



# The Path

## Introduction from Soul Matters Collective

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good”

- The Book of Genesis

Be careful this month. The theme of delight is deceptive. One could easily see this is a way to end the year “on a light note.” But there’s deep work for us to do with this topic.

It’s hard to believe that our Unitarian Universalist forebearers had to fight for delight. Over the years--and continuing today--there have been many religious systems that begin with the idea that this world is broken, a place of misery and pain, toil and struggle. Our job is to survive it, indeed transcend it, through sacrifice, confession of our own brokenness, and an industrious Protestant work ethic. Delight was reserved for a time far off, a heaven granted to those who earned it.

Unitarians and Universalists just didn’t see it this way. They looked out, and like the God of Genesis, their response was “behold, it is good!” The problem rested not so much in a fallen world but with our blinded eyes. Heaven was right here on earth; our job was to see it and take pleasure in it. And far from being indulgent or seductive, this act of pleasure and delighting in the gift of life was the key to humanizing us. Delight has the power to transform us. This is one of our fundamental UU beliefs. Delight can’t help but lead to gratitude. Gratitude can’t help but lead to generosity. When you notice that you’ve been given great gifts, you want to share those gifts and make sure others notice them too. For UUs the tragedy of life is not that unworthiness has cut us off from delight and joy, but that we fail to take the time to reach out and

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## What Does it Mean to Live a Life of Delight?

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enjoy what’s right in front of us.

So how have you gone blind? What’s keeping you from reaching out? Today those patterns of sacrifice, unworthiness and industrious work ethics continue to run deep. You don’t need to buy into the belief that the world has fallen into those ruts. Who of us doesn’t at times convince ourselves we need to sacrifice our joy for the sake of others? Work and status are our culture’s primary ways of “proving ourselves,” leaving it all too easy to spend our days so dedicated to proving and improving that we never get around to enjoying who we already are and what we already have.

Thus the simple goal of this month: to get every single one of us to stop, look around and declare, “Behold, it is very good!” And then having received the gift of delight ourselves, may we find ourselves re-engaged with the great work of figuring out our unique way of bringing delight to others!

### 2016/2017 Themes

- September – Connection
- October – Deep Listening
- November – Hospitality
- December – Expectation
- January – Inheritance
- February – Perception
- March – Imagination
- April – Resistance
- May – Growth
- June – Delight

### Self-Care for the Spiritual Journey

When we go deeper into spiritual exploration together and individually, there’s always a chance we will encounter some tender spots in our own spirits and stories. Therefore, it is important, when doing deep spiritual work, to have trusted companions and adequate support on the journey, and to know you are welcome to care for yourself and your spirit along the way, engaging in the theme to the level that’s comfortable for you.



Likewise, please know that we are here to offer support if you find yourself struggling with something surfaced by the monthly theme. Rev. Mara is our first point of contact for pastoral care. She may be able to set up a time to meet you, or refer you to **Andre Mol**, our ministerial intern, caring lay leaders through our **Care Network**, or outside resources. She can be reached at [revmara@uusociety.org](mailto:revmara@uusociety.org) or 802-862-5630 x. 24.

## Delight Someone And Let Them Know How They've Delighted You!

One of our Soul Matters facilitators defined delight as “simple pleasures that go deep.” With this in mind, there’s no doubt that this has been a delight-full year of spiritual themes. Listening to each other’s stories and insights has indeed been a pleasure that’s taken us deep. This two-part exercise aims to honor this gift.

So here’s the first part of your spiritual exercise:

*Think back over our year of our spiritual themes and pick one story that that left a smile on your face and re-connected you to your deepest self or the gift of life and say “thank you!”*

Now for the second part of your exercise:

*As another way of saying “thank you” bring something to your meeting to “delight them.”*

Think of this as sharing delight. If chocolate cake is one of your favorite delights, then find your best recipe, bake that cake, and bring it with you to the group. If music is your way of re-connecting to and sharing delight, then bring your guitar and sing your group a song. If writing is your thing, then write a poem and read it for your group (Pablo Neruda’s “Ode To My Socks” in the recommended resources should inspire you.) If reading is where you find delight, bring in the most recent book that knocked your socks off and tell your group why they should read it too. Or maybe it’s just a matter of bringing in and sharing that picture of your child, the one that sits on your office desk and makes you smile each day. Don’t be afraid of having fun with this. Maybe you have a great card trick or magic trick to share. Also don’t be afraid of showing off. If you’re an artist or a wood-worker, bring in a piece of your work. Let your delight in creating art rub off on others. And if you’re a garden-er, why not make up one of those flower arrangements you so delight in creating?

Think of this as show-and-tell for adults, with the point of reminding each other that “simple pleasures that go deep” are scattered all around!

## Questions

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework." You do not need to engage every single one. Instead, simply look them over and find the one that "hooks" you most. Then let it take you on a ride. Live with it for a while. Allow it to regularly break into--and break open--your ordinary thoughts. And then come to your Theme Circles meeting prepared to share that journey with your group.



