

THE RAIN OF SELF-COMPASSION

AWAKE

Before practicing the R.A.I.N. meditation below, we invite you to breathe deeply as guided in this short [meditation](#).

The R.A.I.N. Technique *by Tara Brach*

Buddhist teacher Tara Brach, herself a victim of an incurable genetic disease, teaches self-compassion during times of confusion and stress using four steps of mindfulness:

R—Recognize. Take time to notice the thoughts and emotions you are experiencing. If you are overwhelmed by anxiety, take a moment to turn toward the anxiety and sit with it. What does the anxiety feel like in your body? What shape does it take?

A—Allow. Allow the experience to be there just as it is. Our tendency is to try to control, numb or repress difficult feelings. Can you allow the feelings to be there without trying to change or control them?

I—Investigate. What is the narrative that you tell yourself about these thoughts or emotions? Are they true? What does this part of you need during this time?

N—Nurture. Nurture yourself with compassion and kindness. Recognize that anxiety, fear, uncertainty and anger are all parts of the human experience. Can you take care of yourself in the midst of it?

AWARE

Daily breathing exercises quiet the mind for us to: Recognize what is happening; Allow life to be as it is; Investigate with kindness; Nurture balance and perspective on our feelings. For example, after recognizing, allowing and investigating the anxiety or confusion we discern, instead of saying “I am anxious” or “I am confused,” we can more truthfully tell ourselves, “I feel anxiety or confusion, but am not defined by my feelings.” We don’t deny, we just don’t over-identify. We are much more than the thoughts or feelings that pass, like clouds, through the sky of our experience.



THE RAIN OF SELF-COMPASSION

ALIVE

We suggest that you use the R.A.I.N. exercise daily, or several times a day, to instill a more natural and realistic way to view your thoughts and emotions, especially during this extremely stressful and confusing time. As you get better at not equating your experience with your spirit, soul or true self, take time to journal what you are observing. If the mood strikes you, create a poem or story to express this experience more vividly or with more compassion.

ABIDE

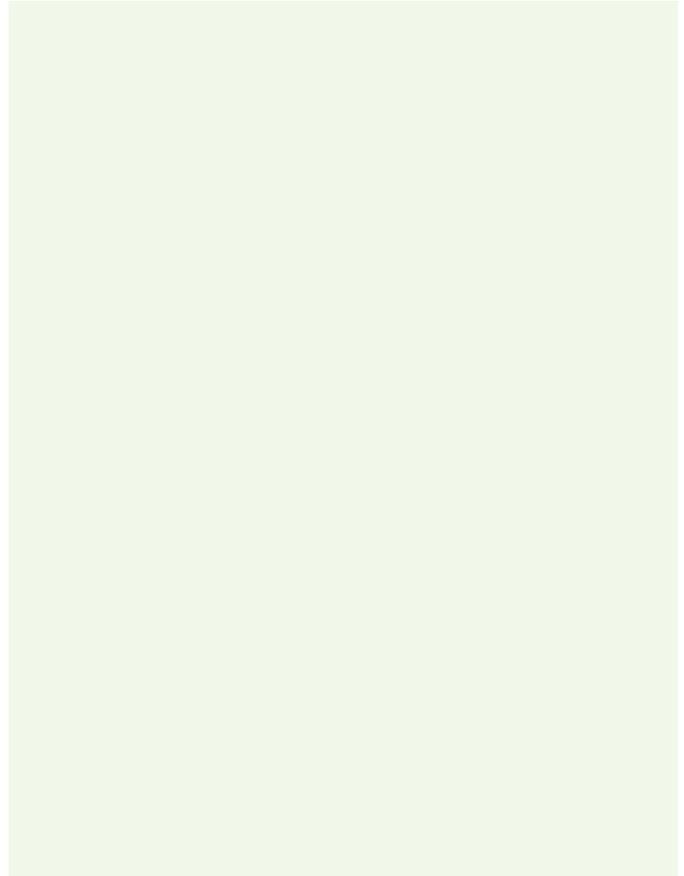
In the New Testament we are encouraged, “*let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.*” (Colossians 3:15) Without a doubt, finding peace isn’t easy after we glance at a newsfeed and feel heavy with the pain of a world in which we share our suffering and uncertainty. Our Lord was known as a man of sorrows, so we are assured that Christ abides with what troubles us most. And yet the strength of Christ, made perfect in weakness, ends with God’s word for a time such as now: “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.*” (John 14:1)

ARISE

Today the wisdom of Buddhist mindfulness and the peace of Christ known through the example of Jesus coalesce into a message of hope that we are not captive to our thoughts and feelings, although they have urgent need to be recognized and understood. Arise and...

- Practice the R.A.I.N. exercise daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here



AWAKENING TO GRATITUDE

AWAKE

We invite you to take part in the **Gratitude Meditation** as preparation for our devotion, Awakening to Gratitude.

This devotion series has offered help and healing by connecting mind to body, body to others and others to God's good creation. Living mindfully is, paradoxically, to not live alone in the prison of your mind, but to extend beyond yourself into a world of relationships that awaken gratitude.

"Today, let us swim wildly, joyously in gratitude." - Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi

AWARE

We can move spiritually from wakefulness to full awareness when we view our surroundings, be they majestic or mundane, through the lens of gratitude. The English poet John Milton spoke of how a viewpoint of gratitude is an act of worship:

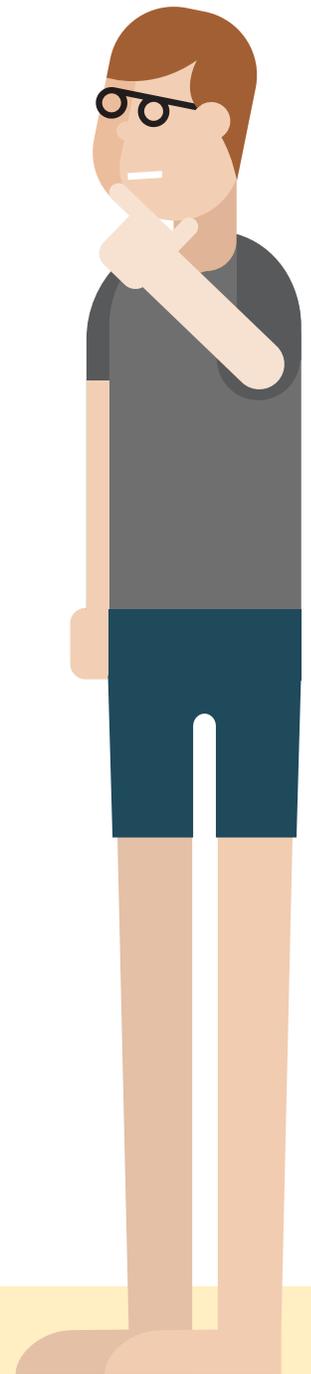
"Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world."

