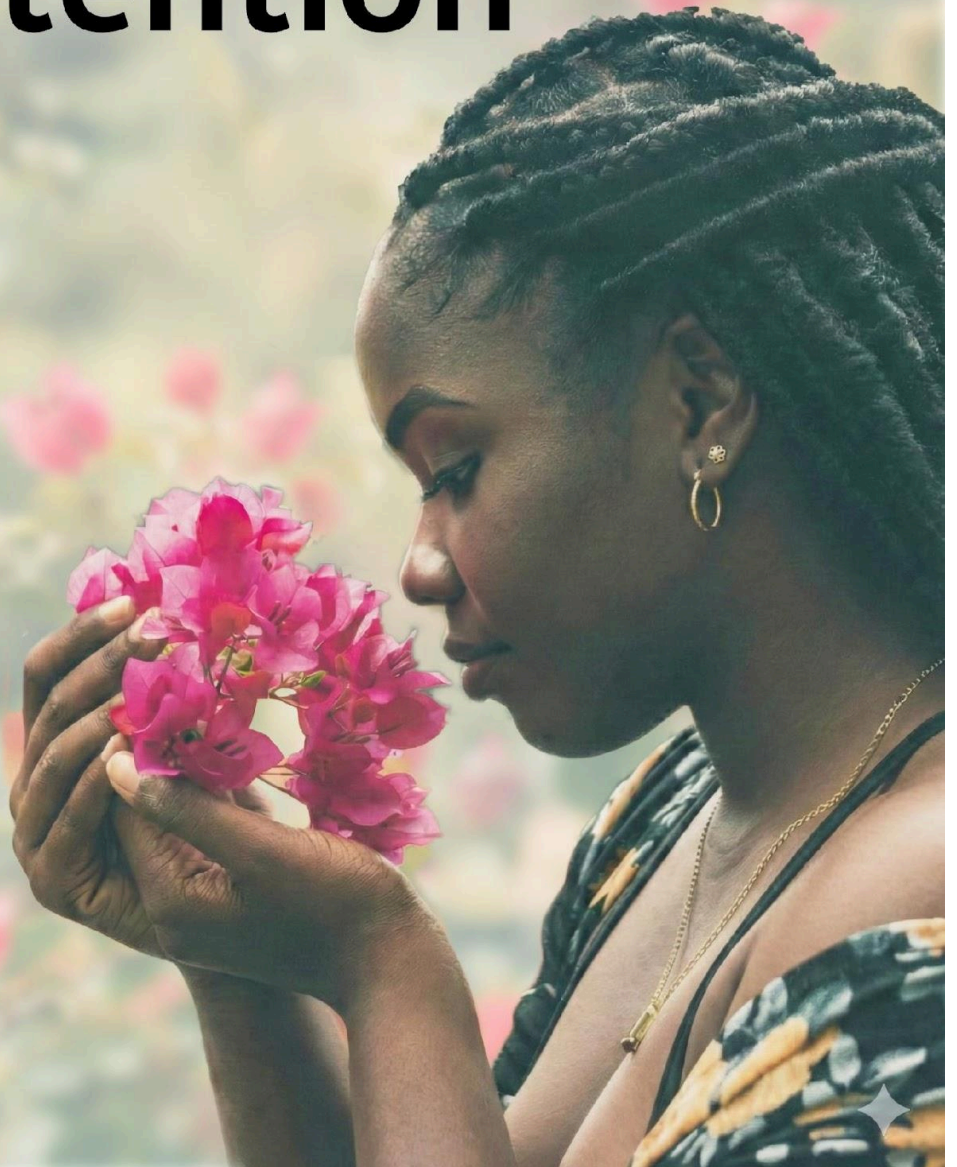




Soul Matters

Paying Attention



Worship Research
March 2026

Contents

Calendar Connections	1
Chalice Lightings & Opening Words	2
Meditations & Prayers	5
Music	8
Stories For All Ages	15
Sermon Seeds	16
Recommended Sermons	27
Closing & Chalice Extinguishing Words	29
Worship Leader Support	30

About Online Permissions, Research Focus & Referencing Resources

Online Permissions: We support multi-platform worship by researching material that is permissioned for online use. We identify the online-permissioned pieces we find with an asterisk by the title of the suggested resource. We also add a “permission source” note that explains the source of that online permission.

A Reminder About Partial Texts and *Pointing not Publishing*: To honor legal and relational standards, we do not include the full pieces of authors’ works unless we’ve received explicit permission to do so. We want all users to understand that these worship packets are research packets not publications, which means we focus on pointing to where you can find fair use and publicly available pieces, rather than on publishing original writings and full resources. Our main service to subscribers is theme-based *curation* and *research*, done in the service of saving professionals and lay leaders time.

A Note About Author Titles: Many of the authors we refer to are ministers. Some ministers prefer to be credited with their title “Rev.,” others don’t, and still others are fine either way. Our practice is to follow whatever practice was used in the source material we reference.

Calendar Connections

View our full-year calendar [HERE](#)

March 2026

Click on the hyperlinked names of each event for more information or inspiration.

Interfaith

- [Purim](#) begins (Jewish) - March 2-3, 2026 (more [here](#) & [here](#))
- [Holi](#) (Hindu) - March 4, 2026 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Ostara](#)/ Spring or the Vernal Equinox (Pagan/Wiccan) - March 20 (more [here](#))
- [Ramadan](#) (Islam) - Feb. 17 - March 19, 2026 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Eid al Fitr](#) - end of Ramadan (Islam) - March 19, 2026 (more [here](#))
- [The Annunciation](#) (Christian) - March 25
- [Lent](#) (Christian) - Feb. 18 - April 2, 2026
- [Palm Sunday](#) (Christian) - March 29, 2026

Unitarian Universalist

- [James Reeb](#) dies (1965) - March 11 (more [here](#) and [here](#).)
- [Susan B. Anthony](#)'s Death - March 13
- [Climate Justice](#) Month - March 22 to April 22
- [Viola Liuzzo](#) dies (1965) - March 25
- *Stewardship Season (in some congregations)*

National & Cultural

- [Women's History Month](#)
- [Irish American Heritage Month](#)
- [Peace Corps Established](#) - March 1 (1961)
- [Season for Nonviolence](#) - Jan. 30 - April 4
- [International Women's Day](#) - March 8 (more [here](#))
- [Harriet Tubman Day](#) - March 10
- [St. Patrick's Day](#) - March 17
- [World Water Day](#) - March 22
- Archbishop [Oscar Romero](#) dies - March 24 (1980)
- Selma–Montgomery March (1965) - [March 7](#) (first) [March 9](#) (second) & [March 21-25](#) (third)
- Death of [Ida B. Wells](#) - March 25 (1931)
- [International Transgender Day of Visibility](#) - March 31 (more [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe

- [National Day of Unplugging](#) - first Friday of March / Mar. 2
- [Pi Day](#) - March 14
- Everything You Think is Wrong [Day](#) - March 15

Chalice Lightings & Opening Words

Call to Presence *

Rev. Bob Janis-Dillon

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Here within these walls,
here in this community of love and justice,
we pause in our busy lives,
to consider what is worthy of our
deepest yearnings.

In the time we are given here,
may we pay attention to wonder of each moment,
may we grieve what is lost,
and may we be grateful
for our life on this beautiful earth,

and may we prepare ourselves
for the work love calls us to do.
Just as we are,
may we be the beloved community.

May our attention be befriended, directed, and sustained...*

Lóre Stevens

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

With this chalice,
may we kindle the flame of our attention.
Not too fiery or wild,
spreading without cause or care.
Not too dim or fading,
unfocused and ineffective.
But, like a cheerful cookfire in a cozy hearth,
like a comforting candle, flickering yet steady,
may our attention be befriended, directed, and sustained
for the betterment of all humankind.

