



The Practice of
Spiritual
GROUNDING

Roots of Resilience Theme Packet March 2025

When you hear the words ‘Spiritual Practice’, what comes to mind? Does it feel elusive and out of reach? Exciting to find a new way to connect with yourself/the world/the divine? Do you feel a little (or a lot) guilty that you are not doing as much as you believe you should? A sense of calm having a regular practice that works for you? Does it feel like another chore or item on your to-do list? I know I have felt all of the above (and more) at different times.

Spiritual practice does not need to be time consuming and difficult. Anything you do with attention and that you bring a spiritual intention to can become a spiritual practice through repetition and integrating the practice into your life. Doing a small, regular practice can be much easier to integrate and have a bigger impact on your life than doing one ‘big’ thing occasionally, like a weekend long silent retreat once a year.

Whether you are new to spiritual practice or have had a regular routine for years, this month we encourage you to be creative and try some new practices. We have lots of examples in this packet and you can review the practices in previous packets that you haven’t got to try yet... Or you can make up your own. Perhaps around something you do already, for example, a year into the pandemic my partner and I adopted our kid. I found my regular practices were not working for me, but I knew I needed something so I adapted a morning routine.

I had quite a few ‘fun’ socks and underwear with designs ranging from favourite animals to the galaxy. Each morning I take a moment to breathe, think about how I am feeling, the day ahead, and set an intention for the day and then pick socks and/or underwear that symbolize that intention. My sloth socks could be a reminder to slow down, rest, and appreciate what is happening around me. My galaxy underwear could represent needing ‘space’, mystery, or interconnection. Since getting dressed each morning was already part of my routine, adding the attention and intention created a practice that was easier to integrate... And seeing a flash of my socks or underwear throughout the day would remind me of my intention. This practice brings regular points of reflection into my days, and feels creative and playful - all three I felt were lacking in my life as a new parent in the pandemic. Because this practice centres around something I was already doing, only takes a few minutes, and directly addressed my spiritual needs (for reflection, creativity, and play) it has worked really well for me and I have done it almost every day since I began.

We invite you to reflect on what feels lacking and/or what you want more of as you explore a variety of spiritual practices over the month. See if you find something that complements a practice that is already working for you or a new routine that feels sustainable.

Warmly,

Arran

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The Practice of Spiritual Grounding

How do we transform through personal spiritual experiences and shared ritual?

- What are you already doing that might become a spiritual practice?
- Where do you have the greatest sense of connection – to your inner voice, the larger whole, or the sacred? What expands your sense of self?
- How do you integrate your spiritual practices into your life?
- What have you gained from your spiritual practice? What do you hope to gain?

QUOTES

“Everything is connected and the web is holy” Marcus Aurelius

The deep meaning of spirituality is breath. Breath is the taking in of life-giving essence from the world around us, and the release, in turn, of life-giving essence. It is a metaphor for interdependencies: the fact that we change and are changed by our environment in a continuous play of creation. Spiritual practices are aimed at helping us understand that connectedness, to sense our oneness, to the end that our yearning is appeased in actuality.... We can practice spirituality in our daily lives, in our daily activities, by remembering to pause, pay attention, and feel appreciation for what is before us. Paying attention means using all of our senses in being in the world and in the moment.

Susan Manker-Seale in *Everyday Spiritual Practices* (ed. Scott Alexander)

I stepped onto the spiritual path moved by an inner sense that I might find greatness of heart, that I might find profound belonging, that I might find a hidden source of love and compassion. Like a homing instinct for freedom, my intuitive sense that this was possible was the faint, flickering, yet undeniable expression of faith.

Sharon Salzberg, Buddhist

Unitarian Universalist spirituality can be understood as the felt awareness that all life is connected.” Rev. Fiona Heath

REFLECTING ON SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Spiritual practices can be described as moments that either take you deeper inside yourself or take you farther out of yourself. They can ground you more firmly within your being so that you hear that still small voice within, or they can bring you outside of yourself into connection with something greater – that wordless visceral experience of belonging to the whole. That whole may be the community, the earth, or the mystery of all life, or the universe, or God. Only you know. Practices might be simple and informal, a daily routine done with intention, such as a special mug for your morning coffee, or a pause for a deep breath before an important meeting, grounding you, or they may be seasonal, communal, rich with ritual, like the water in-gathering ceremony. (Fiona)

While many people do spiritual practices individually, spiritual community can deeply enrich our spiritual experience and practice in the following ways:

Practicing together

- You might meditate, pray, or do any other practice individually most of the time and practicing in a group, such as a weekly meditation group, with others can help us have outside accountability and support as well as deepen our practice.