What revelations of wonder are you aware of today when you view the ordinary world as extraordinary?

ALIVE

This well-known saying is attributed to Saint Irenaeus: *"The glory of God is man fully alive."* The Spirit of God that enlivens all of us is present when we feel like our lives, and the very life of our world, is being held in the balance. But remember, the stars shine brighter when the night sky is as dark as ink.

How is God's glory fully alive and bright in your night sky?



AWAKENING TO GRATITUDE

ABIDE



We are shown throughout the book of Exodus that Moses received vision and courage to lead the Hebrew children toward a promised land whenever he was willing to abide for an extended time on Mt. Sinai.

In Exodus 33, there is an epiphany of the Lord that took Moses by surprise. In fact, the Lord expressed gratitude to Moses for his faithfulness and asked what “favor” Moses would want from God in return. Moses asked to see God’s glory (or God’s face), but the Lord asked Moses to first do this:

“See there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back; but my face shall not be seen.” (33:21-23, NRSV)

As we abide in an awareness of gratitude, God’s back will pass by. Like Moses, we will “see” the Lord mostly in retrospect—as we reflect on the times we have stood in the dark cleft of history. Sadness and heaviness of heart can awaken us to new appearances of the Divine trailing by.

ARISE



In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus passes through Samaria and heals ten lepers. One of the lepers is filled with such gratitude that he returns to Jesus to give thanks. Jesus then said:

“...were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And he said to him, ***“Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”*** (17: 17-19, NKJV)

Arise and know that faith connects you whenever you stop, like the one leper, and awaken to gratitude.

- Listen to the Gratitude Meditation daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here



WE MUST BE PREPARED

AWAKE

Before reading this poem, which will set the tone for this time of reflection and action, we invite you to breathe deeply as guided in this short **meditation**.

We Must Be Prepared by Ken Sehested

A brief meditation for the living of these days

We must be prepared.
Things are likely to get worse
before they get better. We
must listen to the news,
from a variety of sources.
But we must not draw our
bearings from that news.
Ours is a larger horizon.

We must be prepared to
take emergency action, to
go completely out of our
comfort zones, in resisting
the Powers-and-Principalities'
sway over current events.

In the meantime, however,
we must not neglect
our common duties:

- to care for those close,
especially our young ones,
in guiding them toward a
life commitment to empathy,
simultaneously brave and humble;

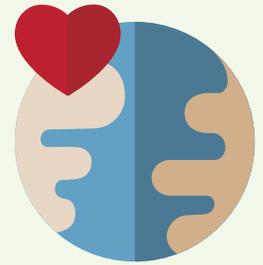
- to care for neighbors, for
friends and acquaintances
and co-workers — no less
than for the earth itself.
- to be faithful in communities
of faith, in whatever form that
takes, to listen for and proclaim
the Word's invitation and direction;
- to building a culture of peace
in the zip codes, the watersheds,
the time zones, in which we live
and with special attention to
advocacy for those who presently
have no seat at the table of bounty;
- to risk the status we have been
given in *the world as is present*
on behalf of *the world that is promised*.

In light of these and an endless
list of other similar commitments,
we plead:
Lord have mercy on our frail
appeal; and grant what we need
for the living of these days.

*Ken Sehested is curator of prayerandpolitics.org, an online journal at the
intersection of spiritual formation and prophetic action.*

AWARE

Daily breathing exercises help our body and mind to become at rest. We must be prepared to take any necessary action, but from a place of stillness that is both peaceful and alert. For most of us, until now, getting out of our “comfort zones” meant taking minimal responsibility to push beyond the limits of the norm. What distracts and discourages you from living faithfully into the larger horizon of God’s infinite care while living responsibly within the finite limits of the here-and-now?



WE MUST BE PREPARED

ALIVE

It is suggested that you use the poem above as a meditation on the meaning of being prepared, taking emergency action and resisting the “Powers-and-Principlalities” that exhaust our limits. As thoughts, memories and sensations arise, observe them with a quiet mind and, if you like, write what is speaking to you in your journal.

Write your reflections here

ABIDE

Our Lord demonstrated his high calling by being prepared and watchful. As he entered the Garden of Gethsemane he said to his disciples, and now to us, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here and stay awake with me.” (Matthew 26: 38, NRSV) Reach out remotely, but in real time, to encourage a friend or friends to “stay awake” and be prepared.

ARISE

Today the poet Ken Sehested helped us accept the obligations of being prepared that we each face during this time of pandemic. He also urges us to balance our lives in the direction of health and wholeness by getting our bearings from a “larger horizon.” While we are socially isolated, exercise your deeper values of care, compassion and connection in remote ways that communicate love. Remember to:

- Read this poem daily.
- Awake to clear your mind by listening to the breathing exercise clip.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.
- Safely express “care for neighbors, for friends and acquaintances and co-workers.”
- “Be faithful in communities of faith, in whatever form that now takes, to listen for and proclaim the Word’s invitation and direction.”



CARRYING ONE ANOTHER'S PAIN

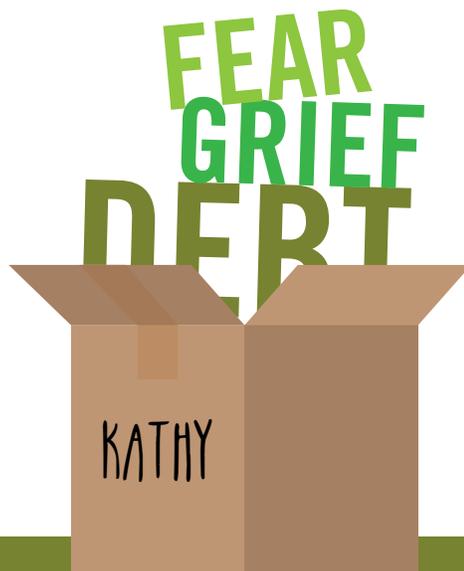
AWAKE

Prepare for our devotion by engaging in the Christian mindfulness practice [here](#).

John Lennon of The Beatles, during his solo career, wrote a song entitled GOD. It began by saying, “God is a concept by which we measure our pain.” While the three Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—insist that God is more than a concept, pain awakens us to life more urgently than anything else. What you do with your pain, be it physical or psychological, suggests that it can be shared with God (through prayer) as well as with others (through relationships of trust). As pain of any kind awakens you today, what are the ways that God, family, friends or community carry your pain? And in what ways do you carry the pain of others?

AWARE

While the crucified Jesus is the ultimate expression of God’s suffering for Christians, we are, in turn, asked to be “imitators of God” (Ephesians 5:1). During this pandemic, when pain is deeply felt by all, are you aware of the healing role you’re playing with others as you imitate Christ’s suffering?



CARRYING ONE ANOTHER'S PAIN

ALIVE

An inspirational poster in a student life center read, *"As long as you feel pain, you're still alive. As long as you make mistakes, you're still human. And as long as you keep trying, there's still hope."* (Susan Gale)

As you acknowledge your pain, uncertainty and mistakes, the good news amidst the bad is that our Lord is with you and sees the depth of your present challenge. Jesus said, *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* (John 10:10, NRSV).

