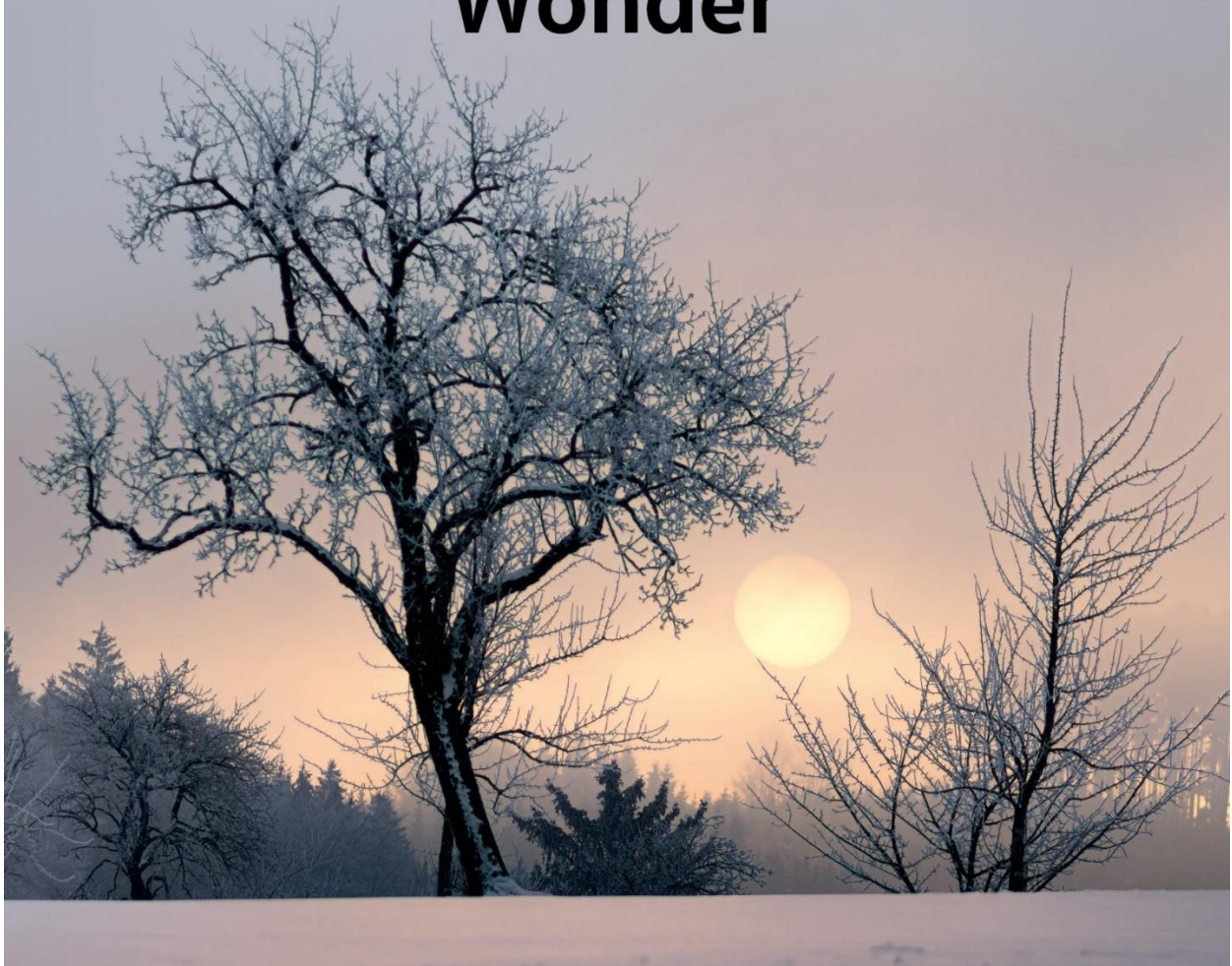


The Path of Wonder



This seems to me the main problem... How can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet at home in it?... How can this world give us at once the fascination of a strange town and the comfort and honor of being our own town? - G.K. Chesterton

