

SPIRIT OF LIFE
A Tapestry of Faith Program for Adults

REVISED



BY REVEREND BARBARA HAMILTON-HOLWAY

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PREFACE

The song "Spirit of Life" by Carolyn McDade could be considered a Unitarian Universalist anthem of sorts. Its page in the *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook (Hymn 123) is probably the most frequently accessed page of any in many congregations' collections. Some congregations don't sing Hymn 123. Perhaps they have other "greatest hits" their members prefer, or they found they were singing it too much and had to take a break. But its popularity is uncontested. Many Unitarian Universalists find the song deeply meaningful. Its imagery is beautiful. Its words are inclusive of Unitarian Universalists all along our theological spectrum. Its tune grows on its singers and listeners, and many use the song to help themselves grow.

Barbara Hamilton-Holway's Spirit of Life program seeks to be like the song from which it derives its name and bring meaning, beauty, inclusivity, and growth to Unitarian Universalist adults as they deepen their spiritual awareness and connections. The Spirit of Life program taps into one of the central functions of religion, eloquently described by minister Kendyl Gibbons: "... how we—each of us, in our uniquely constituted beings—recognize and understand and make sense of that unbidden, overwhelming awe at the wonder, magnificence, danger, demand, and delight of being alive."

The Spirit of Life program is part of the Tapestry of Faith program series for adults. As a whole and in each of its individual programs, the Tapestry of Faith series weaves Unitarian Universalist values, principles, and sources together with four strands of religious growth: faith development, spiritual development, ethical development, and Unitarian Universalist identity. Each of the strands is described below:

Faith Development. When we develop in faith, we develop as meaning-makers. Faith is not about accepting impossible ideas. Rather, faith is about embracing life's possibilities and growing in our sense of being "at home in the universe." Faith is practiced in relationship with others. It has personal dimensions, but it is best supported by a community with shared symbols, stories, values, and meaning.

Spiritual Development. In the book *Everyday Spiritual Practice*, Scott Alexander defines spirituality as our relationship with the Spirit of Life, whatever we understand the Spirit of Life to be. Our spirituality is our deep, reflective, and expressed response to the awe, wonder, joy, pain, and grief of being alive.

Ethical Development. When we develop our ethics, we develop our moral values—our sense of right and wrong. We also enhance our ability to act on those values, overcoming oppressions and despair.

Unitarian Universalist Identity. A person's participation in a Unitarian Universalist congregation does not automatically create his/her Unitarian Universalist identity. Personal identification with Unitarian Universalism begins when people start to call themselves Unitarian Universalist, and feel part of a Unitarian Universalist congregation or community. Identity is strengthened as individuals discover and find resonance with the stories, symbols, and practices of Unitarian Universalism. As individuals find and give acceptance in a Unitarian Universalist community; as they cherish the community's people, values, messages, and activities; and as they find sustenance for their holy hungers, they grow into Unitarian Universalists.

The workshops in Spirit of Life address all of these strands, yet the program focuses primarily on Unitarian Universalists' spiritual development. May these workshops be for your congregations like roots, holding us close, and like wings, setting us free. Spirit of Life, come to us, come to us.

—Sarah Gibb Millspough, M.Div., Developmental Editor

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THE PROGRAM

True spiritual growth can be achieved only through the persistent exercise of real love... . The principal form that the work of love takes is attention. When we love another we give him or her our attention; we attend to that person's growth. When we love ourselves we attend to our own growth... . By far the most common and important way in which we can exercise our attention is by listening. — M. Scott Peck

Spirit of Life workshops offer participants space, time, and community to explore their Unitarian Universalist spirituality. Each focuses on a different aspect of the spiritual life, framed by the lyrics of Carolyn McDade's song "Spirit of Life." Like the song, the workshops are designed to be welcoming to Unitarian Universalists of many spiritual and theological persuasions. Participants are invited to claim an inclusive definition of spirituality and recognize the spiritual aspects of their lives.

Reflecting, speaking, and listening are core activities in each workshop. Listening, M. Scott Peck writes, is "a kind of attention that fosters spiritual growth." Participants in Spirit of Life are given space to silently reflect, to listen to the still small voice within. They are also given space to speak and to listen to other participants. Sharing honestly and listening attentively are affirmations of the inherent worth and dignity of each person and of our interdependent relationship to one another. Reflective and expressive activities invite participants to give attention to their lives and their choices so that they might live with mindfulness and intention.

The word "spirit" derives from the Latin word for breath and for inspiration. The "spirit of life" can thus be understood as inspiration for life, or the very breath of life. It can be felt as a loving force, a life force, or as (in the words of Howard Thurman) a growing edge, "the upward reach of life when weariness closes in upon all endeavor." The spirit of life can be experienced as god or goddess, as deity unfolding, as divine comforter. It can be felt as the collective human spirit, the power of nature, or innate wisdom. Each participant finds a meaning that speaks to his/her own understandings and experience.

As participants reflect on the following questions, they may grow in awareness and connection: "What experiences or moments have you had of feeling 'wow,' feelings of oneness with the earth, feelings of connection with the mystery and wonder of the universe, or a sense of God or the Spirit of Life?" "How have celebrations and rituals helped express your spirituality,

and helped you connect with the Spirit of Life?" "What calls out for your care and compassion?" "How does your spirituality relate to the earth and our natural environment?" "In what ways do you show care, love, and respect to yourself? To others?" "What are the roots that 'hold you close' and the wings that 'set you free'?" "If you could reach your full potential as a person in touch with the spirit of life, what would you be like?"

Choice is central to Unitarian Universalism. Just as each of us is responsible for choosing our beliefs, we are responsible for choosing practices that support our living them. We can make our choices within the context of heritage and community. As Unitarian Universalists, we believe that truth—revelation—is continually unfolding. We learn from our experience and from one another. Spirit of Life accompanies its participants on a "free and responsible search for truth and meaning" in the context of a covenanted congregational community.

May the Spirit of Life move through these workshops as you bring them to life.

GOALS

Participants will:

- Become familiar with a broad and inclusive definition of spirituality—one that includes those who do and do not affirm the existence of spirit or deity
- Evaluate their experiences of the spiritual during turning points in their lives and during day-to-day living
- Learn methods for being attentive to their spirituality
- Consider the value of spiritual practice, in any variety of forms, as a means to deepen faith and enhance the quality of everyday living
- Participate in the spiritual practices of speaking and listening with respect
- Explore a vocabulary of reverence drawn from the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition* and its supplement, *Singing the Journey*
- Articulate thoughts, feelings, and longings in authentic ways, and develop their understanding of the spiritually healing value of such authenticity
- Explore possibilities for deepening experiences of spirituality for themselves and for others in

the context of their Unitarian Universalist congregation.

LEADERS

A team of two or more adults should lead the Spirit of Life workshops. The same co-leaders need not lead each workshop. However, consistency in leadership has many advantages for participants.

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

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

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

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

A leader can facilitate learning in these workshops without teaching experience or pedagogical knowledge. Throughout each workshop plan, leaders will find detailed guidance to conduct activities in a way that facilitates participants' learning.

PARTICIPANTS

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

The program can accommodate any number of participants, with six participants an ideal minimum. Six

or more participants allow you to divide the group into the pairs or triads that several activities require.

For a group of thirty or more, leaders will need to modify activities that involve small group presentations to the entire group. Co-leaders can split the whole group in half and facilitate in separate meeting spaces. The two, separate sets of small groups can then present simultaneously, each to their own half of the whole. Workshops with more than sixty participants will require further adaptation of some activities, including expansion of the leadership team.

INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

Leader Resource 1 from Workshop 1 offers tips to make the activities inclusive for all participants and accessible for people with particular cognitive, learning, and physical disabilities. In addition, some activity descriptions in the program include a section called Including All Participants, which includes specific suggestions for modifying that activity to meet particular accessibility needs.

The tips are not exhaustive. You may find they do not fully equip you to create a welcoming, accessible space for all of participants. The Unitarian Universalist Association website offers more information about accessibility for persons with disabilities—information that goes well beyond the recommendations listed in this program. Visit the UUA website and search the keyword "[accessibility](http://www.uua.org/accessibility)" (at www.uua.org/accessibility)."

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

All nine workshops follow a similar structure. Between an opening and a closing ritual, participants engage in up to seven activities. The opening includes a chalice-lighting, and the closing includes an extinguishing of the chalice. Each workshop includes a time for sharing names and regarding one another. Most workshops feature a central story.

All workshops offer one or more additional activities for extending the workshop from an hour and a half, to two hours or longer. Leaders should decide in advance how long each workshop will be so that they and participants can schedule the time and arrange transportation and/or childcare.

Every workshop offers ideas for participants to continue exploring its themes after the workshop's conclusion. The Taking It Home section supports continued engagement with topics to discuss, things to notice, and questions to consider in journal-writing. The Faith in Action section invites participants to apply experiences and discoveries from the workshop to personal or group

service and justice-making activities. While these activities are optional, Taking It Home and Faith in Action are important elements of the Unitarian Universalist Association's Tapestry of Faith programs. The leader preparation for each workshop should include reviewing Taking It Home and Faith in Action, choosing relevant suggestions, and creating a Taking It Home handout for participants.

Quote

Excerpts from the Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations introduce the focusing principle and source for each workshop. These quotes are in the introductory handout for each workshop and are read as part of the opening. Co-leaders may like to discuss the quote as part of their preparation to feel grounded in the Principles and Sources of our Unitarian Universalist living tradition as you prepare to lead.

Introduction

The Introduction provides a short summary of the workshop's content and guidance for implementing the workshop.

Goals

The Goals state the general participant outcomes of the workshop. Review the goals to connect the workshop's content and methodologies with the four strands of religious development that are the basis of Tapestry of Faith: ethical development, spiritual development, faith development, and Unitarian Universalist identity development. As you plan a workshop, apply your knowledge of the group, the time and space available, and your own strengths and interests to determine the most important and achievable goals for the workshop and the activities that will serve them best.

Learning Objectives

The Learning Objectives describe specific participant outcomes for which the workshop activities are designed. It may be helpful to think of learning objectives as the building blocks with which the program's larger goals are achieved. To achieve particular learning objectives, make sure you select the activities that address those outcomes.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

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

Workshop-at-a-Glance is not a road map that you must follow. Rather, use it as a menu for planning the workshop. You will decide which elements to use and

how to best combine them for your group, meeting space, and time available.

Keep in mind that many variables determine the time required for an activity. Whole-group discussions will take longer in a large group than in a small group. While six teams can plan their skits as quickly as two teams can, your group will need more time to watch six skits than to watch two. Remember to consider the time needed to move and settle participants from one area to another.

Spiritual Preparation

Each workshop includes suggestions for leaders to prepare for leading the workshop. Take advantage of these suggestions to experience the Spirit of Life program yourself, to grow spiritually, and to grow as a leader.

Workshop Plan

The workshop plan presents every element of the workshop, in detail, in the sequence established in the Workshop-at-a-Glance table. The workshop plan also presents Taking It Home and Resources sections. The Resources section includes additional sources to help the leader further explore the workshop topics.

If you are reading Spirit of Life online, you can move among the workshop's elements—Opening, Closing, Activity 4, Handouts, etc. Each element occupies its own web page. You can click "Print this Page" to print just the Opening, for example, or a single handout. You can also download a single entire workshop—or download the entire program—to customize and print as you wish.

Opening

Each workshop begins with a chalice-lighting ritual and an opening activity that involves reading together and considering the Unitarian Universalist Principle and Source that center the workshop. Shape the opening ritual to suit your group and the culture and practices of your congregation.

Activities

Up to seven activities form the core content of each workshop. The variety of activities in each workshop helps address different learning styles among participants. In most workshops, one activity focuses the group's attention on a story that illuminates the workshop theme.

Presenting the activities in the sequence suggested in each workshop helps provide a coherent learning experience. In general, workshops are structured to first activate participants' interest in and prior knowledge of the main topic, then offer hands-on engagement with the

topic, and finally provide opportunities to process and apply new reflections and knowledge. The suggested sequence balances listening and talking, and complements individual exploration with small group or whole group exploration.

As you mix and match activities to form a workshop that works well for your group, keep in mind the benefits of a well paced workshop that includes different kinds of activities. If you are leading an hour-and-a-half or longer workshop, sequence in Alternate Activities in an order that makes sense within the flow of the workshop.

Materials for Activity

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

Preparation for Activity

Review the bulleted preparation "to do" list for each activity at least one week ahead of a workshop. The list describes all the advance work you need to do for the activity, from securing musical accompaniment to creating a poster.

Description of Activity

This section provides detailed directions for implementing the activity with your group. Read the activity descriptions carefully so that you understand both the activity and its purpose. Later, when you are leading the group, use the description as a step-by-step how-to manual.

Including All Participants

Adaptation to include all participants should always be part of your planning process. For certain activities, the Including All Participants section suggests specific modifications to make the activity manageable and meaningful for participants with limitations of mobility, sight, hearing, or cognition. Leader Resource 1 in Workshop 1 includes general tips for making workshops more accessible. Neither the leader resource nor Including All Participants are comprehensive.

Faith in Action

Each workshop includes suggestions for ways to apply experiences and discoveries from the workshop to personal or group service and justice-making activities. You may want to include some of the Faith in Action suggestions on the Taking It Home handout. You may also choose to invite the group to join together in a Faith in Action activity.

Closing

Each workshop includes a closing ritual which includes a closing reading, extinguishing of the chalice, and

introduction of the workshop's Taking It Home ideas. For workshops in which participants are invited to read closing words together, these words appear on the introductory handout that also provides the workshop's chalice-lighting words, Principle, and Source. Use the program as a resource to shape a closing that fits your group and your faith home culture and practice.

Leader Reflection and Planning

This section provides questions to help co-leaders process the workshop after it is concluded and use their reflections to shape future workshops.

Taking It Home

The Taking It Home section helps participants extend their Spirit of Life experiences. This resource includes conversation topics, journaling assignments, and other ideas for incorporating learnings from the workshop into participants' lives at home, and in their workplaces, congregations, and communities. Download Taking It Home, print out, photocopy it "as is" for participants to bring home, or customize it first.

Alternate Activities

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

Resources

The program provides four types of resources.

Stories have the full text of any story you will read or tell the group.

Handouts are material that you need to print out and copy for all participants to use in the workshop. Some handouts are optional, such as those that include the full text of stories that you will read aloud to participants.

Leader Resources are materials that you will need to print out and modify in some way for the workshop.

Find Out More includes book and video titles, website URLs, and other resources to help you learn more about the workshop topics.

IMPLEMENTATION

Each congregation has its own approach to structuring adult programs. Some congregations offer programs on Sunday mornings, gathering adults before the service, after the service, during a second service, or between two services. Other congregations offer adult workshops

on Sunday afternoons or weekday evenings. Some offer single workshops here and there, others prefer to present workshops as a series. Some congregations charge money and require pre-registration for adult courses. Many congregations open their adult programs to all who wish to attend, regardless of whether they've attended previous workshops in a series.

Spirit of Life has a flexibility that allows you to offer it under any of these scenarios. The program design does not assume the same participants will come to each workshop. Each workshop offers activities that acknowledge and welcome newcomers. The one-hour workshop length fits readily with the time slot typically available for a Sunday morning adult program. A one-and-a-half hour workshop might better suit an afternoon or evening program. Congregations can use one of these workshops, a few, or all of them. Program leaders and congregational leadership can decide how the Spirit of Life program can best fit into the congregation's lifespan education program.

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

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

BEFORE YOU START

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

Choose a meeting space. Find a comfortable room that offers, or can accommodate, chairs for participants, tables for artwork and writing, an altar or centering table, a podium if you will use one, and a cordless microphone if you will use one. Make sure you will be able to use an easel or post newsprint on the walls, and make sure the space is accessible for participants in wheelchairs. Reserve the space and any equipment you may need for all of the workshop dates and times you have chosen.

Arrange for childcare. If you are meeting at a time when religious education programming is not available for participants' children, arrange for childcare with qualified childcare providers and reserve a room for childcare.

Promote the Spirit of Life workshop(s). Use newsletters, websites, printed and verbal announcements, adult religious education brochures, and special invitations to publicize the program. Reach out at worship, at visitor and new member orientations, and at other religious education program meetings. You may also choose to promote the workshop(s) more broadly with a listing in your local newspaper or on your local community access television channel.

FACILITATOR FEEDBACK FORM

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

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

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation:

Number of Participants:

Age range:

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

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

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

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

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

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

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

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM

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

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religiouseducation@uua.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation or group:

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

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

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

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

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

WORKSHOP 1: SPIRIT OF LIFE: EXPLORING SPIRITUALITY FOR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS

INTRODUCTION

We covenant to affirm and promote the free and responsible search for truth and meaning. The living tradition we share draws from... Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

This introductory workshop gets participants in touch with spiritual moments in their lives. Rather than offering opportunities to discuss or debate the existence of something external called "spirit," the activities help participants recognize and claim their own internal experiences of wonder, awe, and connection.

"Heart and mind" and "body and spirit" are phrases we use as metaphors to try to describe a goal of our human quest for wholeness. The experiences participants will have in this workshop become part of their own quest—a quest to live fully as individuals and to participate together in creating a loving and just world.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build community in the group
- Help participants get in touch with their own sense of spirituality and the sacred.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Get to know other participants
- Describe their personal sense of the sacred
- Reflect on and share spiritual moments in their lives
- Optional: Reflect on and discuss their spiritual journeys.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Meeting One Another	5
Activity 2: Introducing Spirit of Life	10
Activity 3: Singing "Spirit of Life"	5
Activity 4: What Does the Song Mean to You?	10
Activity 5: Words of Wonder and Reverence	10
Activity 6: Reflecting on Spiritual Moments	15
Activity 7: Sharing in Groups of Three	25
Faith in Action: Listening to Deepen Social Justice Projects	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: In Poetry and Prayer	30
Alternate Activity 2: Spiritual Journey Map	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Before leading this introductory workshop, you may wish to engage in the following suggested practices for centering. A centered leader who is present and responsive while facilitating is likely to lead an effective workshop.

Reflection. Set aside some time to reflect on your personal experiences and understanding of spirituality. Either individually or together, co-leaders can use the workshop activities to spark and structure your reflection. Doing so will also prepare you to explain and lead the activities.

Practice. Set aside some moments to pray, to meditate, or to envision your good intentions for the workshop.

Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for general tips to make your workshop welcoming to people with physical disabilities and sensitivities.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Nametags and bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen or pencil
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide that lists workshop activities

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or email addresses.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, prepare and post an agenda, or create a digital slide of the agenda for display during the workshop.
- Set up a station with nametags and markers for participants to create their own nametags. Provide large nametags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's nametags from a distance.
- If you have a flyer about upcoming workshops, place it with the nametags.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create nametags.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Handout 1, [Spirit of Life](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Small votive candle in holder
- Optional: Taper candle in candlestick

Preparation for Activity

- Review and photocopy Handout 1.
- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice and candle, votive candle, taper candle, and matches or lighter. If you are using an LED battery-operated candle, place it in the chalice.

- Optional: Light the votive candle in advance and place the taper nearby so that chalice lighter can use the taper to carry the flame to the chalice.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle. Distribute Handout 1. Indicate the unison chalice-lighting words on the handout.

Invite a participant to light the chalice, while you lead the group in reciting the unison chalice-lighting words.

ACTIVITY 1: MEETING ONE ANOTHER (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure all participants' nametags are visible. If any participants need to make nametags, pass around the materials as you begin this activity.

Description of Activity

Begin name sharing by affirming participants:
I'm so glad you are here. There is so much knowing in this room, and each one of us has something to offer us all.

Invite participants to think of an activity they enjoy or engage in frequently. Then, invite each to share their name and their activity. For example, "I'm Mary, and I enjoy jumping out of airplanes," or "I'm Bob, and I type at a keyboard all day."

A variation on this activity involves movement: Each person mimes the activity they describe, then all other participants mimic their motions.

You may begin by sharing your own name and activity, or invite a participant to go first. Ask participants to say their names clearly. If you are using a microphone, pass it during the sharing.

If the group has 20 or fewer participants, after all have shared their names and activities ask if anyone thinks they can repeat all the names. If the volunteer gets stuck on a participant's name, ask the participant to repeat their name.

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING SPIRIT OF LIFE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Schedule for Spirit of Life](#) (included in this document)

- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the description of the activity. Familiarize yourself with the content you will deliver so you can speak to participants in a way that feels comfortable and genuine for you.
- Customize Handout 2 according to your congregation's plan for the series, and then prepare a copy.
- If you are using a microphone, make sure it is working properly.

Description of Activity

Offer an introduction to this workshop and Unitarian Universalist spirituality. Ask:

- What are some ways you understand Unitarian Universalist spirituality?

After engaging participants in a brief discussion, describe the workshop series. Spirit of Life helps participants:

- Become familiar with a broad and inclusive definition of spirituality—one that includes those who do and don't affirm the existence of spirit or deity
- Evaluate experiences of the spiritual turning points in their lives and spiritual experiences in day-to-day living
- Learn methods to be attentive to one's spirituality
- Consider the value of spiritual practice, in any variety of forms, as a means to deepen faith and enhance the quality of everyday living
- Participate in the spiritual practices of speaking and listening with respect
- Explore a vocabulary of reverence drawn from the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition* and its supplement, *Singing the Journey*
- Articulate thoughts, feelings, and longings in authentic ways, and understand the spiritually healing value of such authenticity
- Explore possibilities for deepening experiences of spirituality for oneself and for others in the context of one's Unitarian Universalist congregation.

Distribute your version of Handout 2.

Invite questions about the workshop or the series.

ACTIVITY 3: SINGING "SPIRIT OF LIFE" (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of "Spirit of Life" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Gather copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, enough for all participants. Obtain large print and/or braille copies for participants who need them.
- Optional: Arrange for musical accompaniment or set up music player.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Spirit of Life" by Carolyn McDade, Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

If your congregation has a tradition of using body movement or sign language to accompany this song, you may invite participants to share in this movement while they sing together.

Including All Participants

The invitation to "rise in body or spirit" accommodates participants of all physical abilities.

ACTIVITY 4: WHAT DOES THIS SONG MEAN TO YOU? (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review the discussion questions for this activity to be comfortable posing them to your group.
- Optional: If you want to record participant responses during the discussion, post newsprint where all can see it and place markers nearby.

Description of Activity

Share with participants this excerpt from a 2007 article in *UU World*:

No other song, no other prayer, no other piece of liturgy is so well known and loved in Unitarian Universalism as "Spirit of Life" by Carolyn McDade.

It is our Doxology, or perhaps our "Amazing Grace." Many congregations sing it every Sunday, or at least enough to know the words

by heart. Sermons have been devoted to this one song... It is sung at weddings and memorial services, around campfires and at demonstrations, at cradles and hospital bedsides.

In six short lines "Spirit of Life" touches so much that is central to our faith—compassion, justice, community, freedom, reverence for nature, and the mystery of life. It finds the common ground held by humanists and theists, pagans and Christians, Buddhists and Jews, gay and straight among us.

Engage participants in a reflection on the song "Spirit of Life," using the questions below. Allow a few short responses to each question. If you like, you or a volunteer may note participant responses on newsprint:

- Does the song elicit a feeling in you? If so, what feeling?
- Do you identify this feeling with a sense of spirituality, and in what way?

ACTIVITY 5: WORDS OF WONDER AND REVERENCE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 3, [Words of Wonder and Reverence](#) (included in this document)
- Pens or pencils for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review and make copies of Handout 3.

Description of Activity

Share with participants:

As Unitarian Universalists, we have many ways of naming those things in life that inspire wonder, awe, and reverence. Whether or not we believe that there is divinity at work in our universe, we experience moments of what our Unitarian Universalist Principles name as "transcending mystery and wonder" and "an openness to the forces that create and uphold life."

Distribute Handout 3. Explain that this handout features some, but not all, of the words that describe an object of wonder and reverence in the hymns included in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Point out the variety among these words; the phrases speak to Unitarian Universalists in all our theological diversity.

Ask participants to spend a few minutes individually reading the list in Handout 3 and to circle at least three personally meaningful phrases—words that remind them

of wonder or the Spirit of Life. Invite participants to write down their own phrases or words if none of the phrases speaks to them or if the list seems incomplete. Explain that they will use the words in activities that follow.

