

ALL SOULS UNITARIAN CHURCH

February Theme Prayer and Spiritual Practice

Opening Reading/ Chalice Lighting

I pray on the principle that wine knocks the cork out of a bottle. There is an inward fermentation, and there must be a vent. ~Henry Ward Beecher

Check-In How goes thy spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? 2-3 sentences

Business

Branches extravaganza is January 24

Please spread the news! New Groups begin Tuesdays in Feb!

Collect names and send Jennifer Johnson an email @ jennji@hotmail.com

**Can you facilitate? We need 4-6 facilitators
Group Evaluations**

Revisit the Covenant

Claim time for Deeper Listening Deeper listening is a time at the end of our meeting where you can be listened to uninterrupted for what is essentially an extended check in if you have more you need to say than the initial check in. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes.

Centering Take a moment to breathe, feel your feet on the floor and your body in the chair. After a few minutes of breathing, find your heartbeat (either by listening to your ear or placing your fingers on your pulse). See if you can hold the attention of your heartbeat and listen to the sounds in the room. (1-2 minutes) Our goal would be to bring this sense of calm and way of listening to the readings and to one another, keeping our attention toggling between self and what you are listening to.

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Readings (Read through readings and questions twice, one time per facilitator, with reflection space in between followed by Quaker Style sharing. Try to stay in I statements and personal stories and not shift into third person and facts. Try to leave space between speakers.)

The Alphabet of Spiritual Literacy

A

ATTENTION: Pay attention. Stay awake and totally alert. See with receptive eyes and discover a world of ceaseless wonders.

B

BEING PRESENT: Live in the present moment. Don't obsess about the past or worry about the future. All you need is right here now.

C

CONNECTIONS: Cultivate the art of making connections. See how your life is intimately related to all life on the planet.

D

DEVOTION: Express your feelings of praise and adoration through devotional practices. Pray with words and pray through your actions.

E

ENTHUSIASM: Celebrate life with this intoxicating passion. It adds zest to everything and helps build community. Hold nothing back.

F

FAITH: Recognize and accept that there is another dimension to life than what is obvious to us. Live with obstacles, doubt, and paradox, knowing that God is always present in the world.

G

GRATITUDE: Spell out your days with a grammar of gratitude. Be thankful for all the blessings in your life.

H

HOSPITALITY: Practice hospitality in a world where too often strangers are feared, enemies are hated, and the "other" is shunned. Welcome guests and alien ideas with graciousness.

I

IMAGINATION: Give imagination free rein in your life. Explore its images and ponder its meaning-making moments, and it will always present you with something new to be seen, felt, or made known.

J

JUSTICE: Seek liberty and justice for all. Work for a free and fair world where oppression and inequality no longer exist.

K

KINDNESS: Let Spirit flow through you in little acts of kindness, brief words of encouragement, and manifold expressions of courtesy. These deeds will add to the planet's fund of good will.

L

LISTENING: Cultivate the art of deep listening in which you lean toward the world in love. All things in the universe want to be heard, as do the many voices inside us.

M

MEANING: Constantly try to discover the significance of your experiences. Seek further understandings from sacred texts and spiritual teachers.

N

NURTURING: Take good care of the best that is within you. Self-exploration and personal growth continue throughout our lifetimes and equip us to tend to the needs of others.

O

OPENNESS: Hold an open house in your heart for all people and all things. Practice empathy with others and receptiveness toward the universe.

P

PLAY: Be playful. Express your creative spirit in spontaneity. Hurrah the pleasures of being, and let loose your laughter.

Q

QUESTING: Savor questions and thrill to the quest. See your life as a journey that quickens your faith and deepens your soul.

R

REVERENCE: Practice reverence for life. The sacred is in, with, and under all the things of the world. Respond with appropriate respect and awe.

S

SILENCE: Slow down. Be calm. Find a place where you can regularly practice silence. There you will find the resources to revitalize your body, mind, and soul.

T

TEACHERS: Be willing to learn from the spiritual teachers all around you, however unlikely or unlike you they may be. Always be a sensitive student.

U

UNITY: In this age of global spirituality, respect differences but affirm commonalities. Work together with those who are trying to make the world a better place.

V

VISION: Practice the art of seeing the invisible. Use the wisdom of your personal visions to renew yourself and your community.

W

WONDER: Cultivate a vibrant curiosity and welcome the reports of your senses. The world is alive and moving toward you with rare epiphanies and wonderful surprises. Remember you are standing on holy ground.

X

X - THE MYSTERY: Accept the unknown as part of life. Don't try to unravel the profound mysteries of God, human nature, and the natural world. Love the ineffable.

Y

YEARNING: Follow your heart's boundless desire. It takes you out of yourself and fosters an appreciation for the multidimensional pleasures of life.

YOU: Accept that you are a child of God. Sing your own song with gusto. Fulfill your mission as a copartner with the Holy One in the unfolding drama of the universe.

Z

ZEAL: Be passionately aroused by life. Cherish every moment, honor your commitments, and treasure your kinship with all.

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Questions

- 1. Do you pray? What form does it take? How often? Whom do you pray for? Whom do you pray to?**
- 2. Can you think of the first time (if ever) that you were deeply touched or moved by prayer?**
- 3. Have your prayers ever been answered? How do you make sense of whether they are or are not?**
- 4. What do you consider to be your spiritual practice?**
- 5. What would your ideal spiritual practice be (since many of us struggle with making the time)**
- 6. Can anything be a spiritual practice? What makes something a spiritual practice?**
- 7. What is the relationship between prayer and silence? Prayer and wonder? Prayer and Joy? Prayer and Grace?**

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8. **What are the effects of prayer or spiritual practice as you experience them?**
9. **What is the purpose of prayer or spiritual practice? Why do it?**

Deeper Listening If time is claimed by an individual, group listens to speaker uninterrupted for that designated time. It is best to have a timer of sorts so that facilitator can listen fully as well.

Check Out

One sentence about where you are now that we have been together for the past hour and a half. (How did you show up? Would you share more or less? Would you do anything differently? Focus your likes and dislikes on your own behavior)

Closing reading/Chalice Extinguishing

Call on God, but row away from the rocks. ~Indian Proverb