



Soul Matters

Living Love Through The Practice of **Joy**

Worship Research
April 2025

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A Note About Author Titles: Many of the authors we refer to are ministers. Some ministers prefer to be credited with their title “Rev.”, others don’t, and still others are fine either way. Our practice is to follow whatever practice was used in the source material we reference.

Calendar Connections

View our full-year calendar [HERE](#)

April 2025

Click on the hyperlinked names of each event for more information or inspiration.

Interfaith

- [Lent](#) (Christian) - March 5 - April 17, 2025
- [Passover](#) (Jewish) - April 12 - 20, 2025 (more [here](#))
- [Palm Sunday](#) (Christian) - April 13, 2025
- [Maundy Thursday](#)/Holy Thursday (Christian) - April 17, 2025
- [Good Friday](#) - (Christian) April 18, 2025
- [Easter](#) (Christian) - April 20, 2025
- [Yom HaShoah](#) - begins April 23, 2025, at sunset

Unitarian Universalist

- [William Ellery Channing](#)'s Birthday - April 7 (1780)
- Death of [Sophia Lyon Fahs](#) - April 14 (1978)
- [Hosea Ballou](#)'s Birthday - April 30 (1771) (more [here](#))
- [Climate Justice Month](#) - March 22 to April 22

National & Cultural

- [Arab American Heritage Month](#)
- [Jazz Appreciation Month](#) (more [here](#))
- [National Poetry Month](#) (more [here](#))
- Martin Luther King Jr gives his "mountaintop speech" - April 3 (1968)
- Martin Luther King Jr Assassinated - April 4 (1968)
- [U.S. declares war on Germany](#) - April 6 (1917)
- [Day of Silence](#) (LGBTQ) - April 11, 2025, second Friday of April. (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Vimy Ridge Day](#) (Canada) - April 9
- [Fair Housing Act passed](#) - April 11 (1968)
- [Richard Allen and Absalom Jones](#) organized the [Free African Society](#) - April 12 (1787)
- Nonbinary Parents Day - April 20, always the third Sunday in April (More [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Earth Day](#) - April 22
- [Lesbian Visibility Day](#) - April 26
- [Workers Memorial Day](#) - April 28 (more [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe

- [April Fool's Day](#) - April 1 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [National Superhero Day](#) - April 28 (more [here](#))

Chalice Lightings & Opening Words

A Chalice of Joy *

Rev. Dr. Julia Corbett-Hemeyer

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We light this chalice in celebration of joy:
The flickering flame of a candle,
A flame that shimmers, that dances, that cheers,
The flame that heartens and encourages us in hard
times,
The welcoming flame of this community.

Let there be joy... *

Carl G Seaburg

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/5359.shtml>

[Permission Source](#)

Let there be joy in our coming together this
morning.
Let there be truth...

Come Into This Place*

Rev. Margaret Weis

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/come-place>

[Permission Source](#)

Come into this place with your whole self – the
parts that are raw and exposed;
the part that is beaming with joy;
the part that is seeking the truth, the new, the
possibility...

Still So Much Good, and Beauty, and Joy... *

Rev. Gretchen Haley

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Come in, all who long to know
how to love this world
How to keep eyes open
hands unclenched
arms wide
Breathing deeply
In, and out
This is a time to practice
Because there is
still so much good, and beauty, and joy
But it can be hard to keep telling this tale
With all the news

and the wind, and the rain, and the trembling earth
(Who wants to love this life, anyway?)

Come in, all who teeter
on this edge of cynicism
broken hearted and trying still to remember
laughter and kindness
And the chance to be alive
in these days when so much is at stake
In this place we remind each other
Why we persist
Giving each other courage
to take this path that is not always easy
to keep practicing
This love
That cannot, will not let us go
And still calls us on
Come, let us worship together.

It's Flung *

Rev. Scott Tayler

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Joy doesn't simply arise
It flies.
It flings.
No, it is flung.
It is passed,
it is spread,
between you and me,
between the one who just received a gift
and the one that has been looking for it,
for oh so long.
It's a beautiful and elegant contagion,
over which we have more control than we know.
If only we share it.
If only we notice that joy is not ours to keep,
but ours to pass on.
So let's light up the world, friends!
Joy blesses us with its exuberance,
so we can make that blessing grow.

It Dances *

Rev. Scott Tayler

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Look carefully.
This fragile flame, it dances,
barely able to contain its delight,
bursting with the joy of being brought into being.
And it seems to want us to do the same.
So this morning,
may we let it lure us into letting go,
of the worries,
of the stiffness that sets in after all the striving,
of the myth that productivity alone gives us
purpose.
This garden of life we've been given
is a playground, friends.
The work and worry can wait.
So says this joyful flame!

Warmth, Joy, Togetherness *

Ben Soule

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/warmth-joy-togetherness>

[Permission Source](#)

Out of the warmth, joy.
Out of the joy, togetherness...

Today

Billy Collins

Full poem at

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/40824/today-56d21ebdad746>

If ever there were a spring day so perfect,
so uplifted by a warm intermittent breeze
that it made you want to throw
open all the windows in the house
and unlatch the door to the canary's cage,
indeed, rip the little door from its jamb...
well, today is just that kind of day.

Chalice Lightings & Opening Words For Easter, Passover & Earth Day

Hope Is Risen*

Elena Westbrook

Full piece found at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/hope-risen>

[Permission Source](#)

When all the world has gone dark and we cried out,
“Why have You forsaken me?”—even then, there is
a sunrise.

Even then, there is a resurrection, if we will climb
the hill to look for it...

Call to Worship on Easter *

Rev. Elizabeth M Strong

Full piece at

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/5372.shtml>

[Permission Source](#)

...May we join with the miracle that is Easter time,
and enter into life with hope and love.

Let us resurrect with spring, let us resurrect with
the spirit and enter into renewed life as we gather
into our time of worship together this Easter
morning.

For Holy Days on Which We Recall the Old Stories*

Rev. Dillman Baker Sorrells

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/holy-days-which-we-recall-old-stories>

[Permission Source](#)

Easter Blessing and Opening - Alleluia!*

Rev. Jeanne Lloyd

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/alleluia>

[Permission Source](#)

Alleluia, spring is here in all her glory. New life
begins, the earth and its creatures are resurrected
from their dens of hibernation and dark slumber.
Spring is here, long live spring, long live the
rebirthing of life into new and creative forms. Long
live majestic love that calls us out of our shells, out
of our tombs...

Alive in All Creation*

Rev. Shari Woodbury

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Spark of the spirit
cupped in earth's embrace,
Light of love
alive in all creation,
As we kindle this flame,
we rekindle our connection
to the sacred web of life.

Easter Call top Worship*

Rev. Tess Baumberger

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

From the valley of the shadow of death
Into the glory of the early morning
He is risen

From the silence of an ancient tomb
Into the symphony of spring
He is risen

Out of our old, hardened, deadened ways he calls
us
To rise with him
Into new, vibrant, abundant life he call us.
To rise with him

From the deep well of despair he calls us
To rise with him
Into a wellspring of hope
To rise with him

To a world of suffering, pain and loss he calls us
To rise with him.
To be an Easter people, living his word and witness
To rise with him

For he is risen
Alleluia.
He is risen.
Alleluia.
Alleluia!
Alleluia.

Rise! *

Rev. Gretchen Haley

Full opening at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/rise>

[Permission Source](#)

A: Because the tides are rising

B: So must we

C: Rise!...

Meditations & Prayers

The Days of Too Many Flowers *

Rev. Tess Baumberger

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

We all have those days of no flowers, just weeds.
You know the kind I mean—
The days when the trials and tribulations seems most present.
The days when the commitments we make
exceed the time we meant to give,
And yet it is all such good work and there's more to do.

The days when someone is snarky and we snark right back.
The days of our own mistakes that we cannot admit to ourselves
The days of criticism we take too much to heart,
Ignoring all previous and future praise.

The days when we simply cannot summon compassion
For those who push our buttons,
No matter how hard we try to do so.
We all know those days of no flowers in our life
When the weeds rise up and seem to choke out the beauty.

(Pause, breathe)

Then there are the days of more flowers than the vases can hold.
You know those days—
The days of fun and productivity
Where creativity is queen in loving and thoughtful ways,
Days when everything flows.

The days when people treat one another gently
Even when someone is snarky, even if it is you.
When a thoughtful silence wraps you and them
In a holy moment of connection.
The days when you can take criticism with a grain of salt
And praise and positive feedback with a thankful, open hand.

The days when exactly the right thought word or action
Occurs to you at exactly the right moment,
And you think it, or say it, or do it
And you witness something opening up inside you
Or in another person, or in the garden spaces between you.