Including All Participants

To adapt this activity for people with vision limitations, form small groups and ask a volunteer in each small group to read up to 20 of the phrases aloud. Invite others in the group to respond by verbally indicating which words speak to them about the sacred, while another volunteer jots down tally marks on his/her handout to record the number of responses earned by each word or phrase. Invite each small group to tally up the responses to identify the phrases with the most positive responses. Reconvene the entire group and compare findings.

For participants with low vision, handouts can be printed with large font, or emailed to participants to use their own reader.

ACTIVITY 6: REFLECTING ON SPIRITUAL MOMENTS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper for drawing or writing
- Pens and pencils
- Bell
- Optional: Color pencils, markers, crayons

Preparation for Activity

Gather the necessary supplies and put them out on a table or another easily-accessed place in the meeting room.

Description of Activity

Invite participants into a time of quiet reflection.

In the quiet, ask participants to read to themselves the words they circled on their list. Or, if you used the adaptation in Activity 5, Words of Wonder and Reverence that involved spoken responses, you may now choose to read aloud to the group all of the words that earned tally marks.

Invite the group to reflect on this question:

What experiences or moments have you had of feeling wonder and reverence—feelings of oneness with the earth, feelings of connection with the mystery and wonder of the universe, or a sense of God or the Spirit of Life? In other words, what experiences or moments have led you to appreciate the words you chose?

Allow one or two minutes of shared silence. Then, distribute paper and writing/drawing implements. Invite participants to write about or draw their memories of, or responses to, those experiences or moments. You may suggest that participants list words or memories, create a poem, write their thoughts in prose, or draw abstractly or realistically.

An invitation to draw can make "art-phobic" participants nervous. Make it clear that this activity presents an opportunity to be creative, which can involve writing or drawing. Suggest that participants try drawing with their non-dominant hands, to free themselves from self-judgment about their drawing ability.

Let the group know they will have ten minutes for reflecting and responding on paper. After ten minutes, ring the bell and invite participants to return their attention to the whole group.

Including All Participants

Welcome participants who do not wish to or are not able to write or draw to sit comfortably and contemplate in silence. While the objective of this activity is spiritual reflection and expression, neither a specific product nor its quality matter. Invite participants to engage in the form of creativity that most awakens their spirituality in this moment.

ACTIVITY 7: SHARING IN GROUPS OF THREE (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how to form triads in your group. Determine whether you will have participants number off or form their own groups.

Description of Activity

Tell the group they will have an opportunity to share their stories about their own experiences of wonder, reverence, and the Spirit of Life.

Invite participants to form groups of three, preferably with people whom they do not yet know well. If the number of participants is not divisible by three, form pairs as needed.

Then, offer these instructions:

For this exercise, each person in your group will have a turn at each of three roles: speaker, listener, and holder of the space.

When you are the speaker, it takes courage to speak from your depths to another person. You

choose what, and how much, you want to share. True, honest speaking creates community and strengthens you in being true to who you are. Listening is a way of showing respect and care for another. Listening is a way to learn and grow. Listening creates community. Listening without interruption and with attention takes concentration and effort.

When you are holding the space, you hold the good intentions for the group and provide witness to the sharing between speaker and listener. As you hold the space, you want the best for the time. You want safety and compassion. You want truth to be spoken, and heard. When you are holding the space, you give your attention and support to the speaker, to the listener, to the process, and to the relationships it creates. One woman said that holding the space is like being in the same room with her two children when they are having a conversation. She is not part of the conversation, but she wants so much for the conversation to go well.

Each person will have five minutes to speak. When it is your turn to speak, you might begin by taking a deep breath. Speak the essence of what you have to say. Take all the time given to you. Not less, so as not to show up. Not more, so as to take away from someone else's presence in the group. You might think you've said all you have to say, but if your minutes are not up, you can pause quietly, breathe, and perhaps get in touch with something more to share.

Invite each triad to determine the order in which they will rotate the three roles. Participants who are paired will each take a turn as speaker and listener.

Tell the group you will ring the bell to begin the exercise and at five-minute intervals so they can switch roles. Ring the bell, and watch the clock.

When all have shared, tell participants they will have two minutes to reflect on the exercise within their triads or pairs. Ask each triad or pair to allocate the time evenly, on their own, so that everyone has the same amount of time to speak and to listen. Offer this question to guide triads and pairs in reflection:

- How was this experience for you? What did you notice?

Begin and end the two-minute period by ringing the bell. Bring the whole group back together, and invite brief responses to these questions:

- What was it like to hear about others' experiences of wonder, reverence, or the Spirit of Life?
- What was it like to share your own?
- What will you carry with you from this experience of sharing?

Tell the group:

The triad sharing you have completed introduces some practices that many consider spiritual: To speak the truth in love, to listen as a way of showing respect and care, to hold good intentions for a group, and to witness to sacred possibilities in a moment of human interaction.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle or LED battery-operated candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Taking It Home section for this workshop
- A copy of the closing words you want to use

Preparation for Activity

- Review Taking It Home and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Print out Taking It Home for all participants.
- Review the closing words. Decide whether to use these or another closing. Print out a copy of the closing words you will use and place it near the chalice.

Description of Activity

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

Hand out the Taking It Home section you have prepared. Invite participants to "take the workshop home" and explain the activities, as needed.

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit. Offer these instructions:

Place your left hand palm up and your right hand palm down, so both thumbs are pointed left. Now, each of us is in a position of receiving and giving. Let's join hands with one another

around the room. Perhaps in this way we can feel energy, the Spirit of Life, moving through us.

Once participants have all joined hands, invite them to call out a word or phrase that describes how they are feeling right now. Allow some silence to be sure all who would like to do so have a chance to speak.

Then, read aloud the closing words—either the words below or words of your choice.

We give thanks for this time together, for the courage it takes to show up, for our willingness to share, to listen attentively, and to hold one another in trust and good will. Thanks for our desire to grow spiritually and learn from one another. Spirit of Life, be with us in our parting and in our return. Be with us now and always. Amen.

Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

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

FAITH IN ACTION: LISTENING TO DEEPEN SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS

Description of Activity

Bring the practice of deep listening to your service or social justice work. When involved in congregational commitments, practice listening deeply to other members of your committee or group and to children or youth with whom you interact. When involved in extra-congregational social justice or interfaith projects, engage others in conversation about how their faith calls them to involvement. When involved in direct service projects such as food pantries or Habitat for Humanity, listen deeply to the stories of those who are recipients of the service.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

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

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop?

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

- Place paper and writing implements on a common table or within your own reach for distribution to all participants.
- Copies of Handout 3 for all participants.
- Optional: Write a short song, poem, meditation, or prayer using words of wonder and reverence that speak to you, to share with the group as an example. Try not to make it too polished, so as not to raise an unconscious expectation that participants' works be highly polished—they will only have twenty minutes to work on them.

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote the free and responsible search for truth and meaning. The living tradition we share draws from... Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Share your list of words of wonder and reverence with some members of your household, a few of your friends, or some of your co-workers. Ask them which words speak to them. Share your favorites. Conversations about wonder and reverence can deepen family, friend, and even work relationships—even if your words differ completely from one another's!

Start a journal in which you record when and where you witness the Spirit of Life in the days between this workshop and your next meeting. Examples might include in a conversation, in the misty fog, in someone's unselfish kindness, in the sudsy dishwater, or in singing. In your journal, describe your thoughts and feelings.

Write a letter to the self you might have been, had your spiritual journey gone a different way.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: IN POETRY AND PRAYER (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 3, [Words of Wonder and Reverence](#) (included in this document)
- Writing paper and pens or pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure each participant has a seat at a table where they can write.

Description of Activity

If your group has done Activity 5, Words of Wonder and Reverence, ask each participant to find their copy of Handout 3. Explain that they may use the phrases they have already chosen as ones that speak to them about the sacred, or they may choose new words to explore.

If your group has not done Activity 5, distribute Handout 3. Tell participants that these are some, but not all, of such words from hymns in the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Ask participants to scan the handout for words they would like to explore in a creative exercise. Distribute paper and writing implements.

Now, invite participants into a creative space with this instruction:

Try writing a song, poem, meditation, or prayer that incorporates some of these words of wonder and reverence or others of your own creation or choice. You might begin with your chosen words and then move on to express your thanks, regrets, hopes, fears, worries, joys, longings, and more. Express yourself naturally. You can imagine writing a letter to someone you love and trust with whom you can share your self.

If you have composed a sample, share it with the group now.

Tell participants they will have twenty minutes for writing. Then, they will each have an opportunity to share the song, poem, meditation, or prayer they have written with another person.

After twenty minutes, invite participants to form pairs. Encourage them to pair up with people whom they do not know well. You may create a group of three if your group has an odd number of participants.

Offer these instructions for sharing in pairs:

In pairs, one of you speaks or reads what you are willing to share with the other. The companion listens attentively, openly. After the

first speaker finishes, let there be a moment of silence between you. The listening companion can then say something to affirm the experience you have shared. Perhaps you can say "May it be so" or "Amen" or "Thank you." Then, switch roles. These are moments of precious sharing and confiding, and we offer one another our mutual trust and regard.

Allow two or three minutes for pairs to share their writing. Then, invite pairs to rejoin the full group. Lead a discussion using these questions:

- How many people wrote songs? prayers? meditations? poetry? something else?
- What was it like to write something with your words of wonder and reverence—what were some feelings that came up for you?
- How was it to listen to someone else's poem, prayer, song, or meditation?
- What will you carry forward from this experience?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SPIRITUAL JOURNEY MAP (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Unlined paper, standard 8 1/2" x 11" size or larger, for all participants
- Handout 4, [My Spiritual Journey](#) (included in this document)
- Drawing and writing implements, such as pencils, color pencils, markers, crayons
- Pairs of scissors (including left-handed scissors) for participants to share
- Rolls of clear tape for participants to share
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds

Preparation for Activity

- Review and photocopy Handout 4. Make more copies than you have participants, to ensure enough puzzle pieces.
- Make sure all participants have a place to sit at a table or desk where they can create their maps.
- If your group has not done Activity 7, Sharing in Groups of Three, read the description of that activity so you will be prepared to explain the roles of speaker, listener, and holder of the

space. If you decide to incorporate some of Activity 7, Sharing in Groups of Three into this activity, print out the activity description and mark the parts you want to use.

- Optional: You may prefer to cut out puzzle pieces from Handout 4 in advance, rather than have participants spend time cutting them out during the workshop. If so, cut out the puzzle pieces from some or all of the photocopies of Handout 4. Store the cut-out puzzle pieces in a plastic bag.
- Optional: After you review the description of this activity, create a map of your own spiritual journey to show participants as an example.

Description of Activity

Tell the group that each of us is on a spiritual journey. You may use these words, or your own:

Along the journey from birth to death, each of us learns and grows and experiences many things. All of this learning, growing, and experiencing affects our relationship with the Spirit of Life, our relationship with the ground of our being. These things affect our spirituality.

Tell the group that they will now have an opportunity to create individual maps of their own journeys of spirituality. Ask participants to consider how these questions pertain to their lives as lived thus far:

- What have been some of the peaks and valleys? The rough seas?
- When have been times of wandering about? Times of spinning in circles?
- What have been the most spiritually challenging times, and the most spiritually straightforward times?
- How and where have they found pathways out of spiritually difficult times, or pathways into better times?

Tell participants that their maps can include markers for their changes in religious identity and spiritual practices as well as major events in their lives that affected their spiritual development. Offer these examples, as well as others you may think of:

- Making a friend
- Getting through a loved one's illness
- Learning to be yourself
- Dealing with addiction

- Seeing the world as more varied than you once thought it was
- Trusting yourself to make an important decision
- Accepting a physical feature of yours that you once disliked.

Explain that participants will have ten to fifteen minutes to create maps of their spiritual journeys. Encourage them to concentrate on the important points along the way, rather than the details, because the time they have to complete their maps is short.

If you have prepared your own map as an example, show it now. Then distribute sheets of unlined paper, handouts and/or puzzle pieces, scissors, drawing and writing implements, and rolls of tape. If you are distributing cut-outs rather than entire handouts, make sure you give each participant a variety of puzzle pieces. Tell participants they can trade with one another for more of certain pieces.

Demonstrate that the puzzle pieces will fit together in any sequence. Explain that participants may write on and decorate the pieces they want to include. They may tape the pieces together or onto a sheet of unlined paper to form a basic map of their spiritual journey. Let participants know they are welcome to color outside the lines or to draw a map on a piece of unlined paper if they'd rather not use the puzzle pieces. Ring the bell when time is up.

Ask participants to bring their maps and move back into the triad or pair they shared with during Activity 7, Sharing in Groups of Three. If your group has not done that activity, form triads or pairs now.

Invite participants to share their maps, allotting each speaker two minutes. Instruct each triad to rotate the three roles of speaker, listener, and holder of the space. Tell the group that along with sharing their maps, triads can discuss these questions:

- How did it feel to look at your life as a spiritual journey?
- Where does Unitarian Universalism fit into your journey?

Remind the group that one's spiritual journey is a deeply personal subject. All are welcome to show or not show their maps, and to reveal to their triad as much or as little personal information as they wish.

Ring the bell to begin the discussion time. Ring it again at two, four, and six minutes to signal that triad members should switch roles.

Gather everyone into the large group and ask for a few responses to the same two questions:

- How did it feel to look at your life as a spiritual journey?
- Where does Unitarian Universalism fit into your journey?

Affirm the good work of the group.

Including All Participants

If you notice participants struggling to hear one another in their small groups, invite some groups to leave the room and find a quieter space.

HANDOUT 1: SPIRIT OF LIFE

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

Our Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant to affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

We gather to support each other on this spiritual journey.

The Living Tradition we share draws from many sources including direct experience of transcending mystery and wonder.

We gather to explore our own experiences and listen to the experiences of others.

May our time together renew us and open us to the forces that create and uphold life.

We light this chalice for the Spirit of Life.

FOCUSING PRINCIPLE AND SOURCE

This workshop is grounded in the following Principle and Source from the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

- We covenant to affirm and promote the free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
- The living tradition we share draws from many sources: *Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder*, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life.

HANDOUT 2: SCHEDULE FOR SPIRIT OF LIFE

Facilitators' names and contact information:

Location of workshops:

Time of workshops:

Date Workshop

Spirit of Life: Exploring Spirituality for Unitarian Universalists

Sing In My Heart: Celebrations And Rituals

The Stirrings Of Compassion: Caring For One Another

Blow In The Wind, Rise In The Sea: Nature And Spirit

Move in the Hand: Living Our Spirituality in Our Day-to-day Lives

Giving Life The Shape Of Justice: Loving Your Neighbor And Yourself

Roots Hold Me Close: Tradition, Teachers, and Spiritual Formation

Wings Set Me Free: Hopes, Dreams, and Expanding Vision

Come to Us: Closing and Continuing On

HANDOUT 3: WORDS OF WONDER AND REVERENCE

These words of wonder and reverence come from *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbook.

Spirit of Life	Wholeness	Eternal One
Wondrous Creation	Grander View	Fount of Justice
Transforming Grace	Circle of Peace	O Liberating Love
Great Spirit, Come and Rest In Me	Spirit of Truth, of Life, of Power	Streams of Mercy Never Ceasing
Deep Power in Which We Exist	Highest That Dwells Within Us	Mother Spirit, Father Spirit
Come, Spirit, Come	Power of Love	Web of Life
Love Eternal	Grandeur of Creation	Boundless Heart
All My Memories of Love	Care that Cares for All	Stillness
Heart Beat	Power of Hope Within	Amazing Grace
Open Heart	Wonder of Wonders	Eternal Home
Chords of Life	Spirit of Love	Truth Within
Shaper of All Things	Wise Silence	Blessed Radiance
The Glory of Creation	Beauty of the Earth	Deep Yearning
Voice Within	Source of All	Being in All
Fount of Every Blessing	Mother Earth	Creative Light and Dark
Unfolding Grace	Peace Profound	The Universal Mind
Beauty, Truth, and Goodness	Mother of the Generations	Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
One Living Whole	Inward Love	Truth that Makes Us Free
Silence	Hope Undaunted	Source of Body and Soul
Spirit Growing in All	Longing	Fruits of Peace and Love
Still Small Voice	Creative Love	Blessed Spirit of My Life
Inner Wisdom	Inner Beauty	Faith, Hope, and Love
Old Mindfulness	Giver of All	Ever Spinning Universe
Wind of Change	The One	God
Mother-Father of Us All	Lover of All	Calm Soul of All Things
Compassion	Mysterious Presence	Stream of Life
Shield and Defender	Living Waters	Mystery
Immortal Good	Deepest Mystery	Universal Beauty
Star of Truth	Help of the Helpless	Music of the Spheres

Spirit of Heart and Mind
Singer of Life

Immortal, Invisible
Goddess

Spirit of Life and Renewal
Author of Creation

HANDOUT 4: MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Draw a map of your spiritual journey.

Your spiritual journey began with your birth, and it leads to now.

Draw the high peaks, the low valleys, the plateaus where your life seemed to coast along, the deserts, the wilderness, or the oases.

You can show the twists and turns, the detours, the places where you were lost, the smooth pathways, the wandering road, the straight path, the renewing well springs. There may have been super-highways, bustling cities, rivers you had to cross. You may need to indicate road blocks, helpful signs, or stepping stones.

On your map, you can name mountains, valleys, or any locations or passages for the experiences you were having when you passed that way.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR WORKSHOP PRESENTERS

As a presenter, you may or may not be aware of a participant's need for accommodations. In addition to accommodating the accessibility needs of participants who request them, you are urged to follow these basic accessibility guidelines for every workshop or session activity.

- Make a few large-print copies of all handouts available to participants.
- Write clearly and use large letters on newsprint. Use black or brown markers for maximum visibility (red and green are difficult for some to see).
- Make a printed copy of prepared newsprint pages to give to any who request it.
- Make sure that you have available different kinds of chairs for your group- some with arms and some without, some with cushioned seats and backs and others with hard seats and backs. This will allow people to choose the kind of seating that best accommodates physical limitations.
- Face the group when you are speaking and urge others to do the same. Please be aware of facial hair or hand gestures that may prevent or interfere with lip reading.
- In a large space or with a large group of people, use a microphone for presentations and for questions and answers. If a particular activity will likely make it difficult for speakers to face those who are listening (e.g. a fishbowl activity, a force-choice activity, a role play, etc.), pass a portable microphone from speaker to speaker.
- When engaging in a brainstorm activity, repeat clearly any work or phrase generated by the group in addition to writing it on newsprint.
- During small group work, make sure that each group is far enough from other groups to keep noise interference to a minimum.
- Be sure that aisles and doorways are clear at all times during a workshop so that people with mobility impairments or immediate needs may exit the room easily.
- When re-arranging furniture for small groups or other purposes, ensure that there are clear pathways between groups.
- Enlist workshop participants in being vigilant about removing bags, books, coffee cups and other obstacles left in pathways.
- Use the phrase, "Rise in body or spirit," rather than "Please stand."
- Use language that puts the person first, rather than the disability (e.g., "a person who uses a wheelchair," rather than "a wheelchair-user," "a child with dyslexia," rather than "a dyslexic child "people with disabilities" rather than "the disabled.")
- Refrain from asking people to read aloud (i.e., going around the room and asking each to read a part of something). Request a volunteer or read the material yourself.
- Ask participants to let you know in advance of any allergies to foods. Add to your covenant an agreement that the group will avoid bringing problem foods for snacks or will always offer an alternative snack food.
- Ask participants to let you know in advance of any allergies to scents or perfumes they may have. If there are participants with allergies or sensitivities, invite members of the group to refrain from wearing perfumes and add this agreement to your covenant.

For further information, please see guidance for [including persons with specific accessibility needs](http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/accessibility/disability101/27055.shtml) (at www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/accessibility/disability101/27055.shtml) on the Unitarian Universalist Association website.

FIND OUT MORE

The following resources can help you or participants reflect further on spiritual journeys.

Finding Your Religion: When the Faith You Grew Up With Has Lost its Meaning, by Rev. Scotty McLennan, a Unitarian Universalist minister and Dean for Religious Life at Stanford University. This book explores spiritual and faith development throughout life.

[*Writing the Sacred Journey: The Art and Practice of Spiritual Memoir*](#) by Elizabeth J. Andrew, a Unitarian Universalist layperson, author, and writing instructor.

[*Questions for the Religious Journey: Finding Your Own Path*](#), by George Kimmich Beach, a Unitarian Universalist minister. This book provides theological food for thought and tools for religious introspection from a Unitarian Universalist perspective.

[*Finding the Voice Inside: Writing as a Spiritual Quest for Women*](#) by Gail Collins-Ranadive, a Unitarian Universalist minister. This book offers a series of writing exercises inviting women to explore their spirituality.

WORKSHOP 2: SING IN MY HEART: CELEBRATIONS AND RITUALS

INTRODUCTION

We covenant to affirm and promote acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

The living tradition we share draws from... Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life... — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

In this workshop, participants focus attention on spiritual moments experienced in celebrations and rituals. Discussion helps participants name and explore experiences of wonder, awe, and connection they have had as individuals, as well as in family, group, and congregational life. The activities help participants recognize and claim their ability to create meaningful ritual, without props and in a short amount of time.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Explore the role of ritual and celebration in spirituality
- Help participants consider the importance of ritual as a means of spiritual growth
- Build community in the group.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Claim their ability to create meaningful ritual
- Identify spiritual elements of their experience of celebrations and rituals
- Plan and enact a ritual together.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0

Opening	5
Activity 1: Singing "Spirit of Life"	5
Activity 2: Celebrations and Rituals	20
Activity 3: Grounding	5
Activity 4: Creating Ritual Together	30
Activity 5: Story — The Gates of the Forest	5
Activity 6: Reflecting on Ritual	15
Faith in Action: Rituals in Social Justice Work	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Ritual in the Congregation	30
Alternate Activity 2: Ritual in Your Life	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflection. Before leading this workshop, you may wish to set aside some time to reflect on your personal experiences and understanding of ritual. Either individually or together, co-leaders can use the workshop activities to spark and structure your reflection. Doing so will also prepare you to explain and lead the activities.

Practice. Setting aside some moments to pray, to meditate, or to envision your good intentions for the workshop can help you to center yourself before you begin leading. A centered leader who is present and responsive while facilitating is likely to lead an effective workshop.

Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for general tips to make your workshop welcoming to people with physical disabilities and sensitivities.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Nametags and bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen or pencil
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide that displays a list of this workshop's activities

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or email addresses.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, prepare and post an agenda, or create a digital slide presenting the agenda for display during the workshop.
- Set up a station with nametags and markers for participants to create their own nametags. Provide large nametags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's nametags from a distance.
- If you have a flyer with information about upcoming workshops, place it at the nametag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create nametags.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A dripless candle in a heatproof holder or LED battery-operated candle that can be safely passed around the room
- Handout 1, [Sing in My Heart](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Small votive candle in holder
- Optional: Objects for the altar or centering table, such as rocks, pinecones, seashells, plants, flowers, figurines, little plastic animals and people, or statues of religious figures like St. Francis or the Buddha

Preparation for Activity

- Review and make copies of Handout 1 for each participant.
- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, a votive candle, a dripless candle and its holder to pass around the room, and matches or a lighter. If you are using an LED battery-operated candle, place it on the altar or centering table.
- Optional: If you have brought additional items for the altar or centering table, place them there.
- Optional: Light the votive candle in advance and place the taper nearby so that chalice lighter can use the taper to carry the flame to the chalice.

Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 1. Indicate the unison chalice-lighting words on the handout.

Welcome participants and offer a brief introduction to this workshop. Use these words, or your own:

Welcome to this program on Unitarian Universalist spirituality as expressed in the celebration and rituals we use in our congregational life and in our home lives. Celebrations and rituals are ways to appreciate life, face grief and sorrow, share joy and gratitude, and deepen relationships and core commitments.

In this workshop, we will explore how celebration and ritual can support our spirituality and spiritual growth. I am so glad you are here!

Tell participants that the opening for this workshop includes some additional elements to enrich the group's investigation of celebrations and rituals. If you have added objects to your altar or centering table, explain that you have added these objects to provide an example of how someone might personalize an altar for ritual.

