

The Path

Introduction from Soul Matters

“Creativity is our ability to dream things up and make them happen.” - Peggy Taylor

We’re all familiar with that part in the quote about dreaming. Conjuring up new ideas and images is what creativity is all about. Using the building blocks of “what is,” we—almost magically—make the “not yet” appear in our minds.

But what about that other part? The part about “making them happen.” When we talk about creativity, that half of the equation often gets short shrift. We celebrate the fun piece about dreaming and leave off the hard piece of making our imaginings real. And it’s not just the hard part; it’s the scary part, too. You have to be brave to try new things and fail. Being creative and unique can cause the crowd to cheer and swoon; it can also lead to being laughed at and excluded from the group. Yes, there is joy, beauty and play in creativity, but there is also insecurity, loneliness and self-doubt. Which means that this month is not just about imagination, artistry and self-expression, but also courage.

Once that’s in view, it’s clear that we also need to talk about “co-creativity” this month, as well. Something as daring as creativity is dangerous if we try to do it alone. Indeed, where did we get the silly idea that artists and inventors are isolated, independent geniuses? When it comes to myths about creativity, that one tops the list. We need to remind each other that there is no such thing as a “person of creativity,” only “people of creativity.” The Bible talks of the Holy Spirit appearing when “two or more are gathered.” The same rule applies to the *creative* spirit! For instance, new ideas come from the clash of debate. New art emerges only after inspiration from those who’ve gone before. Better forms of community are built on the backs of those who have toiled and sacrificed

What Does It Mean to Be a People of Creativity?



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long before we put ourselves on the line. Simply put, there are no creators without companions.

It's all a way of reminding us that the secret to creative self-expression is staying connected to each other. Those sacred sources of inspiration inside us—our imagination, unique voice and inner muses—are like wild animals; they are hungry to run free but are also shy and easily scared away. They want to come out and play but will only do so when coaxed and cared for by the inspiration and support of others. So, in the end, maybe the most important question this month is not just "What do you want to create?" but also "Who are your partners?"

With gratitude for all our sources of creativity—those within us and those all around us, let us begin.

2017/2018 Themes

September – Welcome
October – Courage
November – Abundance
December – Hope
January – Intention
February – Perseverance
March – Balance
April – Emergence
May – Creativity
June – Blessing

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 or (802) 862-5630 ext. 24.

Option A: The Big Art of Your Life

“All the arts we practice are apprenticeship. The big art is our life.” - *M. C. Richards*

You don't have to know how to use a paintbrush or put words into poetry to be an artist. Creation is something we do with our very living. We are all composing numerous projects and pieces with our relationships, activism, parenting and jobs. And yet we don't often think of our daily living that way. So this exercise asks us to put our life through this artistic lens. To do so, meditate and reflect on this question this month: **“What am I building, constructing, composing, planting or recreating with my life?”** Here are two ways to engage the question and make it more concrete:

Make a List of Your “Life Projects”:

Take a day, or a week, and make a list of what you have created or are creating with your life. For instance, your job is surely more than “putting in hours.” You are creating something with your time and talent and putting it out there into the world. Children are also shaped by our creativity; parenting is surely a sacred “life project.” What would you add to the list? When your days come to an end and you assemble your “life’s portfolio,” what pieces of beauty and creativity will fill those pages?

After you’ve made a list of your “life projects,” take some time to ask those close to you what they would add. How do they see you composing “pieces of art” with your life? Come to your group ready to share what surprised you most about your list and what you learned by trying to figure out what to add to it.

List Your “Art Piece” Every Day:

Too often our days dictate and create us rather than us creating them. For this exercise, treat each day like a blank canvas. First thing in the morning, set aside some time to ask yourself, “What is it that I want to create today?” Maybe it’s a moment of joy for yourself or an experience of kindness for another. One day it might be “create an adventure”; another day it might be more tangible, something like an actual painting. It might even be something you were going to do anyway, but now you’ve transformed your relationship to it by seeing it as an act of your creativity. Come to your group ready to share how treating your day like a blank canvas changed the way you walked through it.

Option B: Create and Give

This exercise invites you to explore the relationship between creativity and generosity. Often the creative impulse involves expressing yourself, but it’s also about using yourself for the sake of others. Another way to put this is to say: We create in order to heal and help. Creativity is not just about bringing something new and original into the world; it’s also about bringing beauty, kindness, joy and affirmation to others.

So, give some thought to how the people around you need beauty, kindness, connection, joy or affirmation. Then pick one person and create something for them. The gift can be as simple as a baked good or as elaborate as a painting. The most important thing is to figure out what that gift is a conduit for. Are you offering it to bring a bit of joy or fun into their life? Are you sharing it to reflect one of their wonderful qualities back to them? Is your gift a means of helping them hold onto something they loved but recently lost? Come to your group ready to share what you created and how your gift-giving went.

