



# Spiritual Practice Packet

December 2022

## *Wonder*



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Unity Church-Unitarian, St. Paul, Minnesota

[Unityunitarian.org](http://Unityunitarian.org)

# Wonder

While this article was being written, Saint Paul has its first major snow of the Fall. It's coming down with no sign of abatement! Our Transcendentalist ancestor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, attended church during a snowstorm and noted the disconnect between the wonder of the snowstorm and the anemic preaching he experienced. He wrote:

*I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say, I would go to church no more. A snowstorm was falling around us. The snowstorm was real; the preacher merely spectral; and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him, into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had no one word intimating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended or cheated or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the wiser for it. The capital secret of his profession, namely, to convert life into truth, he had not learned. ... The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life—life passed through the fire of thought.*

Emerson recounted this memory in the Harvard Divinity School address in July 1838. In that speech to the soon-to-be new ministers, he challenged the students to inculcate a greater sense of wonder into their ministries. Emerson and other Transcendentalists were both heady intellectuals AND were deeply aware of the need for a sense of curiosity and wonder as part of the religious and spiritual life. They would often reflect on wonder and miracles as manifestations of the same impulse. Again, Emerson wrote:

*All our life is a miracle. Ourselves are the greatest wonder of all. I can believe a miracle because I can raise my own arm...*

As singer-songwriter Paul Simon once wrote “these are the days of miracle and wonder...” And indeed, December invites us into a time of radical wonder. There are many wonder-ful celebrations this month; Buddha found enlightenment in December; The miracle of Hannukah’s eight days tells of the light that would not die. December 21<sup>st</sup> brings the Winter Solstice and Yule a time of introspection and wonder at the power and beauty of the ever-changing seasons. Christmas brings carols, songs, and stories about the birth of a child who became one of the world’s greatest spiritual teachers. And at the end of December, Kinara candles are lit as part of the spiritual practice of engaging with the seven principles of Kwaanza. There is something about the coming of Winter and the encroaching darkness that evokes a sense of wonder.

Miracles, according to Emerson, are ordinary events that occur all the time. But, is wondering just mere curiosity? Or, is it something more?

There are at least three different definitions of “Wonder.” The first *is* linked to curiosity – and is on the forming edge of possibilities. In our Faith Formation classes, we ask our children to consider the world framed by the questions “what if” and “as if?” We wonder – “what if the peoples of the world acted not out of self-interest, but in the interest of another’s well-being?” or “Could we act as if the Beloved Community were already here?”

A second definition is to doubt, as in “I wonder about the sincerity of a politician’s promises,” or, “I wonder about how you’re REALLY doing. It’s a kinder, gentler way of asking what is behind the words said or the emotions expressed. To wonder out loud is a way of expressing concern.

But, it’s the last definition of wonder that captures our imagination and attention at this time of year. Wonder: the quality of rapt attention or astonishment at something awesome, mysterious, or new to our experience. It is the emotion or feeling most associated with the holiday season of Christmas, with its fantastic stories of a star that marks the birth of a child, the special music, and, in our part of the world, the advent of winter with all its attendant beauty.

Which brings us back to Emerson’s snowstorm again. Emerson had the ability to see the extraordinary in the ordinary. A snowstorm becomes a symbol of meaning beyond the moment; it opens up a window of seeing the world anew. Whether you celebrate Bodi Day or Hannukah; Solstice, Yule or Kwaanza, or simply marvel at the snowflakes collecting on your windowsill, we hope you remember Emerson’s wise counsel who said: “Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.” May every day be the best day of the year.

*By Kathleen Rolenz on behalf of this month’s theme team: KP Hong, Karen Gustafson, Andrea La Sonde Anastos, Tom Duke, and Drew Danielson.*

# ***Spiritual Practices***

## ***Option A:***

### ***Seeing with Wonder-filled Eyes***

About what do you wonder? Some of us wonder about the existence of God or a divine being. Some of us wonder about how to make effective changes to rid the world of poverty, racism, and other systemic ills. And some of us wonder how a crocus can grow and bloom through snow.

