



Soul Matters

Living Love Through The Practice of **Invitation**



Companion Resources
September 2024



Welcome to the Practice of Invitation

*Do not try to save the whole world
or do anything grandiose.
Instead, create a clearing
in the dense forest of your life
and wait there patiently,
until the song that is your life falls
into your own cupped hands
and you recognize and greet it.
Only then will you know
how to give yourself to this world
so worthy of rescue.*

-Clearing by Martha Postlewaite

There is so much saving needed in this world of ours. Especially in this moment. Which is why this call for clearings and cupped hands seems so odd and out of place. Doesn't this dear poet understand the urgency of the moment? Doesn't she understand that we need to be lifting up our voices as loudly as we can, not carving out space for quiet? Doesn't she understand that we need *engaged* hands not cupped hands, with all of us pushing as hard as we can against the tide and madly mending a world that is about to be torn in two?

Well, yes, she certainly could be clueless. But it's also clear that she thinks we are the wrong-headed ones. Hers is an invitation to see that our urgent, muscular mode of saving is just not what the world needs.

And of course she is correct. In our better and clearer moments, we know the world needs us to be grounded and centered before rushing into battle. We need those cupped hands to catch our breath before we cover them with boxing gloves and engage the fight.

We also know that creating clearings is never a waste of time. The dense forest homes we so carefully cultivate keep us safe and comfortable, but they also make it hard to see the horizon and the newly rising sun. Clearings let that new light in and in turn help us notice when we are applying old ways of being and thinking to a world that isn't here anymore.

Ah, that seems right. A good place to leave it. With us thanking the poet for her invitation to better understand what the world needs.

But there's that pesky piece about the world handing our song back to us. That complicates things. It means this isn't just an invitation to see what the world needs, but also an invitation to notice that the world sees us in need and is trying to give us a gift; an invitation to notice that the world is also an actor in this precious play, not just an object we are acting upon; an invitation to notice that while we are focused on saving the world, the world is also focused on saving us.

Or to put it another way, maybe the world is trying to love us. And we are being invited to let it. Maybe that is what this talk of cupped hands is all about.

And if so, what a way to begin this new church year! And maybe even what a way to travel through our lives all the time! With cupped hands, remembering and open to receiving the love of the world.

Calendar Connections

View our full-year calendar [HERE](#)

September 2024

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

Interfaith

- [Mabon/Autumn Equinox](#) - (Pagan/Wiccan) - Sept. 22,2024 (more [here](#))
- [Mawlid al-Nabi](#) - the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad - begins Sept. 15, 2024
- [Rumi's birthday](#) - Sept. 30 (1207)

Unitarian Universalist

- Ingathering/Water Communion Ritual - Early Sept. - date varies by congregation
- The first meeting of [the Transcendentalist Club](#) - Sept. 19 (1836) (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- Universalism Day: [John Murray](#) preaches [1st sermon](#) in US (1770) - Sept. 30 (more [here](#))

National & Cultural

- [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15)
- Suicide Prevention Month, World Suicide Prevention Day is Sept. 10
- [Labor Day](#) – Sept. 2, 2024 (*first Monday)
- International Literacy Day - Sept. 08
- [9-11 Remembrance](#) - Sept. 11
- [International Peace Day](#) Sept. 21 (more [here](#))
- [World Gratitude Day](#) - Sept. 21
- [Bisexual Pride Day](#), CBD, Bisexual Pride, and Bi Visibility Day - Sept. 23
- [Bisexual Awareness Week](#) - Week of September 23 (more [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe

- [Hobbit Day](#) - Sept. 22
- [Banned Books Week](#) - Sept. 22-28, 2024 (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 is the most beautiful invitation you ever received?
2. What relationship invited you to grow up the most?
3. What is regularly on your to do list that was invited there by someone else, not by you?
4. We all inspire and influence people with our way of being in the world. What is your way of being in the world inviting people to do or become?
5. What question do you need to invite into your life in order to enter the next phase of your becoming?
6. How are you being invited to *know* fear? i.e., to travel with fear, rather than fight to eliminate it from your life?
7. Jungian analyst, James Hollis, writes, "Something within us knows us better than we know ourselves...It speaks by silently withdrawing energy from things that are not for us. It doesn't care about our comfort; it cares about our growth." So, how is your inner wisdom withdrawing energy from your life? And how is that withdrawal of energy inviting you to growth?
8. This year, we're exploring practices that help us embody our new UU core value liberating love. Who's "act of invitation" has taught you the most about what it means to love?
9. Have you grown more from what you've invited into your life or what you've disinvited from your life?
10. How has your life partner invited beauty into your life?
11. How has parenting invited you to be more courageous?
12. What have you unwittingly invited into your life in the past year? What snuck in without an invitation?
13. If you could only invite two new things into your life in the coming year, what would they be?
14. How are you being invited to return home?
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 invitation in your life.

Definitions

Invitation

1. the act of inviting, such as an offer of hospitality
2. the act of enticing or attracting; allurement
3. a provocation
4. a formal request to be present

Synonyms: encouragement, provocation, temptation, enticement, attraction

Antonyms: denial, refusal, discouragement, repulsion

Wise Words

Come, come, whoever you are,
wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving.
Ours is no caravan of despair.
Come, yet again come.

[Hymn #188](#)

A real conversation always contains an invitation.
You are inviting another person to reveal
[themselves] to you, to tell you who they are or
what they want.

[David Whyte](#)

I pray for you, world
to come and find me,
to see me and recognize me
and beckon me out, to call me
even when I lose
the ability to call on
you...

[David Whyte](#)

Change is not a threat to your life, but an invitation
to live.