These are the days of too many flowers for any vase to hold.
May this be a day of too many flowers for you,
and in the coming weeks and months, may such days grow
In number and frequency for each of us,
May we rejoice in the abundance of our blessings.

Joy is Hard*

Rev. Joe Cherry

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Joy is hard.

Joy requires us to feel safe enough,
to be safe enough, to open to vulnerability.

To feel joy, you must be brave.

Joy walks into a room after the space has been cleared

Cleared of shame,

Cleared of doubt

Cleared of self-recrimination.

Joy is hard.

Joy *is* hard

and joy is worth the hard work of preparation.

Preparing oneself and setting down all the defenses

all the shoulds and could'ves,

all the should not haves and might haves.

Joy is worth the work.

You are worth the work.

You can start small:

the simple pleasure of your favorite tea,

the grand freedom of a full belly laugh.

Invite Joy to be your companion.

Beannacht

John O'Donahue

Full piece at <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/beannacht-blessing/>

And when your eyes

freeze behind

the grey window

and the ghost of loss

gets into you,

may a flock of colors...

come to awaken in you

a meadow of delight...

Welcome Morning

Anne Sexton

Full poem at <http://mondaypoem.blogspot.com/2013/06/welcome-morning-by-anne-sexton.html>

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...

All this is God,

right here in my pea-green house

each morning...

Meditation on Gratitude and Joy

Jack Kornfield

Found at <https://gratefulness.org/resource/meditation-on-gratitude-and-joy/>

Excerpt: "...breathe gently. Bring to mind someone you care about; someone it is easy to rejoice for. Picture them and feel the natural joy you have for their well-being... With each breath, offer them your grateful, heartfelt wishes:

May you be joyful.

May your happiness increase.

May you not be separated from great happiness...

gradually open the meditation to include neutral people, difficult people, and even enemies until you extend sympathetic joy to all beings everywhere, young and old, near and far..."

Joy*

Rev. Terri Pahucki

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/joy>

[Permission Source](#)

And every morning, I plead
with the dew-moist buds
to know their secret joy:
to open and close without holding,
to surrender all to light,
to sing..."

Nourished and Transformed*

Rev. Lisa Garcia-Sampson

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/nourished-and-transformed>

[Permission Source](#)

For ours is the work of creation.

Ours is the work of inviting people into an irresistible movement,
rooted in our belief that a new world is possible.

And the center of our work is love, and joy, and the spirit of abundance...

Prayers and Meditations For Easter, Passover & Earth Day

Easter Prayer: Voice Still and Small*

Rev. Shari Woodbury

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

[A prayer written to be offered after singing "Voice Still and Small," #391 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.]

Voice still and small, as we turn inward we listen for you.

Deep inside all, this Easter morning, open our hearts to hear you in the figure of Jesus.

In dark and rain, sorrow and pain, his followers continued to hear that still voice of pure love.

In the uncertain days after his cruel death, the memory of his words surely comforted them.

The quiet voices of one another, the tender holding of one another through grief, accompanied them.

Through all the years, they held onto his voice—and they found their own voices.

Holy spark within us all, may we too hear the voices of love—voices that the powers would drown out even still today, if they could.

May we too notice the stirring of conscience, the rustling of compassion, within ourselves.

Whether the voice speaks to us of our neighbor who is hungry, or the young people yearning to be accepted as they are, or the tragedies unfolding overseas—let us not shut it out.

The voice of truth and courage sings through all the years when we are open to hear that voice—and to be that voice.

It matters not how long it has been dormant in us,

the voice still and small can be resurrected at any time.

Easter is listening, hearing, heeding and being that voice.

Let us celebrate it thus. May it be so. Amen.

Did the Sun Come up This Morning?

Rev. Victoria E Safford

Full piece found in [Walking Toward Morning](#), a UUA meditation manual. Also found [HERE](#)

Is it safe, I wonder, to presume that we have all seen the dead resurrected? Can we presume, just quietly among us, this basic fact? Can we admit, however carefully at first, however foolish it may sound, that once or twice in our lives or perhaps over and over and tumbling over, we have seen events miraculous? Choose the words you will, whatever words you need. If 'miracle' cloy, try 'unexpected.' 'Surprising.' 'Unanticipated.' 'Lucky.' 'That which has been given us, that second chance, that second wind...

The Promise of Easter

[Eugene B. Navias](#)

Who is to say what Easter is that we should celebrate this day and sing for joy?

Easter is promises remembered and fulfilled of death and life and all that lies therein.

It is the promise of the planets in their turn, the infinite fidelity of stars and suns and seasons.

Easter is winter promising to Spring that earth shall yield its death to life again.

It is the growth promise of the dormant seed, the barren meadow and the naked bough.

It is the birth promise of all creatures which have life and breath and being.

Easter is ancient sorrows stilled and hopes remembered. It is the memory of Jesus dying in Jerusalem.

It is the promise that the heart shall be reborn as hatred dies and love is given birth.

It is the promise that the mind shall be renewed as ignorance is lost to newfound truth.

Easter is the promise to everyone who journeys from the death of prejudice to the life of understanding.

Easter is promises to everyone who casts away the errors of the darkness to dwell within the light.

Lo, Easter is of earthly promises and human hopes that make the human heart forever young.

All: A song of life which springs from death, a joyous human song. Forever Alleluia sung.

What Gives Us Life*

Rev. Vanessa Rush Southern & Rev. Alyson Jacks

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/what-gives-us-life>

[Permission Source](#)

May what holds us in bondage to death or loss or hurt or sadness or literal heartbreaking limits,
be released.

And what gives us life, hope, joy, rebirth, feel invited to claim us—and may we claim it...

Ready *

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/ready>

[Permission Source](#)

if you wait until you feel fully ready
you may never take the leap at all
and Infinity is calling you forth...

Earth Teach Me

From the Ute native people of North America

Full piece at <https://peopleandcultures.blog/2018/07/30/a-ute-prayer-earth-teach-me-to-remember/>

Earth teach me freedom
as the eagle which soars in the sky...

Earth teach me regeneration
as the seed which rises in the spring...

Earth teach me to remember kindness
as dry fields weep with rain.

Prayer of Co-Creation *

Rev. Lyn Cox

Full prayer at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/prayer-co-creation>

[Permission Source](#)

Creative spirit, source of life and love:

Thank you for the breezes of change, clearing our heads...

Thank you for oceans of love, rivers of connection, tears of relief, and pools of serenity. May healing waters flow over us and through us and among us, wearing down the sharp rocks of despair to bring joy in the morning...

Music

Suggestions For April 2025 - “The Practice of Joy”

from Soul Matters Music Resources Coordinator, [Adam O'Dell](#)

For those of you who have routinely read my reflections this year, you may notice the lack of a quote to start things off. I've been using quotes as mental jumping off points since October, and in my search for quotes on “The Practice of Joy,” I noticed that about half of the popular quotes I came across said something to the effect of “true joy comes from ____.” They all had different ideas: true joy comes from achievement, or from loving someone, or from within. Today, for me, “true joy comes from the irony of seeing definitive statements of the ‘true’ source of joy all indirectly contradicting each other.”

Joy is, at first glance, the most broad and straightforward theme we're offering this year, and there is no shortage of good “joy music.” So to truly focus my suggestions this month, I am choosing to focus more on the overarching approach to Soul Matters this year, “The Practice of...” It's one thing to identify joy and when you feel it. It's one of the easier things we do as people. It is another thing entirely to practice it.

I am currently going through a divorce. Though I am doing much better than I was a couple of months ago, it still colors a lot of how I am seeing and feeling things right now. So when I saw quotes about true joy being about loving another person, I noted (perhaps uncharitably) that those quotes tacitly invalidate any joy I may be feeling right now. When I saw quotes about true joy coming from within, I thought about the times in the past two months where a friend or family member has cheered me up when I didn't have the strength to conjure joy from within. The quotes about joy from achievement seemed especially foreign when I read them, seeing as I've had many a day without achievements in the last few months (at least in the traditional sense of the word). Perhaps considering these quotes more charitably, I can at least proclaim for myself that I deserve joy despite no longer being in a loving marriage, despite not being able to do it all by myself on a given day, or despite not “achieving” any more than getting out of bed. For all the pain this time has brought, I have thankfully been more strongly reminded of the sources of joy in my life: my friends, family, and congregation among them. I feel joy in these moments because I am *practicing* joy, not simply hoping it shows up.