Spiritual Exercises

Option C: A Creative Response

Ideas about creativity abound. It is a rich area of discussion and thought. So rich that we can get stuck at this level of abstract discussion and debate. This exercise invites us to bring thoughts about creativity down to earth, to turn our creative insights into creative action. To help, we've gathered a number of videos from one of the most followed young thinkers on the Internet, Jason Silva. He has a brilliant mind and infectious energy, and he brings ideas alive in a way that few can. This exercise invites you to take Silva's passion and creatively connect it to your daily living.

Take a day or a week and reflect on the videos below. Find the one where Silva's passion connects with your own. *And then DO something with it.* Once you've identified the insight that grabs you, find a way to respond with an action of some kind. Change your behavior. Try something new. Create something with a friend. Take a risk of some kind. It's all about allowing your altered and inspired thinking to alter and inspire your living.

- **Creativity is Madness**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=US18sczUnTk&list=PLF7eeGkHcenS75D3X73YfcSAQ1QPKxUxf&index=3>
 On creativity as the willingness to risk entering the unknown.
- **How Our Creations Change Us**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHCo9U4jxZE>
 "Everything we design, designs us..."
- **How Being Bilingual Enhances Creativity**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lp6Bxyp0Ek&index=4&list=PLF7eeGkHcenS75D3X73YfcSAQ1QPKxUxf>
 On the creativity of multiculturalism and the way moving between various world views allows us to heal the division between "worlds."
- **How We See Ourselves Through the Eyes of Others**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mykdIUyLPD4>
 The creation of self through the eyes of and connection with others.
- **What is Creativity?**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYbA_-mAtUY&t=14s
 On the otherness of creativity: "Creativity comes through you but not from you...The creative process is what we bring back as reporters of the numinous..."
- **The Ecstasy of Art**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iHwPfirtUg&list=PLF7eeGkHcenS75D3X73YfcSAQ1QPKxUxf&index=8>
 "[To enter a state of creativity] you have to die and be reborn. And then when you are resurrected then you're like, wow, look at what I brought back. Look at my canvas. This is where I went. Our painting, our songs, our stories -- they are maps for where we went."
- **Can Suffering Inspire You?**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sb9KbVqW0zY>
 On our ability to create from our suffering.

Spiritual Exercises

Option D: A New Trip to the Art Museum

A trip to the museum: It means many things. We go to check out the new exhibition. We compare the techniques of the artists. We learn a little art history. Every eighth or ninth piece, we talk about being moved. But we rarely talk about the trip as a spiritual practice or think of what we're doing there as meditation.

So give it a try: **Go to your local museum to meditate.**

That's all the instruction we want to give. We don't want to overthink it or have you overthink it. Part of the goal is to have you figure out what it means to you, what it means to use engagement with pieces of art as meditation.

Here are some resources to help you along your way:

12 Steps to Turn an Art Museum Visit into Mindfulness Meditation

<https://www.yogajournal.com/lifestyle/12-steps-to-turn-an-art-museum-visit-into-mindfulness-meditation>

How Art Changes Your Consciousness

<http://www.thewayofmeditation.com.au/blog/how-art-changes-your-consciousness/>

Option E: Capture Creation

This exercise invites you to explore the relationship between creation and attention. So much of creativity is about attention: seeing connections, noticing the new, looking at things in a new light, appreciating what is trying to be born. And along with greater attention comes greater appreciation. The more we notice how abundantly creative the world is, the more we realize how lucky we are to be a part of it. So to honor this, make time this month to ramp up your appreciation and refine your attention by **taking a picture of one “act of creation” each day.**

You decide what counts as “an act of creation.” What it is matters less than you noticing it. Many of us have a cell phone to make it easier, but if you don’t have one, carry a camera.

Do this daily for at least a week. Each night, consider sharing your photo with a loved one or a friend. Tell them what you think it symbolizes, and more importantly, why that particular act of creativity/creation left you grateful. At the end of your week or two, line up all the photos and figure out what lesson they offer. Are there unexpected patterns? What strikes you in a new way as you revisit the photo after a few days? Why do you think these particular acts of creation spoke to you? What is going on in your life that makes them stick out for you? Which one captures the “process of creation” that you are in the midst of right now?

Bring your pictures to your group if you are comfortable. Most importantly, come ready to share which of the above questions engaged you the most.

