



# TOUCHSTONES

a monthly journal of Unitarian Universalism

May 2020

## Sabbath

## Wisdom Story



### Introduction to the Theme

W.H. Auden wrote, "The past is not to be taken seriously... nor the future..., but only the present instant." It is only in the present in which we can act. It is only in the present in which we can build on the past and shape the future. Building on this, Unitarian Universalist minister Kim Beach said, "The central religious issue in life... is discernment: being able to recognize the difference between what is serious and what is frivolous." According to Auden, idolatry is "taking the frivolous seriously." This does not mean that we should not be frivolous, for there is a time for everything: weeping and laughing, mourn-

ing and dancing. It does mean that we should not confuse the two, nor should we treat the meaning in life that we discover or create in a frivolous manner for it is far too precious to be disparaged. Unitarian Universalist theologian James Luther Adams' counsel was to take time seriously. We do this not by simply talking about the importance of time, but by the ways in which we act in time.



The Greeks understood that time is not uniform. They spoke of *Chronos*, which is ordinary time, the space-time continuum in which we exist most of the

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### Sabbath & Building Beloved Community

A dimension of Beloved Community is time, both mundane time and sacred time, or as the Greeks called them, *Chronos* and *Kairos*. Mundane time or *Chronos* is the work of the world. It is a necessity and, done well, makes so much more possible. Sacred time or *Kairos* is the work of the soul. Without it, we are a human "doing," not a human "being." The task of Beloved Community is to honor both. The work of Community, or church work, is part of *Chronos*, while *Kairos*/Sabbath time falls under the umbrella of Beloved. Without "Beloved Time," our lives would be diminished. The Sabbath is a state of being, as well as a state of heart and mind. Make Sabbath time a priority for rest and renewal. It is not the renewal offered by sleep, rather it has the quality of prayer, of meditation, of stillness, and of depth.

*Touchstones is committed to exploring liberal theology. This journal is supported by subscriptions from Unitarian Universalist congregations. For daily meditations, photos, and more visit/like Touchstones at <https://www.facebook.com/Touchpossibility/>*

### Breaking Bread

*Adapted from Tales for the Seventh Day: A Collection of Sabbath Stories by Nina Jaffe.*

Once there was a chef who was famous throughout the land for the amazing food that she prepared, food that looked beautiful and tasted delicious. She was a great artist who loved teaching her art to others. She hosted a dinner party each month, and it was important to her that all of the dishes be new so that her students could learn new recipes. The dinner guests, in awe of these new and wonderful dishes, spent the dinner "oohing" and "ahhing."

She often traveled throughout the land to find new recipes. Returning home one Sunday afternoon, she stopped at a small, country house to ask for directions to a hotel. The family insisted that she have dinner and spend the night.

When it was time, the mother took a casserole out of the oven. Brother tossed a salad with different vegetables. Sister sliced the homemade bread. "Let me help," said the chef, and she set the table.

When everyone was seated at the table, the family held hands. The chef was overwhelmed to be a part of this family circle. The mother offered grace saying, "To gather around the table together on the Sabbath" and the children replied, "Is a blessing!" "To have food on our table" and the children replied, "Is a blessing!" "The sunset and the possibility of another



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## Building Beloved Community

## Is a Blessing!

(Continued from page 1) **Breaking Bread**

er sunrise tomorrow..." "Is a blessing!" the children replied. "The love of family, the warmth of friendship, and the grace of the Spirit..." "Is a blessing!" the children and chef replied together. Then they laughed, delighted that the chef had joined in. While they ate, everyone told stories about their day. The chef could not believe how delicious the food was. She didn't want dinner to end. "May I have your recipes?" the chef asked the mother, who was flattered that the chef had enjoyed such a simple meal.

In the morning, the chef returned home and immediately told her students to begin preparing these new recipes for the dinner party scheduled for the next night. When the guests arrived, the casserole, salad, and bread were served. The chef took a bite and chewed. Something was wrong. This was not at all like the meal she had at the farmhouse. She asked the students to explain what they had done wrong, but it was clear that they had followed the recipes faithfully.

