



Overview of 2019-20 UU Wellspring Programs: Sources and Sacred Arts

“What will you do with this one wild and precious life?” asks the poet Mary Oliver.

UU Wellspring is a 10-month program of distinctly Unitarian Universalist spiritual development designed to help participants answer that provocative question.

Begun in 2005, the program celebrates the depth and breadth of our rich religious tradition. Over the years, UU Wellspring has expanded and now offers four years of programming: *Sources* (the revised first-year program, described below), *Spiritual Practices*, *Deep Questions*, and *Faithful Actions*.

All UU Wellspring programs incorporate five elements designed to balance a knowledge of UU history and theology with personal spiritual practice and engagement with the world. The five components of UU Wellspring that participants agree to are:

- A commitment to daily spiritual practice
- Participation in a small-group community
- Individual work with a spiritual director monthly
- Readings and resources for knowledge and reflection
- Commitment to live out our values in the world

Our current curricula include our foundational program, *Sources*, along with three advanced programs: *Spiritual Practices*, *Deep Questions*, and *Faithful Actions*. A fourth advanced program, *Sacred Arts*, is in development and will be released in 2019.

Foundational Program: Sources

Background

Many Unitarian Universalists, young and old, are familiar with the seven principles, a statement of our most deeply held values that starts with “the inherent worth and dignity of every person” and ends with “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” In addition to affirming and promoting the seven principles, the living tradition of Unitarian Universalism also draws on six sources for religious knowledge and spiritual growth: direct experience, prophetic women and men, world religions, Jewish and Christian teachings, humanist teachings, and Earth-centered traditions. If the seven principles are what we aspire to, the six sources are what inspires us.

In *Sources*, which is a prerequisite for all other years of UU Wellspring, participants are challenged by, comforted by, and inspired by each one of the six sources. They learn not just about Unitarian Universalism, but also about how to integrate their Unitarian Universalist faith more fully into their daily lives.

Structure

Sources is divided into six units, one for each of the six UU sources. Within each of the six units, participants cycle through a head-hands-heart experience of the source:

- Head: When introduced to a given source, participants learn about our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition. Grounded in UU history and theology, topics such as courage, love, and justice are explored.
- Hands: For the second section, participants reflect on how taking the source seriously might change the way we live our lives. Meaningful topics are brought into the circle such as the theology of everyday life, the prophetic imperative, and reimagining God.
- Heart: During the third part of the head-hands-heart cycle, participants go deep into core spiritual themes: vulnerability, forgiveness, joy, and more. Spiritual struggles, spiritual practices, and spiritual questions are all brought forth, with the wisdom of each source as a guide.

Holding this all together are the essential components that are the heart of all UU Wellspring programs: small group connection, commitment to daily spiritual practice, monthly spiritual direction, reading and reflecting on the assignments, and putting our faith into action, all resting on a foundation of deep listening.

Sources Topics

Session 1 — Welcoming the Soul

Direct Experience

Session 2 — Everyday Theology

Session 3 — Spiritual Histories

Prophetic People

Session 4 — Prophetic Voices of Our Unitarian Ancestors

Session 5 — Modern UU Prophets

Session 6 — Your Own Prophetic Voice: Vulnerability and Courage

*Session 7** — *Solstice Ritual*

Jewish and Christian Teachings

Session 8 — Our Universalist Heritage

Session 9 — Reimagining God: Process Theology

Session 10 — Experimenting with Prayer

World Religions

Session 11 — Buddhism: Religion as Practice

Session 12 — Forgiveness and Letting Go

Earth-Centered Spirituality

Session 13 — Nature as Spiritual Guide

Session 14 — UUism and the Crises of Life

Session 15 — The Theology of Joy

Humanist Teachings

Session 16 — Good without God

Session 17 — UU Perspectives on Death and the Afterlife

Session 18 — Let Your Life Speak

Session 19 — Celebration and Reflection

*In Sources Online for Religious Professionals, attendees are encouraged to attend a local-to-them solstice ritual

Sources Required Books

- *Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life* edited by Scott Alexander; *A Hidden Wholeness*, by Parker Palmer; *You Are Here: Discovering the Magic of the Present Moment*, by Thich Nhat Hanh; *Let Your Life Speak*, by Parker Palmer; *One or both: Voices from the Margins: An Anthology of Meditations* edited by Jacqui James and Mark D. Morrison-Reed and/or *To Wake To Rise: Meditations on Justice and Resilience* edited by William G. Sinkford.