Light the dripless candle from the votive candle flame, and secure the dripless candle in its heatproof holder or prepare the LED battery-operated candle. Say:

Unitarian Universalists believe the flame of truth, the spark of divinity, the light of knowledge, the warmth of love, and the energy of action are present in every person. In celebration of that affirmation, we will pass this candle around the room to each person.

When the candle comes to you, please call out your name clearly and slowly, so we have time to hear each name and see each face. After this candle has been passed among all our hands

and connected to all our voices and faces, we will light our chalice and join together in a unison chalice-lighting reading.

Allow participants to pass the candle, each saying their names. After all participants have said their names, invite a participant to light the chalice using the dripless candle or to place the LED battery-operated candle in the chalice and lead the group in reciting the unison chalice-lighting words.

Invite participants to read silently with you as you read aloud the Unitarian Universalist Principle and Source that this workshop highlights.

ACTIVITY 1: SINGING "SPIRIT OF LIFE" (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of "Spirit of Life" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* for all participants. Obtain large print and/or braille copies for participants who need them.
- Optional: Arrange for musical accompaniment or set up music player.

Description of Activity

Explain that this workshop focuses on the line "Sing in my heart."

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Spirit of Life," by Carolyn McDade, Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

If your congregation has a tradition of using body movement or sign language to accompany this song, you may invite participants to share in this movement while they sing together.

Including All Participants

The invitation to "rise in body or spirit" accommodates participants of all physical abilities.

ACTIVITY 2: CELEBRATIONS AND RITUALS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Writing paper and pens or pencils
- Bell

- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Optional: Cordless microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or podium

Preparation for Activity

- Post newsprint in a place where you can write on it easily and all participants can see it. Place markers, tape, a bell, and a timepiece nearby.
- Make sure all participants have a place to sit at a table or desk so they can write comfortably.

Description of Activity

Explain that this workshop explores rituals and celebrations in both our congregational and personal lives. Ask:

What are rituals?

After the group proposes some ideas, you may communicate your own idea of ritual, or share this one: Rituals are customary observances or practices. In a religious context, a ritual can be thought of as a set of actions infused with symbolic value. They mark both the transient and the permanent in the sacred journey of living—they can highlight changes in our lives or highlight those things that don't change.

Invite participants to name a few rituals and celebrations in the congregation's life. You may offer examples, such as lighting the chalice, a child dedication, or a Coming of Age ceremony.

Distribute writing paper and pens and pencils. Invite participants to position themselves comfortably for reflection and writing.

Say:

Unitarian Universalist minister Frances West says, "Human beings have a desire to worship because it scratches what itches in the human condition."

Take a moment to remember a worship service, a rite of passage, a celebration with friends, a family ritual, or a holiday celebration that addressed a need in your soul.

Pause for a moment, giving participants time to recall a memory. Then say:

What are the sights, sounds, smells, touches, tastes, actions, silence, words, motions you remember? What was the need, or longing, that was addressed?

Explain that participants have two minutes to make some notes about the ritual or celebration they remember. After two minutes, ring the bell.

Ask participants to form pairs. Encourage them to partner with people whom they do not know well. Offer these instructions:

You are invited to discuss the experiences that you just spent time recalling and writing about. You can share whatever is comfortable. If you remembered things that you would rather keep private, that is fine. Each person will have three minutes to talk while the other listens. When it is your turn to listen, simply listen and do not speak. Listening can be a spiritual practice in and of itself.

I will ring the bell when it is time to switch roles.

Time the discussions. Ring the bell at three minutes, and again at six minutes to conclude the sharing. Bring participants' attention back to the large group. Lead the whole group in discussion with these questions:

- What was it like to recall a ritual or celebration? Was it difficult to think of any? Was it difficult to choose one to focus on?
- What was it like to hear from your partner about their ritual or celebration? Did their experiences resonate with yours?

ACTIVITY 3: GROUNDING (5 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Review the activity and consider how you will demonstrate the movement. Use your creativity, but make sure you stay within your own physical limits and choose movements that will be accessible to people within a wide range of physical ability.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to rise to their feet or sit up in their chairs. Tell them that the group will try some simple movements, as each person is willing and able. Speak slowly, allowing pauses for stretching and centering.

Using these instructions or your own, lead the exercise:
Many rituals involve body movement. As we get started with creating our own ritual today, let's engage our bodies and help ourselves get grounded. Please move only as you are able and comfortable.

Feel your feet on the ground. Imagine them solidly on the ground, rooted. Feel your physical center—your core. Breathe into your core. Feel it as strong and solid. Feel your center.

Much that happens in this world can make us feel off balance. Yet, in this moment, we can feel grounded. We can feel centered.

Imagine roots going down from your feet through the floor, deep into the ground. You are a mighty tree in a mighty forest.

As we can, let's gently move our heads. Move our shoulders. Move our arms. Move our hands. Let's free up and shake out our upper bodies, while keeping our sense of having roots.

Take a deep breath. Now let it out. How about some more deep breaths? Let out a sound as you release the breath.

Demonstrate deep breathing with exhaled sound and repeat several times. You may wish to encourage deeper breaths and louder sounds. Allow plenty of time for all participants to experience their own breathing.

Invite participants to relax their bodies into stillness. Thank participants and invite them to come back to their chairs.

Including All Participants

Be sensitive to the range of physical abilities in the group as you lead the activity. Pay attention to the volume of your own voice as you move. Some participants may be unable to hear you if your face and voice are directed away from them. Deliver instructions when you are upright and facing the group.

ACTIVITY 4: CREATING RITUAL TOGETHER (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Leader Resource 1, [A Ritual Celebrating a Loving Community](#) (included in this document)
- Writing paper and pens or pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Participants will form their own small groups to plan and enact five stages of a ritual. If your workshop includes fewer than ten participants, plan how you will adapt this activity. You may decide to create two small groups, one to plan and enact Parts I, III, and V of the ritual, and the other to plan and enact Parts II and IV.
- Review and print two copies of Leader Resource 1. Keep one copy intact for your own use during the activity. Cut the other copy along the dotted lines, making five slips with instructions for small groups.

Description of Activity

Explain the activity using these or your own words:
Meaningful worship and rituals do not necessarily require a lot of props or extensive

planning. In the next fifteen minutes, you will create a ritual together that celebrates the loving community we can have in our congregation. It is connected to today's Principle, "Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations." Each of five small groups will be responsible for one section of the ritual.

Using Leader Resource 1, describe the five elements of a ritual. You may wish to read aloud from the leader resource, or use these brief descriptions:

"Centering" opens the ritual, calling participants to pay attention and ground themselves in the ritual's purpose.

"Sharing the journey" tells or enacts a story.

"Meditating or praying" allows a time for naming hopes and connecting with the Spirit of Life.

"Moving" uses body movement to express transition and emotion.

"Closing" expresses gratitude and closes the ritual in a way that helps participants carry its spirit forward.

Invite participants to move to areas of the room you designate for work on each stage of the ritual, according to their preferences. Ask for volunteers to join smaller groups to equalize the sizes of all five groups. Give each group its instruction slip for Part I, II, III, IV or V that you have cut out from Leader Resource 1.

Explain that groups will have ten minutes to plan their part of a ritual and that the entire group will enact the ritual together when the planning time is up. Each element of the ritual should last no longer than two minutes.

Make yourself available to answer groups' questions and to help them generate ideas.

When ten minutes have passed, re-gather the group to enact the ritual.

Remind participants of the flow of the events: Centering, Sharing the Journey, Meditating or Praying, Moving, and Closing. Explain that silence will link the five stages of the ritual; small groups must be ready to move the ritual forward without prompting. Ask participants to pay attention to the flow of the ritual as a whole, and to observe how their small group's work contributes to the overall experience.

Invite participants to get comfortable in their chairs, take some deep breaths, and prepare to receive the ritual. Signal the first small group to begin.

After the ritual, guide a discussion with these questions:

- What was it like to create and participate in this ritual?
- What was it like to receive it?
- What realizations or learnings have you had that you can carry forward?

Including All Participants

Encourage small groups to be sensitive to the range of physical ability among participants and to create ritual that includes all.

ACTIVITY 5: STORY — THE GATES OF THE FOREST (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[The Gates of the Forest](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Cordless microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or podium

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story and practice reading it aloud to ensure that you will present it effectively.
- Optional: Copy the story for all participants.

Description of Activity

Tell participants that you will share a story that will guide a discussion about the purpose of ritual in our lives.

Invite participants to sit comfortably and listen to a story from the preface to Elie Wiesel's novel, *The Gates of the Forest*. You may wish to use a cordless microphone to ensure that all participants can hear you.

Pause at the conclusion. Then, invite comment and conversation in response to the story.

ACTIVITY 6: REFLECTING ON RITUAL (15 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Explore the purposes and functions of celebration and ritual. Use these questions:

- How is ritual connected with today's Source, "Direct experience of transcending mystery and wonder?"
- Can rituals change God? Can they change reality?
- Can rituals change us?
- Why do you think that ritual and celebration are so important to human beings? Are they important to you? If so, why?

Note participants' responses, and listen for the reasons listed below; if you do not hear these, you may wish to contribute them.

Rituals and ceremonies:

- Add meaning and purpose to major life events
- Help us embrace change
- Help us express important emotions, including love and grief
- Help build community
- Enhance personal connections with the sacred, with the Spirit of Life.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle or LED battery-operated candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Handout 1, [Sing in My Heart](#) (included in this document)
- Taking It Home section of this workshop

Preparation for Activity

- If you did not do so for the opening, prepare a copy of Handout 1.
- Review the Taking It Home and Faith in Action sections for this workshop and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do on their own.
- Print out Taking It Home for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table.

Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop. Invite participants to "take the workshop home" and explain the activities on the Taking It Home handout, as needed.

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit. Ask participants to link arms as willing and able, holding Handout 1 in readiness. Lead the group in reading the closing words together.

Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

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

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

FAITH IN ACTION: RITUALS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK

Description of Activity

Invite participants to reflect upon the ways in which communal rituals can be used to celebrate, honor, or deepen social justice work. Suggest rituals in which participants may have taken part, such as a Jewish Seder ritual remembering our responsibility to work for freedom for all or an Earth Day ritual that reminds renews our commitment to the interdependent web or existence.

As a group or as individuals, consider working with your parish minister, religious educator, or worship committee to create a ritual honoring, celebrating, or deepening the congregation's commitment to a justice-making or service project. For example, some congregations bless the feet of those who participate in pledge walks. Consider creating rituals to honor the beginning of a project, significant milestones, or a project's completion.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

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

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

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

The living tradition we share draws from... Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Discuss some of your ideas about ritual and celebration with people who are important to you.

If you have begun to plan a ritual in this workshop, consider enacting the ritual. You could do this on your own or with your family, your household members, or another group. Or, discuss with members of the congregation how you can include the new ritual in your congregational practices.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: RITUAL IN YOUR CONGREGATION (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Handout 2, [Worksheet for Creating Sacred Space and Ritual Space](#) (included in this document)
- Pens or pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Copies of Handout 2 for all participants.
- Consider how to best divide participants into groups of four.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to name rituals that are part of their congregational life (e.g. Christmas Eve candlelight service, Coming of Age service, water ceremony) Distribute Handout 2 and read it aloud.

Invite participants to move into groups of four to explore how the described elements of ritual appear in the congregational rituals they have named. Invite each group to consider one of the named congregational rituals and use Handout 2 as a guide to help them explore the way in which the ritual is created. Allow ten minutes for groups to work together. Gather the whole group and invite the small groups to share their thoughts about the elements of the congregational ritual they examined.

After all groups have shared, allow time for general comment, observation, and conversation.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: RITUAL IN YOUR LIFE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Writing paper and pens or pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Write these three questions on newsprint:
 - What transitions are you or your loved ones facing that could be marked with ritual?
 - What spiritual or personal longings of yours could be addressed with ritual?
 - What is a celebration or ritual you hold, or would like to hold, with your family, friends, community, or congregation? Imagine what you could do to change or add to it to better nourish your spirit and the spirits of others.

Description of Activity

Invite participants into a time for individual, silent reflection and writing on the three questions. Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Pose the questions aloud that you have posted on newsprint.

Ring a bell to open the time for silent reflection and writing. After ten minutes, ring the bell again.

STORY: THE GATES OF THE FOREST

By Elie Wiesel, from *The Gates of the Forest*.

When the great Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem-Tov saw misfortune threatening the Jews, it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light the fire, say a special prayer, and the miracle would be accomplished and the misfortune averted.

Years later when a disciple of the Ba'al Shem-Tov, the celebrated Magid of Mezritch, had occasion for the same reason, to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place in the forest and say: "Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I

am still able to say the prayer," and again the miracle would be accomplished.

Still later, another rabbi, Rabbi Moshe-leib of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the forest and say, "I do not know how to light the fire. I do not know the prayer, but I know the place and this must be sufficient." It was sufficient and the miracle was accomplished.

The years passed. And it fell to Rabbi Israel of Ryzhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: "I am unable to light the fire, and I do not know the prayer, and I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is tell the story, and this must be sufficient." And it was sufficient.

HANDOUT 1: SING IN MY HEART

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

We light this chalice in affirmation and acceptance of one another.

Each of us has a piece of the truth

and we need one another to be more whole.

May we each bring to our gathering an openness

to the forces that create and uphold life.

May our time together in ritual and celebration

renew our spirits, deepen our community,

and inspire us to lead lives of wholeness, justice and joy.

UNISON CLOSING WORDS

We give thanks for this time together,

for one another's ideas, for our creativity and shared ritual.

May our affirmation and acceptance of one another

and our common celebration of life make us strong.

As we extinguish this chalice,

the flame of truth, the spark of divinity, the light of knowledge,

the warmth of love, the energy of action glow on in each of us

and together the radiance grows brighter.

May it ever be so.

FOCUSING PRINCIPLE AND SOURCE

This workshop is grounded in the following Principle and Source from the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life.

HANDOUT 2: WORKSHEET FOR CREATING SACRED SPACE AND RITUAL SPACE

As you create a sacred space or centering place for a ritual or celebration, you might like to consider these questions:

- *What's the theme of your celebration?*
- *What mood do you want to evoke?*
- *Does a color speak to the feeling of the celebration?*
- *How about texture: smooth, rough, or... ?*
- *Will you use any altar or centering table?*
- *What objects, such as cloths, paintings, photographs, rocks, branches, flowers, or candles, might enhance the ritual's theme?*

STRUCTURE

In *The Art of Ritual* (Celestial Arts, 2003), authors Sydney Barbara Metrick and Renee Beck identify three stages of effective rituals and rites of passage. Make some notes about what you might do at each of these stages.

Preparation: includes naming intentions for the ritual, planning it, choosing the objects that will be involved, and finding the space and the time.

Manifestation: includes building a sacred space, declaring intentions, invoking the Spirit of Life, enacting the ritual, offering blessing, and providing closure.

Grounding: involves integrating the results of the ritual into day-to-day life. Includes taking down the altar, evaluating the experience, and emotionally integrating the experience.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: A RITUAL CELEBRATING A LOVING COMMUNITY

Cut sheet into 5 strips along dotted lines.

A Ritual Celebrating a Loving Community

Part I

Centering: Create a simple opening to the ritual, with words, song, movement, candle light, or whatever your imagination calls to you, for the purpose of calling us together around the theme of celebrating a loving community.

A Ritual Celebrating a Loving Community

Part II

Sharing the Journey: Tell or enact a short story of an experience of loving community within the congregation. First, you may quickly share experience and then come to agreement on what to share in the ritual. How will you share it? Can more than one person tell the story? Can all of you tell the story?

A Ritual Celebrating a Loving Community

Part III

Meditation or Prayer: Create a reflective, meditative or prayerful expression of hope for loving community among us. How will you present this? With one voice? In unison? With several voices speaking in turn? Where will you locate yourselves?

A Ritual Celebrating a Loving Community

Part IV

Moving into Loving Community: Create poses that embody loving community with the congregation. Pick a series of poses, and put them in an order, and create transitions. Think of this as movement and body sculpture that expresses loving community. Will you "present" this, or is there a way to involve all of us in this movement?

A Ritual Celebrating a Loving Community

Part V

Closing: Create a closing to our ritual celebrating loving community. What are the images you want us to take with us? How can you use your voices, or simple movements, to express these images? How can you help us to end this ritual with a feeling of gratitude?

FIND OUT MORE

Recommended reading:

The Art of Ritual: Creating and Performing Ceremonies for Growth and Change by Renee Beck and Sydney Barbara Metrick (Berkeley, California: Celestial Arts, 2004).

Transforming Rituals: Daily Practices for Changing Lives by Roy M. Oswald with Jean Morris Trumbauer (Herndon, Virginia: Alban Institute, 1999).

WORKSHOP 3: THE STIRRINGS OF COMPASSION: CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

INTRODUCTION

We covenant to affirm and promote... Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. The living tradition we share draws from... Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

This workshop engages participants in experiencing and reflecting on spiritual moments connected with giving, receiving care, and compassion. Discussion helps participants identify and articulate the aspects of life on Earth that call out for their caring attention to others. The activities help participants recognize, practice, and claim their ability to exchange compassionate spiritual support with others.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Consider the roles of compassion and care in spirituality
- Build community in the group.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Work with others to create a ritual of blessing
- Offer a ritual of blessing to other participants
- Optional: Write a meditation or prayer
- Optional: Create and participate in a healing circle.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	15

Activity 1: Story — A Hospital Blessing	20
Activity 2: Creating Blessings	25
Activity 3: Sharing the Blessings	30
Faith in Action: Reaching out with Compassion	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Care and Compassion	10
Alternate Activity 2: Creating a Meditation or Prayer	30
Alternate Activity 3: Healing Circle	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflection. You may wish to set aside some time to reflect on your personal experiences and understanding of spiritual care and compassion. Either individually or together, co-leaders can use the workshop activities to spark and structure your reflection. Doing so will prepare you to explain and lead the activities.

Practice. Setting aside some moments to pray, to meditate, or to envision your good intentions for the workshop can help you to center yourself before you begin leading. A centered leader who is present and responsive while facilitating is likely to lead an effective workshop.

Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for general tips to make your workshop welcoming to people with physical disabilities and sensitivities.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Nametags and bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen or pencil
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide that displays a list of this workshop's activities

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or email addresses.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, prepare and post an agenda, or create a digital slide presenting the agenda for display during the workshop.
- Set up a station with nametags and markers for participants to create their own nametags. Provide large nametags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's nametags from a distance.
- If you have a flyer with information about upcoming workshops, place it at the nametag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create nametags.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Handout 1, [The Stirrings of Compassion](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Small votive candle in holder
- Optional: Narrow taper candle in candlestick
- Optional: A recording of "Spirit of Life" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Review and make copies of Handout 1.

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, a votive candle, a taper candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Gather copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, enough for all participants. Obtain large print and/or braille copies for participants who need them.
- Optional: Light the votive candle in advance and place the taper nearby so that chalice lighter can use the taper to carry the flame to the chalice.
- Optional: Arrange for musical accompaniment.
- Optional: Set up and queue your music player.

Description of Activity

Offer these, or similar, words of welcome:

Welcome to this program on Unitarian Universalist spirituality as expressed in our congregation's compassion and care for one another. Caring is an expression of our spirituality and our spiritual life can sustain us in our caring.

This workshop asks, "How can we grow to experience hope and healing in the midst of life's challenges?" I'm so glad you are here to explore this question with us today.

Distribute Handout 1 and indicate the unison chalice-lighting words. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting the unison chalice-lighting words. Invite participants to read silently along with you as you read aloud the Unitarian Universalist Principle and Source that this workshop highlights.

Introduce the workshop with these or similar words:

Please speak your name into the gathering. As we listen to one another's names, let us remember that each person has so much to deal with in life—pressures, anxieties, grief, and struggles. Let us hold each person in our compassion and care.

Invite participants to take turns saying their names clearly.

Explain that this workshop focuses on the line "all the stirrings of compassion."

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Spirit of Life," by Carolyn McDade, Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

If your congregation has a tradition of using body movement or sign language to accompany this song,

you may invite participants to share in this movement while they sing together.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — A HOSPITAL BLESSING (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story "[A Hospital Blessing](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Cordless microphone
- Optional: Pulpit or podium

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story and practice reading it aloud to ensure that you will present it effectively.
- Optional: Copy the story for all participants.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to sit comfortably and listen to the story as you read aloud. You may wish to use a pulpit or podium and/or a cordless microphone to ensure that all participants can hear you. Pause at the conclusion.

Then comment on the story, with these or similar words:

There is something so powerful about having the deep and sacred aspects of your work and your relations with people named. There is something sacred about having someone pay attention to you, hold your hands, honor what you do, and ask for your healing.

You may wish to share an example of such honoring from your own experience.

Talk with the group about rituals and blessings. Lead discussion with these or similar questions:

- Listening to the story, what aspect of the blessing of the hands sounded most meaningful to you?
- How did this ritual bless the participants?
- What does "blessing" mean to you?
- Do you feel we each have the capacity to bless others? If so, how?

Some participants may struggle to find an understanding of "blessing" that fits with their Unitarian Universalist beliefs and values. They may associate the notion of "blessing" with a god they no longer believe in, or with the hierarchy of their childhood religion. If you see the group getting stuck on their understanding of blessing, you can encourage them to think creatively about what blessing one another could mean in our democratic, theologically diverse community of faith. One way of thinking about "blessing" is as a recognition and sharing

of abundance. The word *berakah* means "blessing" in both Arabic and Hebrew. Its ancient root word *barak* also means "liberal" and "pool." Pools of water, generous liberality, blessings—each of these things is an expression of abundance. We can think of blessing as recognizing and sharing abundance in the midst of scarcity; naming and expressing the abundance of spirit, abundance of compassion, and abundance of love that surrounds us, even when we or others cannot feel it.

ACTIVITY 2: CREATING BLESSINGS (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Leader Resource 1, [Creating Blessings](#) (included in this document)
- Writing paper and pens or pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Participants work in five small groups to create blessings to share with the entire group. If the group includes fewer than ten participants or more than thirty, decide how you will adapt this activity so everyone works with at least one other person, and no group is larger than six.
- Review and print out two copies of Leader Resource 1. Keep one copy intact for your own use during the activity. Cut the other on the lines to make five slips with instructions for small groups.

Description of Activity

Introduce this activity with these or similar words:

Just as the Rev. Jurgen Schwing worked with his team to create a blessing of the hands, we are going to work in small groups to create blessings. Rather than bless each of us individually, we will bless ourselves together, as a group.

We'll create a blessing of our hands, a blessing of our minds, a blessing of our hearts, a blessing of our spirits, and a blessing of our community.

We'll create and conduct these blessings to support ourselves as a community in responding with our care to the ways that the hurts of the world affects each of us.

In your groups, use a combination of words, movements, and gestures to create the blessing you're assigned. When we share with our whole group the blessing each group has created, we

will present in this order: blessing our minds, hearts, hands, spirits, and community.

Invite participants to count off to form five groups. If you prefer, invite participants to choose their own small groups, being careful to keep groups nearly equal in size.

Distribute the instruction slips for creating the five different blessings that you cut out from Leader Resource 1. Explain that groups will have twenty minutes to create a blessing based on their assignment. Each blessing should take no more than two minutes to conduct. Ring the bell to begin the group work. Make yourself available as a resource, answering questions and offering ideas where needed. Ring the bell again when the twenty minutes are up.

Adaptations for more than 30 participants: If you have a large group, you can create up to ten small groups. Keep in mind that later, when participants share their blessings with the entire group, each group will need at least two minutes. If you find you need to form many small groups now, be prepared to adapt Activity 3, Sharing the Blessings. You may wish to extend the time for the activity; reconvene participants into two, separate groups so that all have time to conduct their blessings; or, decide how you will select just some of the small groups to conduct their blessings.

Adaptations for fewer than ten participants: With fewer than ten participants, form two or three groups. Assign one, two, or three blessings to each group, so that participants will generate all five blessings.

Including All Participants

Encourage groups to be sensitive to variations in living situation, physical ability, gender identity, country of origin, or other aspects of life that may exist among participants, and to create blessings that include all.

