

JOURNEYS

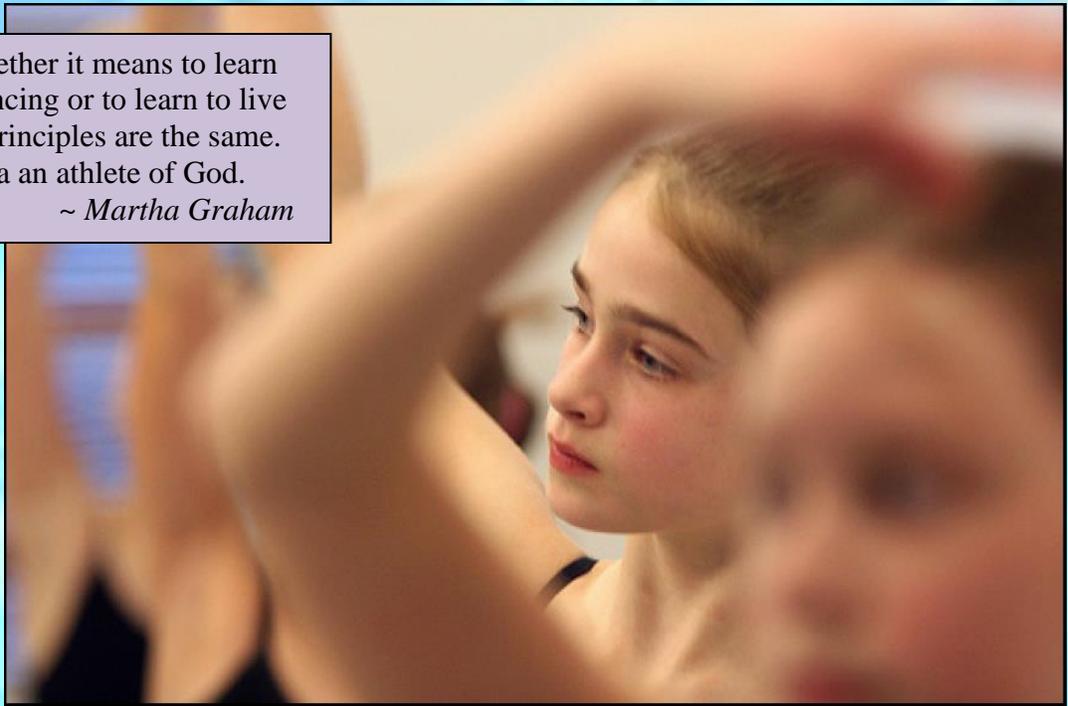
Theme Packet for March 2015

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough

Practice

We learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by practicing dancing or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. One becomes in some area an athlete of God.

~ Martha Graham



<http://www.slideshare.net/johnnigelcook/graham-attwell>

Practice is the fundamental element of transformation.

If we are going to practice towards transforming how we are, then we should strive for mastery at the level of change we seek.

We may not get there and we may not even ultimately wish for mastery, but the intention of mastery can compel us to put our best effort forward in our practice, to be fully present and committed to what we are doing.

~ Ng'ethe Maina and Staci Haines, [The Transformative Power of Practice](#)

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WONDERINGS *on the theme of* PRACTICE

It was the Unitarian theologian James Luther who once said something like, “Church is where we practice being human.” Said differently, a supportive religious community is where we get to practice being the humans we want to be. Combine this with the long-standing Unitarian affirmation of our innate capacity to learn and to grow, and...well, what an incredible, transformational laboratory our UFP community can be!

At our February Journeys group, we had a rich conversation about ‘practice.’ I was particularly moved by the felt implication that to practice getting better (particularly at being human) means that we are not acceptable as we are, or that we are trying to be someone we are not. This tension... between being worthy and cherished on the one hand, and being open to change and improvement on the other...resides in all of us. Perhaps this can be likened to the perennial tension between being and doing.