Aside from my personal life, I am also carrying the perspective of being a semi-fluent Spanish speaker and a progressive church leader in Chicago as ICE attempts to detain and deport my friends and neighbors. It weighs on me, and it weighs on my congregation. Despite this, I am reminded by my age 80+ congregants who marched with Dr. King on these very streets that one of the most bold acts of resistance we perform is the act of stubborn joy in the face of those who wish to see us silenced, scared, and hopeless. It is in moments like these that we are reminded that joy is a practice. It is not always guaranteed, and yes... sometimes it's not the needed emotion, but sometimes we have to work to ensure we experience the joy that we deserve as thinking, feeling human beings in an unfair world.

So this month, and for as long as I can, I am reminding myself that joy is a practice. In remembering that, I realize that the many quotes I came across only illuminate parts of the whole. Joy can come from within, from others, from acts, from principles, and from wherever else you can find it. We deserve to find joy, we deserve to feel joy, and we are called to spread it!

- Adam

Hymns

#	Title	Style Notes	Singability		Permissions
21	For the Beauty of the Earth	Traditional, Joyful	5	H/SL	Public Domain
29	Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	Traditional, Beethoven	5	H	Public Domain
30	Over My Head	Spiritual, Simple, Meditative	5	H/R	Public Domain, Arrangement: UUA Permissions Granted
95	There Is More Love Somewhere	Spiritual, Centering	5	R/SL	Public Domain
100	I've Got Peace Like a River	Spiritual, Upbeat, Water Comm.	5	R/SL	One License
116	I'm On My Way	Spiritual, Upbeat, Joyful	4	R/SL	Public Domain, arrangement UUA permissions granted
118	This Little Light of Mine	Upbeat, Spiritual	5	R/SL	Public Domain
126	Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing	Comforting, Uplifting	4	H	Music: Public Domain Lyrics: UUA Permissions Granted
163	For the Earth Forever Turning	New Age, Lush	5	SL	One License or CCS
196	Singer of Life	Indigenous, Introspective	5	H/SL	One License
201	Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!	Joyful, Spiritual	5	SL	Public Domain
203	All Creatures of the Earth and Sky	Uplifting, Traditional	4	H	Public Domain
311	Let It Be a Dance	Upbeat, Folk	3	SL	Permission Granted if not performed for profit
327	Joy, Thou Goddess	Traditional, Beethoven	5	H	Public Domain
346	Come, Sing a Song with Me	Folksy, Welcoming, In the Round	4	SL	Permissions granted
347	Gather the Spirit	Contemporary, Rocking, Uplifting	3	SL	Make a donation via Jim Scott's Website
356	Will You Seek in Far Off Places	Simple, Transcendental	4	R/SL	One License
361	Enter, Rejoice, and Come In	Jaunty, Folksy, Fun	5	H/R/SL	L & M: Public Domain Arr: UUA Permitted Granted
1010	We Give Thanks	Joyful, Grooving	5	R/SL	See note
	permission granted with one-time fee paid/credit to "We Give Thanks" © The Rev. Wendy Luella Perkins				
1018	Come and Go with Me	Resilience, Anticipation, Spiritual	5	R/SL	L & M: Public Domain Arr: UUA Permitted Granted

Singability Score Key

All congregations are different, but this score is intended to provide basic, subjective guidance on hymn selection and leadership, especially for hymns you or the congregation are less familiar with.

5 - Very Easy	4 - Easy	3 - Average	2 - Hard	1 - Very Hard	H	R	SL
Little to no help needed	Weak singers may need help (usually because of range)	Average singers may need some help	Guidance recommended	Best for soloist or small group	Use Hymnal	Teach by Rote	Use Song Leader

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For more information on permissions and licensing, please consult the [UUA Hymn and Reading Permissions](#).

Choral/Vocal Suggestions

Title	Composer	Voicing	Style Notes
Great Day	Moses Hogan	SATB	Spiritual, Upbeat, a cappella
What a Wonderful World	arr. Russ Robinson	SATB, SAB, 2-part	Jazz, Comforting, Popular
Music of Living	Dan Forrest	SATB, SSAA	Epic, Dynamic, Rhythmic
Rejuvenation!	Tobin Stokes	SATB	Gospel, Rousing
Take This Gift	Tracy Wong	SSA	Upbeat, Rhythmic

Instrumental Suggestions

Title	Composer	Instrumentation	Style Notes
Mazurka in D major, Op 33, No 2	Frederic Chopin	Piano	Classical, Jaunty, Humorous
The Bamboula	Samuel Coleridge-Taylor	Piano	West African, Rousing, Rhythmic
Excursions	Samuel Barber	Piano	Americana, Folk, neo-Romantic
Carnival Rag	Melody Bober	Piano	Ragtime, Jaunty
Toccata (Symphony No. 5)	Charles-Marie Widor	Organ	Boisterous, Exciting, Finale

Music for Online Worship

These videos may be used in online and recorded worship services by Unitarian Universalist congregations. The music that follows does not require additional permission for online use. However, be sure to provide full attribution to the composers and lyricists on your screens, not just verbally, for each piece that you incorporate into worship.

These videos are intended to lighten the burdens imposed by online worship. They should not be used to justify decreasing the wages or positions of professional music staff.

- ["I've Got Peace Like a River" \(Vimeo\)](#) (by Marvin V. Frey; #100 in *Singing the Living Tradition*) led and accompanied on guitar by Mark David Buckles.
- ["Come, Sing a Song with Me" \(YouTube\)](#) as an animal puppet video (#346 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; music and words by Carolyn McDade). Created by MaryJane Wagner for an intergenerational service.
- ["Now Let Us Sing" \(YouTube\)](#) (#368 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; anonymous). Taught and sung by Rev. Suzelle Lynch. Please make a Venmo donation to @Susan-Lynch-120.
- ["I Want To Hold Your Hand" \(YouTube\)](#) by Lennon & McCartney, covered by musicians from First Unitarian Brooklyn Choir; arranged by Adam Podd, Director of Music. Adam's PayPal ID: adampodd@gmail.com/Venmo: @adampodd. *This is an ASCAP song, requiring a WorshipCast or other applicable license.*

Contemporary Suggestions

If you are streaming your services/are hybrid, please note that all copyright permissions are your responsibility to obtain.

- “Happy” by Pharrell Williams
- “Lovely Day” by Bill Withers
- “Unwritten” by Natasha Bedingfield
- “Mr. Blue Sky” by Electric Light Orchestra
- “Light of a Clear Blue Morning” by Dolly Parton
- [This Joy](#), the Resistance Revival Chorus

Important Note: The artists listed above generally are the performers of the works and not always/necessarily the songwriters, please do your due diligence in seeking out crediting info. Many of the above songs can be found on JWPepper, MusicNotes.com and the Chords/Tabs for most of the above can be found here:

[Ultimate Guitar - Ukulele Chords/Tabs - Free to Transpose - Chordify](#)

Another Note About Contemporary Music: For our small group packets, we put together a contemporary music playlist for each month. While these playlists are designed as personal musical meditations on the themes, some of the songs on these playlists could be used in worship.

You can explore these playlists on our website, by clicking [HERE](#).

Music From the AUUMM (Association for UU Music Ministries) Online

Database:

The wonderful leadership of the AUUMM have added our monthly themes to the AUUMM music database. It’s a great way to get music suggestions from UUs all around the country. If you’re still looking for more options, this is a great resource!

Soul Matters Music Leader Support

In addition to monthly music suggestions in our worship packets, we support subscribing music leaders with a monthly brainstorm call and Facebook group:

Monthly Online Musicians’ Brainstorming Group

On the **second Tuesday of every month at 2pm ET/1pm CT/noon MT/11am PT**, Soul Matters musicians meet for an hour-long Zoom call to share additional music ideas and help each other with advanced planning. The discussions focus on music for 2 and 3 months ahead to allow lead time for music purchase and rehearsals. **Recordings** of these monthly music brainstorming calls are available [HERE](#).

No need to sign up in advance, just join as you are able using this Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Soul Matters Music Leader Support Facebook Group

We also have a Soul Matters Musicians Facebook group. This is for on-going sharing among Soul Matters musicians, as well as a place where we share announcements about packets, new music resources and music-related webinars. Click [HERE](#) to view and join.