To Practice the Revolutionary Act of Noticing *

Rev. Michelle Collins

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Come, awaken your senses to this moment,
where we practice the revolutionary act of noticing:
the breath that sustains us,
the beauty hiding in ordinary hours,
the small things that keep hope alive.
Come, let us train our attention

on that which leads us home.

Everywhere We Walk *

Rev. Scott Tayler

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We kindle this light
to help us look upon the world anew.
May it help us remember
that reverent eyes lead to revelation.
In the glow of this hour,
may attention be our prayer,
the vehicle through which we love this world,
and enable it to love us back.

The Beauty of Just Getting to Be *

Rev. Scott Tayler

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Let go.
Let go of those worries that push you into the future.
Let go of your regrets that pull you into the past.
Let go of your judgements that focus you on what's missing rather than what's being offered.
Let go of your perfected plans that blind you to the wildness of the world.
Let go, so you can be here,
so you can notice,
finally,
the sweet stillness
that wants to lure and love you
into the beauty
of just
getting to be.

We Practice Being Called *

Samantha Lynne Wilson

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/we-practice-being-called>

[Permission Source](#)

Choosing to focus our attention is countercultural.
Daily, we are called to worship
at the altar of many devices,
surveillance systems we let take lead...
headlines set purely on our activation...
we are entrapped.
Instead, here...
We are called to bring our attention
to the altar of unpredictable human relatedness.
We are called to focus all our attention on
a foolhardy and open-hearted commitment
to share a future together we cannot cancel nor control...

To Remind Ourselves What Is Real *

Elena Westbrook

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/remind-ourselves-what-real>
[Permission Source](#)

...sometimes the only thing we can do
is be still for a moment
to remind ourselves what is real:
the sun that rose this morning,
the dirt under our feet...
This hour, try just to be present in each moment as it unfolds.
Your simple attention is what makes these moments holy.

To Love Life *

Rev. Daniel Chesney Kanter

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/to-love-life>
[Permission Source](#)

To love life is to notice the wonders that abound
And
To notice the wonders that abound
Is to be grounded here and now...

For Spring Equinox *

Lóre Stevens

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Our flaming chalice holds both light and dark:
simply by being lit it casts shadow.
The spring equinox reminds us of that balance.
We need both brightness and shade,
warmth and cold.
Just as some seeds can only sprout after being frozen,
may our hearts honor both the frost and the thaw.

Meditations & Prayers

Prayer for Attention to Ourselves *

Rev. Michelle Collins

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Spirit of Truth,
We come seeking the courage to see ourselves clearly.
Not the selves we perform for others,
not the selves we wish we were,
but the actual landscape of our hearts;
the fears we dress as principles,
the exhaustion we ignore,
the joy we rush past without naming.

Teach us to notice what stirs in us without shame or hurry.
Help us befriend our limits as sacred boundaries,
to track what makes us alive and what drains us dry,
to honor our body's wisdom when it whispers.

May we grow gentle and honest in our own presence,
learning to see ourselves as we are held:
beloved, finite, and becoming.

Who We Listen to is Who We Become*

Rev. Scott Taylor

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Let us turn inward in the spirit of prayer and meditation.
Sometimes the world outside us can be so loud,
making it hard to hear those voices we once knew so well,
voices that once knew *us* so well.
And so to silence we turn, to listen for
the echoes of memories that make us whole,
the pain of others that reawakens our hearts,
and the beauty of this wildly generous world that wants us back.

This is the attention that saves us, heals us, opens us, expands us.

So, friends, in the stillness of this space,
let us not just listen for clarity and guidance,
but to become larger.

Those voices, whispering from deep within, are not just calling us home; they are home.
We must remember this: What we give our attention to is what we become.

Yes, sometimes the world outside us can be so loud, leaving us lost.
But the quiet always remains,
waiting and willing to be our companion,
gently calling us
to shift our attention,

and reclaim ourselves.

Silence is Not a Punishment *

Lóre Stevens

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Our culture is loud. It clamors and clangs for our attention.

We're told to be silent when we misbehave.

"Go to time out and think about what you did."

Silence starts to make us nervous.

Our mind learns to also clamor and clang.

But silence is not a punishment. It's peace.

Silence can be a warm blanket,

a listening friend,

a channel for the ever-flowing river of Love.

Let us open our hearts for a few moments

in this precious silence.

Prayer for Attention to One Another *

Rev. Michelle Collins

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Ground of All Being,

In this room and beyond it, we are learning to see each other.

Not the quick assessments, not the categories,

but the full, complicated truth of each and every life.

Help us offer the gift of undivided presence -

to listen without planning our reply,

to make space for stories that take time to unfold,

to ask who is missing from here and why.

When we accompany those in pain, keep us from the tyranny of fixing.

Teach us to stay while the crisis passes by, to show up in the unglamorous middle.

May we become communities where every voice matters,

where margins become centers,

where attention itself is love made visible.

Meditation on Attention *

Nancy Reid-McKee

Full piece found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/meditation-attention>

[Permission Source](#)

Pay attention to where you are right now....

You are here, in this community

In this sanctuary...

On this beautiful blue planet

Whirling through the tailspin of a galaxy...

You exist. You are breathing...

You have a holy spark inside you

You are here now. You are paying attention.

Blessed be.

Bring Us Close to the Earth *

Rev. Lyn Cox

Full prayer found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/prayer-union>
[Permission Source](#)

Ground of our being...
Bring us close to the earth,
Ear to the whispering grass,
Quietly,
Attentively,
Waiting with slow breaths,
Listening for the very stones to cry out...
Help us to re-member.
Help us to piece together
Our one-ness with matter,
Our one-ness that matters...

A Tonglen Meditation *

Lóre Stevens

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

A meditation directing our attention to the suffering of others.

Found at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1muHowaqSWb2r5i2OrDusAPutjv0o3bePoViFHF-cazl/edit?usp=sharing>

Body Scan Meditation *

Lóre Stevens

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

I invite you into a body scan meditation. You may close your eyes or let them rest low, as you wish. Settle deeper into your body, into this moment.

Focus your attention on the parts of the body which are closest to the Earth. Scan your attention slowly upwards.
[Hold the quiet for several moments.]

Focus your attention in the center of the body, where air becomes breath, where what is not you becomes you, where the line between blurs in a flow without ceasing. Scan your attention slowly upwards.
[Hold the quiet for several moments.]

Focus your attention at the top of the body, where feeling becomes thought and thought becomes action, where action begins to change the world.
[Hold the quiet for several moments.]

Now that we have enjoyed the quiet, connected to our bodies, and noticed how we are connected to the world around us, may we remember that connection with every breath.

All at Once (A poem to use as a meditation)

Eve Driver

Full poem found at <https://emergencemagazine.org/poem/this-vast-artifice/>

It is all blooming too quickly to write a poem about it
I cannot blink enough times and still see everything that needs to be added

To the list of beautiful things...

Music

Suggestions For March 2026 - “Paying Attention”

from Soul Matters Music Resources Coordinator, [Adam O’Dell](#)

Musical Musings of the Month – “The Here and Now”

With our music recommendations now being released on [a quarterly schedule](#) as well as monthly in each worship packet, I realize my reflections are also coming together in something of a neatly packaged quarterly narrative. In this case, I am talking a lot about how my life and music ministry has changed with the presence of ICE in my community. It’s very easy to talk about the negative and the dystopian when it comes to this topic. For instance, a recent example of me *paying attention* was watching for ICE vehicles in my neighborhood while our local kids went out trick or treating. It’s horrible that Halloween ICE patrols even had to exist, but what came out of that patrol was anything but horrible. I was paying attention to the cars passing by, looking for large, shiny, new domestic vehicles with tinted windows (which their agents tend to drive), and thankfully, we didn’t have any confirmed sightings.