Surely, practice has many meanings and implications. It can mean, in the most conventional sense, to practice a skill, with the goal of improvement or mastery. It could be the application of a spiritual practice, such as meditation or prayer. Or, it can mean to practice a habit or a desired way of being...like practicing joy, or random acts of kindness, or forgiveness, or gratitude, or patience, or... It’s easy to see that we can practice what we want to DO better. Might we also practice who we want to be?

The story on Sunday March 1 is called Piggy Bunny. It was written by Rachel Vail and it tells of a piglet who longs to be the Easter Bunny. It’s more than a longing, actually, because this piglet believes that who he is, at his core, is the Easter Bunny. Yet how he manifests in the world, and what he is good at, doesn’t match who the Easter Bunny is thought to be. He finds the reality of this tension heartbreaking... until someone who loves him shows him that it is fixable dilemma.



No need for a spoiler alert here; I’m not going to give the ending away. Suffice it to say that I think each of us has a longing to show up in the world, and to be in relationships, in different ways than we currently do...to be more of who we truly believe ourselves to be, at our core, at our best. Practice is, or can be, a way to transform us...not into someone different, or someone inherently better...but into who we believe to be our true and authentic best self...with behaviours that best align with our values.

Let’s practice letting our UFP community be a place where we can practice practicing... in a process of becoming and unfolding and transforming...affirming always that we are, whoever we are, at our core, worthy and beloved.

~ Rev. Julie

STORIES *about* PRACTICE

prac · tice prak-təs

v. verb

1. to acquire or polish a skill.
2. to do (something) regularly or constantly as an ordinary part of your life; to do or perform habitually; to make a habit of
3. to live according to the customs and teachings of (a religion)
4. to be professionally engaged in; for example, to practice medicine

n. noun

1. the activity of doing something again and again in order to become better at it
2. a regular occasion at which you practice something
3. the habitual or customary way of

“No, I don’t! Still, I don’t think there’s anything special with your performance. It’s only a matter of practice.”

Chen Yaozi flew into a temper. “You hardly know a thing about archery,” he snarled, “yet you’re pretending to be an expert!”

“Don’t get upset over what I said!” said the old man. “I make my living selling oil, and through the years I’ve mastered a little trick. Let me show you this trick, then you’ll see what I mean.”

The old man set his oil gourd on the ground and placed a coin over its mouth. He then stood up and began pouring oil using a ladle. The oil went straight through the hole of the coin, filling up the oil gourd without staining the coin at all.

“There’s nothing special about this, either.” smiled the old man, “It’s only a matter of practice.”

From then on, Chen Yaozi became a very humble archer.

<http://chinablog.cc/2010/01/a-matter-of-practice-wisdom-of-old-oil-peddler/>

It’s Only A Matter Of Practice

*A Chinese fable written by Ouyang Xiu of Song Dynasty.
The lesson: any skill can be learned.*

During the Northern Song Dynasty, there was a skilled archer named Chen Yaozi. His fame spread far and wide. Every time he performed, a large crowd gathered to watch.

One day an old man who made his living selling oil happened to pass by. Seeing the crowd around him, he also stopped to watch.

All eyes were bent on Chen Yaozi. His shots were very precise, and the crowd cheered him on with rounds and rounds of applause. The old man, however, just nodded his head. He did not seem to be the least impressed.

Chen Yaozi was not pleased. After taking his bow, he stalked angrily up to the old man and eyed him from head to foot. “Do you know how to shoot?” he snapped.

The old man shook his head and said,



You've Got To Find What You Love

Excerpted from a commencement address delivered by Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computer and of Pixar Animation Studios, on June 12, 2005.

I am honored to be with you today at your commencement from one of the finest universities in the world. I never graduated from college. Truth be told, this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation. Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories.

The first story is about connecting the dots.

I dropped out of Reed College after the first 6 months, but then stayed around as a drop-in for another 18 months or so before I really quit. So why did I drop out?