Shared community rituals

- Rituals in congregational life. People doing the same action, but bringing different theologies to it. (Saskatoon: dipping fingers in the water communion bowl - Karen)
- Season after season e.g. water communion, fire communion

Personal practices, grounded and contextualized in community

- Having a spiritual community can help support our spiritual growth even if we rarely practice together. It can be difficult to talk about our spiritual experiences in secular spaces. Programs such as UU Wellspring (<https://uuwellspring.org/>), small groups in congregations, or individual or group spiritual direction are examples of supportive spaces where we can discuss our spiritual experiences. Sharing our experiences and listening to the experiences of others can help us to open up to other insights, other ways of thinking about the experience.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES - 1

A Seed Ritual for Spring Equinox

Day Schildkret shares this simple Seed Ritual for Spring Equinox (or anytime in the spring). When sharing it in March 2020 he said “Now more than ever we need to plant seeds for life, our dreams, our families, our environment, our world.” It feels equally true today! Youtube video (contains text instructions in the description if you prefer to read it): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBH5l8Q8p3o>

Lectio Divina as a Personal Practice

Choose a short passage or poem, from a sacred text or book of meditations.

Find a place that allows you to focus.

Sit in silence for a few moments.

Read it carefully and slowly.

Read it aloud.

Reflect. Repeat words or phrases that resonate for you.

Reflect on why they resonate, what meaning or understanding you are drawing from them. This may be done through quiet contemplation or journaling.

Consider how this insight might nourish you in the coming days.

Read the text once more.

Sit in silence for a few moments.

Wonderstruck

Being wonderstruck is a practice of being open to the world around you. It is a moment when your own self both fades away yet also makes a connection to the greater whole. Experiencing the “wowness” of the earth is experiencing a sense of belonging to this amazing mystery of life.

This week, practice being open to the Wow of living. This is a hard thing to explain, but it requires being present and paying attention to what is going on all around you. Notice what is around you when you are walking and working your daily round. If something catches your eye, stop, take a deep breath, and look more closely. Every moment won't be a wow, but life may surprise you.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES - 2

The Flame Within

tools: chalice with candle, paper, pencil or black pen, red, yellow, orange crayons and markers

Find a quiet space where you can sit comfortably and draw easily. Light the chalice with the words “I honour the light within me.”

Sit and watch the flame for a few moments. Find your pulse on your neck or your wrist. Feel its beat. Let go of your pulse. Close your eyes. What does the flame within you look like? What does it feel like?

On the paper, draw your inner light. Don't over think, choose your colours quickly and draw with loose strokes. The drawing is just for you. Is your light bright and bold? Is it soft and steady? Close your eyes or focus on the chalice light again if you feel stuck in drawing. (For those who are truly reluctant to draw, you could also write out your response, quickly with the first words that come to mind).

When your drawing feels complete, sit back and close your eyes. Focus on the fire within. Open your eyes. Does your drawing reflect your sense of your inner flame? Describe it to yourself. If you feel your flame needs tending in some aspect, what might you do to feed the fire?

Sit a moment more in silence. Blow out the chalice flame with the words “I honour the light within me.”



Chalice at the
Unitarian
Congregation in
Mississauga
with joys and
sorrows candles
Photo by
Dominika Dittwald-Cheng

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES - 3

Walking photo journal

One winter, in the midst of many changes, I began a walking meditation practice. I didn't think of it as meditation as first, but as I walked the same path each morning, I got familiar with the path and found myself becoming more and more attentive to the uniqueness of each morning—the feel of the air, the temperature as it hit my cheek, the presence of rain, snow, fog, or sun, the changing seasons and all the beings who shared the morning with me.

For me, part of the practice was to rest my eyes gently and to wait for some aspect of the view to impress itself upon me. I allowed myself one photo each morning, or maybe two—unusual for me, as I usually take multiple photos when something interests me. When I got back home, I added the photo to a digital journal and wrote a few lines describing the scene or whatever came to mind in the moment. Looking back on that journal, which I kept for about four months, I see a record of the season and my own changing mental landscape. (Karen FG)



Feb 13, 2021



March 2, 2021

Breathing Gratitude

This simple breathing meditation is an exercise in thankfulness. Find a quiet place and sit comfortably, either on the floor or on a chair, with your hands lying loosely on your knees. Close your eyes.