I just so happened to be stationed on a corner with a beloved local street vendor. Initially concerned, he asked if I had seen any agents, and after confirming it had been all clear, we started talking. He asked how I identify vehicles, how I send warnings, and eventually, we started asking questions about each other. He’s been in Chicago for 10 years. He has a daughter going through school, and she’s a talented artist for her age. I had personally never met him before Halloween, but everyone who passed by greeted him by name, and he returned a greeting in kind. He would then jump to tell people about how there was a neighborhood patrol as he gestured to me, and I found myself meeting more and more of my neighbors (with my intermediate-at-best Spanish). Yes, I was paying attention to the cars passing by, but more and more, I was paying attention to neighbors I hadn’t met before. A horrible thing influenced how I spent my Halloween, but Halloween itself was beautiful.

Paying attention does so much. Used well, it creates so much more than it costs. I did it for two hours, and it meant the world to hundreds of my neighbors, which in turn meant the world to me. It therefore doesn’t surprise me that “the Broligarchy” is a bunch of tech billionaires who prey on our attention. Our attention is so valuable and so meaningful that selfish people will spend millions, if not billions of dollars to keep it. What happens when we don’t let them? What happens when we pay attention to the outside world when it matters, then spend the rest of it focusing on our communities and the people and causes for whom we can create change?

As I program for this March theme, I’m thinking about how music can keep us in the here and now, how a good choir piece can bring singers into the same mind, how a hymn can center a room... Music draws our attention, not just to itself, but to the subject of its art. It can shine a light on the people, places, and causes that suffer in the darkness of ignorance. Where might we shine our lights during this time?

- Adam

Hymns

#	Title	Style Notes	Singability		Permissions
4	I Brought My Spirit to the Sea	Flowing, Transcendental	4	H/SL	Permissions Granted
14	The Sun at High Noon	Flowing, Graceful, Transcendental	3	H/SL	Permissions Granted
20	Be Thou My Vision	Traditional, Uplifting, Action	5	H/SL	Permissions Granted Harmony: One License
37	God Who Fills the Universe	Traditional, Mystical	3	H/SL	UUA Permissions Granted
88	Calm Soul of All Things	Centering, Tallis' Canon	5	H/SL	Public Domain
94	What Is This Life	Simple, Meditative	4	H/R/SL	Public Domain
128	For All That Is Our Life	Comforting, Pop	4	SL	Music: UUA Permissions Granted Lyrics: Public Domain
159	This Is My Song	Flowing, Prayerful	5	H	L/M: Public Domain Arr.: One License
203	All Creatures of the Earth and Sky	Uplifting, Traditional	4	H	Public Domain
207	Earth Was Given as a Garden	Transcendental, Hyfrydol	5	H/SL	M: Public Domain L: No known copyright holder
292	If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking	Haunting, Meditative	2	H/SL	Music: No known copyright Lyrics: Public Domain
300	With Heart and Mind	Chorale, Aspirational	5	H	See note
	permission granted if written credit is given as follows: "Lyrics by Alicia S. Carpenter, © 1990; used with permission of the Estate of Alicia Carpenter."				
311	Let It Be a Dance	Upbeat, Folk	3	SL	Permission Granted if not performed for profit
318	We Would Be One	Traditional, Aspirational	5	H	Music and Lyrics: Public Domain Arrangement: One License
348	Guide My Feet	Strength, Compassion, Spiritual	5	R/SL	Public Domain
359	When We Are Gathered	Flowing, Simple, Present	4	H/SL	UUA Permissions Granted
369	This Is the Truth That Passes Understanding	Mystical, Haunting, Transcendental	4	H/SL	Permissions Granted
391	Voice Still and Small	Prayerful, Bittersweet	4	H	Permissions Granted. Must sing "dark and rain," not "storm and rain"
398	To See the World	Lush, Transcendental	3		Public Domain
412	Let Hope and Sorrow Now Unite	Gently rocking, memorial	4	H/SL	Lyrics: One License Music: Public Domain

1000	Morning Has Come	Expansive, Celebratory	3	SL	Permissions Granted
1001	Breaths	Swaying, Prayerful, Ancestry	3	R/SL	Words and Music: Permissions Granted. Arrangement: Copyright unknown/unclear.
1003	Where Do We Come From?	Driving, Looping	5	R	CCS
1009	Meditation on Breathing	Meditative, In the Round	5	R/SL	Permissions Granted
1011	Return Again	Simple, Haunting, In the Round	5	R/SL	CCS
1013	Open My Heart	Simple, Prayerful, In the Round	4	R/SL	Permissions Granted. Email flurry@henryflurry.com when used.
1024	When the Spirit Says Do	Upbeat, Civil Rights	3	SL	M&L: Public Domain Arrangement: UUA Permissions Granted
1031	Filled with Loving Kindness	Slow, Simple, Meditative	4	H/R/SL	Permissions granted
1051	We Are...	Rhythmic, Meditative	4	H/SL	CCS
1052	The Oneness of Everything	Ballad, Wonder	2	SL	Offering requested: donate via Jim Scott's Website
1067	Mother Earth, Beloved Garden	Transcendental, Swaying	3	H/SL	UUA Permissions Granted

Singability Score Key

All congregations are different, but this score is intended to provide basic, subjective guidance on hymn selection and leadership, especially for hymns you or the congregation are less familiar with.

5 - Very Easy	4 - Easy	3 - Average	2 - Hard	1 - Very Hard	H	R	SL
Little to no help needed	Weak singers may need help (usually because of range)	Average singers may need some help	Guidance recommended	Best for soloist or small group	Use Hymnal	Teach by Rote	Use Song Leader

Permissions Key

Hymns where the permissions column is highlighted in GREEN typically do NOT require additional copyright for the average UU congregation.		
Hymns labeled "Public Domain" require no licensing or other further action to use for in-person worship, live streaming, or online recording/archiving.	Hymns labeled "UUA permissions granted" may be used for in-person worship, live streaming, and online recording/archiving, assuming you have legally obtained copies of the UU hymnals.	Hymns labeled "Permissions granted" may be used for in-person worship, live streaming, and online recording/archive. The copyright owner may request an additional donation.
Hymns where the permissions column is highlighted in YELLOW require a copyright license, typically One License or CCS. It is your responsibility to obtain the appropriate license for in person worship, live streaming, and/or online recording/archiving.		Hymns where the permissions column is highlighted in RED require separate copyright permissions for use. Information for securing the copyright will be made available in this packet, but it is your responsibility to obtain permission from the holder.

For more information on permissions and licensing, please consult the [UUA Hymn and Reading Permissions](#).

Choral/Vocal Suggestions

Title	Composer	Voicing	Style Notes
The Peace of Wild Things	Joan Szymko	SATB, SSAA	Rapturous, Prayerful, Centering
Even Here	Mark Miller	SATB	Simple, Prayerful, Theistic
There Will Come Soft Rains	Matt Podd	SATB	Uplifting, Flowing
The Turn Off Your Phone Song	Pachelbel/Podd Brothers	Various	Humorous, Introduction, Canon
Blithe Spirit	Nathan Howe	Two-part	Whimsy, Soaring, Gentle
Listening	Lea Morris	SATB	Simple, Prayerful, Soul/Folk

Instrumental Suggestions

Title	Composer	Instrumentation	Keywords
Solitude	Nahre Sol	Piano	Simple, Meditative
Yuzin (and others from EUSA)	Yann Tiersen	Piano	Minimalist, Centering
Hush	Craig Armstrong	Piano	Spacious, Calming
Tender Thought	Ulysses Kay	Piano	Simple, Melodic
In Quiet Mood	Florence Price	Organ	Hymn-like, Ethereal

Contemporary Suggestions - *If you are streaming your services/are hybrid, please note that all copyright permissions are your responsibility to obtain*

- “Elephant Talk” by King Crimson
- “Enjoy the Silence” by Depeche Mode
- “Children Will Listen” by Stephen Sondheim
- “All Things Must Pass” by George Harrison
- “Be Here Now” by George Harrison
- “Be Here Now” by Osmunda Music
- “Awake” by Josh Groban
- “Cat’s in the Cradle” by Harry Chapin

***Important Note:** The artists listed above generally are the performers of the works and not always/necessarily the songwriters, please do your due diligence in seeking out crediting info. Many of the above songs can be found on JWPepper, MusicNotes.com and the Chords/Tabs for most of the above can be found here:*

[Ultimate Guitar - Ukulele Chords/Tabs - Free to Transpose - Chordify](#)

Additional Resources

Soul Matters Playlist of the Month

We make a thematic playlists - on [Spotify](#) and [YouTube](#) - for our small group packets each month. They are organized as a journey and personal musical meditation. We share them here in case music leaders want to use them in worship.