I naively chose a college that was almost as expensive as Stanford, and all of my working-class parents' savings were being spent on my college tuition. After six months, I couldn't see the value in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out.



Reed College at that time offered perhaps the best calligraphy instruction in the country. Throughout the campus every poster, every label on every drawer, was beautifully hand calligraphed. Because I had dropped out and didn't have to take the normal classes, I decided to take a calligraphy class to learn how to do this. I learned about serif and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture, and I found it fascinating.

None of this had even a hope of any practical application in my life. But ten years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts. And since Windows just copied the Mac, it's likely that no personal computer would have them.

Of course it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backwards ten years later.

Read the rest at: <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2005/june15/jobs-061505.html>

QUESTIONS *for reflection on* PRACTICE

- What do you associate with practice? Growth? Change? Discipline? Sweat? Drudgery? Perfection? What, or how, were you taught about practice as a child? (A recent survey has shown that "Practice Makes Perfect" is the most often repeated parenting expression.)
- What does your faith or life philosophy require of you in terms of practice? How might you better live into your faith through practice? (What are the most important things to practice as a Unitarian Universalist?)
- What practices...intentional or not so intentional...are most shaping your life at this moment?
- What have you practiced that has brought more joy or meaning into your life? Or, what has been an act of discipline for you? (Reflect on that experience.)

INSPIRATIONS *on* PRACTICE

Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.
~ *Thomas Edison*

An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of preaching.
~ *Mahatma Gandhi*

Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty.
~ *Anne Herbert*

Practice is everything. This is often misquoted as Practice makes perfect.
~ *Periander*

Cab drivers are living proof that practice does not make perfect.
~ *Howard Ogden*

One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.
~ *Maya Angelou*

To practice five things under all circumstances constitutes perfect virtue; these five are gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness.
~ *Confucius*

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.
~ *Dalai Lama*

It is a full time job being honest one moment at a time, remembering to love, to honor, to respect. It is a practice, a discipline, worthy of every moment.
~ *Jasmine Guy*

When you are discontent, you always want more, more, more. Your desire can never be satisfied. But when you practice contentment, you can say to yourself, 'Oh yes - I already have everything that I really need.'
~ *Dalai Lama*

My father taught me that the only way you can make good at anything is to practice, and then practice some more.
~ *Pete Rose*

I've always considered myself to be just average talent and what I have is a ridiculous insane obsessiveness for practice and preparation.
~ *Will Smith*

I'm a person who gets better with practice. Getting older is awesome - because you get more practice.
~ *Zoey Deschanel*

Take chances, make mistakes. That's how you grow. Pain nourishes your courage. You have to fail in order to practice being brave.
~ *Mary Tyler Moore*

It is easy to talk on religion, but difficult to practice it.
~ *Ramakrishna*

You've got to learn your instrument. Then, you practice, practice, practice. And then, when you finally get up there on the bandstand, forget all that and just wail.
~ *Charlie Parker*

The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world.
~ *Marianne Williamson*

We cannot make good news out of bad practice.
~ *Edward R. Murrow*



Practice rather than preach. Make of your life an affirmation, defined by your ideals, not the negation of others. Dare to the level of your capability then go beyond to a higher level.
~ *Alexander Haig*

To think is to practice brain chemistry.
~ *Deepak Chopra*

Preaching is to much avail, but practice is far more effective. A godly life is the strongest argument you can offer the skeptic.
~ *Hosea Ballou*

Life is the only art that we are required to practice without preparation, and without being allowed the preliminary trials, the failures and botches, that are essential for training.
~ *Lewis Mumford*

Practice means to perform, over and over again in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire. Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired.
~ *Martha Graham*

Freedom is not given to us by anyone; we have to cultivate it ourselves. It is a daily practice... No one can prevent you from being aware of each step you take or each breath in and breathe out.
~ *Thich Nhat Hanh*

The goal of spiritual practice is full recovery, and the only thing you need to recover from is a fractured sense of self.
~ *Marianne Williamson*