Monthly Theme Resources
December 2022

UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OF
JACKSON



Calendar Connections: December 2022

Month	Seasonal Depression Awareness Month, infographic here
	Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, infographic here and news here
(Nov. 27) - Dec. 1-24	Advent (Christian), info here and here
Dec. 1	World AIDS Day , info here and here
	Rosa Parks Arrested (1955)
Dec. 3	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
Dec. 5-11	Chalica (UU), begins first Monday and lasts seven days, info here and here
Dec. 8	Bodhi Day (Buddha's Enlightenment), info here , here , here , and here
Dec. 10	Human Rights Day
	Nobel Prize Day
Dec. 14	Sandy Hook School Shooting (2012)
Dec. 18-26	Hanukkah (Jewish), info here and here
Dec. 21	Yule/Winter Solstice (Pagan/Wiccan)
	Montgomery's buses are desegregated (1956)
Dec. 23	Festivus for the rest of us
Dec. 24	Christmas Eve
Dec. 25	Christmas Day
Dec. 26 - Jan. 1	Kwanzaa , info here and here
Dec. 28	Holy Innocents Day (Christian)
Dec. 31	Watch Night/Freedom's Eve (Christian)
	New Year's Eve

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

Word Roots & Definitions

From [Old English](#) "wundor," meaning miracle, marvel, horror, monster.

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.
Albert Einstein

Wise Words

People go abroad to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering.
St. Augustine

When it's over, I want to say: all my life I was a bride married to amazement. I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms...
I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.
[Mary Oliver](#)

We are the miracle of force and matter making itself over into imagination and will. Incredible. The Life Force experimenting with forms. You for one. Me for another. The Universe has shouted itself alive. We are one of the shouts.
Ray Bradbury

The more I wonder, the more I love.
Alice Walker

Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger protects that which is loved. And when we think we have reached our limit, wonder is the act that returns us to love.
Valerie Kaur

Forfeit your sense of awe, let your conceit
diminish your ability to revere, and the
universe becomes a marketplace for you.
Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

When our heart wins the battle against our
fear, wonder is ahead.
Paulo Coelho

we have to become more worthy
of our own skins
we have lost the miraculous gaze
we only give it to the newborn
[adrienne maree brown](#)

You bring yourself before the sacred...
You stand at the edge of mystery,
at the edge of the deep...
Meanwhile, the armful of worries you
brought to the edge of mystery
have fluttered to your feet.
[Rev. Angela Herrera](#)

One way to open your eyes [to wonder] is to
ask yourself, "What if I had never seen this
before? What if I knew I would never see it
again?"
Rachel Carson

Were the sun to rise but once a year, we
would all cry out...How glorious! Our hymns
would rise up, our thanks would ascend. O
God...Give us new eyes... and vision to see
the world anew.
A Jewish Prayer Book

The other world is this world rightly seen.
Nisargadatta Maharaj

Years end ways
I dug and dug
Deeper into the earth
Looking for blue heaven
Choking always
On piles of dust rising
Then once
At midnight
I slipped
And fell into the sky
Rev. David Breeden

Wonder is, among other things, an act of
deep attention.
Caspar Henderson

Let me keep my mind on what matters,
which is my work,
which is mostly standing still and learning to
be astonished.
[Mary Oliver](#)

Poetry

Winter Solstice
Rebecca Parker

Full piece:
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/winter-solstice>

Let there be a season
when holiness is heard and
The splendor of living is revealed...
We are not alone.
In the universe there moves a Wild One
whose gestures alter earth's axis
toward love...

Nourished *
Rev. Jay Wolin
Full piece:
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/nourished>

When I look up into the night sky,
I am in awe of all that is...
When I walk in the ocean...
I feel a certain peace with the world...
All of these wonders...
let us protect them...

Videos & Podcasts

**Wonderment: On the wonder of
connection with people, animals and this
precious life**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3NpYvVH9Y&list=RDCMUCcPPUuszZ4-7yzZNgAAYwJjg&index=5>

The Wonder of Ordinary Moments
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPaINZD_I

Collective Wayfinding Through Mystery - On Being Video

<https://onbeing.org/the-summer-of-the-pause-issue-3/>

We are Stardust Harvesting Starlight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEberES6D-M>

Reality is Gorgeous, Alan Watts

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nsjAOchF7M>

On Wonder, Alan Watts (0:00-4:20)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i58MF3knB2c&list=RDLVi58MF3knB2c&start_radio=1&rv=i58MF3knB2c&t=326