At some point, someone looked up at the stars and wondered how they move and why, and then wondered if it was possible to find out the answers, how or by what method could answers be found, and finally wondered how to photograph the movement of stars, called “star trails.” Star trails reveal more about the Earth’s rotation around its axis than about the stars themselves.

Rachel Carson said, “The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.” Wonder is often the first step toward revelation, new ideas, new ways of doing something, new information, and positive change.

Children are naturally curious and wonder about everything. Pull up your child-like wonder and take a look at your home, your backyard, your church, or a favorite place and start a list or a journal of questions and/or things about which you wonder. After five days or so, review your wonderments--what is new for you or has been revealed to you? What did wondering cause you to do or think about? Did wondering lead you to experience the divine? How has seeing with wonder-filled eyes changed your view of wonder itself?

## **Option B: How to Wonder?**

In *Lost in Wonder*, Esther De Waal says that wonder is a door to discover, unearth, and dig deeper “into the gift of being placed in a world of mystery” in order to reach a fullness of life or to fulfill the promise of where life might take us. Wonder helps us reach past ourselves, and see “the sense of beyondness at the heart of things.” But how? Not just by looking, but by seeing with clarity. In *The Journal of Solitude*, May Sarton writes that “If one looks long enough at almost anything, looks with absolute attention...something like revelation takes place.”

There are many paths to discover wonder. De Waal suggests using a magnifying glass to see things otherwise hidden to the naked eye. Pablo Casals sat down at the piano each morning for eighty years and played Bach, a practice he described as a “rediscovery of the world in which I have a joy of being a part. It fills me with awareness of the wonder of life, with a feeling of the incredible marvel of being human.”

Another path is through *lectio divina*, a centuries-old monastic practice of intentional reading that takes you more deeply into a text to discover how the text speaks to you and what it reveals to you through listening and contemplation. In the UU version of *lectio*, we use poetry and you can do this practice as a group or by yourself.

*Here's how:* Prepare yourself for quiet and silence. Light a chalice or candle as an invitation into spiritual practice. Choose a poem from among those in this Wonder packet, and follow these steps:

*First reading: Listen and receive.* Read the poem aloud and just listen. Read the poem aloud again, listening to the words and the spaces between the words. When you hear a word or phrase that touches your heart, hold it and repeat it to yourself. Pause for one to two minutes of silent contemplation. In a group, take turns sharing just the word or phrase.

*Second reading: Listen and ponder.* Read the poem aloud again, or if in a group, ask a different member to read it aloud. This time, listen for a word or phrase that feels sacred to you, that evokes wonder, or offers a glimpse of the holy. Hold it and silently repeat it to yourself. Pause for two to three minutes of silent contemplation. In a group, take turns sharing just the word or phrase.

*Last reading: Listen and respond.* Read the poem aloud again, or if in a group, ask a different member to read it aloud. In this reading, listen for what the poem calls you to be or to do now and/or in the week ahead. Pause for two to three minutes of silent contemplation. What word or phrase led you to a calling? In a group, take turns sharing in your own words, or if by yourself, write what the text revealed to you, and how you will respond to it.

As you extinguish the chalice or candle, ponder again the words or phrases and your response to them. From time to time, let your heart touch these again, and remember both what you heard and what you felt called to be or to do.

Adapted from *Lost in Wonder* by Esther De Waal and *Lectio Divina* (handout) by Karen Hering.

## ***Questions to Ponder***

Read through the questions below and notice which ones resonate with you. One or more of the questions might seem particularly compelling – or some might stir resistance in you. Either of these reactions might make the question fruitful to consider. Choose just one and take time to consider it, over several days if possible. Write it down on a piece of paper you carry in your pocket. Or take a picture of that paper with your phone. Or record it in your journal – and spend some time, each day if you can, reflecting on it in writing or otherwise, noticing where it leads you and what you learn from it, and your response to it.

