



# *Soul Matters*

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



**Companion Resources  
June 2025**

UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
CHURCH OF  
JACKSON



# Welcome to the Practice of Freedom

*What if we could listen  
like the great salmon  
who goes about its ordinary life  
when suddenly something shifts.*

*It does not come as a thunderous  
revelation, but a quiet knowing  
you have been preparing all  
your life to trust.*

*The path lived until now no longer  
satisfies but the path ahead  
seems thousands of miles  
long, and your womb is heavy.*

*-Christine Valters Paintner  
from her poem ["Following an Ancient Call"](#)*

Who of us doesn't understand that "heavy womb"? Who of us hasn't felt a deep hunger begin to grow in our bellies? Who of us hasn't felt a particular new desire rise up, sure and clear? And who of us hasn't—at some point—turned our backs on that desire, that call?

Not that we wanted to. It's just that we were stuck. Imprisoned, so to speak, by circumstances, responsibilities, constraints or assumptions which made that desire seem out of reach. We felt trapped, forced to say "No" when our heart wanted to say "Yes".

More often than we notice, this is the dilemma when it comes to freedom. It's not so much about running away from something as it is about wanting to run *toward* something but not being able to! In other words, there is a big difference between "freedom from" and "freedom to."

Our Unitarian Universalist faith gets this. At its best, it never simply asks us, "What do you need to get away from?" No, it pushes us to ask the deeper question of "What is it that you want to run toward?" Mature freedom is never about the absence of all constraints; it's about being able to commit yourself to the things that have your heart. Or to put it another way, true freedom is about constraints *of our own choosing*.

So what is it for you, friends? Where in your life are you feeling forced to say "No" when your heart really wants to say "Yes"? What is it that you want to use your freedom for? It's not the bars of a prison that make us want to escape; it's suddenly noticing what's on the other side of those bars that makes us want to get out.

So, this month, don't take your eyes off of it. Keep that longing clearly in view. And if you do, you'll be surprised how easy it is to bend open those bars... and simply walk out.

# Calendar Connections

## June 2025

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

### **Interfaith**

- [Pentecost](#) (Christian) - June 8, 2025 (more [here](#))
- [Shavuot](#) (Jewish) - June 1-3, 2025 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Summer Solstice/Litha](#) (Pagan/Wiccan) - June 20, 2025 (more [here](#))

### **Unitarian Universalist**

- Norbert Capek celebrates first [Flower Ceremony](#) - June 4 (1923)
- [General Assembly](#) - takes place June 18 - June 22, 2025.
- [Olympia Brown](#) was ordained - June 25 (1863)

### **National & Cultural**

- [Pride Month](#)
- Anniversary of the [Pulse nightclub shooting](#) in Orlando - June 12, 2016
- [Father's Day](#) - June 15, 2025
- [Juneteenth](#) Emancipation Celebration - June 19 (more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#))
- [World Refugee Day](#) - June 20 (more [here](#))
- [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#) (Canada) - June 21
- [St. Jean Baptiste Day](#) (Canada - Quebec) - June 24
- [Stonewall Uprising](#) - June 28 (more [here](#) and [here](#))

### **For Fun and On the Fringe**

- [National Garden Week](#) - First week of June
- [National Trails Day](#) - First Saturday in June
- [U.N. World Environment Day](#) - June 5 (Sponsored by a different country each year)
- Celebration of [Senses Day](#) - June 24 (more [here](#) and [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. When did you feel most free as a child?
2. Has quitting ever set you free?
3. Has freedom ever frightened you? What did that moment teach you?
4. Is aging trying to offer you a new form of freedom? What is keeping you from accepting that offer?
5. What has life taught you about being imprisoned without realizing it?
6. What story from your life best captures your understanding of freedom?
7. Whose freedom do you envy?
8. Has numbing become your cage?
9. Are you stuck in an old survival mechanism that isn't needed anymore?
10. What form of “imprisonment” are you most vulnerable to? Fear? The need for safety? Woundedness? Shame? Self-doubt? Anger? Fear of rejection? The inability to say sorry? Regret? Gossip? Society's standards of beauty? Your own standard of living?
11. Has seeking safety ever become your jail cell?
12. Have you ever been trapped in someone else's story?
13. Would living more simply bring you more freedom?
14. When were you freed by love?
15. **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**

You must learn one thing.  
The world was made to be free in.  
Give up all the other worlds  
except the one to which you belong.  
Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet  
confinement of your aloneness  
to learn  
anything or anyone  
that does not bring you alive  
is too small for you.