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of creativity means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

1. Do you know what are you building, constructing, composing, planting or recreating with your life?
2. Are you as "[creatively maladjusted](#)" as you'd imagined you would be?
3. When was the last time you created (or helped create) something that will outlive you?
4. Are you being called to help someone else see themselves as a piece of art?
5. Is it time to recreate yourself?
6. What around you needs to be put back together again?
7. They say creativity comes with a cost. Are you trying to achieve creativity but avoid the cost?
8. There's creativity in tearing things down. What in your life needs to be creatively deconstructed so new life has room to grow?
9. How often do you give yourself the gift of inspiration? Why do you think you can go without it for weeks at a time?
10. When was the last time you woke up feeling like the new day was a blank canvas?
11. Do you feel like you create your days or like they create you?
12. Do you make space for the muses?
13. Are you trying to create alone?
14. Who says organized, responsible, spreadsheet-loving types aren't creative (in our own way)?!
15. They say we shape our gods and then they shape us. How is the shape of your god shaping you?

What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Resources for Exploration and Reflection

Word Roots

Creativity comes from the Latin term *creō*: "to create, make." Synonyms include: inventiveness, imagination, innovation, originality, individuality; artistry, inspiration, vision; enterprise, initiative, resourcefulness.

Wise Words

"Creativity is intelligence having fun." - *George Scialabba*

"Remember that you are an artist, regardless of how constantly the world will try to drive it out of you or how a 'real job' will try to bury the part of you. Whether it's with food, or building robots, you will know your medium the instant you realize how in love you are with what it brings out of you." - [Shane Koyczan](#)

"I invented this rule for myself to be applied to every decision I might have to make in the future. I would sort out all the arguments and see which belonged to fear and which to creativeness, and other things being equal I would make the decision which had the larger number of creative reasons on its side. I think it must be a rule something like this that makes jonquils and crocuses come pushing through cold mud." - *Katharine Butler Hathaway*

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“The most regretful people on earth are those who felt the call to creative work, who felt their own creative power restive and uprising, and gave to it neither power nor time.” - [Mary Oliver](#)

“If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.”

- *The Gospel of Thomas*

“If your heart is broken, make art with the pieces.”

- *Shane Koyczan*

“Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction.”

- *Pablo Picasso*

“Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.” - *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

“The war of an artist with [their] society is a lover’s war, and [they do], at [their] best, what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to [themselves] and, with that revelation, to make freedom real.” - [James Baldwin](#)

“We have no hope of solving our problems without harnessing the diversity, the energy, and the creativity of all our people.” - *Roger Wilkins*

“There are, it seems, two muses: The Muse of Inspiration, who gives us inarticulate visions and desires, and the Muse of Realization, who returns again and again to say, ‘It is yet more difficult than you thought.’ This is the muse of form. It may be then that form serves us best when it works as an obstruction, to baffle us and deflect our intended course. It may be that when we no longer know what to do, we have come to our real work and when we no longer know which way to go, we have begun our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings.” - *Wendell Berry*

“You must have a room, or a certain hour or so a day, when you don’t know what was in the newspapers that morning, you don’t know who your friends are, you don’t know what you owe anybody, you don’t know what anybody owes you. This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might

be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first, you may find that nothing happens there. But if you have such a sacred place and use it, something eventually will happen.” - *Joseph Campbell*

“Each New Day” by Rev. Peter Friedrichs

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/each-new-day>

Why is this blank page
staring back at me,
mocking, like an affliction,
and fraught with dread?
How can it hold such sway,
this simple emptiness?
Might it instead be a gift
left on my doorstep overnight,
waiting to be broken open
with the dawn?

A present, eager to emerge
if only I had the sense
to hold the paper
over a candle flame,
its lemon juice message
appearing, like magic,
clear and true?

Each new day is like this,
pure air, devoid of density,
but for the weight of our own
invention.

Birds do not worry the morning
or fret the rising sun.
They wait, expectant,
until its rays kiss their downy necks.
Then, stretching,
they turn to face the day,
And sing.

“Nature is infinitely creative. It is always producing the possibility of new beginnings.” - *Marianne Williamson*

“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.” - *Maya Angelou*

“We design our world, while our world acts back on us and designs us.” - *Anne-Marie Willis*

Videos & Online

Me Myself and Muse

<https://www.wnyc.org/radio/#/ondemand/117294>

“Can you bargain with creativity to get past your writer’s block? ...find a way to ‘live a creative life without cutting your ear off...’ Why your muse wants you to fight back...”

Where Good Ideas Come From - TED Talk

<https://www.ted.com/talks/>

[steven johnson where good ideas come from?referrer=playlist-where do ideas come from](https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_johnson_where_good_ideas_come_from?referrer=playlist-where_do_ideas_come_from)

“People often credit their ideas to individual ‘Eureka!’ moments. But...history tells a different story.”

Your Elusive Creative Genius - TED Talk

[https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_gilbert_on_genius?referrer=playlist-where do ideas come from](https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_gilbert_on_genius?referrer=playlist-where_do_ideas_come_from)

Muses on the impossible things we expect from artists and geniuses—and shares the radical idea that, instead of the rare person “being” a genius, all of us “have” a genius.