Stories For All Ages

Wisdom Tales

These wisdom tales have been written or edited by our Soul Matters DRE, April Rosario, to make them easier to tell from memory. You can find these tellable scripts at https://docs.google.com/document/d/19z33mbyfYGBHazPk_vfusF9lChmPqsp-Y6EmV1BoYSA/edit?usp=sharing

- **The Wise Fool and the King by April Rosario**
- **The Fiddler and the Village (A Jewish Folktale)**
- **The Story the Phoenix by April Rosario**
- **A Story About Joy in Nature - A Retelling of The Root Children**

Story Books

- **Hop on Pop by Dr. Seuss**
Book: [Here](#)
- **There's a Wocket in My Pocket by Dr. Seuss**
Book: [Here](#)
- **Music Is in Everything by Ziggy Marley**
Book: [Here](#)
- **The Music in Me by Jane Pinczuk**
Book: [Here](#)
- **The Little Book of Joy by Dalai Lama (Author), Desmond Tutu**
Book: [Here](#)
- **Jesus, the Carpenter's Son - The Resurrection**
Story: <https://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Carpenters-Son-Sophia-Fahs-ebook/dp/B008MP9EF2>
- **The Hike by Alison Farrell**
Book: [Here](#)
- **Fairy Houses (The Fairy Houses Series®) by Tracy Kane**
Book: [Here](#)

Sermon Seeds

Angles, Ideas & Twists To Get Your Sermon Started!

Don't forget to explore our small group packet for additional sermon seeds. It contains quotes and poems to enhance your sermon, as well as numerous sermon angles in the questions and the spiritual exercises.

Permissions Notes: In addition to the pieces we've noted as permissioned for online use (marked with an asterisk*), you can use the fair use sized quotes and fair use sized portions of longer pieces in your sermons/services. Pay attention to the hyperlinks we include within titles and authors' names; these hyperlinks provide the source material and direction for you to hunt down permissions on your own.

On Reacquainting Ourselves with Ordinary Joy

Quote - Dawna Markova

I don't think anyone "finds" joy. Rather, we cultivate it by searching for the preciousness of small things, the ordinary miracles that strengthen our hearts so we can keep them open to what is difficult.

Quote/Reading - Brené Brown, Daring Greatly

Joy comes to us in moments – ordinary moments. We risk missing out on joy when we get too busy chasing down the extraordinary. Scarcity culture may keep us afraid of living small, ordinary lives, but when you talk to people who have survived great losses, it is clear that joy is not a constant. Without exception, all the participants who spoke to me about their losses, and what they missed the most, spoke about ordinary moments. "If I could come downstairs and see my husband sitting at the table and cursing at the newspaper..." "If I could hear my son giggling in the backyard..." "My mom sent me the craziest texts – she never knew how to work her phone. I'd give anything to get one of those texts right now".

Quote - Brené Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection

Sometimes we miss out on the bursts of joy because we're too busy chasing down extraordinary moments. Other times we're so afraid of the dark that we don't dare let ourselves enjoy the light. A joyful life is not a floodlight of joy. That would eventually become unbearable. I believe a joyful life is made up of joyful moments gracefully strung together by trust, gratitude, inspiration, and faith.

Poem - From Blossoms, Li-Young Lee

Full poem at <https://www.poetryoutloud.org/poem/from-blossoms/>

...There are days we live
as if death were nowhere
in the background; from joy
to joy to joy, from wing to wing,
from blossom to blossom to
impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom.

Poem/Reading - Summer Kitchen, Donald Hall

Full piece at <https://www.ronnowpoetry.com/contents/hall/SummerKitchen.html>

...I watched her cooking, from my chair...
"It's ready now. Come on," she said...
We ate, and talked, and went to bed,
And slept. It was a miracle.

Poem - Precious, Tess Baumberger*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

There are times when I so love
This womb of flesh
In which I am born(e),
This wonder garment woven
Of sinew, organ, fat, bone,
Intercoursed with blood.
I luxuriate in its scent,
Its warmth, it's somethingness.
I revel in its sense of containment,
Life leaping, flickering, flowing throughout.

I do not know whether consciousness, personality
Will survive its final fragrant heartbeat,
Its last transpiring breath.
I'd almost feel dismayed if it did,
Because I would miss my body so.
I'd miss taking in the day
Through these lush eyes, absorbing
These welcome lips speaking, tasting
These foreign fingers, touching, taking,
These rounded ears hearing, listening.
I'd miss the slow infusing of lilac pungency
Through every cell and membrane.

How could the ancients think of this
As prison cell, as sentence, and as tomb.
Even in the chasm of uncertainty and pain
It is precious to be alive.

Anecdote - Ode to Joy (On joy found in the magic of music)

<https://www.utne.com/science-and-technology/depression-research-classical-music-miller-mccune/>

Study suggesting that listening to music is more impactful than talk therapy. Beethoven beats behavioral psychology.

Reading - Wendell Berry, from *The Hidden Wound* (also referenced in [this essay](#))

"Life is hard, full of work and pain and weariness, and at the end of it a man has got to go farther than he can imagine from any place he knows. And yet within the confines of those acknowledged facts, he was a man rich in pleasures. They were not large pleasures, they cost little or nothing, often they could not be anticipated, and yet they surrounded him; they were possible at almost any time, or at odd times, or at off times. They were pleasures to which a man had to be acutely and intricately attentive, or he could not have them at all. There were the elemental pleasures of eating and drinking and resting, of being dry while it is raining, of getting dry after getting wet, of getting warm again after getting cold, of cooling off after getting hot... There was pleasure in quitting work. There were certain pleasures in the work itself. There was pleasure in... going to town, and in visiting and in having company. There was pleasure in observing and remembering the behavior of things, and in telling about it."

Reading - [Herman Hesse](#)

The high value put upon every minute of time, the idea of hurry-hurry as the most important objective of living, is unquestionably the most dangerous enemy of joy... I would simply like to reclaim an old and, alas, quite unfashionable private formula: Moderate enjoyment is double enjoyment. And: Do not overlook the little joys!... a tree, or at least a considerable section of sky, is to be seen anywhere. It does not even have to be blue sky; in some way or another the light of the sun always makes itself felt. Accustom yourself every morning to look for a moment at the sky and suddenly you will be aware of the air around you, the scent of morning freshness that is bestowed on you between sleep and labor... Gradually and without effort the eye trains itself to transmit many small delights, to contemplate nature and the city streets, to appreciate the inexhaustible fun of daily life. From there on to the fully trained artistic eye is the smaller half of the journey; the principal thing is the beginning, the opening of the eyes.

Quote - [Ross Gay](#)

I dreamed a few years back that I was in a supermarket checking out when I had the stark and luminous and devastating realization—in that clear way, not that oh yeah way—that my life would end. I wept in line watching people go by with their carts, watching the cashier move items over the scanner, feeling such an absolute love for this life. And the mundane fact of buying groceries with other people whom I do not know, like all the banalities, would be no more, so soon.

Poem - #80 Tomato On Board, by Ross Gay

Full piece at <https://douceurs.tumblr.com/post/190406467423/excerpt-from-the-book-of-delights-by-ross-gay>
Read by author: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcLEwL4WQnc>

Poem - Joy by Thomas Centolella

Full poem at <https://www.coppercanyonpress.org/books/lights-mysteries-by-thomas-centolella/>

When...

you yourself return,

joy is simple, unassuming.

Red tulips on their green stems.

Early spring vegetables, bright in the pan....

Quote/Reading - Annie Dillard, from Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

The world is fairly studded and strewn with pennies cast broadside from a generous hand. But — and this is the point — who gets excited by a mere penny?... It is dire poverty indeed when a man is so malnourished and fatigued that he won't stoop to pick up a penny. But if you cultivate a healthy poverty and simplicity, so that finding a penny will literally make your day, then, since the world is in fact planted in pennies, you have with your poverty bought a lifetime of days. It is that simple.

On Joy As an Act of Resistance & Freedom

Quote - [Cole Arthur Riley](#)

We must reclaim joy outside of the artificial "cheer" it is often reduced to. There is a joy that is defiant. A portal to survival for our ancestors. A way to say, we will not be captive to despair nor abandon our belief in beauty. Joy with teeth.

Quote/Essay - [Maria Popova](#)

In this world heavy with robust reasons for despair, joy is a stubborn courage we must not surrender, a fulcrum of personal power we must not yield to cynicism, blame, or any other costume of helplessness... And when the war within rages, as it does in every life, the practice of joy, the courage of joy, becomes our mightiest frontier of resistance.

Quote - [Nick Cave](#)

Joy - flighty, jumpy, startling thing that it is - often finds its true voice within its opposite... Joy exists as a bright, insistent spasm of defiance within the darkness of the world.

Quote - [Toi Derricotte](#)

Joy is an act of resistance.