ACTIVITY 3: SHARING THE BLESSINGS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Cordless microphone(s)

Preparation for Activity

- If more than five small groups have created blessings, think creatively about how each group can present within the allotted time.
- If you have decided to divide your whole group into two, separate groups to share blessings, arrange to use an additional meeting space for this activity.

Description of Activity

Gather participants together to enact the blessings. Remind participants that the blessings will flow in this order: Blessing of our minds, our hearts, our hands, our spirits, and our community. Ask participants to maintain silence between the blessings. Invite them to pay attention to the flow of the blessings as a whole, as well as to the role of their small group's work in shaping the overall experience.

Invite participants to get comfortable in their chairs, take some deep breaths, and prepare to receive the blessings. Signal the first small group to begin.

After the groups have conducted their blessings, guide a discussion with these questions:

- What was this experience like for you? (Acknowledge that the group probably has a range of responses, from "awkward" to "deeply meaningful.")
- What are you going to carry forward from this experience?
- Looking more broadly, what are some other ways that you can connect your spirituality with expression of care and compassion?

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle or LED battery-operated candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Taking It Home section of this workshop

Preparation for Activity

- Review Taking It Home and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do on their own.
- Print out Taking It Home for all participants.
- Review and print out the blessing provided as closing words for this workshop.

Description of Activity

Gather the group around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop. Hand out the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Explain the activities, as needed.

Invite everyone to join hands, and offer this blessing:

We give thanks for our minds, hearts, hands, spirits, and this community.
May we bless one another and bless the world with our caring.
What we do matters more than we know.
May you go home at the end of the day feeling blessed
And feeling you have contributed to the healing of the world.
Go in peace. Go in love.

Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

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

FAITH IN ACTION: REACHING OUT WITH COMPASSION

Description of Activity

Find out from your parish minister, your pastoral care team, or other appropriate congregational group about the ways in which assistance is needed. Ask about opportunities that require a small time commitment as well as a substantial one. Invite participants as a group or as individuals to assist with the congregation's pastoral ministry, involving participants in on-going projects or offering to initiate an activity. Possible projects include:

- Sending notes or cards to those associated with the congregation who are serving in the military.
- Sending notes or cards to young adults away at college.
- Joining or starting a shawl ministry to create shawls for those who are ill or bereaved.
- Organizing meals for families with a new baby or dealing with a serious illness.
- Visiting elders in nursing homes on a regular basis.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

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

- What were some of our favorite moments from the workshop?

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

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote... Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.
The living tradition we share draws from... Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Bring a blessing you've created home to a partner, a family member, or a friend. Conduct your blessing for and with your family, a group you belong to, or some of the people with whom you work or volunteer.

Hold on to the themes of compassion and care throughout the coming week. Discuss with friends, loved ones, and colleagues ways to recognize one another's struggles and efforts against the world's hurts.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CARE AND COMPASSION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, and markers, and tape
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the two questions for reflection on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Explain that the topic for this activity is care and compassion. Invite participants to take some deep breaths and seek inside themselves their truest answers to these questions:

- What calls out for your care and compassion?
- Where do you see pain, suffering, hurting, or injustice?

Repeat the questions. Invite people to call out some of their answers. Take a few minutes to hear some responses. Be sure to thank each participant for his/her response.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: CREATING A MEDITATION OR PRAYER (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Creating a Centering Meditation or Prayer](#) (included in this document)
- Writing paper and pens or pencils
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Books of prayers or meditations for participants to browse for inspiration. The readings at the end of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition* can be used for this purpose, as can several of the books listed in the Resources section of this workshop plan.
- Optional: Computer with Internet connection

Preparation for Activity

- Review and make copies of Handout 2.
- Optional: Set up the computer and to access the [Worship Web](#) (at www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/).

Description of Activity

Share with participants:

There is so much that calls out for our care and compassion.

You are invited to create your own centering in meditation and prayer that names your experiences, feelings, and hopes as you try to live compassionately.

Distribute Handout 2. Explain that participants are welcome to use the phrases on the worksheet in their own meditation or prayer, use meditations or prayers that speak to them from any resources you have provided, or write their own from scratch. Provide writing paper and pens or pencils. Tell participants they will have fifteen minutes to write, and then an opportunity to share their writings in pairs, preferably with a partner they do not know well. If you have an odd number of participants, create a triad.

Explain that pairs will have five minutes for sharing. Partners should give one another the opportunity to speak or read aloud uninterruptedly, and should listen with care and attention.

Say:

These are moments of precious sharing and confiding. We offer one another our mutual trust and regard as we share with another the words we wrote for our centering in meditation and prayer.

Suggest that when speakers have finished reading a prayer or meditation, listeners might affirm by saying "Amen" or "Thank you." Allow five or six minutes for pairs to complete sharing. Let the group know when two or three minutes have passed and remind pairs to switch the speaker and listener roles.

Gather the large group and lead a discussion with these questions:

- What was it like to write a centering meditation or a prayer? What feelings came up for you?
- Was it helpful to name what you were seeking in your prayer or meditation? If so, how? If not, what would have been more helpful?
- How can verbal prayers and meditations help us connect with our spirituality? With other people and beings?

Including All Participants

Learning or cognitive disabilities can make on-the-spot composition very difficult for some people. Have a few books of prayers and meditations available, so that participants who do not want to write their own can choose a piece to share. The Find Out More section of this workshop suggests some books well suited to this purpose.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: HEALING CIRCLE (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- The Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- *Singing the Journey: A Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition* for each participant
- Optional: A piano, a guitar, or another instrument for accompaniment

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey: A Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*.
- Review Hymn 352, "Find a Stillness," and Hymn 391, "Voice Still and Small" in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Decide which hymn to learn and lead or recruit someone else to lead. If you prefer,

choose another hymn that many of your participants already know.

- Review "Go Now in Peace," Hymn 413 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Learn the hymn well enough to lead it, or recruit someone else to lead it.
- Review "Comfort Me," Hymn 1002 in *Singing the Journey*. Learn the hymn well enough to teach and lead the first verse, or recruit someone else to teach and lead it.
- Arrange for musical accompaniment, if you think your group will need it to learn or sing a hymn.

Description of Activity

This activity works well in a group with a high level of trust. It is not recommended for groups that are just getting to know one another.

Distribute hymnbooks. Invite participants into a time of quiet. When the group is settled, invite participants to join you in singing Hymn 352, "Find a Stillness," or Hymn 391, "Voice Still and Small," both from *Singing the Living Tradition*, or another song you have chosen.

Teach the group Hymn 1002 from *Singing the Journey*, "Comfort Me." Explain that the group will sing the first verse of this hymn to affirm each participant who brings his/her joys, sorrows, or concerns into the healing circle.

Gather participants into a circle. Ask each person who shares to wait until many others have shared before sharing again. Invite participants to call out joys, sorrows, or concerns as they feel moved. After each sharing, sing the first verse of "Comfort Me."

Allow enough silence to ensure that all have shared who would like to. Then, invite participants to sing the verse one more time for all the joys and sorrows spoken and unspoken.

If the group is comfortable with touch, you can invite participants in the circle to rise as they are willing and able. Invite all who want to receive the touch of hands on their shoulders and the singing of the group to come to the center of the group. Direct the participants remaining in the circle to place their right hands on the shoulder of the person standing next to them, and gently place their left hands on the shoulders of people in the center. Repeat the first verse of "Comfort Me," or lead the group in another song you have chosen.

Invite participants to join hands to form one large circle. Offer closing words that express thanks for this time together, for the sharing, for the healing thoughts and care. You may wish to close by leading the group in singing Hymn 413 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Go Now in Peace."

STORY: A HOSPITAL BLESSING

As human knowledge has grown, we have come to know the immensity of the universe. The universe is big and we human beings can seem infinitesimally small. The hurting in the world, our community, and our families seems huge, and we can feel as though there is little we can do. There's so much that needs care and compassion, so much pain and suffering, and so much hurting and injustice.

It's a lot to wrap our brains around, to think about, to try to understand and work to solve. It's a lot for our hearts to feel, to keep open and sensitive and responding. It's a lot for our hands to try to do. It's more than any of us can do on our own.

How do we keep ourselves from being overwhelmed? How do we keep our spirits from sinking into the pain and staying there? How do we keep ourselves going? How do we link with others in our efforts?

Ritual can be a powerful tool for raising our spirits and building our capacity for compassion. A story from one of our congregations offers an example; The Rev. Jurgen Schwing is an ordained United Church of Christ minister who is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley in California. He works at a nearby hospital, where members of the congregation also volunteer, offering spiritual care to patients. As they worked with patients, they noticed something: the patients and their families weren't the only ones needing spiritual care. The hospital's doctors, nurses, social workers, and other health care staff were often looking weary and stretched. Rev. Schwing could see how the constant care of patients was draining the staff, both emotionally and spiritually. He talked with the Unitarian Universalist volunteers and decided to offer a ritual for the staff: a ritual blessing of their hands.

It is a secular hospital. Many of the staff have no religious affiliation. The hospital administration initially

had concerns about having a "blessing of the hands," even if it was designed to be both voluntary and interfaith. But they gave their consent, mostly because they didn't want to un-invite the clergy and volunteers whom Rev. Schwing had already invited!

The team thought thirty or forty participants might come to the ritual. Yet, when the day came, one hundred fifty nurses, doctors, and other staff lined up to receive a blessing of their hands.

Each participant was invited into the meditation room, where a member of the team spoke to them. "What is your name?" "What is your role in the hospital?" "May I hold and bless your hands?" The team member then held their hands and spoke words of blessing created for that individual.

For example, a phlebotomist, who takes a patient's blood, received this blessing:

Susan, may your hands be blessed. May they be calm and steady. May you be able to induce confidence in the people you serve. May you provide great health care, and may you also share of your heart and of your compassion. May your work contribute to the detection of diseases and in this way contribute to health. Susan, may those who come here for healing be touched not just by your work, but by your being. May you find wholeness, and may you go home at the end of each day feeling blessed and feeling that you have contributed to the healing of the world.

Since that first day, Rev. Schwing, his staff, and volunteers have offered thousands of those blessings. Hospital staff arrive stressed out, with jaws set, and very much in "work mode." By the end of the blessing, there are tears or smiles or both. The staff are renewed, strengthened, and ready to bless their patients with attentive and compassionate care.

HANDOUT 1: THE STIRRINGS OF COMPASSION

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

We light this chalice in affirmation of compassion in human relations.

We gather to support each other in caring for one another
and in trusting in the transforming power of love.

We gather to explore our own experiences
and listen to the experiences of others,
to create and share and to bless one another.

May our time together renew our spirits, deepen our community,
and inspire us to lead lives of compassion and care
to build the common good.

We light this chalice for the Spirit of Life.

PRINCIPLE AND SOURCE

This workshop is grounded in the following Principle and Source from the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.

HANDOUT 2: CREATING A CENTERING MEDITATION OR PRAYER

Create your own centering meditation or prayer that names your experiences, feelings, and hopes as you try to respond with compassion to individuals, groups, or the world. Perhaps you'll be drawn to completing some of these sentences. Or, create your own sentences that name your experience of trying to live compassionately. If you are creating your own words, you might try writing as if you were writing a letter to someone you love and trust with whom you can share your experiences, feelings, and hopes.

Spirit of Life...	I find strength in...
My heart goes out to...	I put my faith in... .
So much calls out for my attention... .	I find joy in...
I am overwhelmed when... .	I am grateful for...
I am frustrated by... .	What matters now is... .
I feel when weary when...	I hope to... .
My own life is... .	One thing I can do is...
I seek...	I will...
I need...	I join with... .
I am restored by...	May...

LEADER RESOURCE 1: CREATING BLESSINGS

Cut sheet into 5 strips along dotted lines.

I. Blessing of Our Minds

The hurting in the world, our community, and our families seems huge, and we can feel as though there is little we can do. Every day, our minds process so much information. We learn of pain and suffering, we learn of hurting and injustice, in ourselves and in the world. It's a lot for our minds to take in, to think about, to try to understand and work to solve.

With words, movements, and gestures, create a blessing of our minds.

II. Blessing of Our Hearts

The hurting in the world, our community, and our families seems huge, and we can feel as though there is little we can do. Every day, our hearts process so many emotions. So much in the world needs care and compassion. There is so much pain and suffering, and so much hurting and injustice. It's a lot for our hearts to hold.

With words, movements, and gestures, create a blessing of our hearts.

III. Blessing of Our Hands

The hurting in the world, our community, and our families seems huge, and we can feel as though there is little we can do. There's so much that needs care and compassion, so much pain and suffering, and so much hurting and injustice. There is so much work for our powerful yet tired hands.

With words, movements, and gestures, create a blessing of our hands.

IV. Blessing of Our Spirits

The hurting in the world, our community, and our families seems huge, and we can feel as though there is little we can do. Our spirits can feel the weight of all that needs care and compassion, all the pain and suffering, and all the hurting and injustice. How do we keep ourselves from being overwhelmed? How do we keep our spirits from sinking into the pain and staying there?

With words, movements, and gestures, create a blessing of our spirits.

V. Blessing of Our Community

The hurting in the world, our community, and our families seems huge, and we can feel as though there is little we can do. Our community recognizes so much that needs care and compassion. We see so much pain and suffering and so much hurting and injustice. It's more than any of us can handle on our own. How do we keep ourselves going? How do we link our efforts with others?

With words, movements, and gestures, create a blessing of our community.

FIND OUT MORE

Books of Prayers and Meditations

Collections of meditations by Unitarian Universalists,
compiled by Skinner House Books:

[*Listening for Our Song*](#)

[*Day of Promise*](#)

[*All the Gifts of Life*](#)

[*Singing in the Night*](#)

Prayers collected by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias
Amidon, published by Harper Collins:

Earth Prayers from Around the World;

Life Prayers from Around the World;

*Prayers for a Thousand Years: Blessings and
Expressions of Hope for the New Millennium.*

Prayers collected by Larry Dossey, published by Conari
Press:

*Prayers for Healing: 365 Blessings, Poems, and
Meditations from Around the World.*

[WorshipWeb](#) is an on-line resource that includes prayers
and meditations by and for Unitarian Universalists.

Here are places for you to find out more about prayer
shawl ministry:

[Prayer Shawl Ministry](#) (at www.shawlministry.com/)

[*The Knitting Way: A Guide to Spiritual Self-Discovery*](#),
by Janice MacDaniels and Linda Skolnik, published by
Skylight Paths.

WORKSHOP 4: BLOW IN THE WIND, RISE IN THE SEA: NATURE AND SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

We covenant to affirm and promote... Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition we share draws from... Spiritual teaching of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature... — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

This workshop guides participants to recognize and engage in spiritual moments in relationship to the natural world. The activities help participants articulate and claim their experiences of wonder, awe, and connection in nature. Participants are invited to celebrate the natural world in its beauty and power, honor our relationship to the web of life, and live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Engage participants in identifying spiritual connections with the natural world
- Build community in the group.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Reflect on the interdependent web of all existence
- Identify spiritual experiences they have had in relation to the natural world
- Relate their understandings of the natural world to their spirituality
- Optional: Create a ritual in praise of the natural world.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0

Opening	10
Activity 1: The Web in the Bread	10
Activity 2: Story — from A Private History of Awe	5
Activity 3: Recalling Our Experiences of Nature	60
Faith in Action: Generations Together Exploring the Natural World	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: In Praise of Creation	30
Alternate Activity 2: Earth-Based Reading and Reflection	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflection. You may wish to set aside some time to reflect on your personal experiences of spirituality in nature. Either individually or together, co-leaders can use the workshop activities to spark and structure your reflection. Doing so will also prepare you to explain and lead the activities.

Practice. Setting aside some moments to pray, to meditate, or to envision your good intentions for the workshop can help you to center yourself before you begin leading. A centered leader who is present and responsive while facilitating is likely to lead an effective workshop.

Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for general tips to make your workshop welcoming to people with physical disabilities and sensitivities.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Nametags and bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen or pencil
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, computer, and digital slide that displays a list of this workshop's activities

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or email addresses.
- Set up a station with nametags and markers for participants to create their own nametags. Provide large nametags and bold markers so participants will be able to read one another's names from a distance.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, prepare and post an agenda, or create a digital slide representing the agenda for display during the workshop.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create nametags.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Handout 1, [Blow in the Wind](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Small votive candle
- Optional: Narrow taper candle
- Optional: Objects for the altar or centering table. You may include natural objects such as rocks, pinecones, seashells, plants, or flowers; little plastic animals, or figurines of religious figures like St. Francis or the Buddha, or pictures of environmentalist heroes like Rachel Carson, Henry David Thoreau, or Aldo Leopold

- Optional: A recording of "Spirit of Life" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Review and make copies of Handout 1 for all participants.
- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, a votive candle, a taper candle, and matches or a lighter.
- Gather copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, enough for all participants. Obtain large print and/or braille copies for participants who need them.
- Optional: Light the votive candle in advance and place the taper nearby so that chalice lighter can use the taper to carry the flame to the chalice.
- Optional: Place additional items you have brought for the altar or centering table.
- Optional: Arrange for musical accompaniment or set up music player.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants and offer a brief introduction to this workshop. Use these words, or your own:

Welcome to this program on Unitarian Universalist spirituality as experienced in nature. We'll remember moments of beauty, awe, and oneness in nature. We'll share some of what we are learning of the cycle of birth and death and the ways we want to live in relationship to the earth. I'm so glad you are here.

If you have added objects to your altar or centering table, explain that you have added them because this workshop focuses on our spiritual connections with nature.

Distribute Handout 1. Indicate the unison chalice-lighting words on the handout. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting the unison chalice-lighting words.

Invite participants to read silently along with you as you read aloud the Unitarian Universalist Principle and Source that this workshop highlights.

Begin name sharing with these or similar words:

Please share your name, and also name for us a geographical feature of your past or current hometown, such as a hill, a river, a valley, or a bay. As we listen to one another's names, let us hold each person in our good will.

Invite participants to take turns speaking.

Explain that this workshop focuses on the line "blow in the wind, rise in the sea."

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Spirit of Life," by Carolyn McDade, Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

ACTIVITY 1: THE WEB IN THE BREAD (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A loaf of whole grain bread
- A knife and cutting board
- A plate for the bread
- Small napkins for all participants
- Bell

Preparation for Activity

- Purchase a loaf of whole grain bread. If you have participants with known food allergies you may wish to purchase (or invite them to bring) a second loaf of bread that is free of ingredients they need to avoid.
- Slice the bread and arrange it on the plate, with at least one piece per participant.

Description of Activity

Place the loaf of bread on the table or hold it up for participants to see.

Invite participants to consider all the elements of the interdependent web of existence involved in creating this loaf of bread and bringing it here, and to name some of those elements aloud. If ideas flow slowly, encourage participants to think about things as diverse as ingredients, transportation, economies, markets, workers, the local store, money, celestial bodies, the founding of the congregation, and the production of this curriculum. When the brainstorm feels close to complete, share the bread, saying:

We give thanks for the web of life, more complex than we understand, and for each strand of the web. We depend upon much more than we know.

Pass the bread in silence. When each participant has a piece of bread, invite them into mindful eating with these words:

I invite you to eat your bread. As you chew and swallow, call to mind the interconnected elements of life that have come together in this loaf, in this moment.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — A PRIVATE HISTORY OF AWE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story "[A Private History of Awe](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review and print out the story. Practice reading it aloud to ensure that you will present it effectively.
- Optional: Copy the story for all participants.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to sit comfortably and listen to the story as you read it aloud. You may wish to use a cordless microphone to ensure that all participants can hear you.

ACTIVITY 3: RECALLING OUR EXPERIENCES OF NATURE (60 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper for drawing or writing
- Drawing and writing implements, such as pencils, color pencils, markers, crayons
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Description of Activity

Invite participants to sit comfortably. Introduce a time of quiet reflection with these or similar words:

Sometimes we witness something like a lightning strike or some other event in nature that stays with us long after the moment has passed. In the quiet that follows, I invite you to recall significant experiences have you had in relation to the natural world. Choose one of these experiences for further reflection and sharing. Remember how you felt, and consider the influence the experience had on you.

A bell will lead you in and out of the quiet. Ring the bell. Allow five or six minutes for quiet reflection. Then, ring the bell again.

Indicate or distribute the materials for writing and/or drawing about the experience and their reflections. Encourage participants who may be shy about drawing

to use their non-dominant hands; tell them that using one's non-dominant hand can reduce self-consciousness and facilitate expressiveness.

Ring the bell to begin the time for writing and drawing. After three to five minutes, ring the bell again to end the time.

Invite participants to form triads. Explain the activity:

You are invited to take turns sharing about your significant experiences of the natural world. While one of you shares, the others listen attentively. After the first speaker finishes, let there be a moment of silence between you. Then rotate roles. These are moments of precious sharing and confiding and we offer one another our mutual trust and regard. Each person will have five minutes to speak without interruption. A bell will ring when it is time to rotate speakers and listener and again to end the time of sharing.

Ring the bell at five minutes, ten minutes, and at fifteen minutes.

Re-gather the whole group for discussion with these questions:

- What did it feel like to recall these experiences of the natural world?
- How do you think these moments have affected your sense of spirituality or connection?
- How do you relate your experiences of the natural world with your religious values or beliefs?
- Our natural world is hurting so badly as environmental degradation continues. How do you think our spiritual connections with the Earth might help us work to save it?

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle or LED battery-operated candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Taking It Home section of this workshop

Preparation for Activity

- Review Taking It Home and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do on their own.

- Print out Taking It Home for all participants.
- Review and print out the blessing provided as closing words for this workshop.

Description of Activity

Gather the group around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop. Hand out the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Explain the activities, as needed.

Invite participants to call out a word or phrase about something they remembered, heard, or felt during the workshop. Allow enough time for all who wish to speak to have the opportunity.

Invite everyone to join hands. Offer this blessing:

We give thanks for the web of life and our place in it.

We give thanks for the beauty of the earth, the rhythms and cycles of life.

We give thanks for this time together.

May the Spirit of Life be with us in our parting and in our return.

Extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

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

FAITH IN ACTION: GENERATIONS TOGETHER EXPLORING THE NATURAL WORLD

Preparation for Activity

- Talk with appropriate groups in the congregation to help you plan and publicize your activity.

Description of Activity

Lead children from your congregation or the broader community on a hike, canoe trip, camping trip, or other opportunity to experience more of the natural world. Alternatively, you might organize such a trip for a multigenerational group. This might be for the sole purpose of experiencing the wonders of nature, or it could be combined with cleaning up litter or otherwise helping the environment.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop is finished, set a time for co-facilitators to get together to evaluate the workshop and

plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

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

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote... Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition we share draws from...

Spiritual teaching of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature... — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Visiting wild places, beaches, or parks, or taking time to observe a rainstorm, can provide opportunities to engage in more experiences of spirituality and the natural world. For further insight, write in your journal a description of the weather, a seashell, or a blossom, looking for wonder and mystery.

Talk with friends, family members, housemates, and co-workers about recycling, reducing energy use, reducing consumption, supporting "green" legislation, and other things you can do together that will have a positive impact on the environment.

Try a form of spiritual practice that involves bringing attentive awareness to whatever is right before us, and showing gratitude for it. Try bringing a mindful attention to sitting or walking outside, or looking out a window. Notice details, and address what you see with gratitude and respect. For example, say "Dear rock showing off in the sunlight, thank you." "Dear shining green, green leaves, thank you." "Dear tall grasses moving gently in the wind, thank you." "Dear people rushing by on the streets, thank you." "Dear pigeons, dear garbage, dear park bench, thank you." Intentional practice of

awareness and gratitude can increase feelings of inner peace and connection with one's surroundings. Such a practice can help us let go of the past and our concerns for what has been, while we embrace the present moment and its possibilities.

Consider bringing mindful eating into your every day practice, including both how you enjoy food as you are eating and how you choose food with regard to its impact on the interdependent web.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: IN PRAISE OF CREATION (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Leader Resource 1, [Group Projects in Praise of Creation](#) (included in this document)
- Writing paper and pens or pencils
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition* for one of the small groups to use
- Optional: Items for groups to use such as rhythm instruments (claves, wood blocks, maracas, bells, a drum, a guiro); decorative items such as streamers, ribbons, fans, or colored sheets; or natural objects such as tree branches, flowers, or pine cones. You may wish to provide flashlights, or a music player and recordings of nature sounds.