There is an inner reservoir of the Holy Spirit to help you be fully and abundantly alive with strength, hope and courage beyond all understanding.

In what ways can you mindfully, prayerfully lean into the pain you carry and sense God's abundant life stirring within? As thoughts, memories and sensations surface, observe them with a quiet mind and, if you like, write what is speaking to you in your journal or on this devotion by downloading the PDF and printing or writing in the fillable text field provided.

ABIDE

We are created to be connected to others and to the Creator of all that is. The metaphor Jesus used to encourage trust in our connectedness was that of a vine: *"Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me."* (John 15:4, NRSV)

What is the fruit of the pain you carry so faithfully? List the ways that you also abide deeply rooted in the Lord of abundant life.

ARISE

Arise to a deeper, more abundant life in the midst of challenge. Today we were nudged beyond our personal pain in order to imitate Jesus's suffering servanthood by carrying the pain of others.

- Practice the Christian mindfulness exercise daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here



CREATION GROANS

AWAKE

We invite you to take part in this **Loving-Kindness Meditation** as preparation for our devotion, Creation Groans.

There is a school of theology known as eco-theology that stresses the vital relationship we share with the natural world. This insight has origins in all the world's religions. An account of creation in Genesis tells us that "*the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.*" (2:7, NRSV)

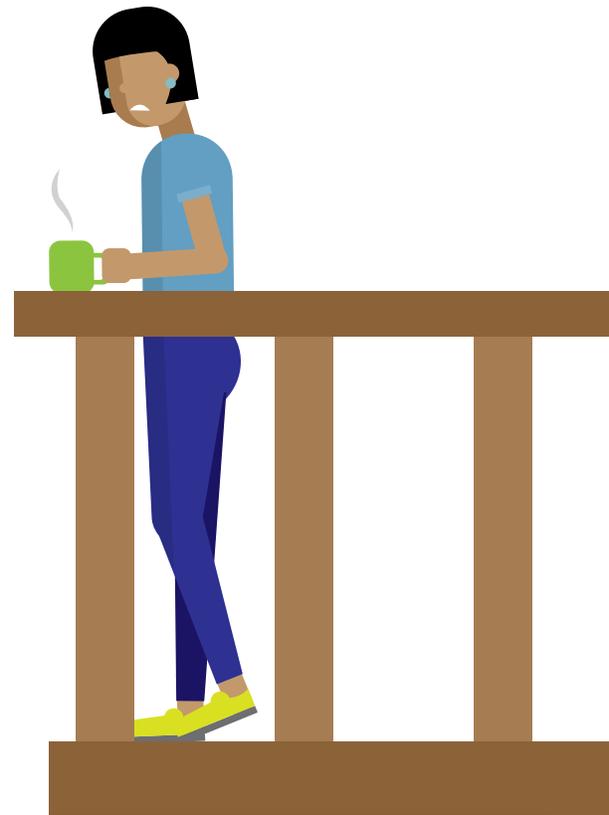
Think of it, when we are born and take our first breath we awake into the world as earth-derived creatures. Creation shares in our joy and our pain, and we have the same capacity to awaken to the joy and pain of nature. The Apostle Paul puts it this way:

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:22-23, NRSV)

AWARE

Because the spread of COVID-19 has increased everyone's sense of uncertainty and apprehension, we're keenly aware of how interconnected we are—to each other and the natural world that offers us sustenance, beauty and comfort. As we relax our pace while sheltering in place, the earth that has been groaning under tons of carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide—gases that come from auto and industry emissions—is now breathing a sigh of relief. Skies are clearing over countless cities that were once obscured by smog.

As you step onto your balcony or back porch to greet the morning, or as you take time for a quiet walk in the woods, in what ways does creation communicate to you a gentle but strong awareness of mutual dependence? In what ways have we made creation groan? In what ways can we help creation heal?



CREATION GROANS

ALIVE

We live in an industrialized world that exploits creation as passive and subject to our will. We got this idea from an inaccurate reading of the first creation story in Genesis that ends by telling humans to “have dominion” over the earth (1:28). And yet the second creation story in Genesis places humans in the garden to till and cultivate it, which means to serve the earth (2:4-8).

In what ways do you sense, in this time of frailty, that we can rebound with wholeness and aliveness in God’s good world by being faithful stewards of creation?

ABIDE

Many guiding visions of the world’s religions came about through natural surroundings and phenomena: Moses was called to liberate the Hebrew children at the burning bush; Jesus began his earthly ministry by spending forty days in the wilderness; Muhammad had a vision at a cave that resulted in the writing of the Koran; The Buddha was enlightened as he sat under the Bodhi tree.

During these stressful times of social distancing, we can draw close to nature and abide in its peace, wisdom and power.

ARISE

Arise and go with these words of scripture that unite creature with creation (Psalm 139:13-15)

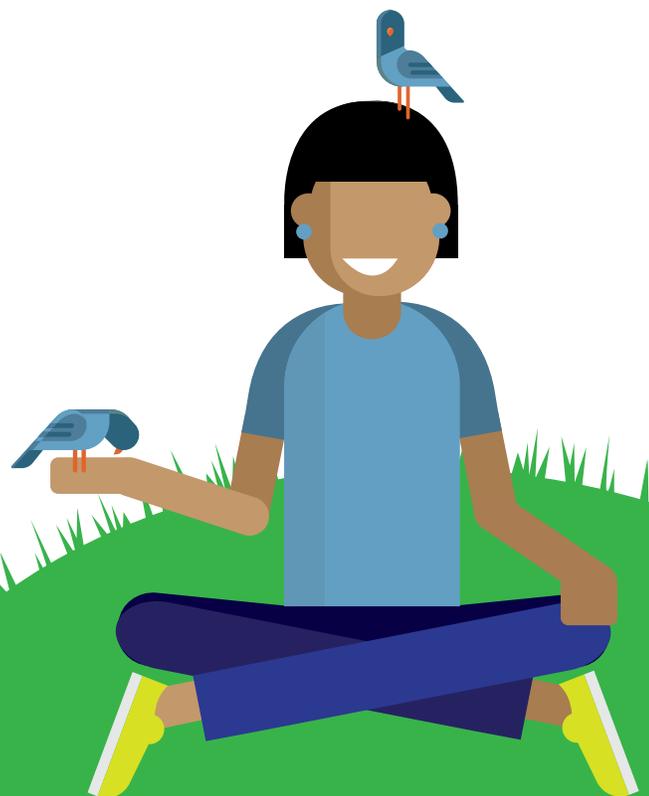
*For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.*

*I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.*

*My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

- Practice the Loving-Kindness meditation daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here



CREATION REDEEMED

AWAKE

We invite you to take part in the **Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon** as preparation for our devotion, Creation Redeemed.