Wellspring Sacred Arts

Background

Art matters, because the act of creating matters, because we are – as our examination of process theology shows us—that just as God is both creator and creating, we too are both a part of creation and are creators—and the moments of creation are the true reality. As writer Arthur Graham notes, “Each of us is an artist whose task it is to shape life into some semblance of the pattern we dream about. The molding is not of self alone, but of shared tomorrows and times we shall never see.”

Sacred Arts is meant to deepen our own sense of creation and creativity, to start the tiny revolutions of connection and resistance in our personal lives, our Unitarian Universalist communities, and the world.

In creating *Sacred Arts*, attention has been paid to not only the readings but also the process of our work together. We are engaging in different ways to decenter white supremacy culture in our programs. For example, we do not throw away the deep listening practices we have learned from Parker Palmer’s *A Hidden Wholeness*, but we do engage listening in some different ways besides silence, since silence is more common to white spaces than non-white spaces. We will also engage a different sort of covenanting process that addresses issues of power that often go unspoken in predominantly white spaces. Throughout the program, you will also note more activity and less sitting still. And yes, artists, theologians, and thinkers—we will engage are from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. We are under no delusion that we have a perfectly decentered program; however, we believe our efforts will help us be more expansive and inclusive.

Structure

We begin this journey together with an assessment of ourselves as creative individuals, and with an affirmation through covenant to be each other’s supporters – to be a validation squad. Participants will be encouraged to take up an art form as their spiritual practice for the duration – and as always, they are welcome to dabble or dive deep.

Over the next sixteen sessions, we will engage an art form—through information about the form itself, one practitioner of that art form, and an invitation to engage it outside the UU Wellspring session. The session will also feature engagement of a

spiritual concept—through an essay or sermon about that concept, and then probing questions that might connect the art form to the concept and then finally to ourselves and to the world. There will be an invitation to engage creatively in ways that serve the congregation and the community—your group may decide to engage a project together or each engage individually.

In the closing session, we will celebrate the creativity of each person – the projects they have engaged and/or completed, as well as the creative work they have done in the congregation and the community.

Sacred Arts Topics

Session 1 —The Art of The Squad

Session 2 — Dance and the Art of Embodiment

Session 3 — Painting and the Art of Observation

Session 4 — Architecture and the Art of Human Ingenuity

Session 5 — Sculpture and the Art of Simplicity

Session 6 — Composition and the Art of Harmony

Session 7 — Cooking and the Art of Devotion

Session 8 — Textiles and the Art of Forgiveness

Session 9 — Fiction and Memoir and the Art of Hidden Wisdom

Session 10 — Photography and the Art of Giving Our Attention

Session 11 — Poetry and the Art of the Metaphor

Session 12 — Stand-Up Comedy and the Art of Telling Our Stories

Session 13 — Improvisation and the Art of Letting Go

Session 14 — Landscaping and the Art of the Natural World

Session 15 — Installation Art and the Art of Being an Earthling

Session 16 — Music Performance and the Art of Choosing the Right Song

Session 17 — Theater and the Art of the Ensemble

Session 18 —A Celebration of Creativity

Required Books

Faithful Practices: Everyday ways to feed your spirit, edited by Erik Walker Wikstrom



at [UU Wellspring: Spiritual Deepening for Unitarian Universalists](#)
or go to uuwellspring.org for more information.