Preparation for Activity

- Participants will self-select their assignment and work in five small groups. Decide how you will make sure everyone works with at least one other person, and no group is too large.
- Review and print out two copies of Leader Resource 1. Keep one copy intact for your own use during the activity and cut up the second into five slips, each with an assignment for a small group.
- On newsprint, list the groups you will form: Altar, Litany, Movement, Meditation, and Closing/Blessing. Post the newsprint.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to create a worship celebration in praise of creation. Direct participants' attention to the newsprint you have posted. Explain that participants will be invited to choose one of five groups. One group will

build an altar, one will offer a litany, one will engage in body movement, one will develop a guided meditation, and one will offer a blessing as a closing. Invite participants to form five groups according to their interests. Make sure no one will be working alone, and that no group is too large to engage all of its participants.

Give each group a slip from Leader Resource 1. Explain that groups will have ten minutes to work together and create something to present to the entire group. The element each group creates should take no more than two minutes to conduct or present.

Distribute copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* to the group whose assignment is Movement in Praise of Creation. Distribute or indicate any other items, such as musical instruments, that you have provided for all groups to use.

Ring the bell to begin the activity. While the groups work, make yourself available as a resource. Watch the time, and ring the bell when ten minutes are up.

Re-gather the group. Remind participants of the flow of the events: Altar, Litany, Movement, Meditation, and Closing. Ask them to pay attention to flow so as to experience the celebration and to experience how their parts contribute to the whole. Invite participants to keep silence between the elements as they are conducted or performed. Invite them to get comfortable in their chairs, take some deep breaths, and prepare to receive the celebrations.

After the celebration closing, allow a silent pause. Then lead a discussion with these questions:

- What was it like to create and participate in this celebration of creation?
- What was it like to receive it?
- Did you feel moved? In what ways?
- What might you carry forward from this process?

Including All Participants

The noise created by group work may interfere with some participants' ability to hear in their small groups. You may wish to help some groups relocate to a quieter room.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: EARTH-BASED READING AND REFLECTION (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- One *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbook
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

- Paper for drawing or writing
- Drawing and writing implements, such as pencils, color pencils, markers, crayons
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Optional: Cordless microphone
- Optional: Additional arts and crafts materials, including color paper, glue, or objects from nature such as leaves or flowers

Preparation for Activity

- Review Reading 524 in *Singing the Living Tradition* and mark the page.
- Write on newsprint, and post, the following reflection question:
 - In the natural world, we experience the cycle of seed, blossom, fruit, and seed again. We experience the changing of the seasons, the times of light and dark, the cycle of life and death. What cycles and seasons are you experiencing now, and how do they influence your spirituality?

Description of Activity

Offer Reading 524 in *Singing the Living Tradition* from the contemporary Pagan spiritual leader, Starhawk. Read the passage aloud slowly and clearly. You may wish to use a cordless microphone to make sure all participants can hear you.

After some moments of silence, read the passage a second time. Invite participants to call out words or phrases from the reading that were significant to them.

Invite participants to express their reflections on the reading, using the question you have posted. Indicate that there are paper, writing and drawing implements, and other materials you have provided for those who wish to use them. Explain that they will have five minutes of silence for reflections and responses. Give participants permission to move in the silence—if their most authentic response is a dance, they can dance!

Ring the bell to begin silent time for reflection and expression. Ring the bell again after five minutes.

Now, invite the group to form pairs to share their reflections and creations. Explain that they will have six minutes for sharing in pairs, preferably with someone with whom they have not yet spent time. If you have an odd number of participants, create a triad.

Remind participants that they may share as much or as little as they feel comfortable sharing, and that each person should have the opportunity to speak uninterruptedly and to listen with care and attention. Encourage listeners to affirm speakers, when they have finished, with "Amen" or "Thank you."

Ring the bell at three and six minutes. If you have a triad, watch the time carefully, and remind these participants verbally to switch roles at each two-minute interval.

Re-gather the large group, inviting participants to bring with them any creations they would like to share. Ask for one or two volunteers to show or read aloud their reflections. Pass the cordless microphone to participants who wish to read aloud, so that all can hear them. Thank each participant who shares.

Lead a discussion with these questions:

- Do natural cycles influence your personal spirituality? If so, how? If not, why not?
- How might the seasons affect us spiritually? Would anyone like to share an example?
- How about the cycles of life—birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, parenthood, aging, death. How might the cycles of our own lives, or the cycles of others in our lives, affect us spiritually? Would anyone like to share an example?
- Do you consider your spirituality Earth-centered? Why, or why not?
- What from this reflection and discussion might you carry forward?

STORY: A PRIVATE HISTORY OF AWE

Excerpted and adapted from Scott Russell Sanders' book, *A Private History of Awe* (New York, North Point Press, 2006).

In his book *A Private History of Awe*, Scott Russell Sanders remembers a spring day when he was a young boy, old enough to run around and small enough to be carried in his father's arms. The wind was booming; lightning flashed everywhere as a heavy rain fell. His father carried him out on to the porch, held him against his chest, and hummed as the thunder rumbled. They looked out at the trees and the huge oak which was the tallest thing the child knew. The oak swayed in the storm. Suddenly a flash and boom split the air.

Everything became a white glare. "Sweet Jesus," his father cried out, grabbing him and pulling him close. Lightning had struck the oak and it snapped like a stick. Its top shattered onto the ground and a charred streak ran down the trunk.

One moment the great tree was there as solid as the father, bigger than anything Scott knew, and the next moment it was gone.

Fifty years later that day still haunts Scott. That was the day when power, energy, wildness that surges through everything was revealed in a flash. Scott writes, "The sky cracked open to reveal a world where even grownups were tiny and houses were toys and wood and skin and everything was made of light."

HANDOUT 1: BLOW IN THE WIND

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

We light this chalice in affirmation and respect for
the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

We gather to support one another in celebrating the sacred circle of life
and in living in harmony with the rhythms of nature

We gather to explore our own experiences
and to listen to the experiences of others.

May our time together renew our spirits, deepen our community,
and inspire us to live lives of praise, respect, and harmony.

We light this chalice for the Spirit of Life.

PRINCIPLE AND SOURCE

This workshop is grounded in the following Principle and Source from the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Spiritual teaching of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: GROUP PROJECTS IN PRAISE OF CREATION

Cut into strips.

I. Altar in Praise of Creation

Create an altar or centering space to express the beauty and power of the earth and a ritualized opening to our Praise of Creation. Let your words, song, movement, candle light or whatever you imagine invite all of us to see and take in the altar or centering space. 2 minutes.

II. Litany in Praise of Creation

Create a litany of thanks for the beauty and power of the earth. How will you present this with one voice? In unison? With several voices speaking in turn? Where will you locate yourselves? 2 minutes.

III. Movement in Praise of Creation

Create movements to embody and accompany your singing of verse one of Hymn 21, "For the Beauty of the Earth," in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Where will you locate yourselves? Will you invite people as they are willing and able to participate? Will you sing and embody verse one a second time? 2 minutes.

IV. Meditation in Praise of Creation

Create a guided meditation on how we fit in to the interdependent web of life. How will you present this meditative piece? With one voice? In unison? With several voices speaking in turn? Where will you locate yourselves? 2 minutes.

V. Closing/Blessing in Praise of Creation

Create a closing that calls to us to live in harmony with and respect for the earth. How will you present this? With movement? With voices in unison? With several voices speaking in turn? With sounds other than words? Where will you locate yourselves? How will your group give us a sense of ending to our Praise of Creation? 2 minutes.

FIND OUT MORE

Many of the meditations compiled by Skinner House Books and available from [inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop](#) include readings that reflect a spiritual connection with the earth: [Listening for Our Song](#), [Day of Promise](#), and [Singing in the Night](#) are just three of the titles.

Unitarian Universalist minister Barry Andrews's book [Thoreau as Spiritual Guide](#) helps readers gain spiritual insight from the classic book *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau.

Similarly, his book [Emerson as Spiritual Guide](#) draws out the connections with the natural world made in Ralph Waldo Emerson's classic essays.

[Prairie Soul: Finding Grace in the Earth Beneath My Feet](#) and [A Guest of the World: Meditations](#) by Unitarian Universalist entomologist Jeffrey A. Lockwood emphasize interconnections between spirituality and ecology.

WORKSHOP 5: MOVE IN THE HAND: LIVING OUR SPIRITUALITY IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES

INTRODUCTION

We covenant to affirm and promote... The inherent worth and dignity of every person. The living tradition we share draws from... Wisdom from the world's religions which inspire us in our ethical and spiritual life. The living tradition we share draws from... Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

This workshop helps participants connect with the sacred in everyday living. Participants will experience ways they can bring enhanced awareness to their activities throughout the day, and how they can let the Spirit of Life "move in their hand" as their hands do the work of daily living.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Broaden participants' understanding of the sacred in the everyday
- Build community in the group.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify everyday tasks during which they can intentionally connect with the Spirit of Life, and explore words and practices to facilitate that connection
- Optional: Create and consider practices of praise, thanksgiving, awareness, intention, and petition which they can perform throughout the day.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0

Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Balance	5
Activity 2: Sacred in the Everyday	35
Activity 3: Triad Sharing	35
Faith in Action: Using Your Hands to Help Others	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: A UU Book of Hours	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflection. You may wish to set aside some time to reflect on your personal experiences of the sacred in the everyday. Either individually or together, co-leaders can use the workshop activities to spark and structure your reflection. Doing so will also prepare you to explain and lead the activities.

Practice. Setting aside some moments to pray, to meditate, or to envision your good intentions for the workshop can help you to center yourself before you begin leading.

Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for general tips to make your workshop welcoming to people with physical disabilities and sensitivities.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Nametags and bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen or pencil
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide that displays a list of this workshop's activities

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or email addresses.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, prepare and post an agenda, or create a digital slide presenting the agenda for display during the workshop.
- Set up a station with nametags and markers for participants to create their own nametags. Provide large nametags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's nametags from a distance.
- If you have a flyer with information about upcoming workshops, place it at the nametag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create nametags.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Handout 1, [Move in the Hand](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of "Spirit of Life" and a music player
- Optional: Small votive candle in holder
- Optional: Taper candle in candlestick
- Optional: Everyday objects to enhance the altar or centering table

Preparation for Activity

- Review and photocopy Handout 1.
- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, a votive candle, a taper candle, and matches or a lighter. If you are using an LED battery-operated candle, place it in the chalice.
- Gather copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, enough for all participants. Obtain large print and/or braille copies for participants who need them.
- Optional: Light the votive candle in advance and place the taper nearby so that chalice lighter can use the taper to carry the flame to the chalice.
- Optional: Enhance the altar with some of the "everyday" items you brought for Activity 2, Sacred in the Everyday.
- Optional: Arrange for musical accompaniment or set up music player.

Description of Activity

Offer these words of welcome:

Welcome to this program on Unitarian Universalist spirituality as lived in our day to day lives. We'll look at the kinds of activities we do everyday and how we might make them part of our spiritual practice. I'm glad you are here!

Distribute Handout 1. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting the unison chalice-lighting words.

Invite participants to read silently along with you as you read aloud the Unitarian Universalist Principle and Source that this workshop highlights.

Invite participants to share their names and their responses to the question, "What is the most special time of the day for you?"

Explain that this workshop focuses on the line "move in the hand." The song talks about how the Spirit of Life moves in the hand, "giving life the shape of justice," however today's workshop looks at how the Spirit of Life moves in our hands throughout all our days, giving shape to our lives through the tasks of the everyday.

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Spirit of Life," by Carolyn McDade, Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY – BALANCE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story "[Balance](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story. Practice reading the excerpt from "Balance" aloud to ensure that you will present it effectively.
- Optional: Copy the story for all participants.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to sit comfortably and listen as you read the story aloud. You may wish to use a cordless microphone to ensure that all participants can hear you.

ACTIVITY 2: SACRED IN THE EVERYDAY (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper for drawing or writing
- Drawing and writing implements, such as pencils, color pencils, markers, crayons
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- An assortment of everyday objects, at least twice as many as you have participants in your group. These objects may include car keys, eyeglasses, a needle and thread, a cell phone, garden tools, salt and pepper shakers, note pads, a child's toy, a guitar pick, a puzzle piece, playing cards, a sponge, a remote control device, a book, a file folder, pencils or pens, a lunch box, a watch, a grocery list, a "to do" list, a newspaper, an envelope, a screwdriver, diapers, matches, a cooking utensil, an eating utensil, a lipstick, a hairbrush, deodorant, a candle, a toothbrush, a coffee cup, matches, napkins, duct tape, a bar of soap, postage stamps, a laptop computer, a PDA, a phone book, a flashlight, a mirror, a dog leash, scissors, earrings, a corkscrew, a calculator, a hammer, a pacifier, socks, or a pair of shoes
- A cloth large enough to cover the objects until you begin the activity

Preparation for Activity

- Set out writing and drawing materials convenient to the space where you will lead this activity.
- Make sure participants will have seats at tables for writing or drawing.
- Collect an assortment of your own and borrowed everyday objects. Make sure you have enough different objects—at least two different objects for every one participant in your group. Omit from your collection items which are fragile or valuable.
- Place the collection of everyday objects on a table in the center of your meeting space and cover the collection with a cloth.

Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

The hymn "Spirit of Life" asks that the spirit move in the hand. Throughout a typical day, what kinds of things move through our hands?

Invite a few responses, then uncover the collection of everyday objects.

Invite participants to come forward and select one of the everyday objects, saying:

Choose an object because you feel moved to select it. It can be something you use frequently or something you don't use at all.

Invite participants to return to their seats and hold in their hands the object they have chosen. Explain that they will have a time for meditation on the object, guided by three questions you will read aloud:

- What does the object remind you of from your own experience? It might call to mind something everyday and mundane, or it might call to mind a peak or a turning point in your life. Whatever it calls to mind, hold it in your thoughts.

Pause for a minute or so. Then ask participants to silently reflect on this question:

- Thinking creatively, how does the object you are holding relate to your spirituality?

After allowing a couple of minutes for silent reflection, ask,

- How might you say the Spirit of Life "moves in your hand" in relationship to the object?

Allow another minute or two for silent reflection. Transition to a time of sharing by sounding the bell.

Invite participants to integrate their reflection experiences with these or similar discussion questions:

- What drew you to select the object you chose?
- What sort of reflections did it evoke for you?
- Was it easy or difficult to name a way that the object relates to your spirituality?
- As you go about the more mundane or stressful tasks of your days, is it easy or difficult for you to feel spiritually engaged?

Conclude the activity by sharing these or similar words about the purpose of this reflection:

Reflecting on these everyday objects can help us get in touch with how we feel and live our spirituality in the everyday—not just at the times we're worshipping or meditating or traveling through beautiful country, but how we feel and live our spirituality during the workday, while we do chores or errands, when we wait in line, or when we listen to music while being kept on hold during a phone call.

Including All Participants

If some participants are not able to move to the table to explore and choose from the collection of everyday objects, bring an assortment of at least ten objects to them and invite them to select one.

ACTIVITY 3: TRIAD SHARING (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Finding the Spiritual in the Everyday](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how to form triads. You may have participants number off, or allow participants to form their own groups.
- Write on newsprint and post this question: How might you invite the Spirit of Life to move through your hands in your everyday tasks?
- Prepare and post five separate sheets of newsprint, each with the description of praise, gratitude, awareness, intention, or petition from Leader Resource 1.

Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:
Many religious traditions have specific methods for connecting the spiritual with everyday tasks.

Traditional Jews start their day with a blessing after waking, say a blessing after going to the bathroom, and say additional blessings before their morning prayer. Buddhists are encouraged to practice mindfulness with each action—to stop the mind from racing ahead and to become non-judgmentally aware of the present moment. What are some other ways you have heard of that connect the spiritual with the everyday?

Listen for a few responses. Then say:

As Unitarian Universalists, we have freedom to choose—freedom to follow spiritual paths and develop spiritual practices that are meaningful to us as individuals. I invite you to consider, in the work that follows, some ways that you can meaningfully connect with the Spirit of Life in the tasks of your everyday living.

Invite participants to form triads, preferably with people who they do not already know well. If the group doesn't divide into threes easily, allow for a group of two or a group of four.

Say:

In your groups, you will work together to identify ways to recognize the spiritual in everyday life, using your own examples of everyday tasks. Each group member will name two everyday tasks for the group to focus on. Talk together about how you might invite the Spirit of Life to move through your hands as you perform these tasks. You will have fifteen minutes for this work—about five minutes to focus on each person's examples.

Post the sheets you prepared before the workshop, inviting groups to consider these modes, or purposes, of spiritual expression as they generate their ideas. Offer examples of everyday tasks, such as taking a shower, using email, grocery shopping, cooking, changing a diaper, hammering, shaking hands, taking notes in a meeting, or eating breakfast.

Watch the time. Ring the bell at five and ten minutes and remind triads to switch their focus to the next member. After fifteen minutes, ring the bell again. Invite the groups to share what the experience was like using these or similar words:

Now your small group is invited to share your experiences of this process. How was this experience for each of you? What did you notice? You'll have ten minutes to share. Be sure that each of you gets a chance to speak.

Ring the bell after ten minutes. Bring the whole group back together for a short discussion based on these questions:

- What was it like to generate ideas together about the spiritual in the everyday?
- Did anyone think of a practice that involved praise? If so, could you tell us a little bit about it? How about a gratitude practice? An awareness practice? An intention practice? A practice of petition?
- What will you carry with you from this experience of sharing?

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle or LED battery-operated candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Taking It Home section of this workshop

Preparation for Activity

- Review Taking It Home and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do on their own.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants.
- Review and print out the blessing provided as closing words for this workshop.

Description of Activity

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

Hand out the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Explain the activities, as needed.

Invite everyone to rise in body or spirit. Ask participants to hold hands as they are willing and able as you offer these closing words:

We give thanks for the Spirit of Life moving through our day to day lives and through this time of creating and sharing. May we bring our beliefs and values into our routine tasks.
May we respond to the gift of life by living with worth and dignity and by loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Extinguish the chalice.

FAITH IN ACTION: USING YOUR HANDS TO HELP OTHERS

Description of Activity

To help the spirit "move in your hand," try finding a way you can work with your hands that would also involve your creativity and your spirit: Here are some examples:

- Working in or starting a community garden
- Sewing or knitting items for those who are ill or bereaved
- Cooking a meal for someone who needs it
- Creating a piece of art to share with others
- Building something as small like a shelf for your church's library or as big as a house for Habitat for Humanity
- Taking care of children for a church event for young parents.

As you engage in the activity, call to mind the persons who will use it or for whom it is intended. Hold them in thought or in prayer.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

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

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

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote... The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

The living tradition we share draws from...
 Wisdom from the world's religions which inspire us in our ethical and spiritual life.
 The living tradition we share draws from...
 Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

There are several ways to take today's workshop home. You might like to:

- Discuss ideas for bringing the spiritual into everyday tasks with housemates, family members, or co-workers. You may gain particularly valuable insight from people of different faith traditions.
- Take note, for a day, of all the tasks you engage in. Try to evaluate your spiritual presence with each task. Notice whether each task felt mindful or mindless; whether you felt or spoke curses or gratitude; and whether you performed the task with loving intention or spite.
- Write in your journal about ways you can invite spiritual connection into your everyday tasks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: A UU BOOK OF HOURS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [UU Book of Hours](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Writing paper and pens or pencils
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds

Preparation for Activity

- Using Leader Resource 2, create and post one or two newsprint sheets with the traditional Christian canonical hours and the times for Muslim daily prayer.
- Write on another piece of newsprint a list of these times of day: rising, morning, noon, mid-afternoon, evening, bedtime, and awakening during the night. Post the newsprint.

Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with this description of two daily cycles of prayer and contemplation—one from the Christian tradition and one from the Muslim tradition.

One of the five pillars of Islam is Salah, prayer. Muslims—especially male Muslims—pray five times a day at specific times. The expectation of prayer exists no matter where they are or what they're doing—whether they're in a mosque, or in their home, or at work. In Muslim countries, you might be awakened at 4 a.m. by the call to prayer floating over the city. It is sung by the Muezzin from the Minaret of a mosque five times a day. On a Friday in the middle of the day, when the melodic phrases are sung again over loudspeakers, you might see merchants walking away from their shops, their goods left unattended on the street, all kneeling down, bowing down, all on the same level, filling the mosque, the grounds, the sidewalks, and the streets to remember "There is no god but God." In Christian monasteries, psalms and prayers are recited and sung eight times throughout the day. The Christian liturgy of the hours are: [Matins](#) (at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matins) (during the night), [Lauds](#) (at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lauds) or Morning Prayer (at dawn), [Prime](#) (at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_%28liturgy%29) or Early Morning Prayer (6 a.m.), [Terce](#) (at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terce) or Mid-Morning Prayer (9 a.m.), [Sext](#) (at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sext) or Mid-Day Prayer (12 noon), [None](#) (at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/None_%28liturgy%29) or Mid-afternoon Prayer (3 p.m.), [Vespers](#) (at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vespers) or Evening Prayer (at the lighting of the lamps), [Compline](#) (at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compline) or Night Prayer (before retiring).

Invite participants to consider the effect of prayer and contemplation of the holy throughout the day. Ask:

- What do you see as some of the biggest personal benefits from such a regular form of spiritual practice?
- How do you think it affects the ways that practitioners go about their daily tasks?
- What kind of things would you like to be reminded of or give thanks for at regular intervals throughout the day?

Invite participants into a time of individual quiet reflection and expression, using these or similar words:

Consider what words and/or actions might center you throughout your day—upon rising, in the morning, at noon, in the mid-afternoon, in the evening, at bedtime, or awakening during

the night. The words or actions might differ for different times of day, or they might be the same each time.

Using the paper, pens, markers, crayons, and materials available, create your centering words for times throughout your day. You will have five minutes to imagine a daily prayer or contemplation cycle they might like to use.

Ring the bell to begin the time, and ring it again after five minutes.

Invite participants to form pairs. Encourage them to partner with people whom they do not know well. If you have an odd number of participants, form one triad.

Offer these instructions:

In your pairs, you are invited to share some of your thoughts from the reflection time. Share as you are comfortable. If you thought of things that you would rather keep private, that is fine. Each person will have two minutes to talk and to listen. When it is your turn to listen, just listen. Listening can be a spiritual practice in and of itself. I will ring the bell when it is time to switch roles.

Ring the bell at two minutes and again at four minutes when it is time to conclude the sharing. If you have a triad, signal that group verbally just after one minute, and again just before three minutes, to make sure all three participants have some time to share.

Bring participants' attention back to the large group.

Lead a group discussion with these questions:

- Was this easy or hard to do? What was easy about it? What was more difficult or challenging?
- What are some ideas that you came up with? (Take in several first for rising, then morning, then noon, followed by mid-afternoon, then evening, then bedtime, and ending with times of awakening during the night.)
- What do you think the value of such a practice would be?

STORY: BALANCE

This story is an excerpt from the essay "Balance" by Unitarian Universalist minister Susan Manker-Seale, included in the book *Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life*, edited by Scott W. Alexander (Skinner House Books, 1999). Used with permission.

My daily spiritual practice is to balance. A major part of that practice involves balancing the busy, taking-for-granted moments of the day with moments to pause and appreciate what is before me in my life. I probably wouldn't even have considered this a spiritual practice, except that I've been learning to redefine the meaning of what is spiritual, and to ponder for myself what is important in my faith.

The message many of us have been given through our religious heritage is that if one wishes to be "spiritual," one must leave the worldly world. Yet the reality is that, if we have family and work, integrating a traditional spiritual practice into our daily lives is a real challenge. Try meditating with a baby in the next room!

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 takes only a few moments and is not bound by place or time or ritual...

Out of our busy-ness, 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.

HANDOUT 1: MOVE IN THE HAND

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

We light this chalice in affirmation of each person and each day of life.

We gather to support each other in responding to the gift of life
and daily living with love for ourselves and for others.

We gather to explore our own experiences and learn from the experiences of others,
to draw on traditions and create new ways of seeking the sacred in the ordinary.