The Wonder of the Webb Telescope:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bv6k7WiNHYI>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lf4EDcjMtmw>
- <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/whats-the-james-webb-telescope-searching-for/id1554578197?i=1000570561108>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m52YqRxolY>

Space - Radio Lab

<https://radiolab.org/episodes/91520-space>

How we experience awe - and why it matters, Beau Lotto and Cirque du Soleil

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17D5Sr qBE6q&list=RDLV1o2XkcftsMQ&index=4>

Music

Check out these popular songs that reflect the theme of wonder:

- *What a Wonderful World* - Thiele/Weiss, Louis Armstrong

- *World of Wonder* - Bruce Cockburn
- *Wonder* - Shawn Mendes
- *Winter Solstice Song* - Lisa Thiel
- *Star of Wonder* - Tori Amos
- *Wonder* - Natalie Merchant
- *I Stand in Wonder* - Joe Cocker

Each month playlists are organized as a journey of sorts; listen from beginning to end as a musical meditation.

- Click for the Spotify playlist on [Wonder](#).
- Click for the YouTube playlist on [Wonder](#).
- Check out a special playlist this month: "[For Stargazing](#)"

Articles

How to experience more wow

<https://psyche.co/guides/how-to-fill-your-life-with-more-awe-every-single-day>

Overcoming Racism to Recolor the Outdoors

<https://sites.tufts.edu/earthstewards/2020/07/07/overcoming-racism-to-recolor-the-outdoors/>

Books

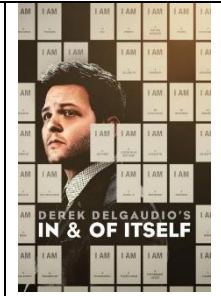



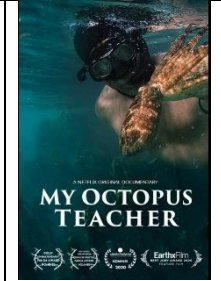
World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks, and Other Astonishments
Aimee Nezhukumatathil

- Interview with author: https://www.pw.org/content/world_of_wonders_an_interview_with_aimee_nezhukumatathil

Walking in Wonder: Eternal Wisdom for a Modern World

John O'Donohue

Movies

<p><u>In & Of Itself</u>: A new kind of lyric poem, storyteller and conceptual magician Derek DelGaudio fights to see through the illusion of his own identity, only to discover that identity itself is an illusion. An intimate and powerful exploration of what it means to be and be seen, the film chronicles Derek DelGaudio's attempt to answer one deceptively simple question, "Who am I?" His personal journey expands to a collective experience that forces us to confront the boundaries of our own identities.</p>	
<p><u>Gravity</u>: The film centers on Dr. Ryan Stone, a medical engineer on her first shuttle mission, and Matt Kowalsky, her commander, a veteran astronaut, helping his last flight before retirement. During a routine spacewalk, disaster strikes: The shuttle is destroyed, leaving Ryan and Matt stranded in deep space with no link to Earth and no hope of rescue. As fear turns to panic, they realize the only way home may be to venture further into space.</p>	
<p><u>Pan's Labyrinth</u>: An award-winning Spanish-Mexican dark fantasy film, the story takes place in Spain during the summer of 1944, five years after the Spanish Civil War, during the early Francoist period. Intertwining the real world with a mythical world, the film centers on an overgrown, abandoned labyrinth and a mysterious faun creature, with whom the main character, Ofelia, interacts. Ofelia's stepfather, the Falangist Captain Vidal, hunts the Spanish Maquis who fight against the Francoist, while Ofelia's pregnant mother Carmen grows increasingly ill. Ofelia meets several strange and magical creatures who become central to her story, leading her through the trials of the old labyrinth garden.</p>	
<p><u>Free Solo</u>: This film is a stunning, intimate, and unflinching portrait of free soloist climber Alex Honnold as he prepares to achieve his lifelong dream: climbing the face of the 3,000ft El Capitan in Yosemite National Park without a rope. Honnold's climb is celebrated as one of the greatest athletic feats of any kind and set the ultimate standard: perfection or death. Succeeding in this challenge, Honnold enters the annals of human achievement, exceeding our current understanding of human physical and mental potential, in a triumph of the human spirit.</p>	
<p><u>My Octopus Teacher</u>: A filmmaker forges an unusual friendship with an octopus living in a South African kelp forest, learning as the animal shares the mysteries of her world. This moving 2020 film won the Oscar for best documentary.</p> <p>Related podcast: https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/my-octopus-friend/id1554578197?i=1000558838022</p>	

Reflection Questions

Don't treat these questions like "homework" or try to answer everyone. Instead, make time to meditate on the list and then pick the one question that speaks to you most. The goal is to figure out which question captures the call of your inner voice? Which one contains "your work"? And what is that question trying to get you to notice or acknowledge?