[David Whyte](#)

The bird you put inside a cage, you will have to  
find it another name, for it is no longer a bird.

[Shenaz Patel](#)

The only way to deal with an unfree world is to  
become so absolutely free that your very  
existence is an act of rebellion.

*Albert Camus*

Had I not created my whole world, I would  
certainly have died in other people's.

[Anaïs Nin](#)

The eyes of others our prisons; their thoughts  
our cages

[Virginia Woolf](#)

It is only through disruptions and confusion that  
we grow and are set free, jarred out of  
ourselves by the collision of someone else's  
private world with our own.

*Joyce Carol Oates*

The more you try to control something, the  
more it controls you.

*Unknown*

As long as you make an identity for yourself out  
of pain, you cannot be free of it.

*Eckhart Tolle*

Freedom is what we do with what is done to us.

[Jean-Paul Sartre](#)

I used to feel a lot of guilt or shame about  
feeling emotions like jealousy or insecurity, but  
they have been and are a path to my freedom.  
They show me what work still needs to be  
done. They are an inner compass for healing.

[Katie Creel](#)

Some days you have to unplug the phone and  
step

out to the porch and rock all afternoon  
and allow the sun to tell you what to do...

[Philip Terman](#)

To be free...You must know, not that you  
can do whatever you want... You  
must know instead, that inside you are entire  
Universes [and]... you must fight for the entire  
Universes inside of everyone else...

[Rev. Julián Jamaica Soto](#)

Nobody's free until everybody's free.

[Fannie Lou Hamer](#)

True individual freedom cannot exist without  
economic security and independence.

Necessitous people are not free people.

[Franklin D. Roosevelt](#)

The assumption that truth has a self-evident,  
liberating power, that once people see the truth,  
they will act on it, must be reinterpreted. Truth  
must be repeated over and over again in order  
for it to cut through disinformation. But even  
then, truth alone doesn't set people free—  
power does...

[Scot Nakagawa](#)

Those who profess to favor freedom and yet  
depreciate agitation, are people who want crops  
without ploughing the ground; they want rain  
without thunder and lightning... it must be a  
struggle. Power concedes nothing without a  
demand. It never did and it never will.

*Frederick Douglass*

Juneteenth exists as a counterpoint to the Fourth of July; the latter heralds the arrival of American ideals, the former stresses just how hard it has been to live up to them.

[Jelani Cobb](#)

I try to understand why trans folx are so terrifying to people, why we are seen as such a threat. And ultimately, I think the scariest thing we represent is possibility and freedom. We have resisted the imposition of overly-determined stories of our lives and bodies, and we have demanded more. And that is our gift to all of you.

[Chase Strangio](#)

the days are all too heavy; and then we lift together

[adrienne maree brown](#)

## **Books**

[On Freedom](#)

[Timothy Snyder](#)

[How We Fight White Supremacy: A Field Guide to Black Resistance](#)

[Akiba Solomon & Kenrya Rankin](#)

[The Hidden History of American Oligarchy](#)

[Thom Hartmann](#)

[Chatter](#)

[Ethan Cross](#)

On freeing ourselves from the negative voices in our heads

## **Videos & Podcasts**

**Stuck On An Escalator**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsjj\\_-5RIkl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsjj_-5RIkl)

**This is Water**

On the prison of the petty parts of life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC7xzavzEKY>

**The Good Whale - so good!**

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/podcasts/serial-good-whale.html>

**Dr Maya Angelou on How Love Liberates**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LryyFNh6m3Y>

**A Big Life: Breaking Free from My Past to Embrace the Future**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmByMBz83XM>