May our time together renew our spirits, deepen our community, and inspire us to lead lives of worth and dignity.

We light this chalice for the Spirit of Life.

PRINCIPLE AND SOURCE

This workshop is grounded in the following Principle and Sources from the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

Principle: ... The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Sources: Wisdom from the world's religions which inspire us in our ethical and spiritual life...

Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature

LEADER RESOURCE 1: FINDING THE SPIRITUAL IN THE EVERYDAY

Before leading Activity 3, write descriptions of these five modes, or purposes, of spiritual expression on newsprint. Post the newsprint for participants to use as a reference during the activity. You may want to use five separate sheets of newsprint to make sure your printing will be large enough for all to read.

Praise:

Recognizing, honoring, and celebrating

Gratitude:

Expressing thanks

Awareness:

Cultivating mindfulness, empathy, and perspective

Intention:

Naming how you would like to be and what spirit you would like to bring

Petition:

Stating or asking for what you would like to happen

LEADER RESOURCE 2: UU BOOK OF HOURS

Before leading Alternate Activity 1, write the text below on two pieces of newsprint, and post.

Traditional Christian Canonical Hours Times for Muslim Daily Prayer

Vespers (sunset)

Compline (bedtime)

Midnight Office (midnight)

Matins (dawn)

Prime (~7 a.m.)

Terce (~9 a.m.)

Sext (noon)

None (~3 p.m.)

Fajr (dawn to sunrise)

Zuhr (early afternoon)

Asr (late afternoon)

Maghrib (after sunset)

Isha (between dusk and dawn)

FIND OUT MORE

"Balance" by Rev. Susan Manker-Seale, from which this workshop's story is excerpted, is included in the book *Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life*, edited by Scott W. Alexander (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1999).

[Practicing Our Faith](http://www.practicingourfaith.org/) (at www.practicingourfaith.org/) is a Christian-oriented web site with an outlook compatible with Unitarian Universalism. It includes several essays relevant to connecting with the sacred in the everyday, and resources including suggestions for honoring the body and adding a spiritual dimension to managing household tasks.

WORKSHOP 6: GIVING LIFE THE SHAPE OF JUSTICE: THE SPIRITUALITY OF WORKING FOR CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

*We covenant to affirm and promote...
 ... the goal of world community with peace,
 liberty, and justice for all.
 ... respect for the interdependent web of all
 existence of which we are a part.
 The living tradition we share draws from...
 ... wisdom from the world's religions which
 inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.
 ... Jewish and Christian teachings which call us
 to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors
 as ourselves. — Principles of the Unitarian
 Universalist Association*

This workshop helps participants understand and experience connections between spirituality and action for justice. The activities help participants recognize and claim the spiritual aspects of justice work.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Consider the deep connection between spirituality and justice
- Provide a forum for discussion of the spiritual aspects of healing the world's brokenness.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn that the song "Spirit of Life" grew from the songwriter's linking of spirituality and work for social change.
- Consider that work for justice can be an expression of spirituality.
- Identify ways to integrate their spirituality into justice work.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity

Minutes

Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Songwriting as a Prayer	15
Activity 2: Spirituality and Action Panel	30
Activity 3: Justice and Spirit	30
Faith in Action: Interfaith Action and Dialogue	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Creating a Web of Connection	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflection. You may wish to set aside some time to reflect on your personal experiences and understanding of the spiritual dimensions of justice work. Either individually or together, co-leaders can use the workshop activities to spark and structure your reflection. Doing so will also prepare you to explain and lead the activities.

Practice. Setting aside some moments to pray, to meditate, or to envision your good intentions for the workshop can help you to center yourself before you begin leading. A centered leader who is present and responsive while facilitating is likely to lead an effective workshop.

Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for general tips to make your workshop welcoming to people with physical disabilities and sensitivities.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Nametags and bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen or pencil
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide that displays a list of this workshop's activities

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or email addresses.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, prepare and post an agenda, or create a digital slide presenting the agenda for display during the workshop.
- Set up a station with nametags and markers for participants to create their own nametags. Provide large nametags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's nametags from a distance.
- If you have a flyer with information about upcoming workshops, place it at the nametag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create nametags.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Handout 1, [Giving Life the Shape of Justice](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Small votive candle in holder
- Optional: Taper candle in candlestick
- Optional: A recording of "Spirit of Life" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Review and photocopy Handout 1.

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, a votive candle, a taper candle, and matches or a lighter. If you are using an LED battery-operated candle, place it in the chalice.
- Gather copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, enough for all participants. Obtain large print and/or braille copies for participants who need them.
- Optional: Light the votive candle in advance and place the taper nearby so that chalice lighter can use the taper to carry the flame to the chalice.
- Optional: Arrange for musical accompaniment or set up music player.

Description of Activity

Offer these words of welcome:

Welcome to this program on Unitarian Universalist spirituality as expressed in our lives in the world. The peace, liberty and justice we want is an expression of our spirituality. Our spiritual lives can support us in being who we want to be in the world. Our lives make a difference in shaping justice and love. Unitarian Universalist spirituality calls us to participation and involvement, sustains us for living lives of truth and love, and nourishes our hope and our joy.

Invite a participant to light the chalice as you lead the group in reciting the unison chalice-lighting words.

Distribute Handout 1 and invite participants to read silently along with you as you read aloud the Unitarian Universalist Principle and Source that this workshop highlights.

Invite participants to share their names. Invite them to reflect on the news of the past week and briefly share something that made them think about justice or injustice in the world.

Explain that this workshop focuses on the line "giving life the shape of justice."

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Spirit of Life" by Carolyn McDade, Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — SONGWRITING AS A PRAYER (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Songwriting as a Prayer](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story and practice reading it aloud to ensure that you will present it effectively.
- Optional: Copy the story for all participants.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to sit comfortably and listen to the story as you read it aloud.

Offer a minute for silent reflection after completing the story. Then, invite discussion with these questions:

- What stands out for you from the story of Carolyn McDade and "Spirit of Life?"
- When can work for justice become wearying, or lead to burnout?
- How can spirituality help us sustain our work for a better world?

ACTIVITY 2: SPIRITUALITY AND ACTION PANEL (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Additional chairs for guest speakers
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Recruit two or three speakers to serve on a panel on spirituality and justice work. Speakers may be Unitarian Universalist or of another faith; they may be clergy or lay; they may be working for social change in many different ways. If possible, invite people with different generational perspectives. What is important is that each speaker be able to articulate the connection between their spirituality and their justice work.
- After recruiting speakers, brief each speaker on what to expect.

Description of Activity

Introduce the panelists to the group by name, then offer two minutes each for panelists to introduce themselves further.

Guide the panelists' sharing with your own questions or these:

- In what ways is your spirituality an expression of your work for change?
- In what ways has your work for justice informed your spirituality? Has it affected your relationship to the sacred? Has it affected your definition of what is sacred?
- Where do you find the sustenance you need to keep working for change, even when change doesn't come easily?

Solicit participants' questions for the panelists. When twenty-five minutes have passed, thank the panelists for their participation and invite them to share any final thoughts with participants.

ACTIVITY 3: JUSTICE AND SPIRIT (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper for drawing or writing
- Drawing and writing implements, such as pencils, color pencils, markers, crayons
- Table(s) with adequate space for each participant to write or draw.
- A bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange tables and chairs to allow adequate space for each participant to write or draw.
- Place paper and drawing/writing implements for easy distribution to the group.

Description of Activity

Introduce this time of reflection and discussion by asking participants to share the names of people they know, famous or otherwise, who bring a strong sense of spirituality to their work for justice. Names might include luminaries such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, Mohandas Gandhi, The Dalai Lama, Mother Theresa, Daniel Berrigan, and others. When a name is shared, ask those who have shared it if they can say a few words about how this person connected spirituality with justice. Allow five minutes for this part of the activity.

Now, invite participants to reflect on how justice work can be, or already is, an expression of their own spirituality. Pose these questions for reflection:

- What do you believe, and feel, spiritually about your relationship to other people? To other beings? To our planet?
- What are some ways that the experience of injustice affects you spiritually? (I.e., injustice you've experienced or injustice you've learned about others experiencing.)
- For you, what is (or what could be) spiritual about working for justice?
- For you, how would (or does) it look and feel to strongly integrate your spirituality and work for justice?

Tell participants:

A bell will lead you in and out of a quiet in which you can contemplate these questions. You are invited to come forward as you feel moved to gather supplies for drawing or writing.

Allow ten minutes for reflection, drawing, and writing and ring the bell when the time is up.

Invite participants to form pairs for discussion. Encourage participants to pair with a new partner or with someone they don't know well. If you have an odd number of participants, form one triad.

Offer these instructions:

In pairs, I invite one of you to share while the other listens attentively, openly. After the first speaker finishes, let there be a moment of silence between you. Then switch roles. Each person will have five minutes to share. A bell will ring when it's time to shift roles and to end the time of sharing.

Ring the bell at five minutes and at ten minutes. If you have a triad, watch the clock and signal this group verbally at two minutes and four minutes to help participants share their time equally.

Re-gather the whole group and say: "We have a few minutes for sharing in the larger group. What did you discover? What did you say or hear that you want to share with the larger group?"

Allow as many responses as time permits. Thank each person who speaks.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle or LED battery-operated candle

- Chalice extinguisher
- Taking It Home section of this workshop
- A copy of the closing words you want to use

Preparation for Activity

- Review Taking It Home and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants.
- Review the closing words. Decide whether you wish to use these, or another closing. Print out a copy of the closing words you will use. Place your copy of the closing words near the chalice.

Description of Activity

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

Hand out the Taking It Home section you have prepared. Invite participants to "take the workshop home" and explain the activities, as needed. Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

Offer these or similar words:

In closing, I invite you to rise in body or spirit and join hands. We join hands with one another to remind ourselves of the truth that we are all connected, that we are one body, and that we depend upon one another more than we know. As you feel moved, I invite you to call out a word or phrase for how you are feeling right now.

After participants call out words and phrases, offer this benediction to close the workshop:

Spirit of Life, we give thanks for this time together,
for our caring and sharing.
May we respect and love our selves and respect and love others.
May we trust that the intention we bring and the action we take matter.
Our good intention and respectful actions shape justice
and ripple out beyond our knowing.
May we bring joy to our living and to our loving.
May we be supported in our commitments,
by our spiritual practices, by one another,
by community, and by the Spirit of Life.
Amen.

Extinguish the chalice.

FAITH IN ACTION: INTERFAITH ACTION AND DIALOGUE

Description of Activity

Find out if there is another faith community in your area that is involved in justice work in some way. Offer to work alongside them, invite them to participate in a project you are planning, or suggest that you work together on a new project. Take this opportunity to engage in dialogue with members of another faith about how your spirituality informs your work for justice or your justice work informs your spirituality.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

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

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

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote...
... the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.
... respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
The living tradition we share draws from...
... wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.
... Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Talk with people you know who work for social change. Ask them about how their spirituality relates to the work that they do.

Reflect on "giving life the shape of justice," a line from the song "Spirit of Life" by Carolyn McDade. Include it in prayer, meditation, and journaling. Do you see the spirit of life as moving the world toward justice? Do you see yourself as moving the world toward justice? How, or how not? How might you participate in giving life the shape of justice?

Look for ways you can get involved in social justice work in your community. Engage in social action as an expression of your spirituality.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CREATING A WEB OF CONNECTION (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Yarn, preferably acrylic or cotton, at least 30 feet (10 meters) for each participant
- Optional: Scissors (including left-handed scissors)

Preparation for Activity

- Create a large ball of yarn. You may need to tie together several skeins in order to do this.
- Determine whether you will need to set a time limit on each participant's sharing in order to complete this activity in the time allotted.
- Choose one of three methods for taking apart the web: asking participants to drop the web on the floor, tossing the yarn ball among participants in reverse and rolling it up, or passing scissors for participants to cut their own pieces as a reminder of their interconnectedness.

Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:
We will toss this ball of yarn among us. When the ball comes to you, hold it and speak briefly to the essence of your response to: What would a just world look like? If you would prefer to receive and toss the yarn in silence, you may. When you are finished speaking or holding the yarn in silence, unroll some of it, hold on to the strand and toss the ball to someone else in the circle. We will continue until each person has received the ball of yarn and spoken. Then the last person can toss the ball of yarn back to the one who began the toss.

If you are setting a time limit for each person's sharing, announce it now.

Conduct the yarn toss and sharing, timing participation if necessary. After all participants have spoken, offer closing words for the activity. You may say:

We are part of a web of connections, a community of life. Together we weave a more just, more peaceful world.

Take apart the web using the method you chose in advance: asking participants to drop the web on the floor, tossing the yarn ball among participants in reverse and rolling it up, or passing scissors for each participant to cut their own piece as a reminder of their interconnectedness.

Including All Participants

Some participants may lack agility in catching or throwing the yarn. Explain that it is perfectly acceptable if participants are not expert catchers or throwers, and assure participants that it is all right to ask for help.

STORY: SONGWRITING AS A PRAYER

Excerpted and adapted from "Carolyn McDade's Spirit of Life" by Kimberly French, *UU World* magazine, Fall 2007. Used with permission.

Carolyn McDade, the author of the song "Spirit of Life", does not identify herself as a songwriter or musician—though she has written hundreds of songs and released fifteen CDs. "Activist, yes, but not a musician," she says.

McDade has given her life to what she calls the movement. By that she certainly means the feminist movement that dramatically changed what was possible for women since she was a girl. But she also means a chain of linked, politically progressive causes: She has actively opposed wars, South African apartheid, U.S. foreign policy, and nuclear power. She has worked for economic justice, environmental protection, and the rights of women migrant workers, prisoners, refugees, and lesbians.

"I'm boringly consistent," she says, with a streak of self-deprecation, sitting on the sun-dappled deck of her modest Cape Cod home, lined with three birdfeeders and a birdbath. "I'm still basically at the same work."

Consistent, yes, but not boring. McDade's life has reached pinnacles of political victory and spiritual insight as well as troughs of personal disappointment and despair with the world. Running through it all has been a strong thread of women's spirituality, which she has woven with Unitarian Universalist and United Church of Canada women, as well as radical Catholic nuns.

McDade still dresses in her signature layers, a dark turtleneck or T-shirt under a white collared shirt, jeans, and squiggly silver earrings. But she now wears her soft gray hair in a short cap of curls. The powerful, deep singing voice on her recordings hardly seems like it could come from this slight, soft-spoken, warm grandmother of eight.

It was the 1960s, when she was working as a Secretary at Boston's Arlington Street Church, that McDade started to write music. The student minister, Marni Harmony, had invited Carolyn to put together music for one of the first women's services. But when she went looking for songs written by women, she was appalled to find so little available.

So late one night she sat at her piano and sang what she wanted to say to her three daughters asleep upstairs, which became the song "Come, Daughter." It was a turning point, the first time she had sung from her

own experience, and a searing recognition of what she was meant to do.

"Writing my own song really was the beginning of finding of my own way," she says. "I was a young woman activist, my children were young, and I had totally lost myself. I wouldn't have known what to call it. Social movement was my healing, seeing my life as part of other lives."

She quickly immersed herself in the groups of women activists rising up in Boston and across the country in the mid-1970s. Early on she joined with the Women and Religion groups within the UUA, demanding a place for women's spirituality. McDade and one of that movement's leaders, Lucile Schuck Longview, in 1980 conceived the water ceremony as a way for women who lived far apart to connect the work each was doing locally to the whole. Each woman brought a jar of water from the place she lived, and during the ceremony poured it into a bowl, naming what made it precious to her. Then, dipping her hands into the water they'd combined, each blessed the woman next to her, imparting strength to continue her work.

In the 1980s, McDade became a leader in the movement to oppose U.S. policies in Central America, particularly Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The UU Community Church of Boston invited her to chair its Sanctuary Committee, challenging U.S. government policy by offering illegal shelter to political refugees. She traveled to Nicaragua and helped clear stones from land the revolutionary Sandinista government had given peasants, under constant threat of attack by the U.S.-backed contras. She traveled around the United States, sometimes on speaking tours, sometimes moving with refugees among safe houses or churches. Her life was intense with demonstrations, arrests, threats of legal action and violence, infiltration, and endless meetings.

Like much of McDade's music, the genesis of the song "Spirit of Life" was a very personal one. Late one night in the early 1980s, she was driving her close friend Pat Simon home from an activists' meeting for Central American solidarity.

What she remembers most clearly was the feeling she had. "When I got to Pat's house, I told her, 'I feel like a piece of dried cardboard that has lain in the attic for years. Just open wide the door, and I'll be dust.' I was tired, not with my community but with the world. She just sat with me, and I loved her for sitting with me."

McDade then drove to her own home. "I walked through my house in the dark, found my piano, and that was my prayer: May I not drop out. It was not written, but prayed. I knew more than anything that I wanted to continue in faith with the movement."

Thus the song was born—a prayer for infusing work for justice with spirituality; a prayer for change in the heart leading to change in the world.

Spirit of Life, come unto me.

Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.

Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.

Roots hold me close; wings set me free;

Spirit of Life, come to me, come to me.

HANDOUT 1: GIVING LIFE THE SHAPE OF JUSTICE

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

We light this chalice for the Spirit of Life.

We light this chalice in affirmation of the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.

We give thanks for the wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual lives.

May our time together renew our spirits, deepen our community, and inspire us to lead lives of justice and joy.

PRINCIPLE AND SOURCE

This workshop is grounded in the following Principles and Sources from the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

Principles: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.... Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Sources: ... Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.... Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves.

FIND OUT MORE

[Congregational Justice Making](#) offers ideas for bringing justice and spirituality together in your congregation.

The Unitarian Universalist Association's [social justice resources and programs](#) can help congregations carry forward the energy of this workshop to "give life the shape of justice."

[*Blessing the World: What Can Save Us Now*](#) by the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker, Unitarian Universalist theologian and president of Starr King School for the Ministry, presents a series of essays connecting theology, spirituality, and social justice.

[*How Much Do We Deserve? An Inquiry Into Distributive Justice*](#) by Unitarian Universalist minister Richard S. Gilbert explores the idea of economic justice.

WORKSHOP 7: ROOTS HOLD ME CLOSE: TRADITION, TEACHERS, AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Activity 3: Tapping Our Unitarian Universalist Roots	30
Faith in Action: Sharing Cultural Traditions	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Thanking Our Role Models	30

INTRODUCTION

We covenant to affirm and promote acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

The living tradition we share draws from... words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

This workshop invites participants to get in touch with their roots, heritage, and traditions. Participants will identify the role models, teachers, and mentors who have influenced them and create a litany of thanks.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Engage participants in exploring their personal spiritual roots and the roots of Unitarian Universalism.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify and reflect on some of their personal spiritual roots
- Name roots of Unitarian Universalism that are or can become important to their spirituality
- Offer gratitude to teachers, mentors, and role models who have guided them on their way.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	15
Activity 1: Meditation on Leftovers	5
Activity 2: Tapping Our Personal Roots	35

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflection. You may wish to set aside some time to reflect on your personal experiences and understanding of your spiritual roots. Either individually or together, co-leaders can use the workshop activities to spark and structure your reflection. Doing so will also prepare you to explain and lead the activities.

Practice. Setting aside some moments to pray, to meditate, or to envision your good intentions for the workshop can help you to center yourself before you begin leading. A centered leader who is present and responsive while facilitating is likely to lead an effective workshop.

Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for general tips to make your workshop welcoming to people with physical disabilities and sensitivities.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Nametags and bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen or pencil
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide that displays a list of this workshop's activities

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or email addresses.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, prepare and post an agenda, or create a digital slide presenting the agenda for display during the workshop.
- Set up a station with nametags and markers for participants to create their own nametags. Provide large nametags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's nametags from a distance.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in, create nametags, pick up schedules if you have prepared them, and find seats.

OPENING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Handout 1, [Roots Hold Me Close](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Small votive candle in holder
- Optional: Taper candle in candlestick
- Optional: A recording of "Spirit of Life" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Review and photocopy Handout 1.
- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, a

votive candle, a taper candle, and matches or a lighter. If you are using an LED battery-operated candle, place it in the chalice.

- Gather copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, enough for all participants. Obtain large print and/or braille copies for participants who need them.
- Optional: Light the votive candle in advance and place the taper nearby so that chalice lighter can use the taper to carry the flame to the chalice.
- Optional: Arrange for musical accompaniment or set up music player.

Description of Activity

Offer these words of welcome:

Welcome to this program on Unitarian Universalist spirituality. Each of our personal spiritualities is shaped by our roots, traditions, and heritage, by our role models, mentors, and teachers. Each one of us has had much life experience. Here may we learn from one another. I'm so glad you are here!

Distribute Handout 1. Invite a participant to light the chalice, while you lead the group in reciting the unison chalice-lighting words.

Invite participants to read silently along with you as you read aloud the Unitarian Universalist Principle and Source that this workshop highlights.

In this workshop about roots, invite participants to share their full names. You may ask participants to share how their full name connects to their spiritual or cultural roots.

Explain that this workshop focuses on the line "roots hold me close."

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Spirit of Life" by Carolyn McDade, Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

ACTIVITY 1: MEDITATION ON LEFTOVERS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Meditation on Leftovers](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story and practice reading it aloud to ensure that you will present it effectively.
- Optional: Copy Handout 2 for all participants.

Description of Activity

Read aloud the meditation in Handout 2.

Allow several moments of silence following the story.

ACTIVITY 2: TAPPING OUR PERSONAL ROOTS (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper for drawing or writing
- Drawing and writing implements, such as pencils, color pencils, markers, crayons
- Table(s) with adequate space for each participant to write or draw.
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide to display the reflection questions
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Write these questions for reflection on newsprint or download the questions to your computer and create a digital slide to display during this activity:
 - What aspects of your life do you think of as being your "roots?" Some examples are places you've lived or are living, family origins, ethnic identity, and religious background.
 - Which of these roots nourish the "tree" of your spirituality today? How do they do that?
 - Which roots would you like to give more water to? Which ones do you want to strengthen and deepen, so they can nourish your spirituality more?
- Post the newsprint or set up and test your computer and digital projector and display the digital slide.
- Arrange tables and chairs so each participant has enough space to write or draw.
- Place paper and drawing/writing implements for easy distribution to the group.

Description of Activity

Distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Invite participants into a time of quiet reflection and writing or

drawing in response to the questions that you have posted or displayed. Read aloud the questions and explain to participants they will have fifteen minutes for reflection and writing or drawing.

After fifteen minutes, ring the bell.

Encourage participants to find a partner, preferably someone with whom they have not spent time before. If you have an odd number of participants, form one triad. Instruct participants:

You are invited to take turns talking about your roots. I encourage you to focus your sharing on the roots that nourish you and the roots you wish to nourish more as you live your spirituality. While one of you shares, the other listens attentively. After the first speaker finishes, let there be a moment of silence between you. Then switch roles. These are moments of precious sharing and confiding and we offer one another our mutual trust and regard. Each person will have five minutes to speak without interruption. I will ring a bell when it is time to switch speaker and listener and again when it is time to end the time of sharing.

Ring the bell after five and ten minutes. If you have a triad, alert that group verbally to switch roles at three and six minutes so all three members will have equal time to share.

Re-gather the large group and lead a discussion with these questions:

- Was it easy or hard for you to identify your roots and the ways they've fed (or not fed) your spirituality? Why?
- What did it feel like to think about your roots?
- How do you think your roots have affected your spirituality today?

Conclude the activity by inviting a few participants to name the roots that they want to nourish as they develop their sense of spirituality.

Invite them to leave their writings and drawings on the table for use in the next activity.

ACTIVITY 3: TAPPING OUR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ROOTS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Unitarian Universalism's Roots](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

- Easel for displaying newsprint
- Scissors, several pairs (including left-handed scissors)
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds

Preparation for Activity

- Keep the space in the same configuration as it was for Activity 2.
- Set up the easel where participants will be able to see it, place a pad of newsprint upon it, and place markers nearby.
- Evaluate whether or not your room is large enough to allow for posting several pieces of paper on the wall with participants gathered around them. If not, adapt the activity by allowing participants to stay seated after brainstorming and call out the names of roots that nourish their spirits.
- If you do not have clear handwriting, recruit two participants in advance to write the words or phrases that the group brainstorms.
- Review Leader Resource 1 as background for leading the activity.