As you awake each morning, the world is radiant with light streaming through your window, a birdsong heard from a tree limb tossing in the breeze, or the scent of pine or honeysuckle wafting through an open doorway. Awakening to creation is to simply recognize that, for better or for worse, we share a common atmosphere and destiny with all that is around us—animal, vegetable and mineral.

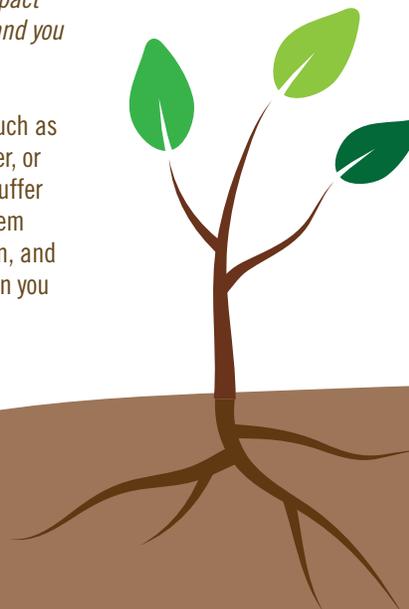
The Hebrew prophets, during Israel's captivity in Babylon (597-538 BC), imagined their redemption within the wider scope of creation: *"But the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."* Habakkuk 2:14

AWARE

Best known for her research with chimpanzees, researcher and conservationist Dr. Jane Goodall encourages environmental preservation by reminding us that humans are inescapably connected to the natural world:

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

It is rightly said that we are not punished for our sins as much as by our sins. Whenever we poison the purity of our air or water, or diminish the resources found in the "web of life," we also suffer by the effects of what we have done, or failed to do, to redeem creation. Pope Francis has said that global warming is a sin, and that protecting creation is an act of mercy. In what ways can you act as an aware and merciful steward of creation?



CREATION REDEEMED

ALIVE

A synonym for being fully alive is to be renewed, or to be “as new” all over again. To the newly converted at the church of Corinth, the Apostle Paul extended this gift of aliveness to all—affirming them as one with creation by saying:

So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Count the many ways that this time of challenge is not only a “passing away” of what we once took for granted, but a time that will lead us, much like nature being redeemed from the paralysis of winter into the vibrancy of spring, into a new day of hope.

ABIDE

As we find ourselves abiding in isolation to maintain a healthy separation from others, we also have freedom to selectively move amidst nature by walking along greenways, waterfronts and open fields that have a lot to teach us... whenever we take time to listen. The German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, in *“Book of Hours: Love Poems to God,”* spoke of our earthly pilgrimage as one of abiding with creation:

*If we surrendered
to earth's intelligence
we could rise up rooted, like trees.*

ARISE

Being rooted to our loving Creator who helps us rise every morning like resilient trees, go forward into your day as if it is a new day of redemption—a day of promise that we anticipate as heaven and nature sings.

- Listen to the Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here



GROUNDING THE BODY

AWAKE

Before practicing the exercise below, we invite you to breathe deeply as guided in this short [meditation](#).

5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique for Anxiety

5: Acknowledge **FIVE** things you see around you. It could be a pen, a spot on the ceiling, anything in your surroundings.

4: Acknowledge **FOUR** things you can touch around you. It could be your hair, a pillow, or the ground under your feet.

3: Acknowledge **THREE** things you hear. This could be any external sound. If you can hear your belly rumbling that counts! Focus on things you can hear outside of your body.

2: Acknowledge **TWO** things you can smell. Maybe you are in your office and smell a pencil, or maybe you are in your bedroom and smell a pillow. If you need to take a brief walk to find a scent, you could smell soap in your bathroom, or nature outside.

1: Acknowledge **ONE** thing you can taste. What does the inside of your mouth taste like—gum, coffee, or the sandwich from lunch?”

The 5-4-3-2-1 exercise was developed by the SOAR Inc Fear of Flying program. Learn more about it [here](#).

AWARE

Daily breathing exercises, as you’ve noticed, connect us to our bodies with greater calm. It is easy during these times to get caught up in our frenzied minds. So, it is vital to engage in simple practices that “ground” our minds into our bodies. Remember, we do not **HAVE** bodies as much as we **ARE** bodies. We are created in the image of God who was perfectly incarnated as a flesh and blood human being. Our bodies, when calm and centered, give strength and power to our thinking and feeling capacities, boosting our awareness and giving us a better sense of our infinite worth and purpose.



GROUNDING THE BODY

ALIVE

We suggest that you use the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise daily, even several times a day, to connect with the full range of your sensory experience—sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste. The more intentional you are about tapping into your five senses, the more enlivened you will become. This aliveness is conducive to a healthier, functioning body and immune system. Additional exercises for grounding yourself during COVID-19 may be found [here](#).

As you practice these exercises, and thoughts, memories and sensations surface, observe them with a quiet mind. If you like, write what is speaking to you in your journal or on this devotion by downloading the PDF and printing or writing in the fillable text field provided.

ABIDE

In Mark's gospel (8:22-25), Jesus heals the blind man at Bethsaida. What is miraculous is that the man's sensory ability is restored, little by little, as he "sees" people as clearly and naturally as possible:

They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" And the man looked up and said, "I can see people, but they look like trees, walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently, and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

In what ways can you be miraculously grounded by opening your five senses to your Creator?

ARISE

Today we gave ourselves two simple sensory exercises that served to ground our fleeting thoughts and emotions into our bodies.

- Practice the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here



HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

AWAKE



Before welcoming the Hope of the Resurrection, we invite you to prepare by singing the celebration hymn, Christ The Lord is Risen Today, written by John Wesley in 1739. Hundreds of Christians from across the globe, including the United States, Africa, the Philippines and Eastern Europe have joined together to experience the risen Christ. The Discipleship Ministries Virtual Easter Choir Project recording can be found [here](#).

“Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present.” (N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*)

During times of tragedy and uncertainty, faith is a way of living in spite of evidence to the contrary. As the Letter to the Hebrews so eloquently puts it, “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (11:1)

As we celebrate the Hope of the Resurrection, we are invited to connect with the two Marys at the tomb. Surprised by an angel, and later by the risen Jesus, they were awakened from a state of fear to great joy.

AWARE



Hear Matthew's Easter message of hope as you stir to new life on faith's horizon:

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. (Matthew 28:1-2)

Daily prayer and breathing exercises help to widen our awareness of new possibilities during our present situation. In what ways can the hope of Easter “roll back the stone” of fear and anxiety that can easily define our day moving forward?



HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

ALIVE

His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay." (Matthew 28:3-6)

Shadowed by great gloom, the two Marys see the empty place where Jesus lay accompanied by messengers bright as lightening and white as snow. The resurrection quickened in them a new sense of being alive and vital. How can this be true for you? Write what is speaking to you in your journal or on this devotion by downloading the PDF and printing or writing in the fillable text field provided.