Breathe in with gratitude for your parents, grand-parents, great-grand parents all the way back to your early ancestors. The air rushing into your lungs was their air too. Breathe out with love, a gift to all the children of the planet, those with us now and those still to arrive. The air leaving your lungs will be their air too.

Breathe in with gratitude, breathe out with love.
Remember that each breath connects you to all has lived, is living, and will ever live.
Breathe in with gratitude, breathe out with love.

Sit with this meditation for five to fifteen minutes.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Finger Labyrinth

We don't always have the time or the ability to walk a labyrinth. Following our finger as it moves along the twists and turns of a labyrinth design is a surprisingly effective practice that you can do in a few minutes. Your finger labyrinth can be simple—take a screenshot of a labyrinth you like or print out the labyrinth design at the end of this document—or you can make it into a beautiful work of art by following Heather Plett or Lisa Coale:

- <https://heatherplett.com/2015/01/make-finger-labyrinth-also-piece-art/>
- <https://youtu.be/sMemC8JqRoA?si=-qsRSGnDRAXvP30r>

However you decide to do it, your practice will be more meaningful if you take a moment before beginning to set an intention. Are you wanting to release something? Find something? Traditionally, we release on the way in, pause in stillness at the center (sometimes called receiving), and then returning (to the world, to your life) on the way out.

Lars Howlett talks about the practice of **finger labyrinths** and the importance of following the breath as part of the experience. Plus he shares some beautiful examples of finger labyrinths!

If you want to learn more about labyrinths, watch **How to Walk a Labyrinth** with Lauren Artress or read more about the labyrinth **here**, including a link to an online labyrinth directory.

There are lots of finger labyrinth online. A finger version of the Chartres labyrinth is shared in the “printable” section at the end of this packet.

ME: Why am I alive?

OLD WOMAN: Because everything else is.

ME: No. I mean the purpose.

OLD WOMAN: That is the purpose. To learn about your relatives.

ME: My family?

OLD WOMAN: Yes. The moon, stars, rocks, trees, plants, water, insects, birds, mammals. Your whole family. Learn about that relationship. How you're moving through time and space together. That's why you're alive.

Richard Wagamese

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Mandala colouring

“A mandala is the psychological expression of the totality of the self.”

CG Jung

Mandala is a Sanskrit word translated as ‘circle’ or ‘sacred circle’ and mandalas are found throughout India and Tibet going back several thousand years. Today in North America, western culture knows mandalas through the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, especially the elaborate **sand mandalas** of Tibetan Buddhist monks, which are carefully constructed and then destroyed.

Mandals were important in the development of western psychology. At a difficult point in his life, Carl Jung painted many mandalas. He later wrote about the mandala as a place where we experience the transcendent function in our lives.

More recently, mandala designs have been adapted for adult colouring books. Colouring detailed patterns within concentric circles focuses our attention. As a spiritual practice, colouring mandalas can help us integrate aspects of our experience, putting the various parts of our life and experience into relationship with the whole.

Learn more about the history of mandalas and their use by Carl Jung in this video by Dr. Sudha Prathikanti, Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California at San Francisco: **Mandala therapy: Art of centering the self**, 2021.

There are lots of mandalas and other circle colouring patterns online and in adult colouring books: one pattern is shared in the “printable” section at the end of this document.

Our imagination is the most important faculty we possess. It can be our greatest resource or our most formidable adversary. It is through our imagination that we discern possibilities and options. Yet imagination is no mere blank slate on which we simply inscribe our will. Rather, imagination is the deepest voice of the soul and can be heard clearly only through cultivation and careful attention. A relationship with our imagination is a relationship with our deepest self.

Pat B. Allen

The Bookshelf

- *Faithful Practices: Everyday Ways to Feed Your Spirit*, Ed. Erik Walker Wikstrom
- *The Sustainable Soul Eco-Spiritual Reflections and Practices*, by Rebecca James Hecking 2011
- *Blessing it all: Rituals for Transitions and Transformations*, Eds. Heather Concannon & Allison Palm, 2024
- *My Year of Living Spiritually*, by Anne Bokma (Unitarian Universalist in Hamilton, On), 2019.
- *Embers: One Objjway's Meditations*, by Richard Wagamese, 2016.
- *Earth Path: Grounding Your Spirit In The Rhythms of Nature*, by Starhawk, 2004.

