"Writing as a Spiritual Practice"
Season 7
With Rev. Barbara Child
A Drop-in Group on Zoom
Tuesdays 1:00-2:00, May 3 – June 28

I invite you to join me forSeason 7 of a journey of personal exploration through writing in community. Season 1 happened the spring of 2020 as the pandemic began to teach us how to be at home on Zoom. Season 2 happened September and October of that year. Season 3 happened January and February2021. Season 4 happened last spring, Season 5 happened this past September and October, and Season 7 happened January and February of this year. Though we still have nothing good to say about covid and its variants, we have discovered some very good things to say about writing together and sharing what we have written on Zoom.

Over the years I have led a variety of retreats and workshops that I called "Writing as a Spiritual Practice." I discovered early on that something both powerful and healing happens when people write in the company of others, all writing at once and then, if we choose, sharing out loud we have written. When we write in each other's presence, there is a great release of energy in being able to look around and see others bent over their writing. The energy gives way to exhilaration at wanting to hear what the others have written and then rejoicing that they willhave a chance to share our revelations. We discover that we can respond genuinely to what others have written without slipping into critique of either the writer's experience or the writing itself.

Writing in community is a splendid spiritual practice, I believe. It differs from writing in a journal, which is private writing that we might hope nobody else will ever read. In the course of a lifetime, and sometimes even at the same time, we live more than one life. We discover we have many stories to tell rather than one chronological narrative. One story leads to another. One informs another. In a sense, writing as a spiritual practice is meditating on paper to become mindful of who we are. It is a process of paying attention to what matters.

When I first thought of offering "Writing as a Spiritual Practice" at UUCB and spoke about my plans at a Sunday service in February 2020, I envisioned about a

dozen of us seated around a table, and I was thinking about people signing up for a given number of sessions. Well, you know what happened to that plan.

But here we are, having discovered unexpected delights in livestreamed Sunday services and reaped unimagined benefits from Chalice Circle sessions on Zoom. And so, guess what – "Writing as a Spiritual Practice"became a drop-in group on Zoom!

Here's how it works. While it is completely fine for you to choose which sessions to attend or how many, I ask that you arrive on time to take part in a session. After we take a moment to say hello and introduce ourselves, I share a writing prompt and invite everyone to devote about ten minutes to writing in response to it. I write too. Do come with paper and pen. It's also fine if you prefer to write on your laptop – but please don't remove your face from our Zoom screen. Even though we aren't around a table, I truly do want us all to be able to look up from our writing and see one another.

After about ten minutes of writing, I sound my chime, inviting everyone to stop writing. And then those who wish to do so share what we have written. We don't comment after each reading, but when all have read who choose to, we take the remaining time for whatever conversation emerges, possibly about how it felt to write what we wrote, possibly about what somebody else's writing brought to mind. We don't engage in critique at all. There may be another Zoom room somewhere for critique and "improving your writing." This is not it.

I hope you will join me on Tuesdays at 1:00 as often as the spirit moves you, May 3 through June 28. After that? Well, we shall see how the spirit is moving by then.

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask. You can reach me at revbchild (at) aol.com.