these beliefs. She offers ways to foster spiritual awareness in the home and includes practices for marking the many events in children's lives as religious occasions.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. *The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual on Meditation*. Beacon Press, 1999. Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese poet, Buddhist monk, and peace activist, has become one of the major communicators of Buddhism to the West. This book is a clear and concise guide to a number of different meditation practices.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. *Present Moment Wonderful Moment: Mindfulness Verses for Daily Living*. 2nd ed. Parallax Press, 2006. English translations (with commentary) of the *gathas*—short verses to help one practice mindfulness—used in Nhat Hanh's Vietnamese Buddhist tradition. This collection provides an excellent introduction to *gatha* practice, demonstrating the way one can make the most ordinary of daily activities into opportunities for mindfulness.

Richardson, Peter Tufts. *Four Spiritualities: Expressions of Self, Expressions of Spirit*. Davies-Black Publishing, 1996. In a very readable book, Richardson brings together insights from diverse spiritual traditions and modern psychology to explore the four primary spiritual paths, offering the reader the opportunity to discover his/her own authentic spirituality.

Smith, Martin L. *The Word Is Very Near You: A Guide to Praying with Scripture*. Cowley Publications, 1989. A very readable introduction to the history and modern expression of *lectio divina*, or "divine reading." Smith also includes scripture for meditation, grouping his selections into 30 themes.

Sonsino, Rifat. *Six Jewish Spiritual Paths: A Rationalist Looks at Spirituality*. Jewish Lights Publishing, 2002. An

exploration of six paths within the Jewish tradition that offer growth for the spirit.

Washington, James Melvin, ed. *Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans*. HarperPerennial, 1995. This collection—stretching from the 1700s through the 1990s—demonstrates the power and the poignancy of a voice that has often been silenced.

Wheatley, Margaret J. *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002. This wonderful book explores the power of simple conversation. The first half reminds us why this is so important; the second offers ten "conversation starters."

Wikstrom, Erik Walker. *Simply Pray: A Modern Spiritual Practice to Deepen Your Life*. Skinner House Books, 2005. Offers fresh answers to the age-old question, "Why pray?" and demonstrates how to create and use a prayer-bead practice of your own making.

Wiley, Eleanor, and Maggie Oman Shannon. *A String and a Prayer: How to Make and Use Prayer Beads*. Red Wheel, 2002. Another book looking at the history of beads as a tool for prayer and meditation. Includes a section on how to create your own bead practice—whether for the start of a new day, to memorialize a life, to celebrate a marriage, or to honor religious or political leaders.

Websites

[The Council on Spiritual Practices](#)—A collaboration among spiritual guides, experts in the behavioral and biomedical sciences, and scholars of religion, dedicated to making direct experience of the sacred more available to more people.

[Spirituality and Practice](#)—Created by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, authors of *Spiritual Literacy*, this site is an eclectic and useful resource.

[The Harmony Project](#)—A peace initiative founded by an interfaith minister, the goal of which is "to provide a learning platform for those who wish to grow stronger in the practice and demonstration of their own faith while honoring and appreciating the sacred in other spiritual paths."

[World Prayers](#)—A multicultural collection of prayers categorized as Adorations, Celebrations, Invocations, and Meditations. A unique feature is the "prayer wheel" that you can spin to randomly select a prayer.

[Holy Counting Beads](#)—Provides information on Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Baha'i use of beads.

[WorshipWeb](#)—A helpful online resource for Unitarian Universalists that covers everything from worship theory to readings for specific times in a service.

[Unitarian Universalist Spiritual Directors' Network](#)—A loose association of Unitarian Universalist clergy and laity who provide spiritual direction to others.

[Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation](#)—One of the leading trainers of ecumenical spiritual directors, the Shalem Institute maintains a geographical list of directors to aid the search for one.

[Links to Contemplative Spirituality Texts](#)—This page on the Shalem Institute's website provides a plethora of possibilities for further searching.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTES TO MYSELF (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Writing paper (at least one sheet per participant)
- Envelopes (one per participant)
- Pens or pencils (one per participant)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Make arrangements—on your own or with the congregation's office—to have participants' letters mailed out to them six months from the date of this workshop.

Description of Activity

Pass around the paper, envelopes, and pens or pencils. Say something like this:

Each of you should now take a few minutes to write yourself a letter—a letter from the person you are right now to the person that you'll be in six months' time. What experiences from these workshops do you want to remind yourself about? What have you learned that you want to make sure not to forget? What do you think you'll need encouragement with six months from now?

When participants have completed writing—or when ten minutes are up—have them put their letters into the envelopes, seal them, and address them to themselves. Collect the letters.

Including All Participants

Using a microphone helps participants hear your instructions.

Due to learning differences or personal preference, some participants may not enjoy writing. You can encourage these participants to draw pictures representing their experiences of the workshop, what

they have learned, and how they want to encourage their future selves.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORING THE SPHERES WITH PEERS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, at least eight sheets (one per potential group)
- Markers, at least eight (one per potential group)
- Optional: Microphone (preferably cordless)

Description of Activity

If the group is large enough, ask participants to form small groups around particular spheres of spiritual growth that they especially want to focus on in the year to come. Remind the group that the spheres are Personal Spiritual Practices, Communal Worship Practices, Spiritual Partnerships, Mind Practices, Body Practices, Soul Practices, Life Practices, and Justice Practices.

For instance, if there are several people who want to bring more "soul practices" into their lives, invite them meet together while those who want to explore "spiritual partnerships" gather in another group.

When the small groups have formed, give each group a marker and a sheet of newsprint. Invite them to discuss and/or brainstorm ways the individuals might more fully engage the sphere, or ways the group might collectively work on it. They could also come up with plans to help the entire congregation have more opportunities in this sphere.

When the groups have finished their work, provide a time for each group to report back to the larger group, sharing their ideas.

Including All Participants

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their small groups, allow some groups to leave the room and find a quieter space. You may wish to pass a cordless microphone when the small groups give their reports so that participants can hear one another better.

STORY: UNDERSTANDING THE ELEPHANT

Five people wearing blindfolds were once brought into a room in the middle of which stood an elephant. Each person was directed to a different part of the animal, and then all five were encouraged to explore and discover whatever they could.

The first person explored one of the elephant's legs. "This creature," she said, "is like a strong tree."

The second person was led to the elephant's tail. "No," he said, "it is like thick rope."

The third person was investigating the elephant's ear. "You're both wrong," he said. "It's like a giant palm leaf."

"No, no, no," said the fourth person, who was engaged with the elephant's trunk. "It is like a thick snake."

The fifth, who'd been led to the elephant's body, simply laughed to herself. "How can they all be so wrong?" she thought. "This thing is like a huge boulder."

The five argued with each other for some time—all certain that they were accurately describing what they were experiencing; none able to change the mind of even one of the others. At last they took off their blindfolds and discovered that each was right, and each was wrong. It was only when they combined their descriptions that they began to understand the elephant.

HANDOUT: DAILY, WEEKLY, MONTHLY, YEARLY

<i>During the Next Year I Will . . .</i>	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly
Personal Spiritual Practices				
Communal Worship Practices				
Spiritual Partnerships				
Mind Practices				
Body Practices				
Soul Practices				
Life Practices				
Justice Practices				

FIND OUT MORE

See the workshop's Taking it Home section for a list of resources for further study.