1. Is one of your senses more attuned to experiencing wonder than other senses? Are you more responsive to visual stimuli, or do you experience wonder more readily through your sense of hearing, taste, or touch, perhaps? How does your experience of wonder differ based on the involvement of different sensory inputs?
2. On occasion, we use the words “wonder” and “awe” as synonyms. How are they the same or different for you? Some definitions of the word “awe” describe it as a mix of fear and wonder. Does wonder always generate positive feelings in you, or does it sometimes include feelings of fear or apprehension?
3. Have there been times in your life when your sense of wonder seemed to shut down or be nonexistent? Why was that the case? How was wonder rekindled in your life?
4. Does experiencing wonder prompt you to speak, write, or communicate in other ways? Or perhaps does wonder prompt you into silence?
5. Is the experience of wonder a religious or spiritual phenomenon for you? If so, how?
6. Part of wonder may be the experience of being confronted with something that seems almost magical or unreal. How does this sense of magic or mystery interact with your sense of wonder? Do you think that being comfortable with mystery can help increase our sense of wonder?
7. What is your emotional experience of wondering? Is it exciting to be curious? Is there a sense of pressure? Is it frustrating or anxiety-producing to wonder what might happen?
8. If you were asked to name the Seven Wonders of your life, what would you choose?
9. Do you ever wonder what might have happened if you had chosen a different path at some point in your life? Does that experience of wondering bring joy? Regret? Relief? Hope?
10. Are curiosity and wonder the same thing? How is wonder related to creativity? to science? to invention? to imagination?
11. Is there a relationship between wonder and surprise? Is, perhaps, the feeling of wonder intensified if it is unexpected? Why might that be the case?
12. Sometimes, we are mysteries to ourselves, and it takes effort to truly know ourselves. What do you wonder about yourself? What about yourself makes you feel wonder?
13. **What is your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don’t name what life is asking of you now, spend the month listening to your heart to hear what your question is.

# Inspiration

## Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

These resources are not required reading. They may not be analyzed in our sermons, newsletter, Chalice Circles, Wellspring, or other programs. Instead, they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started, and open you to new ways of thinking about wonder. The hope is not that you will engage them all or even most of them; rather that the variety here will offer you at least several access points to the theme that invite you to consider it thoughtfully and perhaps with new insights or understanding.

### Word Definitions

#### Wonder

##### noun

- a** a cause of astonishment or admiration.  
**MARVEL**  
It's a *wonder* you weren't killed  
the pyramid is a *wonder* to behold  
**b MIRACLE**
- the quality of exciting amazed admiration
- a** rapt attention or astonishment at something awesomely mysterious or new to one's experience  
**b** a feeling of doubt or uncertainty

##### verb

#### wondered; wondering

##### intransitive verb

- a** to be in a state of wonder  
**b** to feel surprise
- to feel curiosity or doubt  
*Wondering* about the future

##### transitive verb

to be curious or in doubt about  
*wonders* why birds sing  
From *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

### Wise Words

The world will never starve for want of wonders;  
but only for want of wonder.

~G.K. Chesterton

We have difficulty embracing mystery and wonder. We have a need to reduce everything to certain material, pragmatic and mechanical principles that we can grasp. In so doing, we lose the very possibility of developing our "sixth sense" which is the sense of wonder. It is well to remember that our inner world deals with words like transcendence, beyond-ness, mystery, beauty and wonder. This sixth sense, as we begin to develop it, brings together our inner and our outer worlds. As our inscape begins to match our landscape, we come to a place of inner harmony and begin to experience the Beyond in our midst.

~Betty Skinner, from *The Hidden Life: Awakened*.

Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3hpa3jD>

Contemplation is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being.

~Thomas Merton

If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.

~Rachel Carson, from *The Sense of Wonder*

Wonder and despair are two sides of a spinning coin. When you open yourself to one, you open yourself to the other. You discover a capacity for joy that wasn't in you before. Wonder is the promise of restoration: as deeply as you dive, so may you rise.