Often it helps to read the list to a friend or loved one and ask them which question they think is the question you need to wrestle with!

1. What was your first experience of wonder? Your first moment of awe?
2. What childhood book served as a doorway into wonder for you? How does its imprint on you remain?
3. Has age impeded or assisted your experience of wonder?
4. How has the location of wonder changed for you over time? Has it shifted from the stars to the woods? From the birth of planets to the birth of your child? From the physical feats your body allowed to the storied wrinkles of your hand?
5. At this stage of your life, do you prefer child-like wonder or adult-like wonder?
6. Is it possible to love someone without being – in some way – in awe of them?
7. Could it be that your challenge isn't noticing wonder, but savoring it? What strategy or habit might you take on to make sure wonder lingers?
8. If you were to list your top 10 values/priorities, where would "experiencing wonder" be on the list?
9. When was the last time you stood in wonder at your life partner?
10. Can you imagine someone standing in wonder at you?
11. If you were to make one change to your daily routine to let a bit more wonder in, what would it be?
12. They say the three main impediments to wonder are worry, accomplishment and judgment. When any of those three take center stage, wonder leaves the room. Is this in any way true for you?
13. What would make your holidays more wonder-filled?
14. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to find it.

Meditations, Prayers, & Blessings

Winter Weather Meditation

Rev. Jonalu Johnstone

Winter weather can be seen as gift or curse –

The curse is easy to see – ruined plans, icy falls, fender-benders, cabin fever. The gift may be harder to find.

There are new kinds of beauty before us – the still, clear starkness of a winter blanket, the glisten of icy crystals. There is wonder before us. Our everyday landscape transformed.

And what about the wonder of snowstorms, that cancel everything from meetings to school to work, allowing time to extend, and reminding us of the gift of time with no particular expectations or assignments, with no place to go and no one to see. A time for dreaming, perhaps, or music, or reading, or silence. A time for re-connecting with precious people we live with – and sometimes drift away from in the clatter of normal routine. Time may be the most special gift we have in these days, if we are ready to make something of it.

The words of David Rankin:

There must be a time when we cease speaking to be fully present with ourselves.

There must be a time when we exclude clamor by listening to nothing whatsoever.

There must be a time when we forgo our plans as if we had no plans at all.

There must be a time when we abandon conceits and tap into a deeper wisdom.

There must be a time when we stop striving and find the peace within.

May this wonder of altered time, come as a blessing, to us all.

AMEN.

Into Greater Union with the Mysterious *

Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

Spirit of Life, Mother of All

Mystery Beyond Our Understanding

Here we are
living breathing creatures
with minds that wonder
and hearts that feel awe
we face questions that we know can't be answered
and tragedies that we know can't be explained
May we find patience
in all that is unanswered
and peace in all that
will never be explained

Here we are
living breathing creatures
with open minds
and tender hearts
May we hold ourselves with gentleness

with all that brings us worry
and all that makes our hearts break

May the living breathing creatures that we are
feel the breath of life
moving in us
and through all things
bringing us into greater union
with the mysterious universe of which we are a part

Blessed be.
Amen.

The practice of zooming in, zooming out... *

Rev. Kimberly Wildszewski

“Do you remember what we learned this past summer?”

Deep within the history of our universe, there have been galaxies dancing together. Stretching each other.

Did you see it? Did you see the pictures of NASA's Webb Telescope? We now know. No wait. We can now see: 5 galaxies. Let's stop there.

One galaxy is a huge collection of gas, dust, billions of stars, and each of those stars' solar systems held together by gravity.

This week we saw images of five galaxies. I can't actually conceptualize that. But what I've learned is that four of those interact. They are pulling on one another. They are influencing each other. They are forming baby stars. Yes, baby stars behind the curtain of dust and gas in what are called Cosmic Cliffs.

When I've been picturing cliffs lately, I've only seen us falling down, falling off.

