



# *Soul Matters*

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## Living Love Through The Practice of **Joy**



**Companion Resources**  
**April 2025**



# Welcome to the Practice of Joy

It's easy to get tricked,  
taken for a ride,  
convinced that joy  
is a possession.

Something to be caught, contained and controlled  
just by us.  
As if it's a birthday present,  
waiting for us to unwrap it  
and keep forever and ever.

And who can blame us,  
with pain seeming so powerfully prevalent, and permanent.  
If sadness can stay for so long,  
why can't joy?

But maybe it's elusive  
for a reason.  
Maybe it's slippery  
in order to help us understand  
that it was put here to fly.  
Or better yet:  
To be flung!  
To be passed, not possessed.  
To be spread  
between you and me,  
between the ones who receive its gift  
and the ones that have been looking for its treasure  
for a very long time.

Maybe it's a beautiful and elegant contagion,  
over which we just might have more control than we think.  
If only we share it.  
If only we notice that joy is not ours to keep,  
but ours to give.

Maybe joy is a gift that opens us  
as much as we open to it.

Maybe that's the way light leaks into our weary world.

# Calendar Connections

## 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](#))

# Your Question

*This list of questions is an aid for deep reflection. How you answer them is often less important than the journey they take you on.*

*So, read through the list of questions 2-3 times until one question sticks out for you and captures your attention, or as some faith traditions say, until one of the questions “shimmers.”*

*Then reflect on that question using one or all of these questions:*

- *What is going on in my life right now that makes this question so pronounced for me?*
- *How might my inner voice be trying to speak to me through it?*
- *How might Life or my inner voice be trying to offer me a word of comfort or challenge through this question?*



1. What were you first taught about “deserving joy”?
2. Did you grow up in a “happy family”?
3. What simple joy rescues you over and over again? (What might you do to make a little bit more room for it in your life?)
4. Are you mostly a creator of joy, receiver of joy, notice-er of joy or spreader of joy?
5. If you could magically give a joy-filled and sorrowless week to one of your friends, family members or co-workers in the coming year, who would you choose and why?
6. Have you been hesitant or scared to ask for the thing you know will bring you joy?
7. When was the last time you sought out joy for your body?
8. Has choosing joy ever been an act of survival for you? Or an act of defiance?
9. Are you too responsible to let joy in?
10. What is one of your favorite/best moments of bringing joy to someone else?
11. Has joy ever asked something big of you? Might it be asking that now?
12. When was the last time you told your partner that they delight you?
13. **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.

## Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

*The following resources are not required reading. Nor are they intended to be analyzed in your group. Instead they are here to companion you on your personal journey this month, get you thinking and open you up to new ways of embodying the practice of joy in your life.*

### Wise Words

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.

[Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)

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.

[Maria Popova](#)

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.

*Dawna Markova*

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?

[Ross Gay](#)

There's joy to be found in how people manage to survive.

[Britney Luse](#)

A person will be called to account on judgment day for every permissible thing they might have enjoyed but did not.

[The Talmud](#)

Happiness is attached to things being a certain way. But joy is about the bliss *of being*. It transcends highs and lows.

[Martha Beck](#)

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.

[Yolande Clark-Jackson](#)

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.

[Cole Arthur Riley](#)

It's easy to believe Joy isn't strategic when you've never had to use it in battle... Joy keeps spirits strong. Joy keeps soldiers marching. Joy sees hope in darkness... Joy makes you keep working for the yes after a million no's.

[Brittany Packnett](#)

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

[Nick Cave](#)

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.

[Jack Gilbert](#)

When we numb out or rush past grief, we also limit our capacity for joy and presence. You can't selectively numb out one emotion, without compromising your ability to feel another.

[Kelly Wendorf](#)

Joy is exactly what is happening, minus our opinion of it.

[Charlotte Joko Beck](#)

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.  
I awoke and saw that life was service.  
I acted and, behold, service was joy.  
*Rabindranath Tagore*

We're a nation hungry for more joy: Because we're starving from a lack of gratitude.

*Brené Brown*

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

[Herman Hesse](#)

when I'm sitting in my favorite rocking chair...  
I feel so content with the way  
my feet push off gently against the wooden floor...

that I just have to sigh  
with the sheer delight of knowing  
that everything I want  
is everything I have.

[Leslea Newman](#)

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.

[Donald Hall](#)

We're only here for a minute. We're here for a little window. And to use that time to catch and share shards of light and laughter and grace seems to me the great story.