Essay - Joy As Resistance, And Joy That My Dignity Demands, Austin Channing Brown

Full piece at <https://austinchanning.substack.com/p/joy-as-resistance>

Poem on which essay is based: <https://www.rattle.com/from-the-telly-cycle-by-toi-derricotte/>

"Black girls and Black women alike have our joy misconstrued as disrespectful, arrogant, or perpetually inappropriate. Our joy is suspicious. And what right have we to joy when we have so much work to do? Ms. Derricotte, with the wonder that only poetry can unearth, gives an answer. We aren't just pursuing racial justice when we are organizing or voting or protesting or speechmaking or volunteering or working... we are also pursuing justice when we indulge in joy..."

Reflection/Reading - Giving Each Other Our Flowers, Atena O. Danner

Found in [Incantations for Rest](#), UUA worship resource & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

. . .How many times have these moments turned my day around?

The gentle touch of a sister's words, saying,

"Hey girl! I see you! Love that outfit!"

"Okay, red shoes!"

"Go 'head with those braids!"

"Come THROUGH, Goddess! Yes!"

"I see you!" I love us. Seeing each other in joy and beauty

is an act of resistance: defiance! . . .

Quote - [adrienne maree brown](#)

Oppression makes us believe that pleasure is not something that we all have equal access to. One of the ways that we start doing the work of reclaiming our full selves — our whole liberated, free selves — is by reclaiming our access to pleasure... As a black woman in this country, I have to walk around every day knowing that, had I been born at a different time in this country's history, it would've been a policy, like part of the law, that I could be raised for the pleasure of whoever owned me in that time. I'm trying to come all the way back from that to living in my own dignity and like, the self-actualization of my own pleasure, my own body — not for someone else to use, not for someone else to have ownership of."

Quote - adrienne maree brown

Feeling good is not frivolous, it is freedom.

Quote - [adrienne maree brown](#)

True pleasure—joy, happiness and satisfaction—has been the force that helps us move beyond the constant struggle, that helps us live and generate futures beyond this dystopic present, futures worthy of our miraculous lives... Pleasure—embodied, connected pleasure—is one of the ways we know when we are free. That we are always free. That we always have the power to co-create the world. Pleasure helps us move through the times that are unfair, through grief and loneliness, through the terror of genocide, or days when the demands are just overwhelming. Pleasure heals the places where our hearts and spirit get wounded. Pleasure reminds us that even in the dark, we are alive.

Book - [Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good](#), adrienne maree brown

“[brown] draws from Black feminist luminaries to teach us how embracing what brings us joy is central in organizing against oppression... She also highlights the many ways that people of color, sex workers, disabled people and queer, trans and nonbinary people have been denied joy—and why we must center their pleasure as an organizing principle. “Feeling good is not frivolous,” brown writes. “It is freedom.”” - [review](#)

Related Essay: <https://fortelabs.co/blog/pleasure-as-an-organizing-principle/>

Quotes from [Pleasure Activism](#) - [adrienne maree brown](#)

- “I touch my own skin, and it tells me that before there was any harm, there was miracle...”
- “Pleasure activism is the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy.”
- “...it must become an incredible pleasure to be able to be honest, expect to be whole, and to know that we are in a community that will hold us accountable and change with us.”

Article - [What Black Joy Means](#), Chante Joseph

<https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/what-is-black-joy>

Article - [The Promise and the Practice: "Black Joy" Reading](#), By Kimberly Quinn Johnson

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/promise-and-practice-joy-unspeakable-reading>

"It is the joy created through our collective healing — our laying down of burdens, to be picked up and shared by our people, our community. This is not joy in spite of suffering — a mask put on to hide pain... This Black Joy reminds me that I am not alone, that trouble don't last always, that I am held and carried forward by a power beyond what I can comprehend..."

Poem - [Joy Is The Justice We Give Ourselves](#), J. Drew Lanham

Full piece at <https://emergencemagazine.org/poem/joy-is-the-justice-we-give-ourselves/>

Joy is the justice,
we give ourselves.
It is Maya's caged bird
sung free past the prison bars
holding spirits bound—
without due process
without just cause...

Quote - [Shira Erlichman](#)

I want to offer you some joy – which is not rage’s nemesis, after all, but its wise older sister... Always remember that the cultivation of joy must not merely exist alongside rage but as a lantern throwing clarity all over it. Our capacity to address our anger & not be consumed by it relies on joy. What revitalizes us & reminds us of our humanness? What highlights why we’re here in the first place? What teaches our hearts openness? Joy.

Poem - A Brief for the Defense, Jack Gilbert

Full piece at <https://poetrysociety.org/poems/a-brief-for-the-defense>

We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure,
but not delight. Not enjoyment. We must have
the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless
furnace of this world...

Poem - Don't Hesitate, Mary Oliver

Full piece at <https://www.thenatureofthings.blog/2021/09/poetry-sunday-dont-hesitate-by-mary.html>

If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy,
don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty
of lives and whole towns destroyed or about
to be... much can never be redeemed.
Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this
is its way of fighting back...

Poem - Sorrow is Not My Name, Ross Gay

<https://www.pcc.edu/harts/2022/04/18/two-deep-breaths-sorrow-is-not-my-name/>

Video of the poem found [HERE](#)

On a Joy that Encompass it All

Quote - Felix Adler

At bottom, the world is to be interpreted in terms of joy, but of a joy that includes all the pain, includes it and transforms it and transcends it.

Quote/Essay - [Krista Stryker](#)

For years, I protected myself from failure, not realizing I was also shielding myself from joy. Now, every day feels vivid and in technicolor (no more grayscale living). But with the highs come the lows... When we open ourselves to joy, we open ourselves to pain. It’s growth and heartbreak, wonder and loss, all tangled together. Passionate living isn’t just about chasing the highs or avoiding the lows. It’s about embracing all of it — the messiness, the beauty, the full spectrum of what it means to be alive.

Quote - [Cole Arthur Riley](#)

Joy situates every emotion within itself. It grounds them so that one isn’t overindulged while the others lie starving. Joy doesn’t replace any emotion; it holds them all and keeps them from swallowing us whole. Society has failed to understand this. When it tells us to find joy in suffering, it is telling us to let [suffering] go, to move on, to smile through it. But joy says, Hold on to your sorrow. It can rest safely here.

Article - Amor Fati: Can We Love Life, No Matter What?

<https://medium.com/a-little-stoic-wisdom/amor-fati-can-we-love-life-no-matter-what-35453ab74522>

On a Joy that is Always Available

Quote/Sermon Angle - [James Crews](#)

The Benedictine monk, Brother David Steindl-Rast, has famously said: “Joy is the happiness that doesn’t depend on what happens.” In other words, the surface happiness of having things go our way, or finding all our desires fulfilled, can never match the sustained power of a truer, deeper joy. Yet we often forget that the smaller joys we cultivate each day remain more sustainable over a lifetime, and that joy is available even as we struggle through a difficult time, even as our world reckons with tragedy and war. I love how Sharon Corcoran describes these “daily visitations,” the moments of joy “so small they barely register,” unless we prioritize them. Like other qualities we might give our attention to—gratitude, kindness, and mindfulness, for instance—perhaps we can also make joy a regular practice, knowing that it doesn’t make us self-centered to receive the grace that rains down from such seemingly ordinary pleasures.

On How Joy and Difficult Times Dance Together

Quote - Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker, from *Proverbs of Ashes*.

This passage is about a time when Parker was in deep despair. In the midst of that she found herself in a situation where she was invited to look through a telescope focused on Jupiter. Reflecting on that moment, she writes:

“It would be wrong to think of this moment as one in which joy triumphed over despair... Such a view assumes that bad feelings need to be excised, or suppressed by stronger, better feelings. Peace or happiness or even survival are imagined to be accomplished by cutting something out or dominating some aspect of the self. Viewing the soul this way internalizes violence... I did not defeat negative feelings of anguish and despair because I saw something more lovely and good. Rather, I became able *to feel more*. My feeling broadened. Pain, sadness, and despair were not eliminated and overcome. I embraced them with a larger heart...my consciousness had been broadened to embrace memories of the religious community, immediate experiences of the world’s beauty and the kindness of human beings, and a vivid sense of future possibility.”

Quote - [Saoirse McClory](#)

The following quote came to me: “Find a place inside where there’s joy, and the joy will burn out the pain.” (Joseph Campbell). I don’t know whether this will resonate with you at all, but there’s something about that invitation, to constantly come back to the place inside us which can (and does) feel the tender (and sometimes exuberant!) pulse of joy – and recognition of a far vaster picture – that feels very compelling to me.

Reflection - Pleasure vs. Joy, [Yolande Clark-Jackson](#)

I hadn’t considered noting the difference between pleasure and joy. I hadn’t considered pleasure as something you can have and that joy was something you could enter but have to let go.

