**Eno River UU Fellowship**

**The Path to Wonder**

December, 2022 Soul Matters Session Plan

*Adapted from Soul Matters Sharing Circle Materials*

**Group Business**

**Chalice Lighting**-

For the wonder and inspiration  
We seek from sun and stars  
And all the lights of the heavens  
We light this chalice.

-*Rev. Dr. Cynthia Landrum*

**Check-ins:** Identify and briefly describe whatever might be happening in your life that is keeping you from being fully present today. After we share, we will take a moment of silence and try to center into the present.

**Topic Thoughts**

*Definitions:*

*Wonder: a feeling of surprise mingled with admiration, caused by something beautiful, unexpected, unfamiliar, or inexplicable*

*Awe: a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder*.

*We often think that wonder and awe are primarily inspired by the great heights of mountains, the huge waves of the sea, or the circular motions of the stars. We most often talk about the giant, single-moment spiritual* transformations that awe ignites in us. For instance, witnessing a solar eclipse, after which our entire view of God and ourselves was transformed.

These once-in-a-lifetime infusions of wonder are great, but most of us wouldn’t mind a little daily shot of wonder too. Every day we get stuck in our heads and we have grown numb to the marvels that make up the daily rhythms of our lives. Ordinary wonder. We miss it all the time. Let’s take time to take a new look at the ordinary and notice how completely wonderful the commonplace is.

*Were the sun to rise but once a year, we would all cry out...How glorious! Our hymns would rise up, our thanks would ascend. O God...Give us new eyes… and vision to see the world anew.*

-A Jewish Prayer Book

**Deep Sharing & Deep Listening**: Speaking one at a time, and leaving a moment for reflection between speakers, share your own thoughts on wonder and awe.

Questions to consider:

What was your first experience of wonder? Your first moment of awe?

How has the *location* of wonder changed for you over time? Has it shifted from the stars to the woods? From the birth of planets to the birth of your child? From the physical feats your body allowed to the storied wrinkles of your hand?

How would you describe one ordinary moment or thing in your life that feels wondrous to you?

Has age impeded or assisted your experience of wonder?

What are some ways to cultivate the mindfulness that allows us to pay attention to the things right in front of our noses that we usually overlook or take for granted?

If you were to make one change to your daily routine to let a bit more wonder in, what would it be?

What would make your holidays more wonder-filled?

**Connections & Responses**: What did others’ thoughts recall for you?

**Likes & Wishes**: In a word or phrase, what will you take away from this session?

**Closing Words & Extinguish Chalice**

When it's over, I want to say: all my life

I was a bride married to amazement.

I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms…

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

[Mary Oliver](https://www.awakin.org/v2/read/view.php?tid=477)

**Some Spiritual Exercises**

**From December Soul Matters, The Path to Wonder**

**Take A Daily Dose of Online Wonder**

So this month, let’s give ourselves the gift of a *daily* dose of wonder. Think of it as taking a regular “Awe Break.” Every day, put everything down for just a few minutes and let wonder soak in.

To make it easy for you, we’ve put together 31 online doses of wonder. One wonder-filled YouTube video for each of the 31 days of December. It’s a lot like those advent calendars some of us had as kids. We’d peel back the cardboard door, discover some magical new gift and our entire day would be transformed.

Here’s the link to the YouTube playlist that contains all 31 of the videos:

[**https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvXOKgOQVYP7kGFJOQQHNr-0nCJWSf\_eC**](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvXOKgOQVYP7kGFJOQQHNr-0nCJWSf_eC)

If you’re having a particularly hard day, feel free to cheat and watch a couple of them.

The goal is to see if these daily doses really change your days. We bet they do!

**Take an Awe Walk**

An “awe walk” is a stroll in which you intentionally shift your attention outward instead of inward. So, instead of thinking about your to-do list or worrying about a conflict with your co-worker, you contemplate the world around you.

There is no one right way to do this. Your walk can be in a familiar place or somewhere brand new. It can happen in nature or in the middle of a city. It can be about seeking out a stunning mountain view or just strolling by your neighbors’ flower beds. Do it once or do it daily for a week. Keep it general or structure the walk by focusing on sounds, then colors, then the new, then the curious.

Journal after your walk is over or process it with a friend over a cup of coffee.

The point is not to seek out the extra-ordinary but to notice the ordinary in a new way. It’s about cultivating a particular type of mindfulness that allows us to pay attention to the things right in front of our noses that we usually overlook or take for granted.

Here are some resources to help you on your way.

* Turn Your Daily Walk Into an Awe Walk and Boost Your Mental Health

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cB-4FDRVbSk>

* An Awe Walk How To

<https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/awe_walk>

* Awe Walks: How To Start

<https://www.diygenius.com/awe-walks/>

## Make an Ode to an Ordinary Moment

**Step One: Get in the right state of mind.**

Start by reflecting on this quote by Rachel Carson:

*“One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, ‘What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?’”*

**Step Two: Meditate**

With Carson’s quote in your mind, make time to watch and meditate on the below video. Consider watching it twice. As you watch, pay attention to which 2-3 images from the video strike you most. Ask yourself, “Which image is ‘shimmering’ for me? Which image has a particularly strong emotional gravitational pull?”

The Wonder of Ordinary Moments

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

**Step Three: Write (or create) something to honor one of the ordinary wonders in your life.**

Based on your engagement with the video, identifying one ordinary moment or thing in your life that feels wondrous to you. Then write a bit about why and how that is true. Think of your piece as an ode to the ordinary. It can be long or short. Straight-forward or involved. And if writing isn’t your thing, consider creating something to honor your ordinary wonder. Take a picture of it, or multiple pictures from multiple perspectives. If sound is connected to your wonderful thing, record it. If you like to draw or paint, do that. The point is to find some way to capture it tangibly, with words, images or sound.