Click [here](#) for the **Spotify playlist** on Paying Attention

Click [here](#) for the **YouTube playlist** on Paying Attention

Music for Online Worship from UUA

These videos may be used in online and recorded worship services by Unitarian Universalist congregations. The music that follows does not require additional permission for online use. However, be sure to provide full attribution to the composers and lyricists on your screens, not just verbally, for each piece that you incorporate into worship.

These videos are intended to lighten the burdens imposed by online worship. They should not be used to justify decreasing the wages or positions of professional music staff.

- **“Spirit of Life”** ([GoogleDrive](#)) (#123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; music and words by Carolyn McDade, harmony by Grace Lewis-McLaren.) Choral arrangement by Nylea L. Butler-Moore. Video by the UU Virtual Singers of the Unitarian Church of Los Alamos, NM; Nylea Butler-Moore, Music Director; Rick Bolton, AV Engineer. If you use this video, please email Nylea at nyleab@uulosalamos.org. [Pay-what-you-can](#) to the Unitarian Church of Los Alamos.
- **“Meditation on Breathing”** ([Vimeo](#)) (words & music by Sarah Dan Jones; #1009 in *Singing the Journey*). Performed by Mary Pratt and Rev. Jim Magaw, UU Church of the South Hills, Pittsburgh PA. [Pay-what-you-can](#); choose “non-pledge collections” and leave a note in the comments section.
- **“Blue Boat Home”** ([YouTube](#)) (words by Peter Mayer; #1064 in *Singing the Journey*). Created by Paul Thompson (Music Director at the UU Church of the Palouse, Moscow ID). Please make a [pay-what-you-can donation](#).
- **“Ancient Mother”** ([YouTube](#)) (traditional Navajo prayer; #1069 in *Singing the Journey*). Performed by Susan T. Mashiyama.
- **“My Roots Go Down”** ([YouTube](#), by Sarah Pirtle, who wrote this song during a UU women’s retreat in the 1970s. Video by Rev. Christopher Watkins Lamb and Kara Shobe. [Read donation guidelines](#).
- **“Meditation”** ([YouTube](#)), written and arranged by Darrell Courtley and performed by Darrell and his wife, Mary Courtley. This would be appropriate for a time of quiet reflection. If you use this video, please notify Darrell at atdcourtley@gmail.com. [Pay-what-you-can](#) to the Morristown UU Fellowship.

Music Resources from the Soul Matters Community

This section is dedicated to showcasing the work of musicians within our community who have created resources based on Soul Matters themes. Check back frequently to see if new resources have been made available, and support the work of your fellow UU musicians! If you’d like to submit your resource, email soulmattersmusic@gmail.com

- Sharon Sholl has created a number of songs based on each year’s Soul Matters themes. You can download them for free at freeprintmusic.com

Soul Matters Music Leader Support

In addition to monthly music suggestions in our worship packets, we support subscribing music leaders with a number of other means of support:

Monthly Online “Music Matters Collaborative Coaching Calls”

These calls meet on the **second Tuesday of every month at 2pm ET/1pm CT/noon MT/11am PT.**

Whereas our monthly music zoom calls used to focus on sharing music ideas and repertoire, now they will focus on the higher-level issues involved in running music ministries. Adam O’Dell, our Soul Matters Music Coordinator, facilitates the calls and brings resources and ideas as needed, but this is primarily intended as a time for the Soul Matters music community to discuss common challenges and share/generate meaningful solutions!

We hope that this transition will be more in line with the needs of our community, and that the introduction of our new [Music Suggestion Google Form](#) will allow our community to share repertoire selections quickly and easily, and without the barrier of needing to attend live calls which may conflict with other work obligations.

Recordings of these monthly music collaborative coaching calls will be available [HERE](#).

No need to sign up in advance, just join as you are able using this Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Quarterly Music Packets *NEW!*

To help those of you who do significantly advanced music planning, we are creating what we are calling [Quarterly Music packets](#). Each Quarterly Music packet will contain 3-4 months of music suggestions, allowing you to plan much farther in advance. As they are completed, they are posted to your online archive labeled as *2025-26 Quarterly Music Packets*. You can also access them by [clicking here](#).

Soul Matters Music Leader Support Facebook Group

We also have a Soul Matters Musicians Facebook group. This is for on-going sharing among Soul Matters musicians, as well as a place where we share announcements about packets, new music resources and music-related webinars. Click [HERE](#) to view and join.

Stories For All Ages

The below wisdom tale and story book recommendations come from our March Lower and Upper Elementary RE Packets. So be sure to coordinate your use of them with your RE Leader. The wisdom tales are hyperlinked because we've given each wisdom tale its own downloadable document. This makes it easier for you to distribute to your leaders and easier for leaders to use as script.

Wisdom Tales (from the upper elementary packet)

- [What's In Your Cup?](#)
- [The Frog Prince](#)
- [Emily Stowe](#)
- [Lucy Stone](#)
- [The Framers' Luck](#)
- [Wash Your Bowl](#)
- [What if Water is God](#)
- [The Cracked Pot](#)
- [Listen to Your Heart](#)
- [The Lion and the Mouse](#)

Story Books (from the lower elementary & one room schoolhouse packet)

- Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed by Emily Pearson
- Stick and Stone by Beth Ferry
- [The Starfish Thrower](#)
- Malala's Magic Pencil by Malala Yousafzai
- Moody Cow by Kerry Lee MacLean
- What Does it Mean to Be Present? by Rana DiOrio
- All the Water in the World by George Ella Lyon
- Save Water Every Day by Mari Schuh
- Listening to My Body by Gabi Garcia
- Wisdom Within by Allison Morgan

An Extra One

- [The Hungry Coat](#)
The folks at the feast seem to only pay attention to what Nasrudin is wearing rather than his character and who he is as a person.

Sermon Seeds

Angles, Ideas & Twists To Get Your Sermon Started!

Don't forget to explore our small group packet for additional sermon seeds. It contains quotes and poems to enhance your sermon, as well as numerous sermon angles in the questions and the spiritual exercises.

Permissions Notes: In addition to the pieces we've noted as permissioned for online use (marked with an asterisk*), you can use the fair use sized quotes and fair use sized portions of longer pieces in your sermons/services. Pay attention to the hyperlinks we include within titles and authors' names; these hyperlinks provide the source material and direction for you to hunt down permissions on your own.

On the Life & Death Importance of Reclaiming Our Attention

Quote - [Oliver Burkeman](#)

Your experience of being alive consists of nothing other than the sum of everything to which you pay attention. At the end of your life, looking back, whatever compelled your attention from moment to moment is simply what your life will have been. So when you pay attention to something you don't especially value, it's not an exaggeration to say that you're paying with your life.

Quote - [Franz Kafka](#)

Evil is whatever distracts.

Video - [Is Our Attention for Sale?](#), James Williams

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSaybP1UivQ>

Podcast - [Your Mind Is Being Fracked](#), The Ezra Klein Show

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihGEL8ICXVM>

On how the attention economy is extracting our attention and the efforts to resist it.