Reading/[Essay](#)/[Book](#) - Margaret Renkl

We are creatures built for joy. At the very saddest funerals, we can hear a funny story about our lost beloved, and God help us, we laugh. We can stagger out of an appointment where a person in a white coat has given us the news we think we cannot bear to hear, and still we smile at the baby in the checkout line clapping her chubby hands at the balloons by the cash register or kicking her feet in joy at a stranger’s smile.

This is who we are. The very best of who we are.

The world is burning, and there is no time to put down the water buckets. For just an hour, put down the water

buckets anyway. Take your cue from the bluebirds, who have no faith in the future but who build the future nevertheless, leaf by leaf and straw by straw, shaping them and turning them into a sheltering roundness perfectly fitted to the contours of the future they are making.

Turn your face up to the sky. Listen. The world is shivering into possibility. The world is reminding us that this is what the world does best. New life. Rebirth. The greenness that rises out of ashes.

Poem - The Poet With His Face in His Hands, Mary Oliver

<https://peyman.live/2017/10/03/mary-oliver-the-poet-with-his-face-in-his-hands/>

Quote - Cole Arthur Riley

“When people demand joy always, it makes the world seem incompatible with those of us whose happiest days are still anguished. In this way, joy was one of my earliest alienators. If I did not belong to this loud, laughing family, whose was I? I was the child who would sit in closets or bathrooms while everyone else laughed together in the kitchen. Every now and again, someone would knock and whisper through to me, 'Well, you gonna join us, hunny?' But I'd stay tucked away under Goosebumps books and shadows, knowing I was never going to laugh like them.

“It took time for me to realize that it was not that my family wanted me happy; it was that they wanted me close. They didn't want for me the kind of sadness that alienates you. In time, I learned how to be in the kitchen, and it didn't seem to matter if I was laughing. My sister pulls me close and feeds me a bite of spinach dip. 'Just stay with me.'

“Depression may contain a joylessness, but it doesn't have to. When we reimagine joy as more than mere happiness, we make space for a sorrowful joy. Mine is a joy born not of laughter but of peace. This is okay.”

On a Joy that Arises from Connecting Our Sorrows

Quote - Ross Gay, from his essay [Joy Is Such a Human Madness](#)

What if we joined our sorrows, I'm saying. I'm saying: What if that is joy?

Quote - Ross Gay

What if joy and pain are fundamentally tangled up with one another? Or even more to the point: what if joy is not only entangled with pain, suffering or sorrow, but it's also what emerges from how we care for each other through those things? What if joy, instead of refuge or relief from heartbreak, is what effloresces from us as we help each other carry our heartbreaks? Which is to say, what if joy needs sorrow?

Interview exchange - Ross Gay

“I find that when I'm experiencing sorrow or sadness... my instinct, which I think is many people's instinct, is to not reach out, to not invite other people in.” “Yeah I agree I think there's some element of shame to it. Some of us sort of feel ashamed to be heartbroken or to be devastated or to be sad... and so I wonder if part of that shame is actually because it is the evidence of need.”

Podcast - Tending Joy and Practicing Delight, OnBeing podcast interview with Ross Gay

<https://onbeing.org/programs/ross-gay-tending-joy-and-practicing-delight>

Quote - Rebecca Solnit

When all the ordinary divides and patterns are shattered, people step up to become their brothers' keepers. And that purposefulness and connectedness bring joy even amidst death, chaos, fear, and loss.

On Sharing and Spreading Joy (aka, On What Joy Asks Of Us)

Swedish Proverb

Shared joy is double joy.

Shared sorrow is half sorrow.

Quote - [Christian Wiman](#)

Jürgen Moltmann says compassion is the other side of the living joy. So that on the other side of a joy, if it is a true joy, then you're alert to the fact that the world is not usually like that and other lives are not usually like that. And so you are motivated to return to the world in order to try to make it like that for others, to rescue the world for the sake of joy.

Poem/Reading - Kinetic Joy, Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Full piece at <https://ahundredfallingveils.com/2024/12/21/kinetic-joy/>

...that's how it is when you,
in your joy, collide with me in a hug,
and your joy passes on to me...
I'm dizzy with it, spinning with it...
in fact it's what I was made for,
to be moved by you, by your joy.

Quote - [Gretchen Rubin](#)

One of the best ways to make yourself happy is to make other people happy.

One of the best ways to make other people happy is to be happy yourself.

Quote - Dolly Parton

I always just thought if you see somebody without a smile, give'em yours!

Quote - Mark Twain

To get the full value of joy you must have someone to divide it with.

Anecdote - Joan Halifax Roshi

One of the ways that Buddhists share sympathetic joy is to dedicate the merit of whatever good has arisen in their lives to the wellbeing of others. At the end of a session of meditation, we say "May the merit of this practice penetrate into each thing in all realms and benefit all beings."

Book Excerpt - The Book of Delights: Essays, by Ross Gay

It astonishes me sometimes — no, often — how every person I get to know — everyone, regardless of everything, by which I mean everything — lives with some profound personal sorrow. Brother addicted. Mother murdered. Dad died in surgery. Rejected by their family. Cancer came back. Evicted. Fetus not okay. Everyone, regardless, always, of everything. Not to mention the existential sorrow we all might be afflicted with, which is that we, and what we love, will soon be annihilated. Which sounds more dramatic than it might. Let me just say dead. Is this, sorrow, of which our impending being no more might be the foundation, the great wilderness? Is sorrow the true wild? And if it is — and if we join them — your wild to mine — what's that? For joining, too, is a kind of annihilation. What if we joined our sorrows, I'm saying. I'm saying: What if that is joy?

Quote - [Gretchen Rubin](#)

One of the best ways to make yourself happy is to make other people happy;

One of the best ways to make other people happy is to be happy yourself.

On a Joy that Honors (and Asks Us to Accept) the Precious Impermanence of What We Love

Quote – [David Whyte](#) (also [here](#))

If joy is a deep form of love, it is also the raw engagement with the passing seasonality of existence, the fleeting presence of those we love understood as gift, going in and out of our lives - faces, voices, memory, aromas of the first spring day or a wood fire in winter, the last breath of a dying parent...

To feel a full and untrammelled joy is to have become fully generous; to allow... a disappearance, a giving away, felt suddenly as a strength, a solace... [it is to feel] the sheer privilege of being in the presence of the ocean, the sky or a daughter's face framed by the mountains – I was here and you were here and together we made a world.

On Our Dance with Worry, Vulnerability and Joy

Video Interview - Dr. Brené Brown on Joy: It's Terrifying

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKV0BWSPfOw>

Quote - Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*

I'd argue that joy is probably the most difficult emotion to really feel...In a culture of deep scarcity—of never feeling safe, certain, and sure enough—joy can feel like a setup...We're always waiting for the other shoe to drop... Scarcity and fear drive foreboding joy. We're afraid that the feeling of joy won't last, or that we won't be enough, or that the transition to disappointment (or whatever is in store for us next) will be too difficult. We've learned that giving in to joy is, at best, setting ourselves up for disappointment and, at worst, inviting disaster. And we struggle with the worthiness issue. Do we deserve our joy, given our inadequacies and imperfections? What about the starving children and the war-ravaged world? Who are we to be joyful?

Quote - Michelle Mays

Staying in a state of disaster preparedness robs us of our ability to feel joy.

Quote - Leo Buscalgia

Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow. It only saps today of its joy.

Quote (and [sermon](#)) - Rev. Elea Kemler

Mostly what I do is what my husband calls rehearsing suffering... I wish I could tell you that... I have learned this lesson, but I have not. I still worry about the wrong things though of course it is only in retrospect that I know they were the wrong things because they seem like totally reasonable worries at the time. But mostly what I do is what my husband calls rehearsing suffering... This is not helpful I assure you. What rehearsing suffering does though is make it harder to have room for joy, to recognize joy, to rest in joy when it comes...

On The Practice of Joy

Quote - [Nick Cave](#)

Joy is not always a feeling that is freely bestowed upon us, often it is something we must actively seek. In a way, joy is a decision, an action, even a practiced method of being.

Article - The Practice(s) of Joy

<https://drmichaelmccgee.com/the-practice-of-joy/>

Essay - on Joy and Gratitude, Brene Brown

<https://globalleadership.org/articles/leading-yourself/brene-brown-on-joy-and-gratitude/>

I went into the research thinking that the relationship between joy and gratitude was: if you are joyful, you should be grateful. But it wasn't that way at all. Instead, practicing gratitude invites joy into our lives...