ABIDE

"Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (Matthew 28:7-8)

As the two Marys quickly ran from the tomb as messengers to the disciples, they symbolized the hope of the resurrected Christ "coming forward from the future into the present." As counterintuitive as it may sound, what are the ways you can abide in the present with a renewed understanding that God intends a very different future for the world?

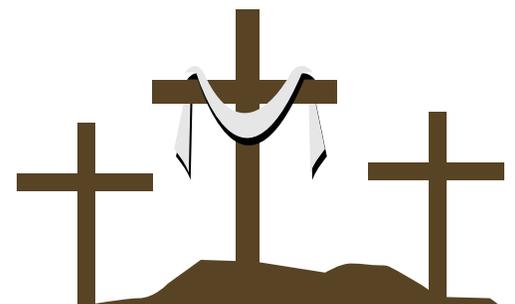
Write your reflections here

ARISE

Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." (Matthew 28:9-10)

Giving thanks for the hope that came to the two Marys, they worshipped Jesus. But Jesus gave them the benediction to arise, to "go" and "tell" how their lives had been so instantly changed from despair and doubt to awe and gratitude.

- Practice breathing exercises and pray daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group to share hope.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.



PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

AWAKE

We invite you to listen to **"Praying Without Ceasing,"** a guided meditation on Psalm 23, as preparation for our devotion.

"The Awakened Life" has guided us through this devotion series by inviting each individual to begin the day in a mindful way. Mindfulness is the most basic and enduring kind of prayer, much like contemplative or centering prayer. Simple words, such as "hallelujah" or "thank you, Lord" or "may I be safe," can be said to give focus, yet the essential thread that runs throughout the mindful state of devotion is our breath.

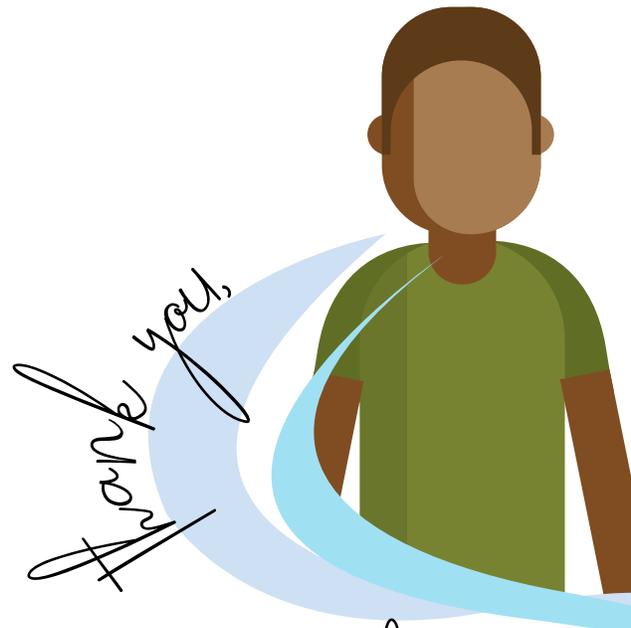
The Hebrew word for breath is *ruach*, which also translates as wind and Spirit. The Book of Genesis equates breath as God's gift of Spirit to humankind: **"then the Lord formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."** (2:7, NRSV).

Awake today by being mindful of your breath as a gift (upon inhaling) and as a prayer of thanks (upon exhaling).

AWARE

The practice of mindfulness is about cultivating a sustained awareness of our breath. Whether we think about it or not, whether we are awake or asleep, we live within a rhythm of breathing-in and breathing-out. As we become intentionally aware of this ongoing rhythm, and as we feel gratitude for the Creator's Spirit that constantly flows, such thankful awareness becomes a natural form of prayer.

Think of the many opportunities throughout this day—while walking up a flight of stairs or cycling down the street—that your breathing can be a form of praying without ceasing.



PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

ALIVE

A Hindu word for breath is *prana*—the power of the transcendent, or Supreme Self, that invigorates life with meaning, wisdom and right purpose. The Hindu scriptures, known as the Vedas and Upanishads, are viewed as the life-breath of spiritual words that flood the heart, fill the mind and connect our divine essence (the Atman) with the cosmic soul beneath the world (the Brahman). Prana yoga is the spiritual practice of breathing and meditating so that the Atman is aligned with the Brahman.

To pray without ceasing is to be invigorated by the Creator's breath that makes us fully alive!

ABIDE

Islam teaches that believers abide in ceaseless devotion to Allah by the mindfulness of faith (*iman*) and the willfulness of good works (*amal*). There is no division between faith and works since they are viewed as two sides of the same coin of true religion. Islam's holy scriptures teach, ***“And those who believed and did good works, they are the inhabitants of Paradise, abiding therein eternally.”*** (Quran 2:82)

Our lives are complete when faith and works, like breathing-in and breathing-out, are lived in balance as an abiding prayer.

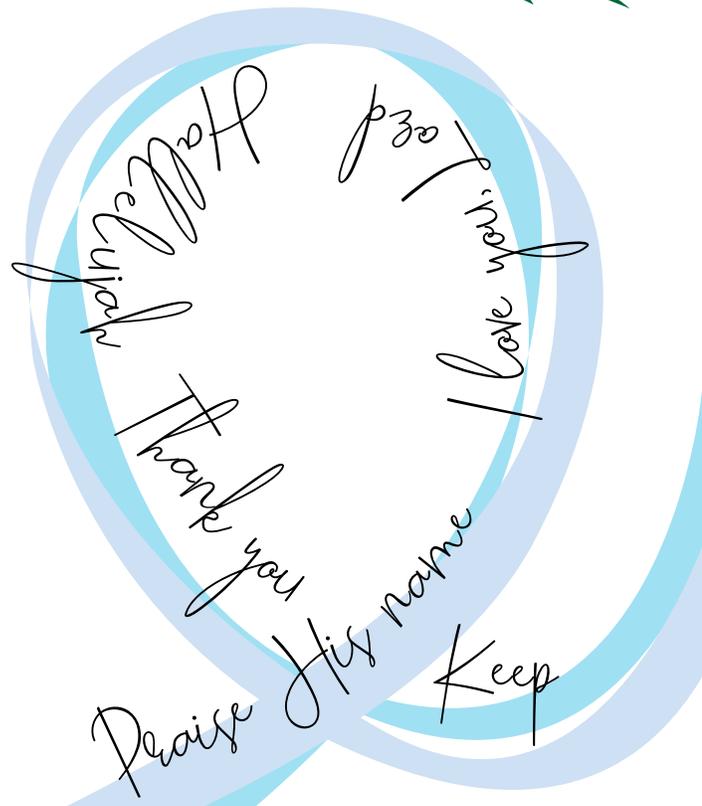
ARISE

After Jesus had been resurrected, and just before he ascended to heaven, he gave this blessing to his followers, and to us: ***“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”*** ***When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit...”*** (John 20:21b-22, NRSV)

Arise, receive the breath of the Spirit, and be sent into the world with power and ceaseless prayer.