1. Who has modeled delight for you?
2. Do you have someone in your life who regularly delights in you? It is one thing to be respected or even loved, but it's quite another thing to feel enjoyed.
3. Do you delight more in people, places, or things?
4. Do you delight in being you?
5. Do you have a daily practice of delight? If not, why?!
6. Do you believe, like the Shakers, that simplicity and delight are deeply bound? They sing, "When true simplicity is gain'd, To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd, To turn, turn will be our delight, Till by turning, turning we come 'round right." Is our consumerist culture disconnecting you from delight in ways you aren't willing to admit? Are you investing in cheap delights at the expense of deeper ones? Has simplifying your life ever "turned you round right"?
7. Do you choose delight or does delight most often choose you? Does delight sneak up on you, or is it something you have to make room for?
8. When was the last time you had an experience of delight that you wished could last forever? When were you so lifted up in delight that everything else fell away? Has delight ever felt like rapture to you?
9. Are you good at finding delight in unpleasant circumstances?
10. Are there ways in which you hold yourself back from being delighted? Is there something about delight that you distrust?
11. Have you ever felt you didn't deserve delight?
12. Have you ever delighted in the misfortune of someone else? Have you taken pleasure in feeling that someone got what was coming to them? Did that delight last or deform you?
13. Has delight ever come at a cost for you? Sometimes if you want more delight in your life, you have to disappoint others who want you to focus on them and their needs. Another way of asking this is: Does your delight come with the cost of guilt? And where are you finding help with that pickle?



14. Has delight ever scared you? Sometimes great joy or great pleasure puts us in touch with a deep hunger--one we've buried deep and convinced ourselves we will never have the chance of satisfying. Is it time to unbury your delight?



15. Does all this delight talk bug you? Does thinking about deep joy as “delight” miss something important or misguide us in some way? Is there a “higher calling” than mere delight? One might argue that our culture is dangerous precisely because of its over-emphasis on delight, enjoyment and doing what feels good. Are you one of those who feels this argument needs to be heard?

16. Does minimizing delight bug you? Does it make you angry or make your heart break when others suggest that enjoying ourselves is a dangerous indulgence in a world where so much work needs to be done and pain needs to be alleviated?

17. Why is delight nothing more than hedonism?

18. When was the last time you stopped and thought to yourself, “Behold, it is very good!”?



As always, this is not “required reading.” We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our group. They are simply meant to get your thinking started--and maybe to open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to “live a life of delight.”

## First Thoughts

de·light v. n.

**Verb:** to please (someone) greatly

**Noun:** Great pleasure

**Synonyms:** Rejoice, gladden, enjoy (verb); pleasure, enjoyment, joy, treat, delectation, relish (noun)

The following are initial reactions to this month’s theme by some of our Soul Matters facilitators. As always, their willingness to share is a gift, as it helps stimulate and open up our own thinking!

My first reaction to this request for 'delight'-full ideas was that I was the last person to have any. But when I started reflecting on it a bit, I realized that there were so many delights--generally personal, small things--that I enjoy. Like the seeming smile on my Russell, Charlie, when he's on a walk exploring the great outdoors. The photo that's got a sharp, clear edge to it as I had hoped, or something else that had worked or fit just right even though I was guessing. Or looking down from the loft at Church and seeing a very young person in his father’s arms looking out at the world with such wide-eyed wonder and searching in all innocence for something that I can only guess at.

I find myself delighting in things that cost no money and most of which can not be given to myself! The sound of my mother’s laughter, my child saying goodbye, seeing a deer lay down in the woods, tossing pine cones out of the lawn, dancing the Lindy Hop, cracking up playing a sport... I do believe that grace is unasked for but delight can be cultivated; it’s more of a practice of sinking into something with fierce focus and letting go at the same time.

So what I have I learned about delight? That it's a matter of opening, letting go of needing to be in control, being fully present, being aware of the lightness of existence. The times when I'm most likely to feel delight are when I'm not trying to make anything happen, just being present--with my grandkids, for instance, just hanging out with them and their agile minds and bodies, observing their delight in the small details of the world. Simple pleasures that go deep.

When was the last time you slowed down, say, washing dishes to see and hear and feel the beauty of the flowing water, or see the colors caught in the bubbles, or see the interesting streaking that is the art of the mixing of soap and oils? My 7-year-old son takes forever washing dishes. He's in no rush. He's having a grand time, finding delight in it. He is also the second best dish washer in the family. Thich Nhat Hanh challenges us to choose where our attention goes, asking "Which seeds will you water?" So the pile of mulch just dumped in the middle of my driveway can be seen through these eyes as a huge burden in my already jammed schedule, or it can wake me up to a deeper joy to dance with my garden like I said I would. The choice itself--getting to choose which seed to water--is a delight!

I find that bubbles add delight to many diverse occasions.

These are places I find delight: Watching the face of a baby in the grocery store. Cultivating the ability to be surprised no matter how much you think you know about how the world works. Never failing to notice the grasses growing in the cracks in the pavement as you ride your bike along. The light in my dog's eye as she greets me returning home.