Podcast - Happiness 2.0: Surprising Sources of Joy (Hidden Brain)

<https://hiddenbrain.org/podcast/happiness-2-0-surprising-sources-of-joy/>

Podcast - Accessing Joy and Finding Connection in the Midst of Struggle

<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/accessing-joy-and-finding-connection-in-the-midst-of-struggle/>

On Joy and Easter

Reading - The Promise of Easter, [Eugene B. Navias](#)

Who is to say what Easter is that we should celebrate this day and sing for joy?
Easter is promises remembered and fulfilled of death and life and all that lies therein.
It is the promise of the planets in their turn, the infinite fidelity of stars and suns and seasons.
Easter is winter promising to Spring that earth shall yield its death to life again.
It is the growth promise of the dormant seed, the barren meadow and the naked bough.
It is the birth promise of all creatures which have life and breath and being.
Easter is ancient sorrows stilled and hopes remembered. It is the memory of Jesus dying in Jerusalem.
It is the promise that the heart shall be reborn as hatred dies and love is given birth.
It is the promise that the mind shall be renewed as ignorance is lost to newfound truth.
Easter is the promise to everyone who journeys from the death of prejudice to the life of understanding.
Easter is promises to everyone who casts away the errors of the darkness to dwell within the light.
Lo, Easter is of earthly promises and human hopes that make the human heart forever young.
All: A song of life which springs from death, a joyous human song. Forever Alleluia sung.

Quote/Poem - [Maya Angelou](#)

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise...

Sermon Homily & Angle - Believing in Joy, Rev. Tess Baumberger

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1c2RpBHy5oB3pTgm1AsZksKH-MPEd4UToYcj_nyx0PNs/edit?usp=sharing

So you'd think that when we get good news, like the apostles did that Easter morning, we would embrace it, right?... But do we? Or do we react like the apostles, thinking joyful news is some "idle tale?" Do we embrace joy right away or do we hold joy at arm's length, afraid to feel it?...

Quote - [SALT commentary](#)

Easter Sunday is not the end of Lent - it's the beginning of Eastertide, and in a deeper sense, the beginning of Christian life, a life lived in the light of God's resurrection. The trumpets and lilies signal not a final victory, then, but a commencement, a launch, a kickoff - a dawn of a new day.

Quote - Frederick Buechner

Resurrection means that the worst thing is never the last thing.

Sermon/Reading - The Unthinkable Alternative (aka, A Resurrected God), Rev. Kara Root

(on Easter and a world of joyful surprises!) * *For inspiration, not for use in a service*

Full sermon at <http://kara-root.blogspot.com/2012/04/unthinkable-alternative-aka-resurrected.html>

In some ways, our faith would be far easier if it ended at the cross. We've got that part of the story down pat, anyway. Then Jesus could just be a great teacher, a martyr for love, an example of justice, a witness of peace... But a resurrected God? Heavens! Who knows what could happen! How does God appear now? Where? What rules will God break next in God's persistent pursuit of love? This thing could go on forever! A Risen Lord is dangerous. Unpredictable... it just might be that we don't get to give up on love, because in fact it outlasts hate. And it seems to suggest that even the smallest signs of life should be noticed and nurtured, because astonishingly, the enduring force is not, after all, death, but instead it is Life, abundant and full... The tomb is empty... Anything could happen. Amen.

Poem - April Fools!, Steve Garnaas-Holmes

Full piece at <https://unfoldinglight.net/2011/04/01/683/>

...Even our glib Easter faith will be blown away.

Faith is not certainty, but astonishment.

Christ is risen! Whaddya know?!

Quote/Closing Words - [Author Unknown](#)

Easter is not a time for groping through dusty, musty, tomes or tombs to disprove spontaneous generation or even to prove life eternal. It is a day to fan the ashes of dead hope, a day to banish doubt and to seek the slopes where the sun is rising, to revel in the faith which transports us out of awareness and the dead past into the vast and inviting unknown.

Reflection - On William Wordsworth's "[Surprised by Joy](#)," by Dr. David Breeden

The British Romantic poet William Wordsworth begins his poem "Surprised by Joy" this way:

*Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind / I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom /
But Thee, long buried in the silent Tomb . . .*

I suspect that most of us have had the experience Wordsworth describes: Sudden joy, then we wish to share, and . . . the realization hits: the beloved we wished to share joy with is not here, with us, any more. Death. Divorce. Estrangement. For Wordsworth, it was a first love lost. From joy to cold realization. Wordsworth ends his poem in that realization of loss. Yet, we need not stay there. A deeper joy awaits reflection: A poignant joy of life lived and wisdom gained.

Live like a sage; play like a child.

On Passover

Special Note: As we consulted with Jewish leaders, it was recommended, in order to be sensitive to the complexity and pain around the Israel-Palestine conflict, that we leave research on joy and Passover to each congregation's leadership, as they know best how to address it in their unique settings.

On Saving the Earth with Joy

TED Talk - Happy Climate Hacks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I02A4g9tMJU>

(Related article [HERE](#))

Article - Happy Climate is on a mission to show what we gain from climate action

<https://grist.org/fix/advocacy/happy-climate-project-reduce-carbon-footprint-find-joy/>

Video - Sweet Spots

<https://happyclimate.org/workshop.html>

Article (and videos) - Hila the Killa dresses up as the Earth and raps about climate. Audiences love it.

<https://grist.org/fix/arts-culture/hila-the-killa-climate-rap-educating-audiences/>

Article - Laughter is the ultimate unifier. Can it work for climate action?

<https://grist.org/fix/arts-culture/humor-comedy-engages-people-climate-science/>

TED Talk - How to Find Joy in Climate Action

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VsOJR40M0as>

“What brings you joy or satisfaction? There is so much work to be done. Please do not choose something that makes you miserable. This is the long haul. So it's critical to avoid burnout. Choose things that enliven you...”

Quote/Reading - [Monya Relles](#)

Another critical element of climate hope is joy. Author adrienne maree brown, in her book “Pleasure Activism,” says that when activism feels joyful, we’re more likely to engage in it, feel purposeful about it, and be able to practice it sustainably. It can be a terrible thing to acknowledge the reality of Earth wrecked by rising temperatures and tides. But I find joy in dreaming what a future world could look like: no homelessness or poverty, an abundance of food available to anyone who needs it, a government where every person has a voice. This imagining is another part of climate hope. “I believe that all organizing is science fiction,” brown tells us, “that we are shaping the future we long for and have not yet experienced.

Climate hope isn’t just about joyfully dreaming of the future: It’s about appreciating what I have found joy in today, too... One day recently while I was teaching at the Hitchcock Center, my 6-year-old students and I found a fallen tree. We started climbing across the tree’s fallen trunk, and I asked them why trees are important. The students had amazing answers: They were fun to climb on, they were beautiful, they made forests, they gave shade. We talked about the carbon cycle, how humans breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon and trees do the reverse. The students all began puffing out exaggerated breaths. “We’re feeding the trees!” one exclaimed gleefully.

Sometimes climate hope is complicated and sometimes climate hope is as simple as that: appreciating your own breath and the beautiful ways you and a tree can care for each other.

Article - Why Happiness Is Good For The Planet

<https://www.earthday.org/why-happiness-is-good-for-the-planet/>

What if I said that you can help save the planet simply by focusing more on happiness and well-being?...

Quote - Sylvia Dolson

Walk in kindness toward the Earth and every living being. Without kindness and compassion for all of Mother Nature's creatures, there can be no true joy; no internal peace, no happiness. Happiness flows from caring for all sentient beings as if they were your own family, because in essence they are.

Article - Exploring Climate Joy in Activism

https://www.bethechangeearthalliance.org/exploring_climate_joy_in_activism

"On a strategic side, joy just makes sense for engagement. [A 2019 study](#) found that using comedy to discuss climate change left participants feeling more hopeful and empowered to take action. The science behind climate change can also be complex and unapproachable. [Humorous ways of sharing information can engage a wider audience](#), which is a necessary step towards producing change; this follows the rule that only 3.5% of a population needs to be engaged in a movement for its success. Local organizers at [Trex Against TMX](#) reflected that their comedic tactics helped garner more positive media coverage, made it harder to criticize their work, and allowed them to reach more people with important information about the fossil fuel transition. This goes to show that traditional doom-and-gloom messaging isn't always effective, and the anxious emotions that it invokes can be paralyzing..."

Article - Nature and the Serious Work of Joy, Maria Popova

<https://www.themarginalian.org/2018/06/07/michael-mccarthy-the-moth-snowstorm-nature-joy/>

"It is time for a different, formal defense of nature. We should offer up not just the notion of being sensible and responsible about it, which is sustainable development, nor the notion of its mammoth utilitarian and financial value, which is ecosystem services, but a third way, something different entirely: we should offer up what it means to our spirits; the love of it. We should offer up its joy..."