Essay - [Powerful Forces Are Fracking Our Attention. We Can Fight Back.](#)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/24/opinion/attention-economy-education.html>

"We are witnessing the dark side of our new technological lives, whose extractive profit models amount to the systematic fracking of human beings: pumping vast quantities of high-pressure media content into our faces to force up a spume of the vaporous and intimate stuff called attention, which now trades on the open market. Increasingly powerful systems seek to ensure that our attention is never truly ours... The moment has come for a new and parallel revolution against the dishonest expropriation of value from you and me and, most visibly of all, our children. We need a new kind of resistance, equal to the little satanic mills that live in our pockets. This is going to require attention to attention, and dedicated spaces to learn (or relearn) the powers of this precious faculty..."

Quote - [Justine Toh](#)

Our entire attention economy is organized around helping us avoid the demands of other people. How many of us have retreated to the comfort of our screens to soothe our social anxiety, or to numb the guilt we feel at failing to show up for people? It turns out that the loss of our focus and ability to concentrate is just the tip of the attentional iceberg. Also at stake is our ability to be present to the people we love, and even to be present to ourselves – and our pain.

Quote - William James

My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice shape my mind.

Quote - Ezra Klein

When we cede control of our attention, we cede more than what we are looking at now. We cede, to some degree, control over what we will care about tomorrow.

Essay - A Life of Depth in an Age of Distraction: William James on the Art of Attention, J.W. Bertolotti

<https://medium.com/perennial/a-life-of-depth-in-an-age-of-distraction-william-james-on-the-art-of-attention-43da9cabd827>

“I pick up my phone to check one thing: the weather. A text. The time. A few minutes later, I’m somewhere else entirely—reading something I didn’t intentionally choose, feeling something I didn’t ask for, carrying a faint agitation into the next task.

Nothing dramatic happened. But something important did: my attention got spent in tiny, almost invisible ways—like loose change disappearing one coin at a time. William James—the American philosopher and psychologist—helps explain why this feels so costly. He teaches us that distraction isn’t only a productivity problem. It’s a formation problem... your life isn’t only what happens to you. It’s what you let in. It’s what you linger on...”

Essay - The truth about distraction, Oliver Burkman

<https://www.oliverburkeman.com/distraction> (Go deeper with [this article](#) and [this book](#))

“If there’s a “war for our attention” – as we’re often told – our role often seems to be that of collaborators with the enemy.

At first glance, that’s really odd: why would it feel so unpleasant to do something you do care about that you’d prefer to seek out distractions, which by definition are things you don’t care about? The answer, at the most general level, is that you’re fleeing a disturbing emotional experience... Meaningful work stretches you, bringing you up against the edge of your talent. Difficult conversations are difficult because you don’t get to control how they’ll unfold. Boredom descends whenever you wish something was happening other than what’s happening now, and can’t do anything about it... This is why most anti-distraction hacks – web-blocking apps, noise-canceling headphones, personal rules – never seem to work very well... they don’t address the unpleasantness itself. They’re not entirely useless. But if you can’t bear the fact that a given activity causes discomfort, shutting down Twitter won’t solve that problem. You’ll just find something else to do (stare out of the window, go and get a snack) to avoid the unpleasantness instead...”

Book - The Sirens' Call: How Attention Became the World's Most Endangered Resource, Christopher L. Hayes

- Book review:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/29/books/review/superbloom-nicholas-carr-the-sirens-call-chris-hayes.html>
“What Hayes offers in “The Sirens’ Call” is an ambitious analysis of how the trivial amusements offered by online life have degraded not only our selves but also our politics...”
- Podcast with the Author:
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/attention-pays-with-chris-hayes/id1081584611?i=1000685636551>
“If we no longer have meaningful conscious control over our attention, at some point, we do reach a level of passivity that makes us more of an object than a person.”

Sermon Anecdote - Daniel Goleman: Focus and Compassion Experiment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxtQXLezIvA>

On how busyness short-circuits our ability to attend to human pain.

Quote - Fredrik Backman, from *Anxious People*

The truth of course is that if people really were as happy as they look on the Internet, they wouldn't spend so much damn time on the Internet, because no one who's having a really good day spends half of it taking pictures of themselves. Anyone can nurture a myth about their life if they have enough manure, so if the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence, that's probably because it's full of shit.

Reflection - So Much Noise, So Little Song, Adam Wilson

<https://peasantry.school.substack.com/p/so-much-noise-so-little-song>

"Inky-black morning. Cloud cover holds back the dawn, the on-rushing-ness of the coming day. I hear the tap of rain drops on leaves. Then quiet. But there is almost always someone singing into the silence. Not screaming but singing. Lone Cricket clicks just below the open window. Rhythmic and metallic, he draws my ears out and into the meadow. If you haven't heard the pre-dawn pulse of a high-summer meadow, I pray that you are so blessed in your days..."

Poem - How To Be Dead, Lisa Owens Viani

Full poem at <https://janicefalls.wordpress.com/2025/06/11/how-to-be-dead-by-lisa-owens-viani/>

Do not feel
the sun cascading
on your shoulders
like a warm waterfall
as you walk...
Do not pet every dog
you see on your walk
from the friendliest
pitbull "Petey" to the joyful
ball-obsessed cocker spaniel.
Do not listen to exquisite
music in one ear, birdsong
in the other.
Refuse to feel
the sweetness of it all.

Quote - David Abram, From *The Spell of the Sensuous*

Only by giving primary value to the full-bodied world of our face-to-face-and face-to-place-encounters, do we have a chance of maneuvering wisely, and well, among the many other worlds that now claim our attention. Only by really opening and offering ourselves to the local earth - unplugging ourselves from the digital thrall and stepping out to wander and bask in the scents drifting up from the night river, allowing the intersecting tones of this land (of its denizens and its solitudes) to recalibrate our organism - only thus do we begin to come to our senses and start to reckon the worthy use, and the misuse, of all our technologies. For we are human only in contact, and in conviviality, with what is not human.

On Becoming What We Give Our Attention To

Quote - [Dr. Rick Hanson](#)

Your attention is like a combination spotlight and vacuum cleaner: It highlights what it lands on and then sucks it into your brain—for better or worse.

Quote - [StoryPeople](#)

I once had a garden filled with flowers that grew only on dark thoughts but they need constant attention & one day I decided I had better things to do.

Quote - Rev. Anne Mason

What are we listening for? The prophet from Galilee taught that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. If money is our treasure, our ability to listen will be shaped by that. What is your treasure? And how has that shaped your heart? If that is a difficult question to answer, think about where you focus your attention. For truly, it matters what - or who - we pay attention to. Our heart drives us to notice - but when our attention is pulled in too many directions, do we even recognize what our heart is telling us? Traditional wisdom tells us that where our attention is, our heart will follow. I'm finding that where my heart is, there is my attention also. When I cultivate my heart, I must cultivate my attention."

On Attention's Power to Make the World Come Alive

Quote - [Robin Wall Kimmerer](#), from *Braiding Sweetgrass*

The land is the real teacher. All we need as students is mindfulness. Paying attention is a form of reciprocity with the living world, receiving the gifts with open eyes and open heart. My job was just to lead them into the presence and ready them to hear.

Quote - [Morgan Day Cecil](#)

As a yoga teacher I (@morgandaycecil) teach that love begins and ends in the act of paying attention. We give so much love to our mobile devices and our screens. What if we shared some of that with other things in our life? What would happen if for one month we set the intention together to pay a little less attention to the exciting things happening online, and a little more attention to the wonderful, quieter things happening in our heart?

Quote/Poem/Reading - *Just Be Here with Me*, [Morgan Day Cecil](#)

Just Be Here with Me.

