Personal Spirituality
Summer 2015

Living by heart begins with waiting - with pausing, sitting, looking and taking time to let something happen within us. For goal-oriented people who structure their days with lists, it can be very difficult to pause without expectation. Most of us are willing to pause, but only if we are sure that there will be results. It takes practice to wait long enough to let something happen within our meditation and in the living of our lives. But this practice sets the foundation for everything else we do.

- Laurel Hallman, "Living by Heart"
in Everyday Spiritual Practice

Summer is upon us, at the end of a long and busy year. Some of us will scatter and some of us will settle in, as we enter the slow part of our church calendar. It is an opportunity for rest, reflection and recuperation after the hard work we have put into our church community.

Our theme for the summer is Personal Spirituality, and I have chosen to frame it with the question that many of you have heard me ask already, "What feeds your soul?" What practices comfort you in difficult times, and restore you when you are feeling worn? Where do you find abundance? Where do you find joy?

Spiritual practices are as diverse as the people who practice them!

I look forward to sharing conversations with many of you this summer - when I am not in Chicago for school.

-- Claire Curole

There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.

~ Mahatma Gandhi

This Soul Matters packet was created by Claire Curole at Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta, ME.

Thoughts within were gleaned from the Soul Matters Network, the UUCC Resource Circle, and other sources.

If you would like to share your experience and wisdom for future packets, please email minister@augustauu.org. To receive an electronic copy please email info@augustauu.org. To learn more about Unitarian Universalist Community Church, please visit our website www.augustauu.org.
"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. Stop a moment. Feel the chair in which you are sitting. Notice the temperature around you. Listen for the sounds of your background symphony. Breathe. Appreciate the colors of your clothes, your skin, the sky or the ceiling. Focus on appreciating the peace out of which you have found the time to read or listen to these words. Remember the feeling of oneness with creation, and try to bring that back into being. This practice only takes a few moments and is not bound by place or time or ritual."

"Our of our busyness, we are called back into balance, back into ourselves and the silence of present being. But it is not just back into ourselves to which we are called; it is also to the awareness of the continuous presence of the environment around us and within us. We are called to remember our relationships and our dependencies. We are called to once again feel the oneness which sustains our being in balance with creation, and to do so with wonder and appreciation."

— Susan Manker-Seale, "Balance" in Everyday Spiritual Practice

For many of us the phrase "spiritual practice" immediately leads to ideas like prayer, meditation and ritual - traditional practices found in many religious expression. But as Susan Manker-Seale writes, spiritual experience and practice can just as easily be found in the activities of everyday life, by pausing and paying attention.

- **Have you ever had a regular spiritual practice? Do you have one now?**

- **Is there some practice that intrigues you, but that you've never tried? Or have you tried a practice or activity that just didn't work for you?**

- **When you are feeling burnt out or worn down, what feeds your soul?**

*Everyday Spiritual Practice*, edited by Scott Alexander, is a collection of essays by Unitarian Universalist authors describing a diverse range of spiritual practices - from activism to parenting to yoga to quilting and many more. I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone who is looking for a deeper take on incorporating spirituality into your everyday life. The book is available from the UUA bookstore and probably other places as well. - Claire
The problem is, finding the right path is like standing in front of a candy counter and trying to decide which is the right piece, the best piece. You know that it all depends on your tastes, and you need to know what you like in order to choose the best piece for you. That means you have to have tried at least some of them to know which ones you like.

There is no one right path to a deeper spirituality. There are many right paths, and the one you choose may serve for awhile, and then need to be changed over time. Like the Buddha who left everything to go off in search of enlightenment, you may find yourself coming back to yourself in the end...

― Susan Manker-Seale, "Balance"
in *Everyday Spiritual Practice*

Summer! It's finally here! Many of us rearrange our lives when summer time comes. Graduations and summer weddings, new summer haircuts and warm-weather clothes finding their way out of winter storage. Some of us go away on vacation while others may take up projects at home or host visiting family or friends.

Summer schedule changes can be an opportunity to try out a new spiritual practice or exercise - or to revisit a practice that may have fallen aside during busier times of the year.

- Not sure about a practice that is new to you? Commit to it for a limited time - try meditation or journaling ten minutes a day for a week, or schedule a weekly yoga class for a month or two.

- Simple practices and rituals can be deeply meaningful when repeated over time. It can be as simple as imagining one thing you are grateful for, every morning, and writing it in a notebook - or sharing it with a companion.

- Spiritual practice doesn't have to be solitary practice! Explore ways to share the wonder and mystery of the world with family, friends and community. Social justice work - from community service to activism and advocacy - can be a powerful place to call spiritual home.

- Spiritual practice doesn't have to be quiet and contemplative, either! Singing and chanting, drumming and dance, walking or running meditation - these are only a few ways to bring mind, body and spirit into the same activity.

I hope that you will find something to feed your soul among the resources in the rest of this packet.

- Claire
The places and activities through which we find spiritual fulfillment are as varied and diverse as we are! I asked members of the UUCC community for their responses to the question, "What feeds your soul?" Here are their responses. - Claire

What feeds my soul?

the wind whispering in the trees...

opening my windows after a long winter and waking up to birdsong for the first time...

lying in my hot tub under a full moon and feeling snowfall...

seeing the positive results of hard work...

choral singing, when the joy and energy of dozens of musicians combine and raise up all who join together...

spending a weekend (or longer) in the company of fellow Pagans who are comfortable in their own skins...

knowing that I am responsible for my own choices, and that I wouldn't have it any other way.

- Rita Moran

My favorite thing to recharge my batteries is to step out in a storm, preferably wind or snow and let the ripples of energy flow over me like surf at the beach. It brings its own form of harmony within.

If no storm is on the horizon, a nice walk in the woods, surrounded by tall trees, bird song and luscious smells does a pretty good job. This tends to ground me more than a storm which energizes me.

-- Jani Clark

The whole world is a work in progress!
Social justice-
I like showing young people and some not so young; what they can do to help neighbors from the area.

Helping to create equality in access to food and a community social gathering, through a monthly supper, is my current offering of Social Justice.

- Jenny McKendry

The beauty of Nature continuously unfolding...

I value the 23 parks in Augusta to enjoy and discover something about nature I didn't notice before.

I also like to read a spirituality book of some kind, and I enjoy being with people of like mind to eat a meal with.

I also like to play the keyboard but I don't do it often. It takes me away!

- Roberta Record
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Another great online resource for exploring spiritual practices is http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com