**The Freedom of a Simple Life**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRXc0G3Njg8&t=382s>

**Is it possible that the American Dream is to be imprisoned in your house?**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m\\_6mQUYA\\_uU&list=LL&index=8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_6mQUYA_uU&list=LL&index=8)

**On The Surprisingly Complex Relationship Between Freedom And Happiness**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFUAZ\\_YVVKI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFUAZ_YVVKI)

**On Breaking Free From The Stories We Tell Ourselves**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/lori\\_gottlieb\\_how\\_changing\\_your\\_story\\_can\\_change\\_your\\_life](https://www.ted.com/talks/lori_gottlieb_how_changing_your_story_can_change_your_life)

**The Long Road to Pride**

<https://www.facebook.com/DublinBusNews/videos/836998473340636/?v=836998473340636>

**Dehumanizing Trans People as the First Step Against Everyone's Freedom**

<https://www.bestoftheleft.com/1700>

**We're Still Not Free Yet**

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/06/19/tv/video/amanpour-stevenson-juneteenth>

**On the Future of American Democracy, Freedom & the Rule of Law**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nw-ObXslUo4>

**Curtis Yarvin Says Democracy Is Done. Powerful Conservatives Are Listening**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/18/magazine/curtis-yarvin-interview.html>

**Praise the Broken Promise of America**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wixXX2eG-8>

**The Great Dictator's Final Speech, [Charlie Chaplin](#)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7GY1Xg6X20>



# Music

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

## Additional Online Music

- "[Bright Morning Star](#)," (Vimeo) led by [Mark David Buckles](#)
- "[To See a World](#)" ([GoogleDrive](#)) (#398 in *Singing the Living Tradition*)
- "[Morning Has Come](#) ([YouTube](#))" (#1000 in *Singing the Journey*)
- "[We Are](#)" by Dr. Ysaÿe Barnwell ([Vimeo](#))
- "[The Evening Star](#)" ([YouTube](#)) by Felix Medelsohn, performed by Ruben Piirainen

## Contemporary Music

- "We Will Not Stop Singing" by the Chapin Family
- "Liberation" by Joshua Long
- "Ex-Patriot's Song" by Lea Morris
- "Head Full of Doubt/Road Full of Promise" by The Avett Brothers
- "I Am Light" by India.Arie
- "Glory" by Common

# Movies

- [Ghostlight](#) ([Hulu](#))
- [Sing Sing](#) ([Max](#), [Prime](#))
- [The Outrun](#) ([Netflix](#))
- [Fearless](#) ([Prime](#))
- [Human Flow](#) ([Prime](#))
- [A Most Beautiful Thing](#) ([Prime](#))
- [Pleasantville](#) ([Prime](#))

# Meditations & Prayers

## Letting Go of Certainty \*

**Rev. Rebecca C. "Beckett" Coppola'**

Let go of the idea that you know  
what breathing  
should feel like.  
Just notice the breath as it moves  
in and out  
of the body.  
Let go of certainty.  
Be with the breath as it is.

Allow openness.  
Allow curiosity.  
Notice the mind.  
Each thought that arises.  
Allow openness.  
Don't judge your mind.  
Or your experience.  
Be loving in your curiosity about each thought.  
Let go of certainty.  
Let go of any idea about what  
you should be thinking,  
accepting your thoughts exactly as they are.  
Be with your self  
as you are.  
Be curious  
about who you are.  
Love  
how you are in the world.  
Gently take a deep breath,  
maybe even a big sigh,  
re-enter the present moment,  
and the stream of your life.

## It Is That Time and That Place \*

**Rev. Dr. Qiyamah Rahman**

Full piece found at  
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/it-time-and-place>

Now is the time to call on the memories of the  
ancestors who thought they could not walk  
another step toward freedom - and yet they  
did...?

## Ultimate Grace \*

**Rev. Ma Theresa Gustilo Gallardo**

Full prayer at  
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/ultimate-grace>

Free us from our hindrances. Make invisible  
things visible; the voiceless heard; lay what is  
hidden before us; make the chained  
unbound...  
O Universe, with stars in your hair, you have  
shown that great things emerge from humble  
beginnings, no matter how flawed and lacking.  
That one story, in a stable, in prison, in the  
cave, in destitution, in abject poverty, if lived in  
all sincerity can liberate from darkness the  
many..."