*Brian Doyle*

## Articles

**What to Do With Spring's Wild Joy in a Burning World**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/07/opinion/spring-happiness-climate-change.html>

**Joy is an Act of Resistance: How Celebration Sustains Activism**

<https://aestheticsofjoy.com/joy-is-an-act-of-resistance-how-celebration-sustains-activism-2/>

## Books

[Inciting Joy](#), Ross Gay

On the joy we incite when we care for each other, especially during life's inevitable hardships

[The Lightmaker's Manifesto](#): How to Work for Change without Losing Your Joy, Karen Walrond

Related podcast [HERE](#)

[The Comfort of Crows](#), Margaret Renkl

On joy and grief in the ongoing pleasures of the natural world

[The Geography of Bliss](#): One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World, Eric Weiner

[Review](#) and related [TV show](#)

[Joyful](#), Indrid Lee Fetell

## Videos & Podcasts

**Joy vs. Happiness**

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=529823663196216>

**Delight & Joy Are Survival Mechanisms & Acts of Resistance**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnliuYC7J8>

**Joy: It's Terrifying!**

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

**Surprising Secrets of How to Help Our Brain (and Us) Find Joy**

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

**The Revolutionary Power of Black Joy**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDE8UJdm458&t=93s>

## **Joy is an Act of Resistance & Nonsense is Necessary for Change!**

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

## **What is Trans Joy?**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ET0UKYvx0\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ET0UKYvx0_M)

## **On Joy as Healing the Past as Well as the Future**

[https://www.youtube.com/shorts/INYWbjXu\\_EM](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/INYWbjXu_EM)

## **Where Joy Hides And How To Find It**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/ingrid\\_fetell\\_lee\\_who\\_re\\_joy\\_hides\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_find\\_it](https://www.ted.com/talks/ingrid_fetell_lee_who_re_joy_hides_and_how_to_find_it)

## **Finding Joy in Being a Part of the Natural World**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MI4Qogwapbo>

## **He Walked Away From it All and Found Joy**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1sAsoJVN1U&t=421s>

**On the joys of...** [racing](#), [bubble wrap](#), [letters](#), [dance competitions](#), [the truth](#), [cold “dipping,”](#) [turning classic art into memes](#), [Rube Goldberg machines](#), and the [largest ball of paint \(and impermanence\)](#).

## **Movies**

[Perfect Days](#)

[Living](#)

[The Florida Project](#)

[Shall We Dance?](#)

[Little Miss Sunshine](#)

## **Music**

This month there are two playlists provided:

### **Deep Joy**

Click [here](#) for our Spotify playlist.

Click [here](#) for the YouTube playlist.

### **Joy Overflowing**

Click [here](#) for our Spotify playlist.

Click [here](#) for the YouTube playlist.

*Remember! Playlists are organized as a journey, so consider listening from beginning to end and using the playlists as musical meditations.*

### **Additional Online Music**

- ["I've Got Peace Like a River" \(Vimeo\)](#)
- ["Come, Sing a Song with Me" \(YouTube\)](#)
- ["Now Let Us Sing" \(YouTube\)](#)
- ["I Want To Hold Your Hand" \(YouTube\)](#)

### **Contemporary Music**

- "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



# Meditations, Prayers & Blessings

## **The Days of Too Many Flowers \***

*Rev. Tess Baumberger*

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*

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*

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...

Full piece at

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

## **Welcome Morning**

*Anne Sexton*

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...

Full poem at

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

## **Meditation on Gratitude and Joy**

*Jack Kornfield*

"...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..."

Full piece at

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

## **Joy\***

*Rev. Terri Pahucki*

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..."

Full piece at

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

## **Nourished and Transformed\***

*Rev. Lisa Garcia-Sampson*

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...

Full piece at

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

## **For Easter, Passover, and Earth Day...**

### **Easter Prayer: Voice Still and Small\***

*Rev. Shari Woodbury*

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.

### **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.

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

### **Did the Sun Come up This Morning?**

*Rev. Victoria E Safford*

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...

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

### **What Gives Us Life\***

*Rev. Vanessa Rush Southern & Rev. Alyson Jacks*

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...

Full piece at

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

### **Ready \***

*Rabbi Rachel Barenblat*

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

Full piece at

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

### **Earth Teach Me**

*From the Ute native people of North America*

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.

Full piece at

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

### **Prayer of Co-Creation \***

*Rev. Lyn Cox*

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...

Full prayer at

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



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