~Christina Baldwin, from *Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest*. Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3MWRkY8>

People who truly know how to wonder don't expend a great deal of energy talking about it; they are off catching snowflakes on hot tongues. They're folding themselves in half to smell the sweet potatoes in the oven just one more time. I no longer try to convince someone of the delight of soup dumplings; I take them to Dim Sum Garden on Race Street in Philly and let them watch me slurp.

~Cole Arthur Riley, from *This Here Flesh*

Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3FKN4cT>

I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it.

~Alice Walker, from *The Color Purple*.

Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3UqiBVz>

I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.

~Albert Einstein

People often think that the basic command of religion is "Do this!" or "Don't Do That. It isn't. It's look and wonder! Learn to give attention to the world around you.

~Dag Hammarskjöld

## **Prayer**

### **Welcome Today**

by Andrea La Sonde Anastos

I welcome today with astonishment.

I soften my breath.

I soften my hands.

I soften my muscles.

I soften my eyes.

I soften my heart.

I soften my mind.

I soften my thoughts.

I soften my mouth.

I soften my words.

I soften my visions.

I soften my hope.

I soften my expectations

to receive this day as gift,

to live this day as guest,

to release this day with wonder.

### **Playtime**

by Rabindranath Tagore

When my play was with You, I never questioned who You were; I knew no shyness or fear; my life was boisterous.

In the early morning, You would call me from my sleep like my own comrade and lead me running from glade to glade.

On those days I never cared to know the meaning of songs You sang to me. Only my voice took up the tunes, and my heart danced in their cadences.

Now, when the playtime is over, what is this sudden sight that is come upon me? The world, with eyes bent upon Your feet, stands in awe with all its silent stars.

From *The Heart of God: Prayers of Rabindranath Tagore*

<https://bit.ly/3gpFUAX>



## Poetry

### ***Letter to the Person Who Carved His Initials into the Oldest Living Longleaf Pine in North America***

by Matthew Olzmann

Tell me what it's like to live without curiosity, without awe. To sail on clear water, rolling your eyes at the kelp reefs swaying beneath you, ignoring the flicker of mermaid scales in the mist, looking at the world and feeling only boredom. To stand on the precipice of some wild valley, the eagles circling, a herd of caribou booming below, and to yawn with indifference. To discover something primordial and holy. To have the smell of the earth welcome you to everywhere. To take it all in, and then, to reach for your knife.

Tin House: <https://bit.ly/3sJpgyh>

### ***One of the Many Days***

by Norman MacCaig

I never saw more frogs than once at the back of Ben Dorain. Joseph-coated, they ambled and jumped in the sweet march grass like coloured ideas.

The river ran glass in the sun. I waded in the jocular water of Loch Lyon. A parcel of hinds gave the V-sign with their ears, then ran off and off till they were cantering crumbs. I watched a whole long day release its miracles.

But clearest of all I remember the Joseph-coated frogs amiably ambling or jumping into the air – like coloured ideas tinily considering the huge concept of Ben Dorain.

From [The Many Days, Selected Poems of Norman MacCaig](#)

### ***Do You Ever Wonder?***

by Gillian Craig

Do you ever wonder why a mole can't see  
Or a snake can't sing or a fish can't walk?  
Do you ever wonder why a snail can't talk?  
Do you wonder what it's like to be me?

Do you ever wonder why a goose can't ski  
Or a dog can't write or a hen can't hop?  
Do you ever wonder why a shark can't stop?  
Do you ever wonder what it's like to be me?

Do you ever wonder why a cow can moo  
Or a seal can clap or a goat can bleat?  
Do you ever wonder why a bird can tweet?  
Do you ever think of things that I can do?

Do you ever think I'm not the same as you  
Or show that in the things you say?  
Well, I can think of lots of games that we can play.  
Why don't we think of things that we can do?  
<https://bit.ly/3TyoyWW>

### ***A Blessing***

by James Wright

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,  
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.  
And the eyes of those two Indian ponies  
Darken with kindness.

They have come gladly out of the willows  
To welcome my friend and me.

We step over the barbed wire into the pasture  
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.

They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their  
happiness

That we have come.