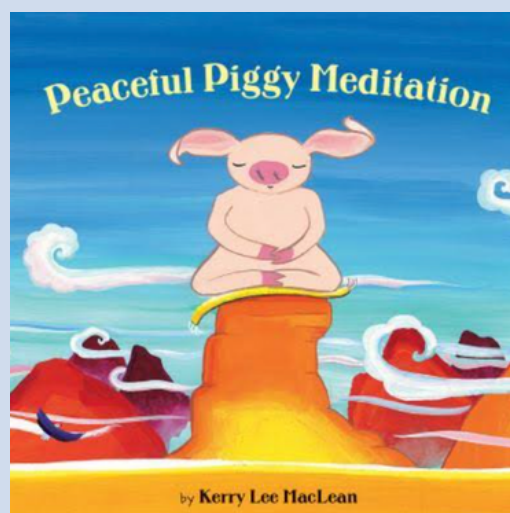
In Unitarian Universalism, spirit refers to the wholeness of the self - the wholeness of all beings. It can also refer to the greater whole - however you define it - as God, Goddess, the Divine, the Sacred, the Universe, the Mystery. I use spirit both for the wholeness of the individual self and the marvellous wholeness of all-that-is. The term spirit recognizes the whole as being greater than the sum of its parts. We all have bodies, minds, and emotions. We have personalities and histories and experiences. And yet taking it all together we are still something more. As is the universe, the glorious mysterious all-that-is.
Spirit. - Fiona Heath

With Children & Teens

Podcast

The Coping Toolbox shares this episode with Dr. Marina Heifetz, a Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychologist and mindfulness educator from Toronto (Ontario), for a discussion on mindfulness. They discuss benefits for children, youth, and parents as well as practical tips for incorporating mindfulness into a busy lifestyle.

<https://thecopingtoolbox.podbean.com/e/mindfulness-for-children-and-teens-with-dr-marina-heifetz-part-1/>



Books

- *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* by Kerry Lee MacLean, 2004.
- *A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Pebbles* by Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008
- *The Wheel of the Year: An Illustrated Guide to Nature's Rhythms* by Fiona Cook (Author), Jessica Roux (Illustrator), 2023
- *Chaos, Wonder and the Spiritual Adventure of Parenting* Eds Sarah Conover and Tracy Springberry, 2011

MUSIC & SINGING

If singing is one of your favourite spiritual practices, consider joining the Rev. Wendy Luella Perkins and her international community of singers for **Soulful Singing** on-line on Zoom every morning at 9:00am EST. Contact info@wendyluellaperkins.com for the zoom link.

To get a sense of her beautiful songs, check out her **TikTok**

Rev. Lynn Harrison has just started a substack email list, sending out a song each week.

Click here to check out the first email, with a song for this moment.

For more songs from Lynn Harrison, check out her **YouTube channel**.

Consider creating your own spiritual playlist. This list of songs was created by the creators of this packet:

- [Ain't no man](#) - The Avett Brothers
 - [All I know](#) - William Prince
 - [Antipatriarca](#) - Ana Tijou
 - [Closer to Fine](#) - Indigo Girls
 - [Glory](#) (John Legend & Common) Performed by UU BIPOC Virtual Ensemble
 - [I'm Not Alone](#) - Aly Halpert & Anat Hochberg
 - [Field of Stars](#) - composed & performed by the late Oliver Schroer
 - [Have you ever](#) - Brandi Carlile
 - [I got you](#) - Paris Richards (Dub J, Jully Black)
 - [Keepers of the earth](#) - Joyce Poley
 - [Loosen](#) - Aly Halpert
 - [Mehcinut](#) - Jeremy Dutcher
 - [My Church](#) - Maren Morris
 - [Nothin' to Lose](#) - Eliza Mary Doyle
 - [O Siem](#) - Susan Aglukark
 - [Room at the Table](#) - Carrie Newcomer
 - [Skicinuwihkuk](#) - Jeremy Dutcher
 - [The River](#) - Coco Love Alcorn
 - [There is More Love Somewhere](#) (#95 STLT) performed by Michael Tacy
 - [This is Me](#) (Greatest Showman) Keala Settle
 - [Walking Song](#) - Nikamok
 - [War & Pierce](#) - On and On
 - [We Rise](#) - Batya Levine
 - [We Shall be Known](#) by MaMuse - Performed Thrive East Bay Choir
 - [What a wonderful world](#) - version by Jon Batiste
 - [With My Own Two Hands](#) (Ben Harper), Song Around The World Playing For Change
 - [You Need To Calm Down](#) - Taylor Swift
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Listen & Watch Online

Meditations & Teachings from Tara Brach

Tara Brach is a meditation teacher associated with Unitarian Universalism who offers hundreds of talks and meditations on spiritual topics.
<https://www.tarabrach.com/talks-audio-video/>