- Listen again to the Praying Without Ceasing meditation.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here



THE RAIN OF SELF-COMPASSION

AWAKE

Before practicing the R.A.I.N. meditation below, we invite you to breathe deeply as guided in this short [meditation](#).

The R.A.I.N. Technique *by Tara Brach*

Buddhist teacher Tara Brach, herself a victim of an incurable genetic disease, teaches self-compassion during times of confusion and stress using four steps of mindfulness:

R—Recognize. Take time to notice the thoughts and emotions you are experiencing. If you are overwhelmed by anxiety, take a moment to turn toward the anxiety and sit with it. What does the anxiety feel like in your body? What shape does it take?

A—Allow. Allow the experience to be there just as it is. Our tendency is to try to control, numb or repress difficult feelings. Can you allow the feelings to be there without trying to change or control them?

I—Investigate. What is the narrative that you tell yourself about these thoughts or emotions? Are they true? What does this part of you need during this time?

N—Nurture. Nurture yourself with compassion and kindness. Recognize that anxiety, fear, uncertainty and anger are all parts of the human experience. Can you take care of yourself in the midst of it?

AWARE

Daily breathing exercises quiet the mind for us to: Recognize what is happening; Allow life to be as it is; Investigate with kindness; Nurture balance and perspective on our feelings. For example, after recognizing, allowing and investigating the anxiety or confusion we discern, instead of saying “I am anxious” or “I am confused,” we can more truthfully tell ourselves, “I feel anxiety or confusion, but am not defined by my feelings.” We don’t deny, we just don’t over-identify. We are much more than the thoughts or feelings that pass, like clouds, through the sky of our experience.



THE RAIN OF SELF-COMPASSION

ALIVE

We suggest that you use the R.A.I.N. exercise daily, or several times a day, to instill a more natural and realistic way to view your thoughts and emotions, especially during this extremely stressful and confusing time. As you get better at not equating your experience with your spirit, soul or true self, take time to journal what you are observing. If the mood strikes you, create a poem or story to express this experience more vividly or with more compassion.

ABIDE

In the New Testament we are encouraged, “*let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.*” (Colossians 3:15) Without a doubt, finding peace isn’t easy after we glance at a newsfeed and feel heavy with the pain of a world in which we share our suffering and uncertainty. Our Lord was known as a man of sorrows, so we are assured that Christ abides with what troubles us most. And yet the strength of Christ, made perfect in weakness, ends with God’s word for a time such as now: “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.*” (John 14:1)

ARISE

Today the wisdom of Buddhist mindfulness and the peace of Christ known through the example of Jesus coalesce into a message of hope that we are not captive to our thoughts and feelings, although they have urgent need to be recognized and understood. Arise and...

- Practice the R.A.I.N. exercise daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here

A large, light green rectangular area with a dashed green border, intended for writing reflections.



WHEN YOUR BODY HAS BECOME STILL, REACH OUT YOUR HEART

AWAKE

Lynn Ungar, a Unitarian Universalist minister in California, was recently moved to compose the below poem as she contemplated the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. In the poem, she considers how we might approach social distancing as an intentional, even prayerful act.

So, before reading this poem, we invite you to breathe deeply as guided in this short [meditation](#) and prayerfully clear your mind and open yourself to receive God's grace in new ways.

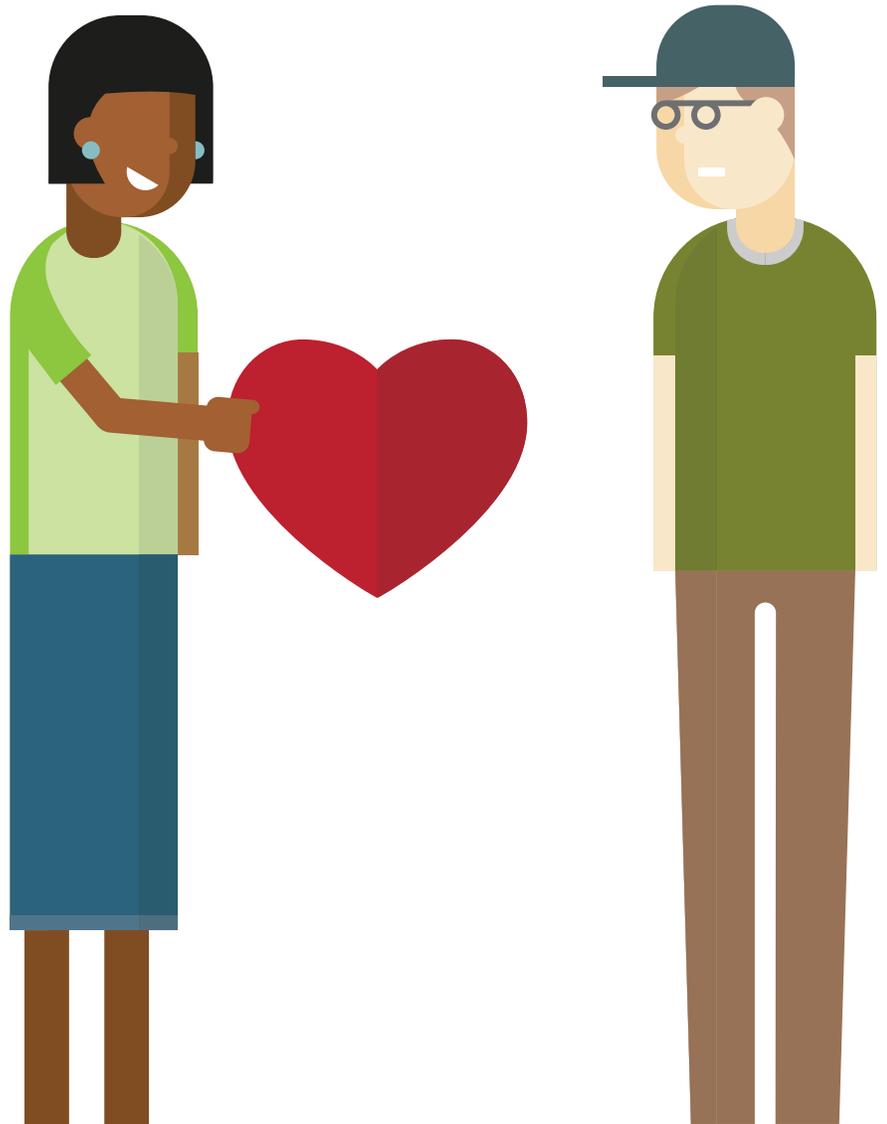
Pandemic by Lynn Ungar

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

**You can read more of Lynn's poetry, and purchase her book, "Bread and Other Miracles," at lynnungar.com.*



WHEN YOUR BODY HAS BECOME STILL, REACH OUT YOUR HEART

AWARE

Daily breathing exercises help our body and mind to become still. During this unique challenge, we can't reach out our hands, but we can reach out in loving ways with hearts that are calm and centered to encourage others to be the same. What challenges you to still your body and breath and reach out your heart?