Remember that early computer game where the lemmings fall thoughtlessly into an abyss, a straight shot down to their demise? Following their leader, who is following their leader and so on all because the controller couldn't redirect them?

Cosmic Cliffs create something new. Whole universes. Whole solar systems. Possibility.

What if we decided this image, these images, came at just the right time? When the world, our tiny, teeny gorgeous ornate inimitable world feels so incredibly despairing. What if we learned to look differently at it, at us? If we began to wonder about what we didn't know, couldn't see, couldn't even conceptualize really, but took up the practice of zooming in, zooming out.

We'd have to stop following the followers. We'd have to start with curiosity. We'd have to begin with the truth that we are but a speck; yes, important, beloved, worthy of life and love and health and safety, but still, a grain of sand in a thousand stunning deserts.

I think we'd find within this possibility. I think we'd learn to breathe. To let go. To give thanks. To bow in awe.

Today we come to this space with whole worlds, whole solar systems of joy and sorrow dancing and stretching inside our very own bodies. Hate has influenced how we love. Hope accompanies our depressions. Life combats the enclosures, the closets, the confines that seem to be building up around us everywhere. Whole solar systems within us.

If it's too much to accept our speck-ness today, if it feels like one more overwhelming new thing. Zoom in to your own universe and discover there what you could not see before. Zoom out and allow yourself to see the enormity of the system, the village, the interdependence of which you are a part.

Be held. Be held in the possibility that is still before us, still stretching and forming us, still inviting us to dance.

Breathe. Let go. Give thanks.

Let the spirit of life interrupt the path we have been following to despair.

The Miracle in the Mundane *

Kyle Johnson

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/miracle-mundane>

Oh Spirit that moves in ALL things...
Help us to see the Miracle in the Mundane,
To see the crystal stars, the shape-shifting clouds, the patient trees –
To see each other through fresh eyes...
As we move through our lives,
let us remember to see through the Mundane to the Miracle beneath...

Boundaries *

Rev. Lynn Ungar

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/boundaries>

...The world comes in at every pore...
Listen. Every molecule is humming
its particular pitch.
Of course you are a symphony.
Whose tune do you think
the planets are singing
as they dance?

Guided Meditation *

Martha Kirby Capo

Full meditation at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/guided-meditation-potential>

Connected to the idea of an "[Awe Walk](#)."

Teach us to look for you *

Fr. Austin Fleming

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/teach-us-look-you>

This prayer was written to accompany the Advent hymn "People, Look East," #226 in Singing the Living Tradition.

Turn our faces in any and every direction
from which you draw near to us.
Teach us to look for you in places
we would not expect to find you...
Let every star in the heavens be a light...

With or Without Candlelight

Rev. John Marsh

Found in [With or Without Candlelight](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)” Book

If you are going to meditate by candlelight,
Do not hurry to light the candle...

Stories For All Ages

Picture Book

I Wonder

Annaka Harris

Here is a book with our theme in the very title. It’s called “I Wonder.” It’s about a girl who takes a walk with her mother and wonders about things around her. She sure notices what is around her. She learns it’s okay to say, “I don’t know.”

- **Book:** <https://www.amazon.com/I-Wonder-Annaka-Harris/dp/1940051045>
- **Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59DSEIWsZCw>

Star Stuff: Carl Sagan and the Mysteries of the Cosmos

Stephanie Roth Sisson

Looking at the stars is a powerful way to evoke a sense of wonder. Carl Sagan began looking at the stars in his childhood. This is his story.

- **Book:** <https://www.amazon.com/Star-Stuff-Sagan-Mysteries-Cosmos/dp/1596439602>
- **Video:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnKUuqls9_c

The Stuff of Stars

Marion Dane Bauer

- **Book:** <https://www.amazon.com/Stuff-Stars-Marion-Dane-Bauer/dp/076367883X>
- **Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cl5Pk45Nuns>

Wisdom Tales

- **The Other Seven Wonders (Humanist)**
 - <https://philipchircop.wordpress.com/2012/08/03/the-other-seven-wonders/>
- **The Treasure (Jewish Tale)**
 - <http://www.azamra.org/Essential/treasure.htm>
- **Are You Searching In The Wrong Place? (Sufi Tale)**
 - <https://philipchircop.wordpress.com/2015/08/09/are-you-searching-in-the-wrong-place/>