

# Soul Matters

A Kaleidoscope of thoughts, images, stories, poetry, and ideas to engage hearts and minds



## What Does It Mean To Be A People Of CREATION

Amen. It is about dreaming and imagination. It is about being able to envision what others haven't. It is about noticing connections that haven't been drawn. Even connections between us and the earth, and us and each other. To be a people of creation is indeed to dream the "not yet."

But what about that other part? "...and make them happen." There's something in there that sometimes gets short shrift. Yes, creation requires the ability to imagine the "not yet," but it also requires the courage to live into it.

Which means that this month is not just about imagination, artistry and self-expression, but also about bravery. It takes courage to offer a unique expression. It takes courage to try new things and fail. Heaven knows it takes courage to create and plant seeds for that which won't be finished in your lifetime. Creativity asks us to leave the familiar, to break with the pack, to risk being singled out. Yeah, there is joy, beauty and play in creation, but there is also insecurity, isolation and the sheer exhaustion of trying again and again until you finally stumble on that one and lucky moment of getting it right.

And so maybe that's why we also better talk about "co-creation" this month. Something as daring as creativity is dangerous if we try to do it alone. Indeed, where did we get that silly idea that artists and inventors are isolated, independent geniuses?! If there ever was a myth, that is definitely one. There is no such thing as a "person of creation"; only "people of creation"! New ideas are created in the clash of debate. New art occurs only when inspired by those who have gone before. New and better forms of community are built on the back of those who have toiled and sacrificed long before we put ourselves on the line. Simply put, there are no creators without companions.

So this month, let's honor the bravery that allows the creative instinct to come alive. But let's also give thanks for the companions that make it all possible. And, yes, ok, let's go ahead and indulge a little in the sheer joy and sacred fun of dreaming things up!

Image from [https://www.longislandpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/RunDown\\_EarthDay.jpg](https://www.longislandpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/RunDown_EarthDay.jpg)



This Soul Matters packet was created by Rev. Carie Johnsen at Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta, ME.

Thoughts within were gleaned from the Soul Matters Network, the UUCS Resource Circle, and other sources. If you would like to share your experience and wisdom for future packets, please email [minister@augustauu.org](mailto:minister@augustauu.org). To receive an electronic copy please email [info@augustauu.org](mailto:info@augustauu.org). To learn more about Unitarian Universalist Community Church, please visit our website [www.augustauu.org](http://www.augustauu.org).

# QUESTIONS TO WALK WITH



Below is a reflection and a list of questions to open the mind's gateway to reveal the wisdom that is right below the surface of our everyday ordinary lives. Pick one question, any, the one that grabs you and won't let go, then walk with it. Let your mind wander and wonder. Let the question percolate. Listen curiously to what surfaces. Live into the answers. Be surprised by what is discovered. Share what you learn with someone meet



1. What are you building, painting, composing or planting with your life? ("All the arts we practice are apprenticeship. The big art is our life." -M.C. Richards)
2. When did you stop singing? When did you stop dancing? When did you stop telling your story? When did you stop sitting in silence? (Cross-cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien tells us that in many traditional cultures, when an ill person goes to the healer, he or she is asked these four questions.)
3. Are you as "creatively maladjusted" as you'd imagined you would be? ("Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)
4. When was the last time you created (or helped create) something that will outlive you?
5. Are you ready to re-create yourself? Is it time to start with a blank canvass? To start writing a new story?
7. When was the last time you "failed beautifully?" Is fear of failure preventing your life from becoming art?
8. What if you started every day with a creative act? ("My future starts when I wake up every morning. Every day I find something creative to do with my life."- Miles Davis)

## Opening Words

On all of creation,  
The animate and inanimate,  
The weak and the  
strong,  
The young and the old,  
The wise and the simple,  
The free and the  
captive,  
The peaceful and the  
anxious,  
The joyful and the sad,  
The saint and the sinner,  
The living and the dead,  
Be the grace and glory  
of God.

— David Adam

9. What if you started every day with "In the beginning...?"

11. If you were put on trial for being part of creation and tangled up in the interconnected web, could you be convicted? Would your sentence be significantly greater than all of your neighbors?