ALIVE

Use the poem above as a meditation on the meaning of Sabbath for your life this week. As thoughts, memories and sensations surface, observe them with a quiet mind and, if you like, write what is speaking to you in your journal or on this devotion by downloading the PDF and printing or writing in the fillable text field provided.

ABIDE

The Apostle Paul reminds us, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it. . . . Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (1 Corinthians 12:26-27, NRSV). Reach out remotely, but in real time, to a partner or group of friends. Reach out and bear witness to the body of Christ that is not constrained by distance.

ARISE

Today, the poet Lynn Ungar helped us view the forced cessation of our busy lives and routines as a time of Sabbath that holds potential for spiritual growth and equanimity.

- Read this poem daily.
- Awake by clearing your mind by listening to the breathing exercise meditation.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.



Write your reflections here

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER

AWAKE

We invite you to listen to **“Daily Calm Live Stream: Disconnect to Connect”** as preparation for our devotion, What God Has Joined Together.

The Plains Indians of North America originated the sweat lodge as a place to say prayers, be purified, receive visions and emerge into the world as though awakening from a tribal dream. Upon entering and leaving the sweat lodge, the Lakota would say aloud to the Great Spirit, “We are all related.”

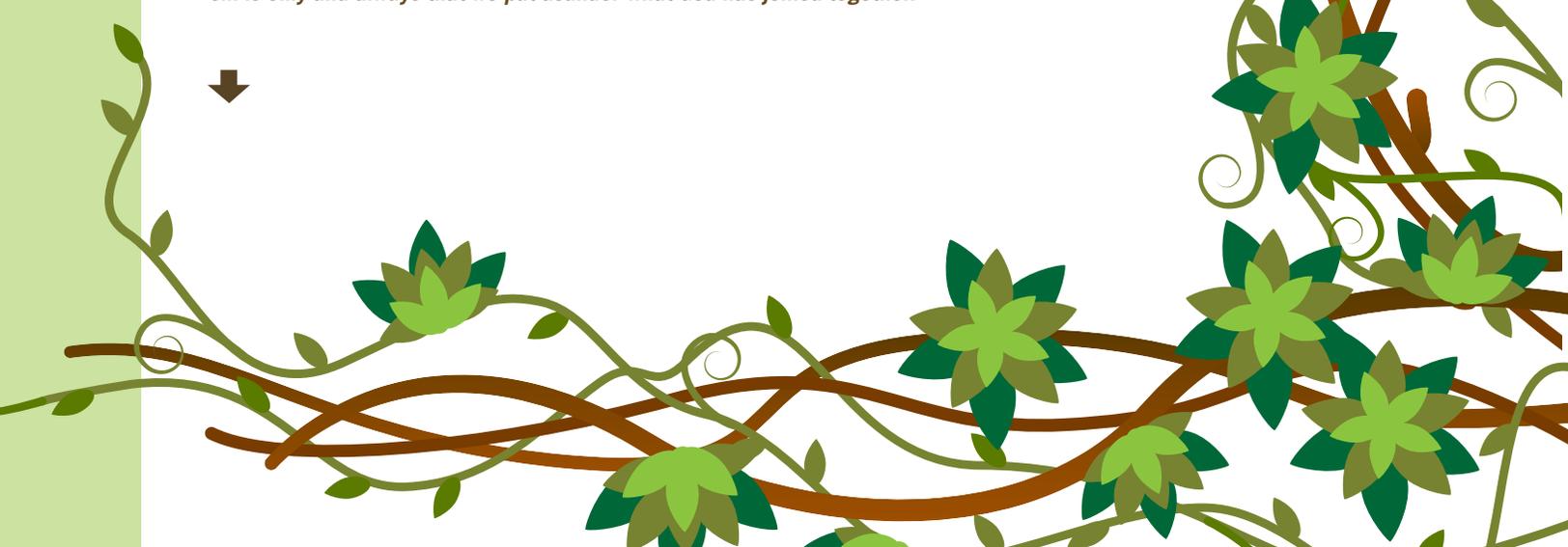
As you awaken to a new day, lift your own voice of thanks to the Creator for being related to all people and creatures. Awaken to the sacred truth that we are all in this world together, even when we must shelter apart.

AWARE

The root of contemplative prayer is the simple awareness that we are all connected. We often work hard at connecting to others through all kinds of methods and media, but our spiritual connection—regardless of race, religion, gender or class—begins with the amazing, yet effortless, recognition that “we are all related.”

Why does this first step toward oneness with all others seem to elude so many? Rev. William Sloane Coffin, former Yale University chaplain, offered his sage insight when he said:

“It is a religious truth that we all belong one to another; that’s the way God made us. From the Christian point of view, Christ died to keep us that way, which means that our sin is only and always that we put asunder what God has joined together.”



WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER

ALIVE

When United Methodists gather for annual conference, they greet each other by singing the Charles Wesley Hymn, “And Are We Yet Alive.” On these occasions countless colleagues and friends have been removed from each other for an entire year. Implied by this greeting, which is a song of yearning as well as celebration, is that we are not “yet” fully alive to the degree that we have been disconnected or separated. Only do we become more perfectly alive in God as we reconnect with each other.

As annual conference concludes, and the mission of the Church has been set and clergy and lay leaders are sent out far and wide until the next gathering. This is an example of remaining alive within a sacred cycle of connection-disconnection-reconnection. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us, **“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven... a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.”** (3:1, 5b, NRSV).

In what ways are you alive and hopeful that this pandemic is a season of disconnection that will, sooner or later, give rise to a season of reconnection?

Write your reflections here

ABIDE

To abide is to endure, to suffer with, and to dwell in difficult circumstances—in a state of expectation and not defeat. As the pandemic has forced us to endure our own personal hardships, it has also called us to suffer, and dwell with, our brothers and sisters who have experienced violence, death, poverty and breath-taking cruelty because of the color of their skin. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, **“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”** (Romans 12:21, NRSV)

ARISE

Arise, and go with this benediction: **“Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”** (Matthew 19: 2, NRSV)

- Listen again to the Daily Calm Live Stream.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.



WHAT WE CAN AND CANNOT CONTROL

AWAKE

We invite you to take part in this Loving-Kindness meditation as preparation for our devotion, **“What We Can and Cannot Control.”**

The theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, paraphrasing the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, wrote what’s been popularized as the “serenity prayer.” Every day, thousands of people in recovery groups offer this prayer in solidarity with each other as they seek health and wholeness. Ponder these wise words that describe how we can best compose ourselves in a time such as this:

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”

As you repeat this prayer, in what ways can you awaken to a depth of serenity that guides you to make differences when you can, and accept limits when you must?