Signed: The moon. The stars. Your still-hot-cup-of-coffee. Your daughter. Your son. Your spouse. Your heart. The green grass. The wild flowers. The waters you long to swim in. The color yellow. The color blue. Your favorite poem. Your favorite blanket. The wind in your hair. The waves on the ocean. The mountain air. Your dad. Your mom. The rain. The ice-cream cone. The butter sizzling with garlic in the frying pan. The grocery clerk with sad, kind eyes. Postcards waiting to be sent. The city squirrel. The country squirrel. Jupiter. The photo album. Your grandmother's rosary. Your favorite song. Ink and paper. Your best friend. The money in your wallet. The fork in your hand. Brushes and paint. Downward Facing Dog. The color turquoise. The almost invisible shade of pink. God. The skyline. The earth beneath your feet. A hammock. The shade of a giant tree. This moment, right here, now. Your bones. Your belly laugh. Your breath. Your breath. Your breath.

Quote - Christine Valters Paintner

When you encounter beauty in the world you drop out of goal-consciousness and into witness-consciousness. To see beauty and truly receive it means to be caught in a moment of savoring.

Reflection/Reading - The Redwood, Jeanne Foster

Found in [Falling into the Sky](#) (pg.8), a UUA worship resource & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

"I doused the fire and crawled into the tent, into my sleeping bag, and put my ear to the ground... I heard, down through the earth, the roots of the redwood strain and groan... I was unforgettably spoken to by this voice from deep below ground, the song of the redwood roots. The tree ceased to be an "It," and the tree and I vibrated together in the dark, somewhere below language. In the "Thou" I said to the tree, I somehow addressed the eternal Thou-that interdependent web of all existence. In the groaning of the roots, I heard the song of the universe..."

Quote - [Joyce Rupp](#)

When I take a deep breath and pull in the reins of my "hurry" I begin to find the numinous everywhere. I notice the soft breeze and how it caresses, soothes, and quiets me. I look out the window beyond my desk and I see not just trees, I see how they behold the sun and receive the nurturance offered to them. I speak with someone on the phone and I hear not just a person's voice, but also the bond of life that connects us... This awareness is essential because my experience of the cosmic dance depends on whether my senses are alert and whether my heart is attuned to looking beyond what is visible. If I rely only on the rational, I will miss a good portion of the cosmic dance. If I fail to be still and to explore the far regions of mystery, the dance will remain aloof from my inner eye.

Quote/Reading - [Annie Dillard](#)

The secret of seeing is, then, the pearl of great price. If I thought he could teach me to find it and keep it forever I would stagger barefoot across and hundred deserts after any lunatic at all. But although the pearl may be found, it may not be sought. The literature of illumination reveals this above all: although it comes to those who wait for it, it is always, even to the most practiced and adept, a gift and a total surprise...

One day I was walking along Tinker Creek thinking of nothing at all and... I saw the backyard cedar where the mourning doves roost charged and transfigured, each cell buzzing with flame. I stood on the grass with the lights in it, grass that was wholly fire, utterly focused and utterly dreamed. It was less like seeing than like being for the first time seen, knocked breathless by a powerful glance. The flood of fire abated, but I'm still spending the power. Gradually the lights went out in the cedar, the colors died, the cells unflamed and disappeared. I was still ringing. I had been my whole life a bell, and never knew it until at that moment I was lifted and struck.

Quote - [W.B. Yeats](#)

The world is full of magic things. Waiting for our senses to grow sharper.

Poem - [Because I Brought You Here, Carolyn Chilton Casas](#)

Full poem at <https://janicefalls.wordpress.com/2025/06/18/because-i-brought-you-here-by-carolyn-chilton-casas/>

there is so much I hope for you to know.
So, I point to things and say...
Look at that man,
how he gently converses with the child;
this is true masculinity, a reverence
for innocence and life...
Greet the jackrabbit
living under the garden cart;
even though she was taught to fear,
see how she perks her ears
towards you in longing of forgotten oneness.
I so want you to see the perfectness of how we fit

together—the wonder of this world...

On Attention's Power to Make You Fall in Love with the World

Quote - [Maria Popova](#)

Narrow the aperture of your attention enough to take in any one thing fully, and it becomes a portal to everything. Anneal that attention enough so that you see whatever and whoever is before you free from expectation, unfiltered through your fantasies or needs, and it becomes love. Come to see anything or anyone this clearly — a falcon, or a mountain, or a patch of moss — and you will find yourself loving the world more deeply.

Book/Essay - [Raising Hare: The Moving Story of How a Helpless Creature Helped a Workaholic Wake Up](#)

<https://www.themarginalian.org/2025/05/28/raising-hare-chloe-dalton/>

On An Attentiveness that Allows God to Speak

Quote - [Frederick Buechner](#)

Whenever you find tears in your eyes, especially unexpected tears, it is well to pay the closest attention. They are not only telling you something about the secret of who you are, but more often than not, God is speaking to you through them of the mystery of where you have come from and is summoning you to where, if your soul is to be saved, you should go next.

Quote - Frederick Buechner

Pay attention to the things that bring a tear to your eye or a lump in your throat because they are signs that the holy is drawing near.

Poem - [Praying, Mary Oliver](#)

Full poem at <https://readalittlepoetry.com/2025/10/28/the-prayer-by-mary-oliver/>

“just pay attention... this isn't a contest but the doorway into thanks, and a silence in which another voice may speak...”

Quote - Frederick Buechner

There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of society, say, or the super-ego, or self-interest. By and large a good rule for finding out is this. The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

Scripture - [First Kings 19:13](#)

The prophet Elijah listened for God to pass by him as he waited in a cave on Mount Horeb. He listened to the storm that passed, to the earthquake, to the raging fire, but God was not in those. And then there came a silence in which Elijah heard a still, small voice, and he covered his face with his cloak and went to the entrance of the cave. The voice he heard asked, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (First Kings 19:13)

Scripture - [Psalm 46:10](#)

Be still and know that I am God.

Quote - [Mark Nepo](#)

Still yourself and listen and soon, in time, the Mystery will begin to speak to you, through its thousand disguises as life on Earth.

On Attention & The Challenge of Inhabiting in Our Lives

Quote - Jack Kornfield

Be where you are; otherwise you will miss your life.

Poem - The Vacation, Wendell Berry

Full poem at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/56192/the-vacation-56d238779b2aa>

Reflection on the poem [here](#).

Once there was a man who filmed his vacation...
With a flick of a switch, there it would be. But he
would not be in it. He would never be in it.

Quote - J.W. Bertolotti

Your life isn't only what happens to you. It's what you let in. It's what you linger on. It's what you return to. This is why distraction feels strangely hollow. It gives you plenty of stimulation, but very little chosen experience. You don't decide what matters; you drift into what is loud, new, frictionless, and emotionally sticky. And drift becomes a worldview — an unconscious credo: nothing deserves full presence; everything can be interrupted; every quiet moment must be filled. The deeper problem is not that you miss a few minutes. It's that you slowly lose the thread of your own life. You become someone who is always "around," but rarely here.

Quote - Amy Krouse Rosenthal

For anyone trying to discern what to do w/ their life: PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU PAY ATTENTION TO. That's pretty much all the info u need.

Quote - Barbara Brown Taylor

The practice of paying attention is as simple as looking twice at people and things you might as easily ignore. To see takes time, like having a friend takes time. It is as simple as turning off the television to learn the song of a single bird. Why should anyone do such things? I cannot imagine—unless one is wary of crossing days off the calendar with no sense of what makes the last day different from the next.

Quote - Devin Kelly

When your entire construct of the world is based on the notion that we are not there yet, then your attention is trained on a future that you believe can only exist with both your permission and your knowledge. Such a use of attention is, in many ways, a misuse of attention, which is perhaps our greatest gift. To take such attention and turn it towards the nonexistent [and not yet future] is to ignore the precious and sometimes passing world as it is. Our attention is a gift because it reminds us, every waking second, that we are in the presence of so many somethings that exist without our permission and to the benefit of our curiosity, our imagination, and our understanding of beauty. Our attention reminds us that we are here, that we should look around. It begs us to consider. As Lavers writes, in another one of his poems: "I asked for awe, and ordinariness flared."