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

# *Spiritual Practice - Deepening Experiences*

## *A new way of being for all ages*

### **OPTION A:** **Capture Creation**

This exercise invites you to explore the relationship between creation and attention.

So much of creativity is about seeing connections, noticing the new, looking at things in a new light, appreciating what is trying to be born. Indeed, maybe appreciation and gratitude has more to do with creativity than we think. So this month, ramp up your appreciation and refine your attention by taking a picture of one “act of creation” each day.

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

Do this daily for at least a week. Each night, share your discovery/photo with a loved one or a friend. Tell them why it symbolized creation for you, and more importantly, why that particular act of creation garners your gratitude. At the end of your week or two, line all the photos up and figure out what lesson they want to offer. Where are unexpected patterns? What did you not notice when you first took the picture? How are they calling you to be more than grateful but also a caretaker?

**Post your images on Facebook #uuccapturecreation.**

### **OPTION B:** **Your Resume of Failures**

This exercise invites you to explore the relationship between creation and failure.

Yup, failure. Nothing gets created without it. The well-known examples of this come from the scientific world; think penicillin, Velcro or Teflon. But some of the most interesting creative failures today are occurring in the world of business and entrepreneurial endeavors. Numerous business schools actively preach one simple message: Fail faster and fail better!

In fact, a Stanford Business School professor recently reported a new trend: young entrepreneurial job seekers are listing their failures on their resumes! Instead of boasting about their successes and awards, they proudly promote their marketing missteps and start-up disasters, and what they learned from them. By sharing what they learned and how they used that learning, they display their ability to look at their failures with creative eyes, not as dead ends and bungled attempts but as lessons and brave test runs.

So why not try it? Here’s your assignment:

Sit down with a piece of paper and spend a day or two listing all your life failures. Then take another day or two and consider them in a new light. Jot down a few bullet points under each “failure” explaining how those dead ends actually became a new road, how what seemed a moment of coming up empty really turned out to be a time of discovering something new, something you would have never looked for otherwise.



## Other Wise Words...

The writing life requires courage, patience, persistence, empathy, openness, and the ability to deal with rejection. It requires the willingness to be alone with oneself. To be gentle with oneself. To look at the world without blinders on. To observe and withstand what one sees. To be disciplined, and at the same time, take risks. To be willing to fail — not just once, but again and again, over the course of a lifetime. “Ever tried, ever failed,” Samuel Beckett once wrote. “No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” — **Dani Shapiro**; more about writing and the creative life here: <http://tinyurl.com/h5y3ju2>

Creation is an act we are all participating in — moment by moment, breath by breath, dream by dream. We are constantly evolving from one thing to the next, reinventing our outward selves as our inner spirit grows and emerges in new ways. Our thoughts, our words, our actions — these create reality, not only for ourselves as individuals, but they shape the world for all beings. Our intentions pull the future into place; our linked hopes hold the power to shape the world-that-will-be. We are all co-creators of the universe. — **Leslie Mills, Soul Matters minister**

### Closing Words

Help us to bring darkness into the light,  
To lift out the pain, the anger,  
Where it can be seen for what it is—  
The balance-wheel for our vulnerable,  
aching love.  
Put the wild hunger where it belongs,  
Within the act of creation,  
Crude power that forges a balance  
Between hate and love.  
Help us to be the always hopeful  
Gardeners of the spirit  
Who know that without darkness  
Nothing comes to birth  
As without light  
Nothing flowers.

I have wished a bird would fly  
away,  
And not sing by my house all  
day;

Have clapped my hands at him  
from the door  
When it seemed as if I could bear  
no more.

The fault must partly have been  
in me.  
The bird was not to blame for his  
key.

And of course there must be  
something wrong  
In wanting to silence any song.  
— **Robert Frost**

All children are artists. The problem is  
how to remain an artist once he grows  
up. — **Pablo Picasso**

The extravagant gesture is the very stuff  
of creation. After the one extravagant  
gesture of creation in the first place, the  
universe has continued to deal  
exclusively in extravagances, flinging  
intricacies and colossi down eons of  
emptiness, heaping profusions on  
profligacies with ever fresh vigor. The  
whole show has been on fire from the  
word go! — **Annie Dillard**