AWARE

It is human to seek to control when we are threatened or distressed. And yet the overwhelming power of a global pandemic makes us aware that we can get through this crisis by practicing non-control. In order to flatten the curve of the coronavirus, we must do nothing, “shelter in place,” and wait this out.

Daily meditation practices clear our minds, calm our hearts and give us ways to embrace this dilemma with dignity and peace. As you take these moments of silent awareness to discern what can and cannot be controlled, when can you act with love and courage, in big and small ways, and when must you trust a higher power to guide you with the serenity of non-control?



WHAT WE CAN AND CANNOT CONTROL

ALIVE

Too often we are not fully alive to the day that God has given us because we are anxious about a future that we cannot see...or control. Jesus asked his anxious followers, *“And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your life span?”* (Matthew 6: 27, NRSV)

In what ways can you mindfully and prayerfully be encouraged to relinquish control of the future? Can you sense the spirit’s aliveness within and around you as you welcome each day with gratitude?

ABIDE

The Eastern philosophy of Taoism teaches equanimity of spirit by encouraging non-resistance. Peace and strength come by abiding at the lowest possible place in the valley. This principle is called Wu Wei, sometimes known as “the watercourse way.” Water has a habit of cutting a meandering path around obstacles, guided by gravity to a creek or pond bed where it sits, collects itself, and then rises-up with effortless strength. By following a path of non-resistance, water becomes the most irresistible force on earth!

Jesus taught his disciples to assume a similar posture of humility by saying, *“But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you.”* (Luke 14:10, NRSV)

By accepting what we cannot control through non-resistance and humility, we are controlling the most powerful way to respond to a challenge. During these forceful times of laying low, think of the ways that you can abide in low places of quiet acceptance that impart resilience and fortitude.

ARISE

Arise to a deeper, more resilient life during today’s challenge. We are learning the wisdom God grants us by balancing control with non-control.

- Practice the Christian mindfulness exercise daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here



WOUNDED HEALERS

AWAKE

We invite you to watch Nancy Simpson's TED Talk, [Secrets of a Wounded Healer](#), as preparation for our Wounded Healers devotion.

Christ's power to heal is said to be rooted in "vicarious suffering," or the ability to make us whole by being broken.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the messiah as a wounded healer in this way:

***Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.*** (Isaiah 53: 4-5, NRSV)

As you awake to this new day, imagine how you can help our broken world be transformed.

AWARE

Theologian Walter Wink claims that the alternative religion of the modern world is grounded in the "myth of redemptive violence," a false myth that equates power with dominance. We must first be aware of the "might makes right" reasoning that misguides our world before we can appreciate the importance of redemptive suffering that is taught in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and many more religions.

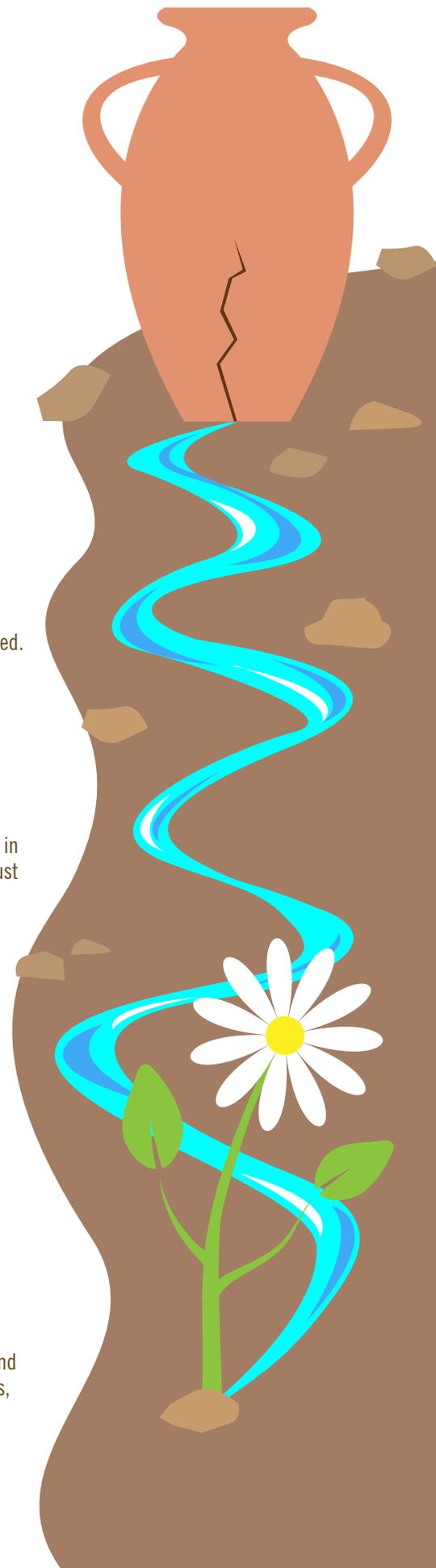
We become aware of the power of a savior's example—a messiah wounded by an unjust punishment for a crime he didn't commit—who now asks people of faith to see and not look away, to bind up the wounds of the voiceless who don't deserve to die either. How can you increase your awareness and take the first step toward wounded healing?

ALIVE

In Genesis we are told that on the first day of creation, God spoke, and light overcame the darkness, separating night from day (1:1-4). We are also told in the Gospel of Matthew that, when Jesus began to die on the cross at noon, the sun refused to shine (27: 45-46).

Often we think that light is the life force and darkness the death force, but to be fully alive and aware of our calling we need to embrace light and darkness at the same time—the darkness, suffering and wounds of the world allow the Spirit to work wonders in and through us. The songwriter Leonard Cohen said it beautifully:

"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."



WOUNDED HEALERS

ABIDE

To abide in this world as a wounded healer, consider the words of “A Non-Traditional Blessing” by Sister Ruth Fox, OSB. Abide with this blessing:

“May God bless you with **discontent** with easy answers, half-truths, superficial relationships, so that you will live from deep within your heart.

May God bless you with **anger** at injustice, oppression, abuse, and exploitation of people, so that you will work for justice, equality, and peace.

May God bless you with **tears** to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that you will reach out your hand to comfort them and to change their pain to joy.

May God bless you with the **foolishness** to think you can make a difference in this world, so that you will do the things which others tell you cannot be done.

If you have the **courage** to accept these blessings, then God will also bless you with:

happiness—because you will know that you have made life better for others

inner peace—because you will have worked to secure an outer peace for others

laughter—because your heart will be light

faithful friends—because they will recognize your worth as a person.

These blessings are yours—not for the asking, but for the giving—from One who wants to be your companion, our God, who lives and reigns, forever and ever. Amen.”

ARISE

Arise, and go in peace.

- Listen again to Secrets of a Wounded Healer.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

What can you do to help our broken world?