Poetry

And the world cannot be discovered by a
journey of miles,
no matter how long,
but only by a spiritual journey,
a journey of one inch,
very arduous and humbling and joyful,
by which we arrive at the ground at our
feet,
and learn to be at home.
Wendell Berry

What the Soul Wants
by Lorna Crozier

A horse made out of rain (it doesn't need
a blacksmith).
A fret of dragonflies, the thin gloss of
their wings.
A yellow bicycle. Outside the door
a tall coffee can full of sand for the soul's
gritty habits.
A place where trees are happy. How can
you tell?
It's the smell they give back to the world.

Breathing Through

This is a recording of Joanna Macy leading a meditation called 'Breathing Through', recorded at a retreat in 2006. In it, she'll guide you to create space to acknowledge and honor the pain for the world that you carry without numbing or getting overwhelmed. All you'll need for this exercise is a place where you can close your eyes and relax.
<https://resources.soundstrue.com/podcast/e-p-5-bonus-breathing-through/>

Meditation app from Plum Village

Spiritual practices can be as close as your phone or tablet: Plum Village has an app of meditations, guided visualizations, teachings and sounds.
<https://plumvillage.app/>

Dharma Seed

Dharma Seed gathers, preserves, and freely shares recordings of teachers inspired by early Buddhism for the benefit of students, teachers, and dharma centers worldwide. The talks and meditations available through the Dharma Seed website are largely, although not exclusively, teachings from the Western Insight Meditation tradition, as taught at centers like the Insight Meditation Society (IMS), Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Gaia House and New York Insight.
<https://dharmaseed.org/>

PRINTABLE: FINGER LABYRINTH

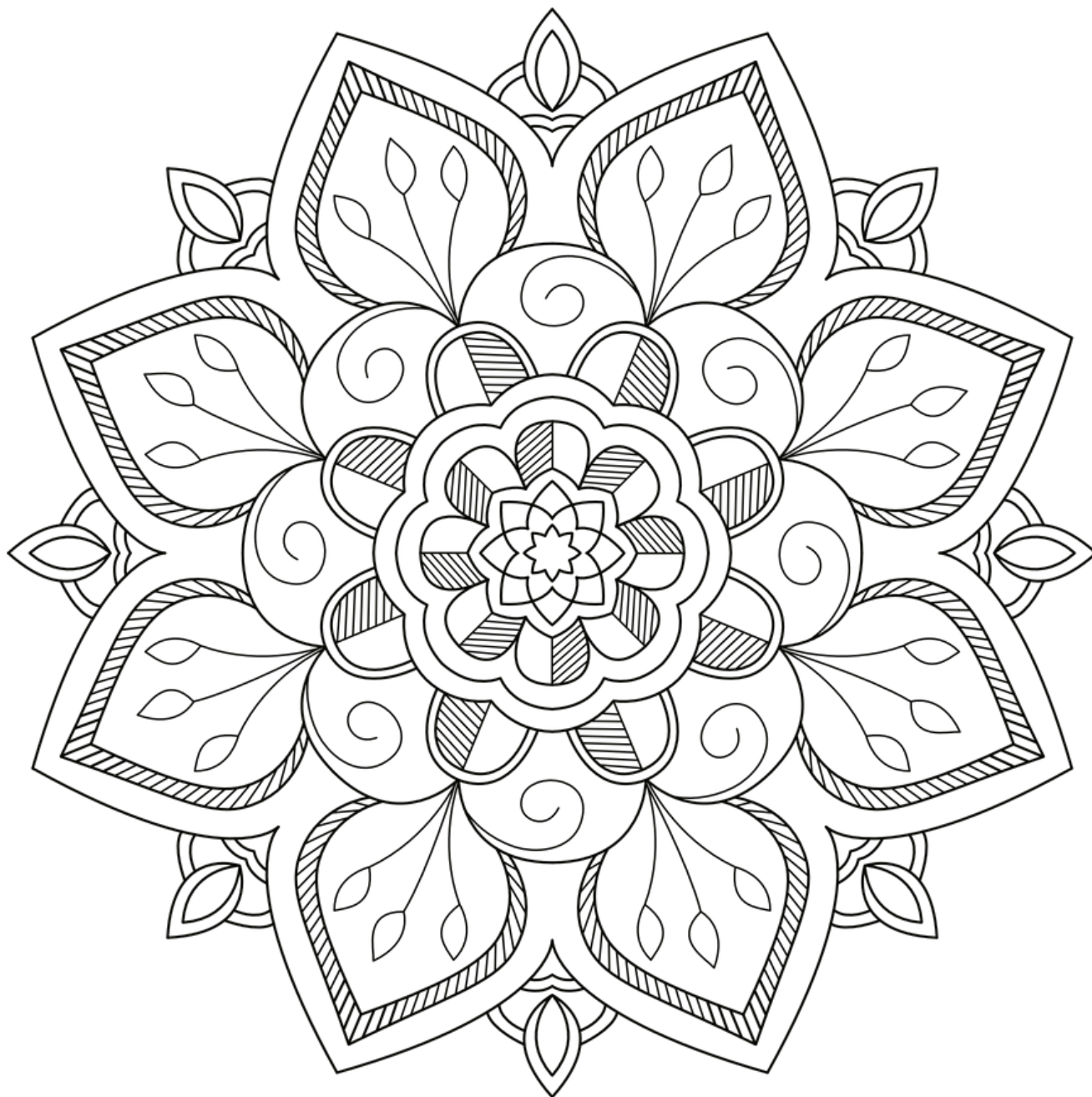
Print out the labyrinth and trace the path in and out with your finger, or an object such as a feather, or a coloured marker.