## Other Wise Words

“Birds sing after a storm; why shouldn't people feel as free to delight in whatever remains to them?”  
— Rose Kennedy

“We find delight in the beauty and happiness of children that makes the heart too big for the body.”  
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Still, what I want in my life is to be willing to be dazzled--to cast aside the weight of facts and maybe even to float a little above this difficult world.”  
— Mary Oliver

"And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair."  
— Khalil Gibran

"I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope. Which is what I do, and that enables you to laugh at life's realities."  
— Dr. Seuss

## Internet

“A Different Kind of Treadmill Workout”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyDm-5gNcEM>  
Bringing delight to your workout!

“Flashmob in the Copenhagen Metro”  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=gww9\\_S4PNV0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=gww9_S4PNV0)  
The Copenhagen Philharmonic takes an interesting approach to making classical music accessible.

“Arctic Sun”  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=4Krky4i6Xk8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=4Krky4i6Xk8)  
Tropicana brightens up the day for the citizens of Inuvik.



“Chocolate Mayonnaise Cake”

<http://www.food.com/recipe/chocolate-mayonnaise-cake-224608>

“This is one of my favorite chocolate cake recipes. Do not let the fact that it has mayonnaise in it freak you out. I promise it is delightful!”

-Soul Matters Facilitator

“Where the Hell is Matt?”

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=Pwe-pA6TaZk#!](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Pwe-pA6TaZk#!)

Matt dances around the world. In his words, “[Travel] helps us learn what we're capable of, that the path laid in front of us isn't the only one we can choose, and that we don't need to be so afraid of each other all the time.”

“Baby Goat Plays with Huge Pig”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ac-Ei73hzy4>

Baby animals at play: a sure source of delight for humans!

## Poetry

“...May it be delightful my house; From my head may it be delightful; To my feet may it be delightful; Where I lie may it be delightful; All above me may it be delightful; All around me may it be delightful...”

— Navajo Night Chant, excerpt

“Ode to My Socks”

Mara Mori brought me a pair of socks which she knitted herself with her sheepherder's hands, two socks as soft as rabbits. I slipped my feet into them as if they were two cases knitted with threads of twilight and goatskin, Violent socks, my feet were two fish made of wool, two long sharks sea blue, shot through by one golden thread, two immense blackbirds, two cannons, my feet were honored in this way by these heavenly socks. They were so handsome for the first time my feet seemed to me unacceptable like two decrepit firemen, firemen unworthy of that woven fire, of those glowing socks. Nevertheless, I resisted the sharp temptation to save them somewhere as schoolboys keep fireflies, as learned men collect sacred texts, I resisted the mad impulse to put them in a golden cage and each day give them birdseed and pieces of pink melon. Like explorers in the jungle who hand over the very rare green deer to the spit and eat it with remorse, I stretched out my feet and pulled on the magnificent socks and then my shoes. The moral of my ode is this: beauty is twice beauty and what is good is doubly good when it is a matter of two socks made of wool in winter.

— Pablo Neruda

“Welcome Morning”

There is joy

in all:

in the hair I brush each morning,

in the Cannon towel, newly washed,

that I rub my body with each morning,

in the chapel of eggs I cook

each morning,

in the outcry from the kettle



# Resources

that heats my coffee  
 each morning,  
 in the spoon and the chair  
 that cry "hello there, Anne"  
 each morning,  
 in the godhead of the table  
 that I set my silver, plate, cup upon  
 each morning.

All this is God,  
 right here in my pea-green house  
 each morning  
 and I mean,  
 though often forget,  
 to give thanks,  
 to faint down by the kitchen table  
 in a prayer of rejoicing  
 as the holy birds at the kitchen window  
 peck into their marriage of seeds.

So while I think of it,  
 let me paint a thank-you on my palm  
 for this God, this laughter of the morning,  
 lest it go unspoken.

The Joy that isn't shared, I've heard,  
 dies young.  
 — Anne Sexton

## Books

*Full-Spectrum Joyfulness*

By Amanda Aikman

“This simple yet profound handbook uses current happiness studies as the source for an abundant collection of easy, fun ways to raise your happiness level. The menu of games and practices is built around seven color-keyed themes (from ‘Receiving’ to ‘Venturing’) to help you remember to incorporate a wide variety of joyfulness practices into your life.”

*Hello, Cupcake!: Irresistibly Playful Creations Anyone Can Make*

By Karen Tack and Alan Richardson

Delightful to make, look at, and eat!



## *Dancing with Joy: 99 Poems*

Edited by Roger Housden

“In his collection *Risking Everything*, Housden addressed love’s many aspects. Now, in *Dancing with Joy*, he assembles 99 poems from 69 poets that celebrate the many colors of joy. Anything can be a catalyst for joy, these poems reveal.”

## Movies

“UP”

Retired balloon salesman Carl Fredricksen, is ready for his last chance at high-flying excitement. Tying thousands of balloons to his house, Carl sets off to the lost world of his childhood dreams. Unbeknownst to Carl, an overeager 8-year-old Wilderness Explorer Russell is on Carl's front porch! A movie about restoring one’s delight in life.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Up\\_\(2009\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Up_(2009_film))



## Creative Space

Use this section to write, doodle, and create!

*AHA! Moments*

*Notes*