Creativity and the Everyday Brain - On Being

<https://onbeing.org/programs/rex-jung-creativity-and-the-everyday-brain>

“Explores the differences and interplay between intelligence and creativity. Unsettles long-held beliefs about who is creative and who is not...[and reveals] connections between creativity and family life, aging, and purpose.”

The Surprising Habits of Original Thinkers

TED Talk

<https://www.ted.com/talks/>

[adam grant the surprising habits of original thinkers?utm_source=newsletter_weekly_2017-06-17&utm_campaign=newsletter_weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_content=talk_of_the_week_image](https://www.ted.com/talks/adam_grant_the_surprising_habits_of_original_thinkers?utm_source=newsletter_weekly_2017-06-17&utm_campaign=newsletter_weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_content=talk_of_the_week_image)

Articles

The End of ‘Genius’ by Joshua Shenk

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/20/opinion/sunday/the-end-of-genius.html>

“Where does creativity come from? For centuries, we’ve had a clear answer: the lone genius... But the lone genius is a myth that has outlived its usefulness...”

Overthinkers May Also Be Creative Geniuses

<http://www.wisdompills.com/2017/02/28/recent-study-revealed-overthinkers-may-also-creative-geniuses-youre-one-heres-tap-genius/>

How to Game Yourself to Make Great Art

Courtney Martin

https://onbeing.org/blog/courtney-martin-how-to-game-yourself-to-make-great-art/?utm_source=On+Being+Newsletter&utm_campaign=1541b9df94-20170603_brian_greene_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1c66543c2f-1541b9df94-69930665&goal=0_1c66543c2f-1541b9df94-69930665&mc_cid=1541b9df94&mc_eid=cb4e45abe0

“Gaming yourself is related...to ‘fake it till you make it’ — an idea that when you feel like an imposter in a particular context, you just have to...pretend you’re feeling confident until you actually are... All that playfulness can accidentally lead to profound art...”

Black Lives Matter Herstory

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/herstory/>

The creation of a movement.

Creative Resistance

<http://www.creativeresistance.org>

“Creative Resistance was started with the goal of promoting and supporting activist art... Offers a daily stream of activist art.”

Books

***A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future* by Daniel H. Pink**

“The future belongs to a different kind of person with a different kind of mind: artists, inventors, storytellers—creative and holistic ‘right-brain’ thinkers...”

Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear

Elizabeth Gilbert

“Broken into six inspiring and thought-provoking sections: Courage, Enchantment, Permission, Persistence, Trust, and Divinity.”

***Wreck This Journal* by Keri Smith**

“Through...creative and quirky prompts, acclaimed guerilla artist Keri Smith encourages journalers to engage in destructive acts—poking holes through pages, adding photos and defacing them, painting pages with coffee, coloring outside the lines, and more...to experience the true creative process and a new way of art- and journal-making.”

Songs & Music

***Midwife* - Peter Mulvey**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=4xUmd43-vAA

***Make Your Own Kind of Music* - Mama Cass Elliot**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbSM02_1k34

***Imagine* - John Lennon**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVg2EJvvIF8&t=0s&list=PLzCSkQM8CL6l5Aq1xhE44zOEdqhfedLo0&index=1>

Spanish and English cover: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=229w-DRCUFU>

***The Rainbow Connection* - Paul Williams**

Performed by Kermit the Frog (Jim Henson):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEnC5gwNAN0>

8-year-old's ukulele cover: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wyczIx95Y>

***Vincent (Starry, Starry Night)* - Don McLean**

Passenger cover: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVMCnvuCADg>

Movies

Ai WeiWei: Never Sorry

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ai_weiwei_never_sorry_2012

Exit Through the Gift Shop

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/exit_through_the_gift_shop

Once

<https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/once>

Buena Vista Social Club

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1087935_buena_vista_social_club

Inspiring & Fun Acts of Creativity

Wintergatan - Marble Machine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvUU8joBb1Q>

Combining Art Forms to Offer a Great Gift

Lil Buck and Yo-Yo Ma

<https://www.facebook.com/thegrindlifemusic/videos/850068791750938/?fref=nf>

Artfullyawear - Clothing inspired by art

<https://www.instagram.com/artfullyawear/>

Six Amazing and Surprising Artists

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMXaCiHXo-E>

The Creativity of Sewing Your Life into a Sweater

https://dangerousminds.net/comments/man_makes_sweaters_of_places_and_takes_photos_of_hi_mself_wearing_the_sweate

Creating Music Within Nature's Creation

<https://www.facebook.com/RubenMandolini/videos/859843210777227/>

Floral Designer Turns New York City Trash Cans into Bin Bouquets

<https://www.designboom.com/art/lewis-miller-flower-trash-cans-new-york-05-22-2017/>

Using Creativity to Connect “Human” and “Nature”

<https://vimeo.com/250752748>

Bringing Nature into the City

<https://vimeo.com/221598681>