### **A Call to Arms \***

**Rev. Marta I. Valentín**

Full piece found at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/281510.shtml>

This is a call to arms. Arms that will hold those with broken and elated hearts, arms that will wrap themselves around beaten bodies... a call to remember that the freedom we've been given... has come on the backs of human beings others wish were invisible...

### **We Imagine a Path \***

**Rev. D. Scott Cooper**

Full piece at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/we-imagine-path>

We bow our heads in order to imagine... a path forward for those who cannot imagine any path forward, because of poor health, financial hardship, family crises, and other roadblocks... We struggle to imagine a path forward for those who are forced to leave a homeland against their will and for those unable to leave a war-torn homeland despite their lives being in danger...

We come together to imagine a path forward for those of us despairing because we do not seem to know our country...

We imagine a path forward for those who feel lonely...

Truly, we know as we imagine these ways forward, and take one another's hands, the paths will lead to hope...

### **Prayer for Juneteenth \***

**Addae Ama Kraba**

Full piece found at

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

As believers in justice,  
Woven into a single garment of life.  
Making us one with the human family,  
Let us rejoice for those who safely  
passed through the shades of night  
towards the daylight of freedom.  
Spirit of all possibilities,  
may we be blessed with true freedom...

### **Blessing for Kin (especially relevant for pride month)**

**Rev. Sean Parker Dennison**

Found in [Breaking and Blessing](#), UUA

meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

Also found in video/visual meditation at

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

### **Father's Day Meditation \***

**Rev. Rod Richards**

Full piece found at

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/fathers-day-meditation>

...We support and celebrate the fathers in our midst who give of themselves to their children, recognizing all the strength and wisdom and stamina and love and time and honest introspection that fatherhood requires... And we seek to honor wherever we find ourselves today across this vast spectrum of experience and to feel the compassion that embraces us within this silence.

### **Father's Day in Our Imperfect World \***

**Rev. Margo Rinehart**

On this Father's Day, like all the others, we are here again reflecting on all the complexities of relationship, the paradoxes that challenge the simplicity of our understandings.

My father, angry and gentle; justice seeking and prosecutorial; ally and abandoning.  
Raised in poverty but possessing the wealth of experience, the gifts of friendships, the tenacity of spirit.

Superman when he placed his arm between a dog's bared teeth and my five-year-old face.  
The advocate when he escorted a guest from our home after a racist word had been used and defended.

The criticizer when he felt the need to see my mother's contributions as less than his own.  
On Father's Day may we see all that they truly are. The greatness and the grist.

May we feel the strength they gave to us.  
May we repair any wounds remaining.  
May we carry forth their dreams for us.



## ***Poems That Can Serve As Meditations On Freedom***

### **Cindy Comes To Hear Me Read**

***Jill McDonough***

Full piece at

<https://www.slowdownshow.org/episode/2019/10/23/238-cindy-comes-to-hear-me-read>

I met her in prison... But now she's out!...  
She has a car... Each day she sees the angry  
people. Sweet, silly people,  
mad—God bless them—at traffic. At other cars.  
She laughs, she told me...  
People around her, angry as toddlers. Whole  
highways of traffic, everybody at the work of  
being free.

### **Perhaps It Would Eventually Erode, But ...**

***Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer***

Full poem at

<http://www.ayearofbeinghere.com/2015/10/rose-merry-wahtola-trommer-perhaps-it.html>

That rock that we  
have been pushing up the hill...  
what if we stopped? We are not  
Sisyphus. This rock  
is not a punishment...  
It's something we've chosen  
to push...  
Now all I want  
is to let the rock  
roll back to where it belongs...  
and you and I could,  
imagine!, walk unencumbered...

### **Praise the Broken Promise of America *Alison Luterman***

Text: <https://rattle.com/praise-the-broken-promise-of-america-by-alison-luterman/>

Spoken: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wixXX2eG-8>

On the painful freedom of waking up to what is  
happening and staying focused on those still  
striving to free us from our painful present



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