Adrienne Rich

We seem to think that beginning is setting out from a lonely point along some line of direction into the unknown. This is not the case. Shelter and energy come alive when a beginning is embraced... We are never as alone in our beginnings as it might seem at the time. *A beginning is ultimately an invitation to open toward the gifts and growth that are stored up for us.* To refuse to begin can be an act of great self-neglect.

[John O'Donohue](#)

Something within us knows us better than we know ourselves. It knows what is right for us. It speaks by silently withdrawing energy from things that are not for us. It doesn't care about our comfort; it cares about our growth.

[James Hollis](#)

Life's a party. Invite yourself.
Gary Johnson

Carl Jung once said in a BBC interview that he began calling God all those "things which cross my willful path violently and recklessly... and change the course of my life for better or for worse." The divine is that power which disrupts everything. So, what if our practice were to court a holy disruption? To welcome in everything which challenges my perspective on how the world works, which upsets all the plans I have for myself, and turns them on their heads? What if when life started falling apart, I opened my heart to welcome in the grief and fear that arrived as well and considered them as holy guides... What if all the painful feelings of loss and disorientation were invited in for tea and tenderness? What if everything that turns our preconceived ideas inside out is precisely where we find God?

[Christine Valters Paintner](#)

Our lives would be immeasurably enriched if we could but bring the same hospitality in meeting the negative as we bring to the joyful and pleasurable... The negative threatens us so powerfully precisely because it is an invitation to an art of compassion.

[John O'Donohue](#)

Ah, Grief, I should not treat you
like a homeless dog
who comes to the back door
for a crust, for a meatless bone.
I should trust you. I should coax you
into the house and give you
your own corner...

[Denise Levertov](#)

We grew up (and still live) in a world that constantly screams at us to seek pleasure... I don't remember anyone ever telling me that it is worth striving for wisdom or strength of character.

[Tristan Tell](#), *on society's invitations*

Sabbath observance invites us to stop... It asks us to notice that while we rest, the world continues without our help.

Wendell Berry

I respectfully decline the invitation to join your hallucination.

Scott Adams

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Paul's letter to the Hebrews

The Arabs used to say,
When a stranger appears at your door,
feed him for three days
before asking who he is,
where he's come from,
where he's headed.
That way, he'll have strength
enough to answer.
Or, by then you'll be such good friends
you don't care...

[Naomi Shihab Nye](#)

True hospitality is when someone leaves your home feeling better about themselves, not better about you.

Shauna Niequist

If justice is what love looks like in public, then inclusion is what love looks like among groups.

Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson

On the Invitations of Love!

Love is at the center... like a flame on a chalice, burning brightly, igniting the values that surround it. The botanical nature of it seems to say that these values are rooted in and grow out of that center of love... They fill the spaces that surround them, and in each case, there is an opening for them to expand beyond their walls.

Rev. Tracy Johnson, on the [flower graphic](#) for our new core values [centered in liberating love](#)

There is a love that sets us free. Not free as in having the power to do whatever we want, but free as in not weighed down or bound by the patterns of hatred and control that get passed from generation to generation... Free as in knowing without a doubt that we are worthy and that it is ours to invite others into that same wisdom for themselves. Free to imagine a world where children are never in harm's way...

[Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt](#)

Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.

James Baldwin

Love isn't something natural. Rather it requires discipline, concentration, patience, faith, and the overcoming of narcissism. It isn't a feeling; it is a practice.

Eric Fromm

One thing I have observed: When we are engaged in acts of love, we humans are at our best and most resilient. The love in romance that makes us want to be better people, the love of children that makes us change our whole lives to meet their needs, the love of family that makes us drop everything to take care of them, the love of community that makes us work tirelessly with broken hearts.

[adrienne maree brown](#)

Videos & Podcasts

Bill Murray on Life's Invitation to a New Day

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/990746565599609>

Inviting Fear to Travel with You

Elizabeth Gilbert

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgKhHeiah80>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-PeOV9M1tw>

An invitation from the birds...

Poem by Andrea Gibson

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C4GISpuO2fL/>

The invitation of a 3-year-old girl...

Story by Andrea Gibson

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Ctpo78GvZg2/>

On inviting in our feelings and hearing their invitations

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oFD8gbic6A&t=409s>

The Story of The Hunter and the Fox Woman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn2DB11yL5A>

On the dangers of what we disinvite from our lives.

Grief as an invitation

Dr. Bayo Akomolafe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcu60pvVs8s>

Complicating the Invitation to "Save the Planet"

Dr. Bayo Akomolafe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PANfg8xC1sk>

On the Life-Giving Questions that Change Invites Us to Ask

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtOarZN6EBM>

Music

Each of our [theme-based playlists](#) - on Spotify and YouTube - is organized as a journey of sorts, so consider listening from beginning to end and using them as a personal musical meditation.

Click [here](#) for the **Spotify playlist** on The Invitation of a New Day

Click [here](#) for the **YouTube playlist** on The Invitation of a New Day

Click [here](#) for the **Spotify playlist** on The Invitation to Live Love

Click [here](#) for the **YouTube playlist** on The Invitation to Live Love

Books

[Hospicing Modernity](#): Facing Humanity's Wrongs and the Implications for Social Activism

On inviting the end of [modernity's denials and damage](#)

[Trusting Change](#): Finding Our Way Through Personal and Global Transformation

On inviting change into our lives

[Faithful Practice](#): Everyday Ways to Feed Your Spirit

On inviting spiritual practice into our lives

Movies & TV

[The Bear](#)

On the invitation to community and beginning again

[Somebody, Somewhere](#)

On the invitation to self-reinvention

[Once](#)

On the invitation to connect and heal

[Rectify](#)

On second chances and the invitation to a new day

[The Great Disconnect](#)

On the invitation to reconnect

[Inside Out 2](#)

On inviting in all of our emotions

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