They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.  
There is no loneliness like theirs.  
At home once more,  
They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.  
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,  
For she has walked over to me  
And nuzzled my left hand.  
She is black and white,  
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,  
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear  
That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.  
Suddenly I realize  
That if I stepped out of my body I would break  
Into blossom.

From *Above the River: The Complete Poems and Selected Prose*. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46481/a-blessing>

## **Wonder**

by Mei-mei Berssenbrugge

*Excerpt:*

One summer night, walking from our house after dinner, stars make the sky almost white.

My awe is like blindness; wonder exchanges for sight.

Star-by-star comprises a multiplicity like thought, but quiet, too dense for any dark planet between.

While single stars are a feature of the horizon at dusk, caught at the edge of the net of gems.

Transparence hanging on its outer connectedness casts occurrence as accretion, filling in, of extravagant, euphoric blooming.

Then, being as spirit and in matter is known, here to there.

I go home and tell my children to come out and look.

The souls of my two children fly up like little birds into branches of the Milky Way,  
chatting with each other, naming constellations, comparing crystals and fire.

They exclaim at similarities between what they see in the sky and on our land.

So, by wonder, they strengthen correspondence between sky and home.

Earth is made from this alchemy of all children, human and animal, combined with our deep gratitude.

<https://poets.org/poem/wonder>

## **Video**

### **BBC Planet Earth II Montage**

with Sir David Attenborough

A brief video that inspires awe and wonder through the natural world.

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/UD9ehpUJweA>

### **Dancing with the Birds**

Netflix Documentary

Deep in exotic forests around the planet, Birds of Paradise dance, shake their feathers, and collect the prettiest rocks they can get their little beaks on just to attract a mate. *Dancing with the Birds*, produced by the creators of *Our Planet*, gets up close to capture some of the most beautiful performances from some of nature's most bizarrely captivating creatures.

Netflix: <https://bit.ly/3TUOR2z>

### **Yosemite Nature Notes**

#### **Night Skies**

Far away from light pollution and high up in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, Yosemite National Park's stunning views of the night sky and majestic natural wonders attract astronomers, photographers and city dwellers from around the country.

YouTube: <https://bit.ly/2lQuRxB>

## **Wonder and Imagination**

by Dr. Antony Esolen

Authenticum Lecture Series of Aquinas College,  
Grand Rapids, MI

Although this Catholic academic is very conservative, his ideas about the theme of wonder in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* are astute and he is a delightful lecturer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5B3jrW3UZN4>

## **Wonder and Awe**

by Louie Schwartzberg

Louie Schwartzberg is an award-winning cinematographer, director, and producer whose nature films are full of breathtaking imagery using time-lapse, high-speed and macro cinematography techniques. In this TED talk, he describes how wonder and awe bring us into the present moment, connecting us with the divine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdLxk4RFCYM>

## **Articles/Online Resources**

### **Six Ways to Incorporate Awe Into Your Daily Life**

by Teja Pattabhiraman

*Excerpt:*

An awe experience, as Paquette defines it, involves two primary components: encountering “vastness” and experiencing transcendence. Vastness happens when we come across a view (like a spectacular sunset) or concept (such as the existence of black holes) that is too incredible to fit into our current worldview, forcing us to expand our understanding of what is possible. Transcendence happens when we take in this new, awe-striking idea or image in front of us and try to make sense of it.

Not only is awe a pleasant feeling akin to wonder, it also helps us to experience a different relationship with the world around us, says Paquette. When we are overcome with awe, he explains, we often experience a “small self”—the sense of our ego becoming smaller, and our needs,

hopes, and purpose more integrated with the people and environment surrounding us.

<https://bit.ly/3ffTxSd>

## **W is for Wonder**

by Patricia Adams Farmer

*Excerpt:*

In *The Alphabet of Spiritual Literacy*, W is for Wonder. And, for many of us, Christmas is the Season of Wonder: pageants and angels and stars and potluck dinners and knitted scarves fresh off the needles. Mesmerized by twinkling lights and Advent candles piercing the darkness, it would seem that wonder just happens, descending like the Angel Gabriel, announcing good tidings.