Description of Activity

Tell participants that you (or participant volunteer(s)) will record on newsprint the ideas the group is about to generate. Say:

Think about Unitarian Universalism's roots—the ideas and sources that are foundational to our faith. Some of these roots have been in the ground feeding the trees of Unitarianism and Universalism for a long time, and other roots have taken to the ground more recently. What roots of the Unitarian Universalism's living tradition do you feel most nourished by?

Allow the group a few moments for reflection. Then, introduce brainstorming as a technique for generating ideas. Remind participants that all contributions are welcome; ideas require no discussion or evaluation as they are being brainstormed. Invite participants to call out what they see as Unitarian Universalism's roots.

Write down these roots on newsprint as participants call them out. Print in large letters, leaving space around the words and phrases so that they can be cut apart later.

If the group has trouble identifying roots of our faith, refer to Leader Resource 1 to stimulate their thinking with a few examples.

After a dozen or more roots have been identified, or after five minutes (whichever comes first) conclude the brainstorm. Ask for volunteers to help cut up the newsprint so that each "root" is separate. Other volunteers can use tape to post the roots around the room.

Once the roots have been posted, invite participants to look at them and to think about which three roots nourish—or have the potential to nourish—their own spiritual growth. Invite participants to move around the room as they think about this question.

Then, invite participants to move to the posted "root" that identifies what is the most nourishing, or most potentially nourishing, root for them. When participants have chosen their places, ask, "What in that root nourishes your spirit?"

If a few participants have gathered around the same root, encourage them to talk together about the question. Ask others to consider the question on their own.

After two minutes, ring the bell and invite participants to move to another of their "top three" roots. Ask them to think about this root, and read aloud the same question: "What in that root nourishes your spirit?" Again, invite those who have chosen the same root to talk with each other.

After another two minutes, ring the bell again. Invite participants to move to the third of their "top three" roots. Repeat the question aloud. Allow one or two minutes for participants to think and talk about the third root they chose. Then, invite them to return to their seats and find their drawing and writing papers from Activity 2. On the same paper, invite them to write the Unitarian Universalist roots that are most meaningful to them.

Conclude the activity by leading a whole-group discussion with these questions:

- How did it feel to identify and think about these roots of Unitarian Universalism in relation to our spiritualities?
- Was it hard to choose the "top three" roots in Unitarian Universalism that you feel spiritually fed by? Why or why not?
- What roots did you notice many participants chose? Why do you think those roots are meaningful to people in this particular congregation?
- What Unitarian Universalist roots do you want to help grow in your personal spiritual life? In the spiritual life of our congregation?

- Are any of the spiritual roots that "hold you close" connected to wings that "set you free," as the song "Spirit of Life" says? Are these roots and wings one and the same for you, or different?
- What will you carry forward from this activity?

Including All Participants

The movement required in this activity may be challenging for some participants. If any participants use wheelchairs or crutches, the activity will work best in a spacious room with a flat floor and few obstacles. If you meet in a room that has steps, pews, or other obstacles, consider adapting the activity to decrease the need for movement.

Some participants may be unable to read the signs for the various roots. Read the posted signs aloud before asking participants to choose one and move toward it.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle or LED battery-operated candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Taking It Home section of this workshop
- A copy of the closing words you want to use

Preparation for Activity

- Review Taking It Home and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do as follow-up.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants.
- Review the closing words. Decide whether you wish to use these, or another closing. Print out a copy of the closing words you will use. Place your copy of the closing words near the chalice.

Description of Activity

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

Hand out the Taking It Home section you have prepared. Invite participants to "take the workshop home" and explain the activities, as needed. Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

Offer this or a similar invitation to participants:

As you feel moved, call out an image or a word or phrase for something you heard or got in touch with that you want to recognize.

After several participants have called out images, words, or phrases, conclude with these closing words:

We give thanks for the Spirit of Life moving through our lives.

When we give attention to and thanks for the gifts we have received, we are reminded to share them.

Extinguish the chalice.

FAITH IN ACTION: SHARING CULTURAL TRADITIONS

Description of Activity

Are there traditions you enjoy that were passed on to you from your family or your culture? Create an opportunity for congregants to share with one another their knowledge about traditional music, dances, foods, or crafts that are associated with their cultural or religious roots.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

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

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

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

The living tradition we share draws from... words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love. —Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Talk with friends, family, co-workers, and housemates about their spiritual roots. Share with them some of the ideas you had about your own roots in today's workshop.

Take some time to notice how the roots that "hold you close" are related to the wings that "set you free" as you relate to the Spirit of Life. Reflect or journal on what you notice.

You may wish to set up an altar or centering table at home, with symbols from your roots. You may wish to include pictures of ancestors, role models, mentors, teachers, or objects that remind you of them such as flowers they admired or food they liked.

Take a walk around your congregation's meeting space. What objects, signs, and symbols do you see? If you are a long-time member or newly participating, what meaning or messages do the objects, signs, and symbols convey to you? Do these objects, signs, and symbols give you a sense of roots? Where do you find a presence of the Spirit of Life in the building and grounds?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: THANKING OUR ROLE MODELS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Teachers, Mentors, and Role Models – A Letter of Thanks](#) (included in this document)
- Pens or pencils
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- One copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Find and mark Reading 447 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Description of Activity

Open the activity by offering Reading 447 by Albert Schweitzer in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Explain that

each of us has cause for gratitude to those who have been teachers, mentors, and role models for us—those who have helped us become who we are today. Say:

In this activity, you will have the opportunity to express gratitude to your teachers, mentors, and role models. Expressing gratitude is a spiritual practice, even when this gratitude is not communicated to the recipient.

Distribute Handout 2. Invite participants to read the directions. Participants should fill out the front first, and then write their personal "thank you" on the back. Explain that participants will share their writing with a partner after the reflection and writing time has ended. This is important to note, so that participants do not write something that is too private to share. Allow fifteen minutes for participants to reflect and write.

After fifteen minutes, ring the bell. Invite participants to find a partner, preferably with someone they do not know well. If you have an odd number of participants, invite one group to form a triad. Say:

You are invited to take turns sharing your letter of thanks, while the other(s) listens attentively. After each speaker finishes, let there be a moment of silence between you. When you have each (or all three) shared, express gratitude to one another and rejoin the group.

Allow three or four minutes for pairs or triads to share. When the whole group has re-gathered, initiate discussion with these questions:

- What was it like to reflect on and express gratitude in this way?
- How is gratitude a spiritual practice? In what ways did you feel a spirituality in the act of focusing on your gratitude to teachers, mentors, or role models?
- How can expressing our gratitude affect our spirits? How about receiving someone else's gratitude?
- What will you carry forward from this activity?

STORY: MEDITATION ON LEFTOVERS

By the Rev. Gordon McKeeman, reprinted from *Out of the Ordinary* with permission of the author. Copyright (C) 2000 by Gordon B. McKeeman. Published by Skinner House Books, an imprint of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Sometimes I enjoy cooking. I've discovered that one of the greatest of culinary skills is making new creations out of leftovers. It takes imagination. It takes a little skill with spices, herbs, and sauces. The achievement of a satisfying and palatable meal from leftovers can be a model of how one might conduct one's own life in a creative way.

The first thing you need to do is open the refrigerator door. You'll see an assortment of things: containers, jars, bags, boxes, and things wrapped in foil, waxed paper, or plastic.

Now I invite you to open a different door, the door of your past. What you find there will be leftovers, too. You will probably find your [family's] voices, their admonitions, perhaps their praise, maybe their blame, their warnings, some expressions of their love, their anxiety. You may find traces of their uncertainties, problems, and hopes.

You will rediscover some decisions you have made without thorough understanding of the consequences: about leaving home or not leaving; about when you decided to be married or not to be, or both, and to whom. You will probably remember some of the jobs you took, some of the jobs you wanted but didn't get, and some of the ones you thought about and turned down. You will also find some circumstances, accidents, diseases, and the times you were born into and lived through. You will find your family and some of its ways, its heritage, its customs, the habits that were funny or odd and are somehow deeply ingrained and make other ways seem even odder than your own. You will find people who touched your life in a thousand unaccounted and unexpected ways, who were there at special moments and changed you or made you a gift: the gift of a smooth stone, a happy day, or an unforgettable experience. And there will be all the ruins, sorrows, guilts, regrets, along with the fears and the hopes, dreams and doubts, forgivings and forbiddings. Don't we have crowded refrigerators! Every one of us, such a collection of leftovers... .

Welcome to the world where we all cook using leftovers—some of us with imagination, some with creativity, some merely resenting the task, some thinking that there is no possibility in it. Add the secret ingredient. Something will come of it that will be at least edible, probably even palatable.

HANDOUT 1: ROOTS HOLD ME CLOSE

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

We light this chalice in gratitude

for our Unitarian Universalist heritage of hope and liberation.

We celebrate that our living tradition draws on many sources.

We give thanks for roots that can ground and steady us

and for the many sources that nurture us.

We lift up our gratitude to the mentors, role models, and teachers

who have guided us on our way.

May we see the Spirit of Life

moving through our stories and our lives.

PRINCIPLE AND SOURCE

This workshop is grounded in the following Principle and Source from the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.

HANDOUT 2: TEACHERS, MENTORS, AND ROLE MODELS – A LETTER OF THANKS

List the teachers, mentors, and role models (historical, fictional, and/or personal) who have supported you in being who you are and becoming who you want to be. Next to each person's name list the qualities you see in this person that you are grateful to foster in yourself. Consider how the Spirit of Life moves through these people's lives and through the relationships you have had with them.

Teacher, Mentor, Role Model	Qualities	Influence	Result	What You Want to Tell Them

LEADER RESOURCE 1: UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM'S ROOTS

Participants brainstorm their own set of Unitarian Universalist Roots in Activity 3. This list is provided as a resource from which facilitators can draw examples for the group. It is by no means exhaustive!

From the Six Sources:

Christian teachings

Jewish teachings

Humanist thought

Experience of "transcendent mystery and wonder"

Wisdom from the world's religions

Teachings of Earth-centered traditions

Philosophical/Theological Roots:

Reason in religion

The sacred is always unfolding

Freedom of belief and practice

Respect for differing viewpoints

Recognition of and respect for interdependence

Practice-Based Roots:

Prayer and meditation in worship

Sharing of joys and concerns

Inclusivity and welcome

Working for the common good

Caring for our planet

FIND OUT MORE

[*A Chosen Faith*](#) by ministers Forrest Church and John Buehrens offers a compelling description of the historical roots of Unitarian Universalist spirituality.

Unitarian Universalist minister Barry Andrews's book [*Emerson as Spiritual Guide*](#) emphasizes the spiritual practices of the Transcendentalists, a spiritual and literary movement that strongly influenced Unitarian Universalist understandings of spirituality.

"Our American Roots," a series of video segments produced by All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, gives an overview of the historical roots of Unitarian Universalism.

The collection of historical Unitarian Universalist hymns and elements of worship on the website [Hymns of the Spirit Three](#) can give readers a sense of the historical roots of our spirituality as expressed through congregational worship. The site is produced independently by a Unitarian Universalist in Washington, D.C.

WORKSHOP 8: WINGS SET ME FREE: HOPES, DREAMS, AND EXPANDING VISION

INTRODUCTION

We covenant to affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

The living tradition we share draws from...

humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision.

— *Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association*

This workshop invites participants to envision the next chapters of their spiritual journeys and to affirm one another's hopes and dreams.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Engage participants in exploring their spirituality-related hopes, dreams, and potentials
- Cultivate a spirit of acceptance and affirmation among participants.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify ways they would like to grow and spiritual potentials they would like to fulfill
- Create and receive prayerful affirmations
- Optional: Identify ways their life experiences have changed their beliefs and their ideas of truth
- Optional: Create a personal definition of spiritual freedom.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10

Activity 1: Untried Wings	5
Activity 2: Unfurling Your Wings	20
Activity 3: Sharing in Triads	30
Activity 4: Writing and Sharing Affirmations	20
Faith in Action: Helping Young People Unfurl Their Wings	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Song of the Open Road	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflection. You may wish to set aside some time to reflect on your own "untried wings" and the directions in which your "wings" might unfurl. Either individually or together, co-leaders can use the workshop activities to spark and structure your reflection. Doing so will also prepare you to explain and lead the activities.

Practice. Setting aside some moments to pray, to meditate, or to envision your good intentions for the workshop can help you to center yourself before you begin leading. A centered leader who is present and responsive while facilitating is likely to lead an effective workshop.

Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for general tips to make your workshop welcoming to people with physical disabilities and sensitivities.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Nametags and bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen or pencil
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide that displays a list of this workshop's activities

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or email addresses.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, prepare and post an agenda, or create a digital slide presenting the agenda for display during the workshop.
- Set up a station with nametags and markers for participants to create their own nametags. Provide large nametags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's nametags from a distance.
- If you have a flyer with information about upcoming workshops, place it at the nametag station.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create nametags.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Handout 1, [Wings Set Me Free](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Small votive candle in holder
- Optional: Taper candle in candlestick
- Optional: A recording of "Spirit of Life" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Review and photocopy Handout 1.

- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, a votive candle, a taper candle, and matches or a lighter. If you are using an LED battery-operated candle, place it in the chalice.
- Gather copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, enough for all participants. Obtain large print and/or braille copies for participants who need them.
- Optional: Light the votive candle in advance and place the taper nearby so that chalice lighter can use the taper to carry the flame to the chalice.
- Optional: Arrange for musical accompaniment or set up music player.

Description of Activity

Welcome the group with these or similar words:

Welcome to this program on Unitarian Universalist spirituality. Unitarian Universalists affirm that religious truth is continually being revealed—the truth wasn't simply revealed in one time, or one place, or among one people. We are all participants in the search for truth, and thus we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. I am so glad you are here.

Distribute Handout 1. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting the unison chalice-lighting words.

Invite participants to read silently along with you as you read aloud the Unitarian Universalist Principle and Source that this workshop highlights.

Begin name sharing with these or similar words:

As we take turns speaking our names, let us pause after each name recognize silently how each person brings to our gathering his/her unique experiences and aspirations. Let us also recognize how much we learn from one another.

Invite participants to take turns saying their names clearly.

Explain that this workshop focuses on the line "wings set me free."

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Spirit of Life" by Carolyn McDade, Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

ACTIVITY 1: UNTRIED WINGS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Untried Wings](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story. Practice reading it aloud to ensure that you will present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to sit comfortably and listen as you read the story aloud. Allow for several moments of silence following the reading.

ACTIVITY 2: UNFURLING YOUR WINGS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Wings Unfurling — Hope, Dreams, and Potentials](#) (included in this document)
- Pens and pencils
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants. Note that it is a two-sided handout.

Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

In each of us there is the possibility of growth and change, of unrealized potentials becoming activated, of "wings unfurling." Sometimes, we experience the freedom of wings unfurled when we become free from limitations. Other times, we experience a similar kind of unfurling in the freedom that comes from accepting limitations. A rich sense of spirituality can inspire us, give us meaning, and carry us forward like wings. This activity offers each of us an opportunity to reflect on how we might be if we let our wings unfurl and our spirits soar.

Distribute Handout 2 and pens or pencils. Invite participants to take fifteen minutes for reflection and writing in response to the handout's questions. Suggest that participants choose the front or the back of the sheet for their primary focus. Completing the entire sheet thoughtfully would be difficult to do in the time allowed and is not necessary. Explain that these

worksheets will be kept private—participants will not be asked to share them.

After fifteen minutes, ring the bell. Invite participants to spend another three minutes deciding what to share for Activity 3. These questions might help them choose a focus for their sharing:

- What is the essence of how you want to be?
- What obstacles do you want to overcome in order to get there?
- What help do you need?

Encourage participants to make some notes about what they would like to share.

Including All Participants

If some participants find that the worksheet hampers their creativity or clashes with their learning style, they are welcome to put it aside and draw or think instead.

ACTIVITY 3: SHARING IN TRIADS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds

Preparation for Activity

- Think in advance about how to form triads in your group. Determine whether you will have participants number off or form their own triads.

Description of Activity

Tell the group that they will have a structured opportunity to share something about their hopes, dreams, and wished-for "unfurlings." Be clear in your explanation that an "unfurling" of wings can refer to freedom from limitations, but also to the freedom that comes from acceptance of limitations.

Invite participants to form groups of three or form triads yourself. This activity will work best if small group members know and trust one another. If the number of participants in your group is indivisible by three, form pairs as needed.

Ask participants to arrange their seats so that each triad can converse easily. Then, offer these instructions:

Each person in your group will have a turn at each of three roles: speaker, listener, and holder of the space.

When you are the speaker, it takes courage to speak from your depths to another person. You choose what, and how much, you want to share.

True, honest speaking creates community and strengthens you in being true to who you are. Listening is a way of showing respect and care for another. Listening is a way to learn and grow. Listening creates community. Listening without interruption and with attention takes concentration and effort. It is important for the listener to carefully take note of what is said, because s/he will use this information in Activity 4.

When you are holding the space, you hold the good intentions for the group and provide sacred witness to the sharing between speaker and listener. As you hold the space, you want the best for the time. You want safety and compassion. You want truth to be spoken and heard. When you are holding the space, you give your attention and support to the speaker, to the listener, to the process, and to the relationships it creates.

Initially, each person will have five minutes to speak. When it is your turn to speak, you might begin by taking a deep breath. Speak the essence of what you have to say. Take all the time given to you. Not less, so as not to show up. Not more, so as to take away from someone else's presence in the group. You might think you've said all you have to say, but if your five minutes are not up, you can pause quietly, breathe, and perhaps get in touch with something more to share.

Invite each triad to determine the order in which they will rotate the three roles. Participants who are paired will each take a turn as speaker and listener.

Tell the group you will ring the bell to begin the exercise and at five-minute intervals so they can switch roles. Ring the bell, and watch the clock. Ring the bell again at five minutes, at ten minutes, and finally at fifteen minutes to end the exercise.

ACTIVITY 4: WRITING AND SHARING AFFIRMATIONS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 3, [Creating an Affirmation](#) (included in this document)
- Pencils or pens

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 3 for all participants.

Description of Activity

While participants are still gathered in their triads, distribute Handout 3. Explain:

Now we will take some moments of quiet for each person to compose an affirmation for the person to whom you were the listener. The affirmation, when delivered, should be two minutes or less. You will have ten minutes to focus on creating an affirmation which you will later speak to the person you listened to. There are many ways we can support one another with these affirmations.

If participants express a desire for an example affirmation, you may share this sample, written for "Jill" who is seeking to be a more emotionally available parent:

Thank you, Jill, for naming and sharing your longings and dreams. You long to be more present to your children, and you face many challenges in life and work that have made this difficult.

May you, Jill, unfurl your wings so that you may gain perspective, so that you may more clearly see what it is you can let go of and what you can claim.

May you trust that even though it can feel like you're all alone in your struggles, you have many friends here who can support you, many friends who struggle, too, to make time for their families.

Even if you know setbacks and disappointments, may you always know that you are held in the embrace of a loving community and sustained by the wondrous spirit of life.

May it be so.

Invite participants to temporarily move to tables to write, if they wish.

After five minutes, re-gather the triads. Introduce the next phase of the sharing with these words, or your own:

Each person will now have the opportunity to give an affirmation, to receive an affirmation, and to witness an affirmation while holding the space. May you express affirmation not only with your words, but with your face and eyes, too. When you are receiving the affirmation, simply receive the words without comment.

Tell the group you will ring the bell to begin the exercise and at two-minute intervals so they can switch roles. Ring the bell, and watch the clock. Ring the bell again at two minutes, at four minutes, and finally at six minutes to end the exercise.

Tell participants they will have five minutes to reflect on the exercise within their triads. Ask each triad to allocate the time evenly, on their own, so that everyone has the same amount of time to speak and to listen. Offer these

questions to guide triads in reflection: "How was this experience for you? What did you notice?"

Bring the group back together to process the experience. Use these questions:

- What was it like to name what you wanted, and then receive an affirmation?
- What was it like to compose an affirmation for someone else?
- Did you notice the Spirit of Life in this experience? If so, where and how?

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle or LED battery-operated candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Taking It Home section of this workshop
- A copy of the closing words you want to use

Preparation for Activity

- Review Taking It Home and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants.
- Review the closing words. Decide whether you wish to use these, or another closing. Print out a copy of the closing words you will use. Place your copy of the closing words near the chalice.

Description of Activity

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

Hand out the Taking It Home section you have prepared. Invite participants to "take the workshop home" and explain the activities, as needed. Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—living alone, with a significant other, in a family, with housemates, etc.—in the way you explain the Taking-It-Home activities.

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and join hands. Then, read aloud the closing words:

We give thanks for the transformative powers at work in each one of us and in our congregation.

May we trust our powers and know the difference we can make in the lives of one another.
May we live to make our dreams true.

Extinguish the chalice.

FAITH IN ACTION: HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE UNFURL THEIR WINGS

Description of Activity

Are the youth or children of your congregation working on a service project or another expression of faith in action? Support and affirm them by getting involved in the project they have planned. Reflect on your role as follower, rather than organizer or leader in this project. How does that offer affirmation to children or youth as they unfurl their wings?

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

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

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

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

The living tradition we share draws from... humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our

vision. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Share Handout 2, Wings Unfurling — Hope, Dreams, and Potentials, with someone who is close to you. Ask them to share about how they'd like to see their wings unfurl, too.

Try journaling in a creative way. Explore the question "Where is the Spirit of Life beckoning me?" by alternating, as you write, between your dominant hand and your non-dominant hand.

Use clay, collage, enactment, or words to create the next chapter of your own life as if it were a parable, a myth, fairy tale, or wisdom story. What is the path you are on now? Is your journey a quest? What are you searching for? How will you know when the quest is complete? Or, is the journey ongoing?

Write your own obituary, epitaph, or eulogy. Write it as you would like it to be. Get in touch with what you value, what you still want to do, and what you want to make peace with.

Create an altar or centering table for the person you are and who you are becoming. You might use candles, flowers, photographs, or any objects that remind you of your dreams for yourself. Consider the placement of objects in relation to one another.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Paper for drawing or writing
- Drawing and writing implements, such as pencils, color pencils, markers, crayons
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Optional: Easel for displaying newsprint with questions

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure each participant will have a seat at a table where they can write or draw.
- Place paper and drawing/writing implements on a common table or within your own reach for distribution to all participants.

- Review Reading 645 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Song of the Open Road" by Walt Whitman. You may wish to practice reading it aloud.
- Prepare a sheet of newsprint with the reflection questions: "How has your understanding of truth and belief changed through the years?" and "What does spiritual freedom mean to you?"

Description of Activity

Distribute hymnbooks and lead the group in Reading 645, "Song of the Open Road" by Walt Whitman. You may choose to switch parts with the group in reading it a second time. Ask the group to start the reading with the non-italicized text, and the co-facilitator(s) will answer by reading the italicized text.

Invite participants to call out lines, words, or phrases from the poem that feel significant to them. Direct participants' attention to the reflection questions you have posted. Read both questions aloud.

Allow one or two minutes of shared silence. Then, indicate or distribute the paper and drawing/writing implements. Invite participants to write or draw their responses. Let the group know that they will have eight minutes for reflecting and responding on paper. You may suggest that participants list words or memories, create a poem, write their thoughts in prose, or draw abstractly or realistically.

After eight minutes, ring the bell and invite participants to return their attention to the whole group.

Invite participants to form pairs. Encourage them to partner with someone they do not know well. If you have an odd number of participants, form one triad.

Offer these instructions:

In your pairs, you are invited to discuss the experiences you spent time recalling and writing about. You can share whatever is comfortable. If you recalled things that you would rather keep private, that is fine. Each person will have two minutes to talk and to listen. When it is your turn to listen, just listen—listening can be a spiritual practice in and of itself. I will ring the bell when it is time to switch roles.

Watch the time. Ring the bell at two minutes and again at four minutes to conclude the sharing. If you have a triad, let these participants know verbally at about one-and-a-half minutes and two-and-a-half minutes that they should switch speakers.