Quote - Thich Nhat Hanh

The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth, dwelling deeply in the present moment and feeling truly alive.

Quote - Katharine Weinmann

One does not have to carpe the crap out of every single day. It's always the small moments of a life – being present to and curious about them – that matter.

On Giving Our Attention to the Right Things

Reflection/Reading - Set in Stone, Rev. Victoria Safford

Full poem found in spoken form at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhv1AeD_PPQ and in written form [here](#) and in [Walking Toward Morning](#) (pg.35), a UUA meditation manual.

In a cemetery once, an old one in New England, I found a strangely soothing epitaph... "She attended well and faithfully to a few worthy things." At first this seemed to me a little meager, a little stingy... [but] now I can't imagine a more proud or satisfying legacy: "She attended well and faithfully to a few worthy things." Every day I stand in danger of being struck by lightning and having the obituary in the local paper say, for all the world to see, "She attended frantically and ineffectually to a great many unimportant, meaningless details." How do you want your obituary to read?...

Quote - [Sharon Salzberg](#)

We need mindfulness and kindness now more than ever. And the two are related... The practice of shepherding our attention back to the present — even an incalculable number of times — helps us find the power to be kind to ourselves. We can let go of our laundry list of work agenda items once we get home to be with our family members, even if our Google calendar gives us a ping. We may be compelled to ruminate or obsess, but a commitment to mindfulness, to being present, is a gesture of kindness to ourselves.

Quote - [adrienne maree brown](#)

put your attention on suffering — which is constant and everywhere — and it is all you will see. joy will come, and laughter, but you will find it brief, possibly a distraction.
put your attention on joy, being connected and feeling whole, and you will find it everywhere. your heart will still break. you will know grief. but you will find it a reasonable cost for the random abundance of miracles, and the soft wild rhythms of love.

Wisdom Tale - What's In Your Cup

Inspired by a story told Thich Nhat Hanh; Adapted for storytelling by April Rosario, Soul Matters Director of RE Resources

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WlcHegMpowXHgWYdey21fooOTDAsQGRtEkuTMKDsJBY/edit?usp=sharing>

"Most of the time, we blame the bump. We blame the other person. We blame the situation. But the truth is this: The bump doesn't create what spills out. It only reveals what was already inside. So the real question isn't, 'Who bumped me?' It's, 'What am I carrying in my cup?'"

Poem - [Pea Apology, Eve Driver](#)

Full poem at <https://emergencemagazine.org/poem/this-vast-artifice/>

I am sorry to the peas
that I watered so quickly each morning
that I did not see the six pods till Sunday...
I am sorry for this the way I am sorry for not responding to your text in time...
attention is so much more like water than anyone told me —
it is just as hard to hold enough of it in our palms
to let someone else have some
even when the garden is so much worthier
than where my mind goes,
and you,

so much more holy

On the Transformative Gift of Offering Our Attention to Others

Quote - Simone Weil

Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.

Short Reflection - My Misgivings About Advice, Parker Palmer (*On offering our attention not our advice*)

<https://www.awakin.org/v2/read/view.php?tid=2188>

“Here’s the deal. The human soul doesn’t want to be advised or fixed or saved. It simply wants to be witnessed — to be seen, heard and companioned exactly as it is. When we make that kind of deep bow to the soul of a suffering person, our respect reinforces the soul’s healing resources, the only resources that can help the sufferer make it through...”

Longer piece expanding on the ideas in the short reflection found [HERE](#)

Quote - Ben Sternke

You cannot love something or someone you do not truly see.

Sermon - Not My Story, Chad Snyder

On the power and challenges of paying attention to each other’s stories

You can find the link to this sermon in the recommended sermon section below

Quote - Maria Popova

Anneal that attention enough so that you see whatever and whoever is before you free from expectation, unfiltered through your fantasies or needs, and it becomes love.

Quote - Meg Rosoff

The average attention span of the modern human being is about half as long as whatever you’re trying to tell them.

On Attention and Social Change

Reflection/Reading - Inviting Our True Attention, Rev. Karen G. Johnston

Full reflection found at <https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/inviting-our-true-attention>

All winter long I overlooked three uninhabited nests... What else is there in this world that my hustling and bustling have barred me from sensing and seeing?... My guess is that it is not only delights, such as these nests but violence, too, that’s within perception’s range, if only I gave it my true attention. Acts of exclusion, discrimination, and the impacts of systemic oppression are all there, right before me. I don’t always perceive them—I have been taught to not see them—but they are there...

Quote - James Baldwin

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.

Story - The Story of John Steinbeck going “undercover” in a Migrant Camp & Writing The Grapes of Wrath

<https://www.facebook.com/philothoughtspage/posts/pfbid02HcFjeSeVq7ChzCjacpJKAc2LDg46cvDhVFkoTMasgY4JAyXvWGiFdr3oAuqokfPI>

“The fame brought Pulitzer and Nobel prizes, but also death threats and surveillance. When asked if he was afraid, Steinbeck’s answer was telling: ‘No. I’m ashamed it took me this long to pay attention.’...”

Quote - Junot Diaz

I've always thought that you don't love a country by turning a blind eye to its crimes and to a problem. The way that you love a country is by seeing everything that it's done wrong, all of its mistakes, and still thinking that it's beautiful and that it's worthy.

Quote - [Rev. Julián Jamaica Soto](#)

Shake the scales from your imagination. Reach. Stretch. Rise. There is no more time for pretending that everything can be all right without your care, without your attention.

Quote - [Sylvia Boorstein](#)

Imagine how our lives might be if everyone had even a bit more of the wisdom that comes from seeing clearly. Suppose people everywhere, simultaneously, stopped what they were doing and paid attention for only as long as it took to recognize their shared humanity. Surely the heartbreak of the world's pain, visible to all, would convert everyone to kindness.

Statement - From our Shared UU Values

"Equity. We declare that every person is inherently worthy and has the right to flourish with dignity, love and compassion. We covenant to use our time, wisdom, **attention**, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities."

Essay - Bearing Witness to Social Injustice as A Spiritual Practice

<https://naturalisticpaganism.org/2019/02/06/bearing-witness-to-social-injustice-as-a-spiritual-practice-moving-from-pain-to-taking-compassionate-action-part-3-of-3-by-wayne-martin-mellinger-ph-d-the-dionysian-naturalist/>

"When we take the time to truly bear witness to the suffering of others we eventually find that we are bearing witness to aspects of ourselves. Those demons who inflict suffering are, in essence, a part of us. We are reflected in both the victims and the villains. We must acknowledge that both are a part of us. Only then can we take care of the other, who is none other than our self.

We often become complicit to the system by our routine patterns of thinking. I see you suffering and I want to help. The two roles and two practices—sufferer and suffering, helper and helping—may lock us into cognitive traps which limit our openness to a deeper reality. To liberate ourselves and thus attain enlightenment, we must discard what we think we already know and expect to happen. Rather than witnessing suffering and feeling that we want to help, what if we escape the "helping" thinking pattern. Perhaps the one originally seen as the "sufferer" turns out in the end to help the original "witness" more than the other way around..."