Sincere practice, makes the impossible possible.
~ *Dada Vaswani*

Listening is such a simple act. It requires us to be present, and that takes practice, but we don't have to do anything else. We don't have to advise, or coach, or sound wise. We just have to be willing to sit there and listen.
~ *Margaret J. Wheatley*

Practicing PRACTICE

1. Go to the practice 'gym' of your own design

Think of one thing, just one thing, that you would like to improve upon in your life. It could be a daily routine or habit, a skill, a spiritual practice, or a character trait, or...you name it! Then, assuming that practice would bring you the improvement you desire, design a 'workout' that works for you. Where and when and how often would you do this workout? What equipment or support do you need to make it effective? Who will coach/train you? How will you be accountable?

Once designed...go to that gym and do the workout! Then do it again. And again. All month. Come back to the Journeys group and report on how you did.



2. Watch this video about Rethinking Your Bucket List:

<http://www.karmatube.org/videos.php?id=4029>

A Bucket List is a list of things you want to do before you 'kick the bucket.' But who do you want to BE before you die? It's never too soon to become who we authentically are. Will practice help you be, or be better at being, more fully yourself?

Come back to the group with a story about what you imagine your developmental task to be at this stage in your life. How can you commit to it?

3. Add a spiritual practice to your routine.

Our spiritual work can be grouped into three basic categories:

- Listening more fully to our deepest self
- Opening more trustfully to life's gifts
- Serving or responding to needs greater than our own

Which category do you feel called to work on? What spiritual practice would aid you in that work? Do some research, talk to friends, consult with Rev. Julie...and then pick something you can practice this month.

4. A Password Mantra

A mantra is a short phrase, repeated over and over, so that its meaning sinks down into us. How about choosing a password for your most-used internet access that can act as a mantra? For example:

IAmAWorkOfArt

BeautyAllAroundMe

IAmPeacePersonified

It's better to practice
one thing a thousand
times, than practice a
thousand things one
time.

Glenn C. Wilson

meetville.com

Next month's theme: **LIGHTNESS OF BEING**

Email your suggestions for resources to share in this packet to unitarianchurch@cogeco.net

*The content for these packets is a group effort. Service leaders and Covenant Group Facilitators work with Rev. Julie to incorporate the theme into our programming and services. Thanks to all who helped by suggesting resources and providing feedback. Your artwork and original writing is also most welcome!
We subscribe to "Soul Matters" a curriculum from Rev. Scott Taylor.*

Resources on PRACTICE

On the Web

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-o6MQGvfiCg>

Benjamin Zander, Boston Philharmonic Orchestra conductor, shows how practicing piano progresses.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4u5h_z-7nA

Writing As a Spiritual Practice with Dani Shapiro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F85Tm-U84as>

Áine Órga's daily natured based spiritual practice.

<http://uuwellspring.com/> Learn about a UU program for spiritual deepening.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kq2n1Jlx5P0>

Malcolm Gladwell talks about the 10,000 Hour Rule...about what it takes to reach "mastery."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9jC1ThqTNo>

Roman Krznaric says that empathy is a habit we can cultivate to improve the quality of our own lives.

[http://www.43folders.com/2008/03/17/falling-](http://www.43folders.com/2008/03/17/falling-awake)

[awake](http://www.43folders.com/2008/03/17/falling-awake) Jon Kabat-Zinn talks about a practice of mindfulness, including a long portion where you can "meditate along."