Lead the whole group in discussion with these questions:

- What was it like to reflect on how your understandings have changed throughout the years? What are some of the ways that your understandings have changed?
- I'm curious to hear from a few people what spiritual freedom means to them, because I imagine we have many different perspectives on that question within this group.
- What was it like to hear from your partner about the ways their understandings have changed as they've traveled through life? Did their experiences resonate with yours? Did you notice generational differences?
- What would you like to carry with you from this experience?

Including All Participants

Welcome participants who do not wish to or are not able to write or draw to sit comfortably and contemplate in silence. While the objective of this activity is spiritual reflection and expression, neither a specific product nor its quality matter. Invite participants to engage in the form of creativity that most awakens their spirituality in this moment.

STORY: UNTRIED WINGS

By Rev. Elizabeth Tarbox. Reprinted from *Life Tides* by permission of Sarah Tarbox. Copyright (C) 1993 by Elizabeth Tarbox. Published by Skinner House Books, an imprint of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Hollow bones, streamlined feathers, and wings shaped to push aside the viscosity of air are not what make birds fly.

Birds let go of their grasp on safe perches at the tops of trees because something calls to them. They unfold their untried wings and feel an unimagined power. They soar

out, up, and through the winter sky because an ancient longing pulls them home.

Loosed from the sticky grasp of earth, free from the snarls of lesser creatures with daggers in their teeth and muscles in their legs, birds laugh upward, homeward, drawn by a calling which bids them welcome in the sky.

Bird, take me with you when you go. Oh not my lumbering body and knitted tissue, no. Take some other me with you, some invisible soul of me that hears the call you hear, that moves effortlessly with you through the bright pink silk of dawn and the warm butter spread of morning. Carry my longing to be weightless, to move as light moves, to be unseen, scattered through time and space. Teach me to trust my wings.

HANDOUT 1: WINGS SET ME FREE

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

We light this chalice in celebration
of our Unitarian Universalist affirmation
of ongoing learning and new understanding.
Each of us individually and all of us collectively
have gifts and talents to use in the service of life.
Though we all know setbacks and failures,
strength, power, and possibilities always lie before us.
We light this chalice for the Spirit of Life
continuing to move through our lives.

PRINCIPLE AND SOURCE

This workshop is grounded in the following Principle and Source from the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

... a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

From Our Statement of Principles and Sources

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision.

HANDOUT 2: WINGS UNFURLING — HOPE, DREAMS, AND POTENTIALS

If you could reach your full potential as a spiritual person, what would you be like?

How would your life be different from what it is today?

How are you moving—or, how can you move—toward that potential?

You may wish to complete some of these sentences to help you focus on your dreams and potentials:

I am drawn to exploring...

I'll let go of...

I long to be...

I can ask for...

I'd like to accept...

I can start again...

I hope for...

I feel an opening to...

A difficulty I know is...

I'm supported by...

Blocks I encounter are...

Hope is kindled in me when...

An old wound is...

I hope for...

Some fears I'd like to see go away are... I give thanks for...

If my fears went away, I would... .

I will draw on...

If my soul unfurled its wings, I would... I will be...

HANDOUT 3: CREATING AN AFFIRMATION

Create an affirmation for the person to whom you were the listener. The affirmation should be two minutes or less in length. You can begin by naming the companion and thanking them for sharing. Then you can speak any sentences completed from the following beginning phrases or any of your own words you have written. You do not need to complete all the sentences below. They are just here to give you ideas.

Thank you, _____, for naming and sharing your longings and dreams.

May you, _____, unfurl your wings to...

May you trust...

May you know the support of...

Even if you know setbacks and disappointments, may you always...

May you go in the path of...

May...

May...

May it be so.

FIND OUT MORE

[*Breaking Free: Women of Spirit at Midlife and Beyond*](#) is a series of essays by women writers, compiled by Unitarian Universalist minister Marilyn Sewell. The book explores themes similar to those explored in this workshop.

Finding Your Religion: When the Faith You Grew Up With Has Lost Its Meaning, by Rev. Scotty McLennan, a Unitarian Universalist minister serving as Dean for Religious Life at Stanford University. Explores the concepts of spiritual and faith development throughout one's life.

[*Writing the Sacred Journey: The Art and Practice of Spiritual Memoir*](#) by Elizabeth J. Andrew, an author, writing instructor, and Unitarian Universalist layperson.

[*Questions for the Religious Journey: Finding Your Own Path*](#) by George Kimmich Beach, a Unitarian Universalist minister. Provides theological food for thought and tools for religious introspection from a Unitarian Universalist perspective.

[*Finding the Voice Inside: Writing as a Spiritual Quest for Women*](#) by Gail Collins-Ranadive, a Unitarian Universalist minister. Offers a series of writing exercises guiding women to explore their spirituality.

WORKSHOP 9: COME TO US: CLOSING AND CONTINUING ON

INTRODUCTION

We covenant to affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

The living tradition we share draws from... humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

This workshop is designed for people who have participated in several of the Spirit of Life workshops. Activities help participants recognize and claim the fruits of the workshop series, and name the support they need for ongoing spiritual development. The group will consider ways they might share their gifts with the congregation as well as ways they might offer one another ongoing support.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Reinforce the themes of the Spirit of Life workshop series
- Engage participants in experiencing, articulating, and expressing their own spirituality
- Explore participants' sense of the sacred.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Get to know other participants more
- Describe their personal sense of the sacred
- Reflect on and share spiritual moments in their lives
- Optional: Reflect on and discuss their spiritual journeys.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity

Minutes

Welcoming and Entering

Opening 10

Activity 1: Fruits of the Spirit 50

Activity 2: Responding to the Spirit of Life Program 15

Faith in Action: Sharing with the Congregation

Closing 15

Alternate Activity 1: Personal Chalice 50

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflection. Leaders may wish to set aside some time to reflect on their own spiritual moments and senses of the sacred in advance of the workshop, either individually or together. You can use the workshop activities to help you explore your own spirituality. Doing so will also prepare you to explain and lead the activities.

Practice. Setting aside some moments to pray, to meditate, or to envision your good intentions for the workshop can help to center you before you begin leading. A centered leader who is present and responsive while facilitating is likely to lead an effective workshop.

Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for general tips to make your workshop welcoming to people with physical disabilities and sensitivities.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Nametags and bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen or pencil
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide that displays a list of this workshop's activities

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet to gather participants' names, addresses, phone numbers, and/or email addresses.
- Using the Workshop-at-a-Glance as a guide, prepare and post an agenda, or create a digital slide presenting the agenda for display during the workshop.
- Set up a station with nametags and markers for participants to create their own nametags. Provide large nametags and bold markers so that participants will be able to read one another's nametags from a distance.
- Optional: Create and photocopy a handout that provides the dates, times, and locations for future adult programs your congregation will offer.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, invite them to sign in and create nametags.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Handout 1, [Come to Us](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Small votive candle in holder
- Optional: Taper candle in candlestick
- Optional: A recording of "Spirit of Life" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 1 for all participants.
- Prepare the altar or centering table with the cloth you have brought, a chalice and candle, a votive candle, a taper candle, and matches or a lighter. If you are using an LED battery-operated candle, place it in the chalice.
- Gather copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, enough for all participants. Obtain large print and/or braille copies for participants who need them.
- Optional: Light the votive candle in advance and place the taper nearby so that chalice lighter can use the taper to carry the flame to the chalice.
- Optional: Arrange for musical accompaniment or set up music player.

Description of Activity

Welcome the group with these or similar words:

Welcome one final time to Spirit of Life. Today we celebrate the time we have spent together and the continuation of our spiritual journeys. Our faith is held together not by common creeds but by covenantal deeds. We are interdependent and we offer one another our mutual trust and support. Together so much more is possible. I'm so glad you are here!

Invite a participant to light the chalice, inviting them to wait to kindle the flame until the conclusion of the reading.

Distribute Handout 1. Indicate the unison chalice-lighting words and lead the group in saying them aloud. Invite participants to take turns so that each participant reads aloud one sentence of the reading. Say that it is fine for a participant to pass if they do not wish to read.

After participants finish the reading, the volunteer kindles the flame.

Invite participants to read silently along with you as you read aloud the Unitarian Universalist Principle and Source that this workshop highlights.

Begin name sharing with these or similar words:

Please speak your name into the gathering. As we listen to one another's names, let us hold one another in gratitude. In doing so, may we create a common spirit of generosity and community.

Invite participants to take turns saying their names clearly.

Invite participants to rise in body or spirit and sing "Spirit of Life" by Carolyn McDade, Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

ACTIVITY 1: FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT (50 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A large newsprint sheet or poster paper for creating a tree
- Color paper for creating leaves and fruit
- Paper for drawing or writing
- Drawing and writing implements, such as pencils, color pencils, markers, crayons
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds
- Markers
- Scissors, at least one pair (including left-handed scissors)
- Glue sticks and/or tape
- Optional: Computer, digital projector, and digital slide to display the reflection questions
- Optional: Cordless microphone

Preparation for Activity

- On the newsprint or poster paper, draw a tree trunk with many branches but no leaves.
- Cut the color paper into the shapes of leaves and fruit. Cut enough leaves and fruit to cover the branches of the tree.
- Write these questions for reflection on newsprint or download the questions to your computer and create a digital slide to display during this activity:
 - What have been the fruits of your participation in these Spirit of Life workshops?
 - Would you say you have learned or grown? If so, how?
 - What is a spiritual gift that you see in your fellow participants?
 - What is one spiritual gift you can share with our congregational community?
 - What ongoing needs do you have for input, practice, and support in order to enliven your spirit and be fruitful?

- Make sure each participant will each have a seat at a table where they can write or draw.
- Place paper and drawing/writing implements where all participants can easily reach them.

Description of Activity

Invite participants into quiet individual reflection and responding to the questions that are posted or displayed. After three minutes, read aloud the questions.

Invite participants to move to table(s) where they are able to draw or write. Distribute paper and writing and drawing implements. Tell participants they will have fifteen minutes for reflection and to write and/or draw some of their responses.

Watch the time and ring the bell after fifteen minutes.

Invite participants to remain at the drawing/writing table(s) and engage them in a large group conversation, responding to these questions:

What are some of the fruits you identified? And some of the gifts?

Hear a few responses, then distribute fruits to participants. Invite participants to write with markers on the fruit, using words or short phrases to describe the fruits and gifts they identified during their time of reflection. After five minutes, ask the group:

What are some of the ongoing needs you identified?

Hear a few responses, then distribute leaves to participants. Invite them to write with markers on the leaves, using words or short phrases to describe the needs they identified during the time of reflection. Allow five minutes for writing.

Invite participants to decorate the posted tree together, adding fruits and leaves. Depending on your space, you may wish to lay the tree down on a table or post it on the wall for decorating. When the tree is decorated, ask participants to look at it together and reflect. Engage the group in conversation using these questions as a guide:

- Does this tree present a full picture of our spiritual gifts and needs?
- What else supports our ongoing spiritual exploration and growth? Is there anything you'd add to the tree?
- How can we bring these gifts and fruits to the rest of the congregation? How can we help them find and share their own gifts?

Thank participants for their thoughtful reflections and conclude. You may wish to post this tree somewhere public within the congregation—if so, ask for the group's assent.

ACTIVITY 2: RESPONDING TO THE SPIRIT OF LIFE PROGRAM (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Responding to the Spirit of Life Program — Evaluation](#) (included in this document)
- Pens or pencils
- A box for completed evaluations

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Place the box for collecting completed evaluations in a central, easily accessible location.

Description of Activity

Invite participants' to provide feedback on the Spirit of Life workshop series by completing the evaluation on Handout 2. Show participants the box for their completed evaluations. Allow fifteen minutes for participants to complete the evaluation.

Including All Participants

If any participants have disabilities that make writing difficult, encourage them to speak with you instead of filling out the evaluation.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Body Movements for Spirit of Life](#) (included in this document)
- Stones, preferably smooth ones
- A bowl to hold all the stones
- Altar or centering table
- Cloth for covering altar or centering table
- Chalice and candle or LED battery-operated candle
- Chalice extinguisher
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Taking It Home section for this workshop
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review "Spirit of Life," Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, to make sure you are comfortable leading the song.
- Review Leader Resource 1 and practice the body movements recommended to accompany "Spirit of Life" (or, choose your own movements to teach the group).
- Review Taking It Home and decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants.

Description of Activity

Add the bowl of stones to the altar or centering table. Gather participants around the table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Say:

As we prepare to leave this space, I invite you to select a stone from the common bowl. If you like, you may name some ways this series has been a stepping stone on your spiritual path. Or, you may select a stone in silence.

After participants have each taken a stone, and have spoken if they wish to, you may offer your thanks and blessings with these words, or your own:

Thank you so much for your attentive listening, open sharing, and creative expression throughout this workshop. My deep wish is that our congregation can be for you a place to continue to grow, and a place where you will encourage growth in others.
Blessings for your journeys!

Invite the group to join in singing "Spirit of Life," with body movements as participants are willing and able. Before leading the song, demonstrate the body movements described in Leader Resource 1.

Lead the song slowly so participants can follow your movements. Sing the song twice, with the movements. If the group seems to be learning the movements well, invite them to repeat the movements in the quiet without singing the song.

Ask participants to form a circle, join hands, and move toward the altar or centering table. Extinguish the chalice together. Close with these words:

This is only the beginning.

Including All Participants

Be sure to adapt body movements to "Spirit of Life" to suit the needs of members of your group. Invite

participants to participate in the "Spirit of Life" body movements as suits their willingness and ability.

FAITH IN ACTION: SHARING WITH THE CONGREGATION

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Bell
- Clock, watch, or timer that shows seconds

Preparation for Activity

- Think about your willingness and ability to be involved in ongoing support for the participants in Spirit of Life. While you are not obligated to be involved in any way after leading this workshop, participants may ask you to be. What boundaries will you draw on your future involvement? Who else might you invite to become involved in providing support? Planning ahead will help you respond helpfully and honestly to participants' requests.
- Plan how many small groups you will form for this activity. Prepare several sheets of newsprint, markers, and tape for each small group.

Description of Activity

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

The word "spirit" comes from the Latin for "breath." The word "conspire" comes from the Latin for breathing together. I want to invite you into a time of conspiring, a time of shared inspiration.

You have heard people name the gifts they've received from this time together and you have heard people say what kind of support they want for their spiritual journeys. What are the gifts this gathered community can bring to the congregation? Is there a ritualized, celebratory way to bring these gifts to the community? Are there ways in which the participants in our workshop can offer one another ongoing support?

Invite participants to move into groups of four or five to imagine and brainstorm ways this group can share the gifts they've received with the congregation. Invite each group to appoint someone to take notes with a marker on newsprint.

Groups may suggest leading Spirit of Life workshops again; leading a Sunday service on Spirit of Life; forming spiritual partnerships or triads for speaking, listening, (and holding the space); starting a spiritual journal

writing group; creating a prayer circle; creating a monthly Circle of Support for participants; offering more adult programs from the UUA's Tapestry of Faith series, such as the [Spirit in Practice](#) program by Erik Walker Wikstrom.

After ten minutes, invite small groups to return their focus to the large group and present their ideas. Invite each group to share their ideas with the large group, and post their newsprint notes on the wall.

Invite comments from the whole group after each small group shares. If there seems to be significant energy around any of the ideas in particular, discuss them further as a whole group. If the group wants to go forward with follow-up, be sure to delegate tasks. You can use these questions as guidelines:

- What other people in the congregation should be involved in the decision-making around this?
- Who will be the "point person" to follow up with those people and report back to the group?
- Who is willing to take responsibility for making this idea happen?

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

You've done it! You've completed the teaching of *Spirit of Life*. Even though your congregation's series is complete, it is still quite valuable for co-facilitators to get together and evaluate the experience of this final meeting. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the whole series?
- What were some of our most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as facilitators?
- What could we handle better as facilitators for future programs?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- Where do we go from here? Is there anything left that we need to follow up on?

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic

process within our congregations and in society at large.

The living tradition we share draws from... humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support. — Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Discuss the "fruits" of this workshop with friends, family, co-workers, and housemates. Enlist one or more of them as people who can support you on your continued journey of spiritual growth.

Create an altar or centering table at home that will remind you of the things you want to hold on to from the Spirit of Life workshops. Return to your altar regularly for meditation, reflection, and prayer.

If your group did the Faith in Action activity, Sharing with the Congregation involve yourself in some of the projects your group identified in the activity.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: PERSONAL CHALICES (50 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small terra cotta standard flower pots, no bigger than 5" in diameter
- Terra cotta saucers, 2" larger in diameter than pots
- Votive candles
- Hot glue gun(s)
- Water-based acrylic paints and plenty of small paint brushes
- Paper plates or similar item to use as palettes
- At least one or two aprons, smocks, or old t-shirts
- Tablecloths or newspaper to protect work areas
- Pencils and paper
- Newsprint, markers, and tape (or a digital slide and projector)

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure to allow yourself sufficient time in advance to obtain the flower pots, saucers, and candles for each participant.

- Prepare and post a piece of newsprint (or digital slide) with these questions for reflection:
 - Where are you now spiritually? What spiritual gifts do you have at present and what challenges are you facing? What do you hope for spiritually?
 - How would you characterize your spiritual path or journey? Has this changed over the years?
 - Have the Spirit of Life workshops contributed to your spiritual development? If so, how? What else has contributed to your spiritual growth over the years?
- Locate an electrical outlet where you can use the hot glue gun.
- Cover work areas with tablecloth or newspaper to avoid paint stains.
- Arrange materials in a central location.
- Let participants know in advance that you will be painting today, so they can wear appropriate clothes. (Acrylic paints don't wash out of fabrics.)
- If possible, think over some things you might include on your own chalice, and either make your own chalice in advance or draw some of your ideas on paper as an example for participants.

Description of Activity

Explain to participants that they will create personal chalices which will represent aspects of their spiritual lives. Invite participants to drawing/writing table(s) and begin by reflecting on personal spiritual experiences. Read aloud the reflection questions that you have posted.

Allow two minutes for quiet reflection, then distribute paper and pencils. Invite participants to take five minutes to draw in response to one or more of these questions. Explain to participants that drawings can be as abstract or representational as they like, and can include words.

After five minutes, explain the chalice project. If you have made your own chalice or drawing in advance, show it now. If you have not made a chalice as an example, demonstrate how a flower pot upside down with a right side up saucer on top can create a chalice shape. Use these or similar words of explanation:

You are invited to plan some designs, pictures, or words to include on your personal chalice.

You may wish to depict aspects of your spirituality or spiritual journey and things that have influenced you spiritually. After you have decided what to include on your chalice, place the saucer upside down on the table, center the flower pot base on it, and trace around the pot with a pencil so as to indicate to yourself the area which should remain free of paint. Then, decorate the flower pot and saucer using acrylic paint. After the painting is done, use the hot glue to attach the saucer to the flower pot.

Suggest that in addition to the reflection questions posed before, participants might consider depicting one or more of the following:

- The nature of their spiritual paths
- Times of day or year, holidays, or a specific time or occasion that they have found particularly meaningful or spiritual
- Special places, memories, or people
- The nature of their spiritual experience, either in general or on a specific occasion

- Values they hold that are connected to their spirituality
- A word or words that are important to them spiritually
- Ideas that are important to them spiritually.

Invite participants to collect their flower pot, saucer, and paintbrushes and begin painting as soon as they are ready. Explain that they will have a half hour to do this project.

When all participants have assembled their chalices, distribute a candle to each participant and invite participants to place them inside their chalices. Invite several participants to share briefly with the group something they represented on their chalice. Thank participants for sharing and invite them to place their chalices in a designated area so they can dry during the rest of the workshop.

Close by pointing out that these chalices can serve as a reminder of the spiritual growth participants have experienced through the Spirit of Life workshops as well as a new ritual object for participants' future spiritual lives.

HANDOUT 1: COME TO US

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

We are here young and old, male, female, and transgender; gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, and straight (but not narrow!) people.

We welcome all the colors of the human race.

Our life experiences have led us to a rich variety of outlooks and a beautiful diversity of perspectives to which our life experiences have led us.

We are agnostic, humanist, atheist, theist, pantheist, questioning and affirming.

We learn from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist teachings, from earth centered religions, from science and nature, from personal experience, and from the poetic and prophetic words and deeds of women and men.

Not only is there room for all of us; there is room for all that is within each of us.

Our confidence in the goodness of inclusion leads us to keep widening the circle of our welcome and our care and concern.

We are people with doubts and convictions.

We have failings and frailties, possibilities and promise.

We know the violence, pain and suffering we humans cause, and we trust our actions for goodness and justice are significant beyond our knowing.

We each have a part of the truth and we need one another to be more whole.

There is always more to know, and we keep open to learning and more sources for understanding.

The truth we search for will always be beyond our reach.

Our reaching and our searching keep us vital and alive. The measure of our searching and our learning is the lives we live, the deeds we do, the love we give.

This community constantly invites us to be who we are. In this community may we receive healing, caring, support, inspiration, challenge, momentum, and increased strength. To this community, we bring the gifts of ourselves.

Both our individual sense of meaning and purpose and our individual actions for love and justice expand and multiply in community.

Together let us marvel at the mystery and wonder of life and the universe.

We light this chalice for the Spirit of Life.

PRINCIPLE AND SOURCE

This workshop is grounded in the following Principle and Source from the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

- ... The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
- ... Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit

From Our Statement of Principles and Sources:

- ... As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

HANDOUT 2: RESPONDING TO THE SPIRIT OF LIFE PROGRAM — EVALUATION

Please take a few minutes before leaving to write out some thoughts about our time together.

The Spirit of Life workshop series was ...

The best thing about it was...

I wish we had...

Something I'd change is...

Another thing I'd like to say is...

I came here wanting...

I leave here... .

Overall, the Spirit of Life program was...

Please circle the number that indicates your position on the following statement.

Spirit of Life helped our congregation create loving community, inspire spiritual growth, and encourage lives of integrity, justice, and joy.

1 - Strongly disagree

2 - Disagree

3 - Neutral

4 - Somewhat agree

5 - Strongly agree

Please include any additional comments or suggestions on the back of this page.

Thank you for your participation!

LEADER RESOURCE 1: BODY MOVEMENTS FOR SPIRIT OF LIFE

When you sing the phrase "Spirit of Life," lift both your arms above your head and then make a big encompassing circle with one arm curving down one side, as the other arm curves down the other side.

When you sing "come unto me," bring your hands together over your heart.

As you sing "sing in my heart," lift your hands out and up into the air.

When you follow that with "the stirrings of compassion," lower your arms, have the palms of your hands facing up and open and move your hands in a circular motion parallel to the floor.

For "blow in the wind," lift your arms above your head and sway them.

As you sing "rise in the sea," lower your arms and then rise them up like a wave. For "move in the hands," move your arms and hands outward in gesture of giving.

When you sing "giving life the shape of justice," extend your arms and hands out to either side and move them up and down like balancing scales of justice.

As you sing "roots hold me close," bend down and extend your arms and hands like roots into the ground. For "wings set me free," bend your arms out to the side like wings to make a flying motion.

As you sing "Spirit of Life," lift both your arms above your head and make a big encompassing circle with one arm curving down one side and the other arm curving down the other side.

Close with "come to me, come to me" with your hands coming one at a time onto your heart.

FIND OUT MORE

The ten-workshop series [Spirit in Practice](#) by Erik Walker Wikstrom is an excellent follow-up to Spirit of Life. Its workshops focus on specific practices that Unitarian Universalists can use to develop their spirituality.

Other Unitarian Universalist programs for spiritual growth include:

[Thoreau as Spiritual Guide](#) and [Emerson as Spiritual Guide](#) by Barry Andrews; [Lifelines: Holding On and Letting Go](#) and [Lifecraft: The Art of Meaning in Everyday Life](#) both by Forrest Church (Beacon Press; [Evensong for Families](#), [Evensong: Volume 1](#) and [Evensong: Volume 2](#) by Barbara Hamilton-Holway; [Gatherings: Small Group Ministry for Men](#) by Tony Bushman and Bill Hamilton-Holway; [Parents as Spiritual Guides](#) Roberta and Christopher Nelson; and [The Force of Spirit](#) by Scott Russell Sanders and a [discussion guide](#) by Sophia Betancourt.