Poem - Thank You, Ross Gay

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/92120/thank-you-587653381d670>

Gay reading and giving background on the poem [here](#)

If you find yourself... hearing,
Again...all you love will turn to dust...
Do not raise your small voice against it...
Instead, curl your toes into the grass... Walk
through the garden's dormant splendor.
Say only, thank you.

Quote - Robin Wall Kimmerer

Even a wounded world is feeding us. Even a wounded world holds us, giving us moments of wonder and joy. I choose joy over despair. Not because I have my head in the sand, but because joy is what the earth gives me daily and I must return the gift.

On Joy found in UU Theology & History

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FhhbzMF8vDEonDoJL4sueft7_4KCnaN8tvArlbntXbM/edit?usp=sharing

Interfaith Angles on Joy

We're exploring a new research effort around interfaith perspectives/angles on each month's theme. The goal is to lift up some general ways various religious traditions engage the monthly theme, so you can decide which ones you might want to explore in more depth. Here's the link to our interfaith research on joy:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AB8RSmnCpUJlpm7burgyiEYPcdmthq70okhdNU-6Jqs/edit?usp=sharing>

Recommended Sermons

Notes about these recommended sermons:

- **Permissions Secured:** All of the sermons below have received permission for your online use. Unless otherwise noted, they can be used/read in both live streaming and recorded services that are posted on YouTube or a podcast. **However, to be extra cautious and in good relationship, we ask that you reach out to the minister to let them know you are planning to use their sermon. Also be sure to ask if they have any particular requests or guidance for how to do that.**
- **An Important Note About Editing:** If you want to make changes to the sermon for brevity or context, **you must reach out to the preachers directly for such editing permission.** Contact information of each of the referenced preachers is listed after the list of sermons.
- **We mostly list written scripts:** In order not to undermine UU preachers who depend on live and online guest preaching income for their livelihood, we mainly focus on sharing sermon texts (and sometimes audio clips), but not videos. When, on occasion, we include a video sermon, it will be from congregations that share those as part of their mission.
- **Note about hiring preachers for online guest preaching:** All of the texts listed below can be used and *read* in your worship services for free. And, in some cases, the preachers of these sermons are glad to be hired to guest preach and give these sermons at your congregation either by zooming into your service or sending you a video recording of them giving it. When this is the case, there is a note under the sermon title/link with the preacher's contact information.

The Practice of Joy, Rev. Laura Thompson

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1L-530GHQ8IMtwHvZW3WrEjrvQMBM3dFs/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

(Note: This sermon was originally given during the Christmas holiday season, so it has a few references at the end to Christmas. Rev. Thompson gives permission to alter those references so her sermon is applicable to April and springtime.)

"There is, in every moment, something happening that could be a danger to us, to someone we love or to the world that we care about. This is an absolute truth. But, it is not the only truth; this life also offers us joy. It's just that our evolved brain bias makes it a little harder for us to experience it. Rather than it being instinctual to experience all the joy the world has to offer, we have to develop a sense within ourselves to notice it and this takes lots of practice..."

Opening to Joy, Rev Nica Eaton

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wUmYmVTUYeqUZlcrSukvh-C4OegFcq94/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

"Focusing on joy, turning our attention to how joy manifests in our lives, experiencing joy in our cells, seems to spread joy to others. Now that's worth cultivating, isn't it? Just as unhappiness can spread, so can joy. Let's create a contagion of joy..."

Ode to Joy, Rev. Dana Worsnop

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_1KTLYFWkDMI2-5pqYvQbXnMDb0hDFa5/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

"Perhaps joy is just another word for love and for grace. It cannot be the goal of life and living, yet it may be something that is worth living for, is worth working to create for ourselves and others. And so, I do not wish for you happiness. I wish you instead a deep and soulful life. I wish for you meaning and purpose, that your life is put to good use. I wish for you joy and woe woven fine..."

Put Something In, Rev. Andrew L. Weber

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1szx1LVlJ2RBfI6sedmCXn0l-Vj-beNjs/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

The spiritual practice this month is to bring joy into the places where you want to experience it. The question then is, what if you don't feel joy? How can we be authentic to ourselves and embody something we don't necessarily feel?..."

Choosing Resurrection - Life after Life, Rev. Tess Baumberger

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LBaeCExfB1f2Z6aUjQdsX5kjKAfkMW/view?usp=sharing>

A two-part sermon on the joy of "choosing resurrection by planting everywhere, subversively, a paradise garden" and the joy of realizing "that in our lives we have many lives."

The Sort of Man You'd Like to Keep Alive, Rev. Jennie Barrington

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mDj5nnmBqNSlxvpa7lhWSkJwQl91o_59/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true

"Why did you change the ending?" Professor Hilbert asks Karen Eiffel. She replies, 'It was a book about a man who doesn't know he's about to die, and then dies. But if the man does know he's about to die, and dies anyway, dies willingly, knowing he could stop it, then, I mean, isn't that the type of man you'd want to keep alive?'"

Featured Preacher Bios & Contact Information

- Rev. Laura Thompson: <https://mnvalleyuu.org/about/staff-3/>
- Rev Nica Eaton: <https://www.chaliceuu.org/about-us/ministers-welcome/>
- Rev. Dana Worsnop: <https://unitarianuniversalistventura.org/about-uu-ventura/minister-and-staff/>
- Rev. Andrew L. Weber: <https://tpuuf.org/about-us/our-minister-and-staff/>
- Rev. Tess Baumberger: <https://uuessex.org/about-us/our-minister/>
- Rev. Jennie Barrington: <https://uuctc.org/about-us/our-minister-and-staff/>

Closing & Chalice Extinguishing Words

Joy: A Benediction, [Dr. David Breeden](#)*

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

May your heart dance
in wisdom and wonder.
May golden light and
a whispering breeze
fill your moments with
joy, the very spark
of being.
Live like a sage;
play like a child.
Dance with
the moments
as they arrive.

This Joyful Game, Rev. Scott Tayler *

[Permission Secured by Soul Matters](#)

Kick the ball.
Dance in the rain.
Get lost on purpose.
Fly the kite.
Smell the flowers.
Pull out the paints.
Let life take you by the hand, friends.
Lean back and let the wind mess up your hair.
Open to the joy that's been waiting for you.
Behold its delight.
Don't you know that you've already won the prize.
Now go out and share it.

The Stars are Dancing, Om Prakash

Found in [Voices from the Margins](#), and at
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=147600264092304>

Put Something In, Shel Silverstein

Draw a crazy picture,
Write a nutty poem,
Sing a mumble-gumble song,
Whistle through your comb.
Do a loony-goony dance
'Cross the kitchen floor,
Put something silly in the world
That ain't been there before.

Excerpt from [Invitation](#), Mary Oliver

Oh do you have time
to linger
for just a little while
out of your busy
and very important day
for the goldfinches
that have gathered
in a field of thistles...
It could mean everything.
It could be what Rilke meant, when he wrote:
You must change your life.

Closing Words for Easter & Earth Day

Closing Words - [Author Unknown](#)

Easter is not a time for groping through dusty, musty, tomes or tombs to disprove spontaneous generation or even to prove life eternal. It is a day to fan the ashes of dead hope, a day to banish doubt and to seek the slopes where the sun is rising, to revel in the faith which transports us out of awareness and the dead past into the vast and inviting unknown.

Blessing the Boats, Lucille Clifton

Full piece found at
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/58816/blessing-the-boats>
may you kiss
the wind then turn from it
certain that it will
love your back...

Earth Mother Star Mother, StarHawk

Full piece at
<https://katilifox.wordpress.com/2011/03/02/earth-mother-star-mother-by-starhawk/>

Earth Mother, Star Mother
You are called by a thousand names,
May all remember we are cells in your body and we
dance together...
Within us, may you dance
Forever

Worship Leader Support

Join the Soul Matters Worship Leader Support Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Join the Soul Matters Ministers' Support Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/719788338192570/>

Attend one of our two monthly online ministers' brainstorming groups:

First Tuesdays and First Thursdays of each month at 1pm eastern time

with this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Attend our monthly online musicians' brainstorming group:

On the second Tuesday of every month at 2pm eastern time

with this zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Inspiration

Our Facebook Inspiration Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Our Instagram Page:

Find us as "soul_matters_circle"

Music Playlists:

Click [here](#) for links to the [Spotify playlists](#) for each month.

Click [here](#) to check out the [YouTube playlists](#).



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