*Spirituality & Practice* <https://bit.ly/3EqmZ08>

## **Atoms with Consciousness: Yo-Yo Ma Performs Richard Feynman's Ode to the Wonder of Life, Animated**

by Maria Popova on *The Marginalian*

*Out of the cradle onto the dry land... here it is standing... atoms with consciousness... matter with curiosity... I... a universe of atoms... an atom in the universe.*

Here we are, each of us a portable festival of wonder, standing on this rocky body born by brutality, formed from the debris that first swarmed the Sun 4.5 billion years ago and pulverized each other in a gauntlet of violent collisions, eventually forging the Moon and the Earth.

*The Marginalian:* <https://bit.ly/3Wcqc55>

## **Primal Reverence**

by Kendyl R. Gibbons

Reverence is an organic human experience that requires no supernatural explanations.

*Excerpt:*

Somewhere this planet has a show-stopper for you that takes your breath away and makes you tug on other people's sleeves to make them see what you see: the whirling autumn leaves with their wedding

song of death and beauty; the heartbreaking call of the loon, or the wolf, or the whale; the nuzzling of newborn creatures after the labor of birth, or the struggle of the monarch out of the chrysalis into unfamiliar wings. For me, it is waterfalls. I could stand all day, dumbstruck by the vision of such endless abundance, the living energy of creation poured out unceasingly before my eyes, seeming to promise a truth that something in the world, and therefore something in me, is never and can never be exhausted. It makes me want to weep, want to dance, want to fall on my knees and be one with whatever that is, in everlasting praise.

The situations are so familiar that they are pretty much clichés. You stand at the shore, with the waves beating out their rhythmic crash, and the water rushing almost to your feet, seeing nothing but a thin line of horizon where sea and sky meet. The distances suggest infinity, the ocean's unfathomable depth and power, its ceaseless, primordial force and mystery. The air, too, moves in a huge current, and the soaring gulls catch light on the back of their wings. Something within us unlatches and expands in that immensity, catching some hint of our finitude, the oneness of all life emerging from the sea's embrace eons ago, the sovereign beauty and freedom of so much overwhelming space and light and sound.  
<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/primal-reverence>

## **Books**

### ***The Sense of Wonder: A Celebration of Nature for Parents and Children***

by Rachel Carson

First published more than three decades ago, this reissue of Rachel Carson's award-winning classic brings her unique vision to a new generation of readers. Stunning new photographs by Nick Kelsh beautifully complement Carson's intimate account of adventures with her young nephew, Roger, as they enjoy walks along the rocky coast of Maine and through dense forests and open fields,

observing wildlife, strange plants, moonlight and storm clouds, and listening to the "living music" of insects in the underbrush. "If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder." Writes Carson, "he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in." The Sense of Wonder is a refreshing antidote to indifference and a guide to capturing the simple power of discovery that Carson views as essential to life.

From Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3GEF8u6>

### ***The Book of Delights***

by Ross Gay

The first nonfiction book from award-winning poet Ross Gay is a record of the small joys we often overlook in our busy lives. Among Gay's funny, poetic, philosophical delights: a friend's unabashed use of air quotes, cradling a tomato seedling aboard an airplane, the silent nod of acknowledgment between the only two black people in a room.

UUA Bookstore <https://bit.ly/3gcr1kU>

### ***Wonder: From Emotion to Spirituality***

by Robert C. Fuller

Bridging science and spirituality, Robert Fuller makes the convincing case that a sense of wonder is a principal source of humanity's belief in the existence of an unseen order of life. Like no other emotion, he argues, wonder prompts us to pause, admire, and open our hearts and minds.

From Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3V2vXHS>

### ***The Soul of the Night: An Astronomical Pilgrimage***

by Chet Raymo

Probing the depths of science and faith, scientist Chet Raymo investigates the mysteries of human spirituality and meaning contained in astronomy. Ranging through the stars and the myths humans have told about them for millennia, Raymo delves into "a pilgrimage in quest of the soul of the night." Chet Raymo's elegant essays link the mysterious

phenomena of the night sky with the human mind and spirit, as he ranges through the realms of mythology, literature, religion, history, and anthropology. Originally published two decades ago, *The Soul of the Night* is a classic work that is a must for those interested in the relationship between science and faith.