Movies

- *Billie Elliot* (2000- PG13)
A poor miner's son sneaks out of boxing classes to attend ballet class, where he is training to try out for the Royal Ballet.
- *Bad New Bears* (1976 - PG)
An aging, down-on-his-luck ex-minor leaguer coaches a team of misfits in an ultra-competitive California little league.
- *Million Dollar Baby* (2004 - PG13)
A determined woman works with a hardened boxing trainer to become a professional.
- *Rudy* (1994 - PG)
Rudy has always been told that he was too small to play college football. But he is determined to overcome the odds and fulfill his dream of playing for Notre Dame.
- *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012 - R)
Pat finds himself living back with his mother and father after spending eight months in a state institution. He meets a girl who offers to help him reconnect with his wife, but only if he'll be her partner in an upcoming dance competition.
- *The Competition* (1980 - PG)
Story of a piano competition whose winner is assured of success. It is Paul's last chance to compete, but Heidi may be a better pianist.
- *Shall We Dance* (2004 - PG13)
A bored, overworked estate lawyer, upon first sight of a beautiful instructor, signs up for ballroom dancing lessons.
- *The Lady* (2001 - R)
The story of Aung San Suu Kyi as she becomes the core of Burma's democracy movement, and her relationship with her husband, writer Michael Aris.

Children's Books on PRACTICE

Abigail Spells by Anna Alter

Mouse Practice by Emily Arnold McCully

Katy Duck, Flower Girl by Alyssa Satin Capucilli

Piggy Bunny by Rachel Vail

Bubble and Squeak by Louise Bonnett-Rampersaud

Gus and Grandpa and the Piano Lesson by Claudia Mills

Whistling by Elizabeth Partridge

Franklin Rides a Bike by Paulette Bourgeois

Good Driving, Amelia Bedelia by Herman Parish

Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children by Thich Nhat Hanh

We March by Shane W. Evans

We Love Yoga (series) by Tove Ohlander and Susan Cline Lucey

I found a book entitled, "How to Be
Amazing at Anything."

It had only a single page inside and
was just one word long:

"PRACTICE."

@Writergram

Table Grace on PRACTICE

As we sit down to eat,
let us pause to practice giving thanks.
The food before us did not magically appear...
someone grew it, someone bought it, someone
prepared it. Some animal gave its life.
We pause; we practice saying grace.
Let us relish these moments, accepting this gift
of food, sharing it with others...
aware of love's presence with us.
We pause, we practice gratitude.
Amen.

"We become what
we repeatedly do."

-Sean Covey

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough
Sunday Services @ 10am @ 775 Weller St
www.peterboroughunitarian.ca
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Books

Everyday Spiritual Practice, Rev. Scott Alexander, ed.
Nearly 40 contributors ponder how to integrate
beliefs into one's daily life, and share their
discoveries about how to make every day more
meaningful and satisfying.

Simply Pray, Rev. Eric Walker-Wikstrom
The practice of prayer appeals to something deep
within many of us, but how, and why, should we
pray? Offers ways to incorporate this spiritual
practice into your personal journey.

Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life, Karen Armstrong
This small guide is chock full of practical ideas for
examining one's life and modifying aims and
behaviours.

The 30-Day Vegan Challenge, Colleen Patrick-Goudreau
Tempted to try veganism as a spiritual discipline?
This guide walks with you through every detail of
using veganism to align your life and your values.

The Mindfulness Revolution, Jon Kabat-Zinn et al
A collection of the best writing on what mindfulness
is, why we should practice it, and how to apply it in
daily life, from leading figures in the field.

Radical Gratitude, Mary Jo Leddy
From one of Canada's most courageous religious
writers and social activists comes this invitation to
imagine gratitude as the most radical attitude to
living life.

*Less is More: Embracing Simplicity for a Healthy Planet, a
Caring Economy and Lasting Happiness*, C Andrews
A compelling collection of essays bringing a new
vision of how a life with Less becomes a life of More:
more time, more satisfaction, more balance, more
security.

Chalice Lighting on PRACTICE

To light a chalice is to live our Unitarian Universalism.
Together, we celebrate life and feel our inherent worth.
Together, we are restored to our dignity. Together we
practice justice, equity and compassion.

With this flame's warmth, let us do the work of building
bridges of connection. With its light, let us affirm the gifts
and blessings we each bring to the work.

With its fire, may we nurture our spirits and heal our world.
To light a chalice is to live our Unitarian Universalism.