On Attention Found in UU Theology & History

Concise connections between the monthly theme and our UU history and theology put together by the Soul Matters Team.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1a388ZPZjrM4bXweyXNzCB1414VjZG7wbbMwaxqY2OE/edit?usp=sharing>

Recommended Sermons

Notes about these recommended sermons:

- **Permissions Secured:** All of the sermons below have received permission for your online use. Unless otherwise noted, they can be used/read in both live streaming and recorded services that are posted on YouTube or a podcast. **However, to be extra cautious and in good relationship, we ask that you reach out to the minister to let them know you are planning to use their sermon. Also be sure to ask if they have any particular requests or guidance for how to do that.**
- **An Important Note About Editing:** If you want to make changes to the sermon for brevity or context, **you must reach out to the preachers directly for such editing permission.** Contact information of each of the referenced preachers is listed after the list of sermons.
- **We mostly list written scripts:** In order not to undermine UU preachers who depend on live and online guest preaching income for their livelihood, we mainly focus on sharing sermon texts (and sometimes audio clips), but not videos.
- **Note about hiring preachers for online guest preaching:** All of the texts listed below can be used and *read* in your worship services for free. If you are interested in hiring these preachers to give the recommended sermons as a virtual guest preacher or through sending you a video recording of them preaching the sermon, we've listed their contact information below the sermon section so you can contact them directly.

Sacred Imagination, Rev. Anna Tulou

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uJMLuwB9q-Q_pNgT-eO_eQmMlcvcvcrDMA40ojDta9t1o/edit?usp=sharing

"I don't just have a news problem. I have an imagination problem. The constant barrage of media and information takes up so much of my attention that it crowds out everything else, all possibility; the violence and endless isms and oppression and war and climate disaster, the constant and disturbingly flippant refrain in everyday conversation that "The world is on fire" – it is easy to get swept up, to be consumed by it all... and in these moments, I have come to understand that my attention has been overwhelmed, my imagination has been captured..."

Note: Rev. Tulou is available to offer this sermon virtually by Zooming into your service as a guest preacher for a fee. If you are interested, you can contact Rev. Tulou at anna.tulou@richmondUU.org

Attending to Our Shared Humanity, Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kKYxCKp-tK5khN6WfCyHxuN7SExY8aVp/view?usp=sharing>

"To truly pay attention, sometimes we need to set aside the story that we want to ascribe to someone else... If we set the story aside, we might realize that we are each fighting our own internal battles..."

Not My Story, Chad Snyder

On the power and challenges of paying attention to each other's stories

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DukHu3MhsMeU5Axqd5buiK2iJ7YBG41X/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true>

"As Brene Brown puts it, "stories are only a form of connection when someone's listening and hearing us." And there's a lot going on that can get in the way of truly listening and hearing. It's hard to get out of our own narratives long enough to let someone else's story stand on its own..."

To Finally Stand Still, Rev. Janet Parsons

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14zaVvAerZ6L8K-6OgTqvrlag1rzGgile/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true>

“From our earliest lives, we are ordered to ‘Pay Attention!’ Teachers and parents insist on having our attention: “Look at me when I’m speaking to you!” “Listen to me!”... We grow up expecting others to demand our attention, and we try to give it. The irony is that in doing so, we take the attention away from our own still centers. Think about having to ‘pay’ attention – we offer it outwardly. We spend it. We are not taught to listen to our deepest selves, or to listen for the moments of silence in the world around us. This is a skill we might never have noticed that we are lacking, and something that we have to intentionally work to reclaim as our own. We have to pay ourselves back...”

Instructions for Living a Life: Pay Attention, Rev. Sandra Fees

https://docs.google.com/document/d/147bvsnXdGv0A7AZATmV1uRBS7xoF7ovk/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

“Thoreau came to recognize that everything important happens in the moment and that eternity is encapsulated in the present. He wrote: *In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God ... culminates in the present moment...*”

Note: Rev. Fees is available to offer this sermon by Zooming into your service as a virtual guest preacher for a fee. If you are interested, you can contact Rev. Fees at sandrarfees@gmail.com. To view all the sermons and services she has to offer, check out her website at revsandrafrees.com.

Presence as a Portal to Possibility, Rev. Michelle Scott-Huffman

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-ZwaAT1sGuDTKZzkndyG89ehdkdskMVs/view?usp=drive_link

“When we treat presence as a task to be completed, another box to check on the endless list of vocational duties or family obligations, it feels impossible. It feels like trying to meditate in the middle of a house fire. But when we treat presence as a treasure hunt, as a wandering through the cluttered antique mall of our own inner landscape, the dynamic shifts... In the thrift store, I didn’t know what I would find, and my unknowing allowed me to actually see, to pay attention, even sometimes to be astonished...”

Note: Rev. Scott-Huffman is available to offer this sermon by sharing a video recording or Zooming into your service as a virtual guest preacher for a fee. If you are interested, you can contact Rev. Scott-Huffman at <https://springfielduu.org/staff/>

Waking to What Is, [Lóre Stevens](#)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1l4ebnRA3YL8Ars1qOnuUGPIVnUi0j5oknnQcpu5-myU/edit?tab=t.0>

Interactive-sermon with guided meditations and discussions

[Video](#) or text can be used.

For Ostara/equinox, balance of light and darkness, recognizing suffering...

“[The River of Loss](#)” sermon short film, [Lóre Stevens](#) (Video can be used, but not text without video.)

Featured Preacher Bios & Contact Information

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- Rev. Joan Javier-Duval: <https://ucmvt.org/welcome/our-minister-staff/reverend-joan-javier-duval-minister/>
- Chad Snyder, community minister: <https://www.mergingwatersuu.org/staff> & chadasnyder@gmail.com
- Rev. Janet Parsons: <https://www.gloucesteruu.org/about-us-3/our-minister-and-staff/>
- Rev. Sandra Fees: sandrarfees@gmail.com (also revsandrafrees.com.)
- Rev. Michelle Scott-Huffman: <https://springfielduu.org/staff/>

- Lóre Stevens, minister of Oak Ridge UU Church: <https://www.oruuc.org/minister>

Closing & Chalice Extinguishing Words

To observe this splendid world... *

[Lóre Stevens](#)

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We extinguish this flame, but not our focus.
We quench this candle, but not our quests.
To observe this splendid world,
to witness each other,
these we continue
all the moments of our lives.

Choose Carefully *

Rev. Michelle Collins

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

The flame goes out. A thousand things now wait for your attention.
Choose carefully what receives your gaze, your time, your wonder,
for what we tend to is what we become.

The Art of Truly Noticing *

Rev. Michelle Collins

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

As you leave this space made sacred by our presence,
may you practice the art of truly noticing
yourself with honesty,
others with compassion,
the world with clear eyes.

Remember that attention is love made deliberate.

So go with courage to look closely, to stay present, to let what you witness reshape you as well as the world.

Attention Is Both An Act Of Resistance And An Act Of Reverence *

Rev. Michelle Collins

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Go forth from here with this blessing:

May you see clearly without cynicism.

May you witness pain without looking away.

May you notice wonder even when despair makes more sense.

Attention is both an act of resistance and an act of reverence.

Choose it constantly. Practice it daily.

And come back when you need renewed, so you can choose it once again.

The Power of Pause *

Rev. Scott Tayler

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

The work ahead demands much.
And so vigilance is a must.
But don't forget to pause, friends.
For it is from grounded hearts and inner stillness
that the vision to see clearly
and the strength to repair the world
arise.

What we attend, grows... *

[Lóre Stevens](#)

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We may pay attention,
but it returns on its investment.
What we attend, grows.
What we focus on, clarifies.
Who we hold in our hearts, is comforted.
Our minds are the mind of the universe.
Our attention connects us
to each other
and to all that is.

So that creation need not play to an empty house...

Annie Dillard

"We are here to abet creation and to witness it, to notice each thing so each thing gets noticed. Together we notice not only each mountain shadow and each stone on the beach but we notice each other's beautiful face and complex nature so that creation need not play to an empty house."

Worship Leader Support

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Join the Soul Matters Ministers' Support Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/719788338192570/>

Attend one of our two monthly online ministers' brainstorming groups:

First Tuesdays and First Thursdays of each month at 1pm eastern time with this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>



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