The spirit, like the body, can be strengthened and developed by frequent exercise.
Just as the body, if neglected, grows weaker and finally impotent,
so the spirit perishes if untended.

Wassily Kandinsky

PRINT & COLOUR: MANDALA



Discussion Guide

Welcome

Greet everyone. If this is a drop-in group or if there are newer folks present, do a go round of names. Give a brief overview of our time together today, including time expectations.

Today's theme is the practice of Spiritual Grounding: How do we transform through personal spiritual experiences and shared ritual?

Chalice Lighting

We light our chalice with words from Julianne Lepp:

Open to Unexpected Answers

A large gray rock is cracked down the middle,
where many small colorful stones are caught.

We seek our place in the world
and the answers to our hearts' deep questions.

As we seek, may our hearts be open to unexpected answers.

May the light of our chalice remind us that this is a community of warmth,
of wisdom, and welcoming of multiple truths.

Covenant

Review the covenant as agreed upon at the last meeting. As participants become more familiar with the covenant, you can change up how you refer to it. For example, you might ask people to name the phrase that feels most meaningful or important to them today. (Don't forget to mention that it's fine to repeat phrases).

- Speak as personally and deeply as we wish--or not. It is always okay to pass.
- Speak kindly about ourselves and others.
- Speak from our own experiences.
- Hold confidentiality. Share your experience of the conversation, not other people's stories.
- Listen respectfully. Avoid giving advice or asking probing questions about others' lives.
- Be aware of power differentials. Consider our own and others' identities and how these identities shape the impact of our contributions.
- (Include any agreements added by your group)

continued . .

Check In

Offer one of these questions or one of your own or combine the check in with the covenant exercise suggested above.

- How goes it with your spirit?
- What's on your mind and heart today?

Conversation

This month we are exploring our experiences of spiritual grounding and the personal and collective spiritual practices and rituals that increase our sense of connection and belonging to ourselves, our communities, our world and beyond.

People are welcome to offer their responses to the service, the reflection questions, their experience with one of the practices, or anything from the theme packet.

You may choose to begin with a go-round or simply let the conversation flow, making sure everyone has a chance to share. If there is a lull, let the silence sit for a time, then offer up a question to continue the conversation.

Optional Starting Questions

- What are you already doing that might become a spiritual practice?
- Where do you have the greatest sense of connection – to your inner voice, the larger whole, or the sacred? What expands your sense of self?
- How do you integrate your spiritual practices into your life?
- What have you gained from your spiritual practice? What do you hope to gain?

Sharing Silence

Before closing the session with the check out and chalice extinguishing, offer a minute of silence to give people a moment to process all that has been said and to share a time of quiet together. Alternatively, or in addition, you could include a time of silence before starting the conversation.

Leaving

From this conversation about spiritual grounding, what resonated most for you, or what are you taking with you?

Closing Words

May we support one another in nurturing our sense of belonging. Blessings on us all.

Extinguish the chalice



**Meaning Making Packets are created
by a team of Canadian UU ministers:
Karen Fraser Gitlitz, Fiona Heath, Arran Morton & Meg Roberts
with administrative support from Crystal Ironside**

**Photo by Dominika Dittwald-Cheng, from Water Ceremony, Unitarian
Congregation in Mississauga, 2022**