From Bookshop.org: <https://bit.ly/3AgZ2aF>

### ***The Enchanted Life: Reclaiming the Magic and Wisdom of the Natural World***

by Sharon Blackie

*Excerpt:*

Ultimately, to live an enchanted life is to pick up the pieces of our bruised and battered psyches, and to offer them the nourishment they long for. It is to be challenged, to be awakened, to be gripped and shaken to the core by the extraordinary which lies at the heart of the ordinary.

Above all, to live an enchanted life is to fall in love with the world all over again. This is an active choice, a leap of faith which is necessary not just for our own sakes, but for the sake of the wide, wild Earth in whose being and becoming we are so profoundly and beautifully entangled.

Taking as her starting point the inspiration and wisdom that can be derived from myth, fairy tales, and folk culture, Dr. Sharon Blackie offers a set of practical and grounded tools for enchanting our lives and the places we live, so leading to a greater sense of meaning and of belonging to the world.

[publisher description]

In the Unity Bookstall, December 2022.

### ***This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us***

by Cole Arthur Riley

A wonderful, expanded, and embodied view of wonder with many examples and the conclusion that “Wonder, then, is a force of liberation. It makes sense of what our souls inherently know we were meant for.”

Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3FKN4cT>

Available in the Unity Library: <https://bit.ly/3fFE9Pb>

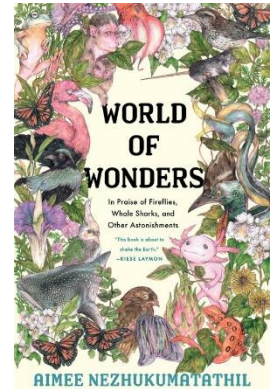
### ***World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks, and Other Astonishments***

by Aimee Nezhukumatathil

*From Milkweed Editions:*

From beloved, award-winning poet Aimee Nezhukumatathil comes a debut work of nonfiction—a collection of essays about the natural world, and the way its inhabitants can teach, support, and inspire us.

As a child, Nezhukumatathil called many places home: the grounds of a Kansas mental institution, where her Filipina mother was a doctor; the open skies and tall mountains of Arizona, where she hiked with her Indian father; and the chillier climes of western



New York and Ohio. But no matter where she was transplanted—no matter how awkward the fit or forbidding the landscape—she was able to turn to our world’s fierce and funny creatures for guidance.

In the Unity Bookstall, December 2022.

### ***Walking in Wonder: Eternal Wisdom for a Modern World***

by John O’Donohue

With a Foreword by Krista Tippett—a poignant and beautiful collection of conversations and presentation from John O’Donohue’s work with close friend and former radio broadcaster John Quinn. John O’Donohue, beloved author of *To Bless the Space Between Us*, is widely recognized as one of the most charismatic and inspirational enduring voices on the subjects of spirituality and Celtic mysticism. These timeless exchanges, collated and introduced by Quinn, span a number of years and explore themes such as imagination, landscape, the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart, aging, and death. Presented in O’Donohue’s inimitable lyrical style, and filled with rich insights that will feed the “unprecedented spiritual hunger” he observed in



modern society, *Walking in Wonder* is a welcome tribute to a much-loved author whose work still touches the lives of millions around the world.

Available in the Unity Anderson Library:

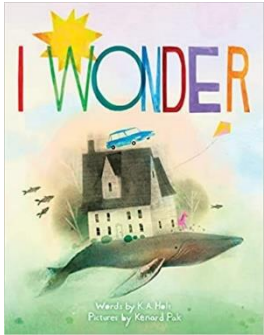
<https://bit.ly/3SthMtk>

In the Unity Bookstall, December 2022.

Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3N1OlXP>

## ***I Wonder***

by Kari Ann Holt, illustrated by Kenard Pak



*From Penguin Random House:*

In this unusual text, young listeners and readers follow a group of diverse kids trying to make sense of the world as they see it. Questions such as *What do clouds taste like?*, *Do my toys miss me when I'm gone?*, and *I wonder if cars*

*and trucks speak the same language* remind us of a child's unique point of view. Nothing is more powerful than seeing something for the first time, and these whimsical questions will encourage all readers to take a fresh look around them.

Children's Book

<https://bit.ly/3Dq8Q41>

## ***The Wonder***

by Faye Hanson

*From Goodreads:*

This is a story about a boy whose head is always full of wonder. We follow him on an average-seeming school day, where his daydreams transform the world around him. Unfortunately, lots of other people - the park keeper, the bus driver, the lollipop lady - all tell him to get his head out of the clouds. It is only in art class that he realizes he can bring the wonder out of his head for the whole world to enjoy.

Children's book.

Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3SoNoRb>

## ***Everywhere, Wonder***

by Matthew Swanson, illustrated by Robbi Behr

A story about exploring by a child, both fantastical explorations and right-at-home ones.

Children's book.

Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3Tq9JiN>

## ***The Vast Wonder of the World: Biologist Ernest Everett Just***

by Melina Mangal, illustrated by Luisa Uribe

*From Goodreads:*

This picture book presents the life and accomplishments of Ernest Everett Just, an African American biologist who made important discoveries about the cell in the 1930s. Through his careful observations and hard work, Ernest opened up the wonder of the universe to all of us, through a tiny egg cell.

Children's book.

Goodreads: <https://bit.ly/3TI4qe6>

## ***Podcasts***

### ***Insights at the Edge***

#### ***Tracking Wonder***

hosted by Tami Simon

In this episode of *Insights at the Edge*, Tami Simon speaks with Jeffrey Davis about his lifelong work of understanding and spreading wonder. Jeffrey explains the six emotional facets that come together to create wonderment, as well as how to cultivate each in your daily life. Tami and Jeffrey discuss the value of accepting confusion, what we can learn from challenging times, and the positive emotions wonder cultivates. They talk about 'wonder interventions' in the workplace and the untapped potential of focused daydreaming for robust creativity. Finally, Jeffrey and Tami discuss the power of personal devotions and the joyous act of gifting someone else with wonderment.

*Tracking Wonder:* <https://bit.ly/3fg9wj5>

## Movies

### *fantastic fungi*

directed by Louis Schwartzberg, 2019

A descriptive time-lapse journey about the magical, mysterious and medicinal world of fungi and their power to heal, sustain and contribute to the regeneration of life on Earth that began 3.5 billion years ago.

Netflix: <https://bit.ly/3V1f00i>

YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3AyEN8j>

## Music

### *What a Wonderful World*

written by Bob Thiele (as “George Douglas”) and George David Weiss

sung by Martina DeSilva and Casey Abrams

<https://youtu.be/-YBCx4uzfpA>

### *The Wonder*

by Peter Mayer

<https://bit.ly/3WzSBJs>

### *Boy in the Bubble*

by Paul Simon

*Excerpt:*

It's every generation throws a hero up the pop charts

Medicine is magical and magical is art

Think of the boy in the bubble

And the baby with the baboon heart

<https://bit.ly/3NqiqY3>

### *Wondrous Love*

by Watchhouse

<https://bit.ly/3GClqiE>

## Photos

### *Rubelev's Savior*



The original icon is by the brilliant iconographer Rubelev. This photo of just the eyes is from a full-sized facsimile painted by Alyona Kneseva in 2012. The facsimile is in the Museum of Russian Icons in Clinton, Massachusetts.

### *Cover Photo*



Circumpolar trails sunset at La Hague Lighthouse

**Contributors:** *the Spiritual Practice packet team – Merrill Aldrich, Andrea La Sonde Anastos, Shelley Butler, Mike Funck, Lia Rivamonte, and Erika Sanders; with ministerial support from Rev. Karen Gustafson.*