

Session 10: Prayer

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| Session Metadata | |
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| Session | 10 |
| Title | Prayer |
| UU Source | Jewish and Christian Teachings |
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| Head / Hands / Heart | Heart |
| Has Exercise | Yes |
| Has Ritual | No |
| Has Spiritual Practice Presentation | No |
| Special Blocks | Exercise |

Preparation

Email to Participants

Our next session is on [date]. For the previous two sessions, we have focused on Jewish and Christian teachings and process theology — inspiring and also somewhat rigorous intellectual topics. For our next session, we are going to move from thinking about the concept of God to an experience of a spiritual practice inspired by *Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves.*

This spiritual practice is prayer. Prayer will have a different meaning and history for each of us. The goal for this session is for us to experience one way people reach out and reach in to touch divine love.

We won't share a spiritual practice during this session since we will have an opportunity to practice prayer together.

Readings

- [“To Whom it May Concern”](#) by Rev. Jen Crow
- [“Simply Pray”](#) by Rev. Kimberley Debus
- [“These Prayer Beads,”](#) by Teri Ashley (UU Wellspring Facilitator)
- [“Unitarian Universalist Views of Prayer”](#) pamphlet
- Here are some links to a range of prayers to explore. You may have other favorites that you would like to reread.
- [Harvard Divinity School Prayers****](#)
- [Prayers from African Americans in History](#)
- World Peace Prayers-[Buddhist****](#)
- [Christian Prayers](#)
- [Jewish Common Prayers****](#)
- [Pagan Prayers](#)

Reflection Questions

- In the words of Sophia Lyon Fahs, Unitarian Universalist religious education visionary, “Many of the past generation and many today have found three abiding values in prayer: the quiet meditation on life, the reaching out toward the universal and the infinite, and the courageous facing of one’s profoundest wishes.” What is prayer for you?
- Tell about an experience you have had with prayer.
- How has your experience of prayer changed over the years? How has it been helpful or hurtful in your life?
- If you pray: How do you pray? Why do you pray? What role does prayer play in your life? If you don’t usually pray, did you experiment with prayer before this session? What was that experience like?
- If you pray, reflect on how you would answer the questions from the pamphlet on UU views of prayer: How do you pray? Why do you pray? What role does prayer play in your life?
- If you don’t pray, you’re invited to experiment with prayer if that sounds appealing to you. Notice how it feels to pray and reflect on that experience.

A reminder: if you haven’t ordered the book *Heartwood: Living with the End in Mind* by Barbara Becker, you may want to do so now so you have it in time to read for session fourteen. We recognize this author comes from a place of privilege, which she notes in the book. We continue to search for resources that fully meet the mission of UU Wellspring and that has a powerful message.

Also, check in to the [UU Wellspring Facebook****Page](#) for to share your prayers with the UU Wellspring Community. We also have a UU Wellspring Instagram page with quotes to inspire you!

In faith,

Session Plan

Chalice Lighting and Silence

We start our session with an eight-word prayer written by a former UU Wellspring participant:

“ Help me; hear me; hold me; heal me.

Again: Help me; hear me; hold me; heal me.

UU Wellspring Participant

Or you can share Jonipher Kwong’s “The Three Jewels” (p. 61) from *Voices from the Margins: An Anthology of Meditations* edited by Jacqui James and Mark D. Morrison-Reed.

The music is [“Have Mercy on Us \(Khudaya, rahem kar\)”](#) from *Sing With the World: Global Songs for Children*. Or for now or a break: [Prayers for the World](#) by the Pentatonix.

Let’s take a few minutes of silence to bring ourselves fully into this circle.

Check-In

What are you carrying in your heart? How is your spiritual practice or spiritual companioning going?

Covenant Review

****Note for Facilitators:****Use whatever process your group has established to stay current with the covenant.

Is there anything about the covenant that we should address?

Remind people to order the book *Heartwood: The Art of Living with the End in Mind* by Barbara Becker if they haven’t already. They will need to have it read for Session 14. Note that we ask you to be aware of the privilege that Becker notes in her writing and use a critical eye as you read.

Spiritual Practice Presentation

Reflection

For facilitators:

This session includes an exercise that invites people to write their own prayer. Bring paper and pens for everyone in your group and be sure to save enough time to do the exercise (at least 20 minutes).

A reminder as we begin our reflection on prayer, that prayer will have a different meaning and history for each of us. The goal for this session is not to convince you of anything about prayer, but rather to experience one way people reach out and reach in to touch divine love.

Reflection Questions

Note that the questions are shortened to allow time for the prayer writing.

- Tell about an experience you have had with prayer.
- What is the role of prayer in your life?
- How has your experience of prayer changed over the years? How has it been helpful or hurtful in your life?
- Which of the prayers, or sets of prayers, from the choices speaks to you and why?

Exercise

Now, instead of just talking about prayer, we are going to actually experience it. Take the next few minutes to write a prayer. It doesn't have to be perfect, just words from your heart. Sit with your prayer for a few minutes until the chime [singing bowl, bell, whatever you use] sounds.

After the chime, as you feel moved, please share your prayer out loud with the group if you feel comfortable doing so. No comments as people are sharing, please, but we will respond at the end of each prayer by saying "Amen."

Reflection on Exercise

- How was the experience of writing your prayer? Sharing it?
- To whom or what do you pray? Does it matter?
- What are you hoping for with prayer in your life?

So What?

How does this reflection relate to your spiritual journey? What are you inspired or challenged to do next?

Gratitude and Closing

Have everyone focus on the chalice. Each person, as moved, says one or two words about something from this session for which they are grateful or how they are feeling in this moment. After everyone has said a word, close with a brief statement of thanks and appreciation.

You might also use some of the words and imagery from the prayers people read aloud to close this circle, or you might read “That Which Holds All” or another selection from the prayer samples.

Music to end the session could include**[The Prayer](#)**by Pentatonix.

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