The chef returned to the farmhouse the next Sunday afternoon, explained what had happened, and asked the mother what secret ingredient she had left out of the recipe. "What's missing cannot fit into a recipe," she replied. "Was the meal made with love, the kind of love that happens when a family gathers together on the Sabbath to enjoy each other and the day? Did you hold hands while giving thanks? Did you share your stories during the meal? Was the time special, not only because of the food, but because of the quality of the time spent together?"

"No," the chef replied. None of that had happened. Then the chef realized that sharing a meal together was about more than good food. It was about working together, sharing lives, and sharing laughs. It was about being thankful and truly enjoying special time together.

From that day forward, the chef gave small, intimate dinner parties in which everyone broke bread by giving thanks, sharing stories, and enjoying the company of each other as well as the food.

Source: Touchstones

## A Sacred Realm

### Heschel on the Sabbath

Born in Warsaw, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972) was an American rabbi and one of the leading Jewish theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was a professor of Jewish mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York City. Active in the Civil Rights Movement, he marched alongside the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and later wrote, "When I marched in Selma, my feet were praying."

In 1968, King was looking forward to attending a Passover Seder at Heschel's home, but he was assassinated a few weeks before the Jewish holiday.

Heschel was the only Jew to deliver a eulogy at King's funeral service.

Published in 1951, Heschel's book, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*, is considered a classic of Jewish spirituality. In a way, Heschel drew a distinction between doing and being, between space and time, between the mundane and the sacred. The Sabbath is intended as a realm of being, a realm of time, and a realm of the sacred. Heschel wrote, "There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have, but to be, not to own, but to give, not to control, but to share, not to subdue, but to be in accord." The Sabbath is realm of time that contains within it "the heart of existence." For Heschel, the problem is that we spend most of our time in the world of space, but "to have more does not mean to be more." While our livelihood depends on how we function in the realm of space, in the work-a-day world, "life goes wrong," wrote



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## Ritualize the Chaos

### Sabbath Moments

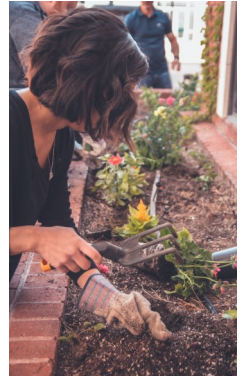
Donna Schaper

*Sabbath Sense* offers a way to take back our time and take care of our souls—one moment at a time. The focus is on spiritual pauses, not organized-religion-designated days. The sense of Sabbath lies in the moment, any moment that actively includes the presence of God or Spirit. Such moments can include walking, gardening, home-making, writing—any activity that steals time back from the chaos of a hectic world, ...rituals that have the potential of unifying our fragmented days and time.

The fragmentation of our minutes and hours is largely why we don't feel we have enough time. When time is broken up into little parts, rather than gathered together into larger ones, it feels too heavy. It loses its shape and its levity. When we ritualize the chaos of modern life, it creates an opening for Sabbath. Rituals keep time from becoming all of the same anxious pace and piece. Rituals separate duty and desire. They allow for leisure, so well-defined long ago as that which we *choose* rather than that which we *must* do. Rituals can even include such unexpected things as keeping house. Traditional women were not wrong in hanging their wash out every Monday. They were into something the two-career family has lost—ritualizing time so that it can become expansive.

...Sabbath moments may be found, informally, in any number of activities, each done in a nearly Benedictine way that honors setting the table as much as any Mass. Each path to Sabbath prizes solitude.... Each takes a few minutes out of full days to bow or nod in a spiritual direction.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/18225>





# Readings from the Common Bowl

**Day 1:** "This is what the Sabbath should feel like. A pause. Not just a minor pause, but a major pause.

Not just lowering the volume, but a muting. ...[T]he Sabbath is a sanctuary in time." A.J. Jacobs

**Day 2:** "Sabbath... is about withdrawal from the anxiety system of Pharaoh, the refusal to let one's life be defined by production and consumption...."

Walter Brueggemann

**Day 3:** "If busyness can become a kind of violence, we do not have to stretch our perception very far to see that Sabbath time ... can invite a healing of this violence." Wayne Muller

**Day 4:** "Sabbath invites limited time to become expansive time. Sabbath makes spacious what is cramped. It makes large out of small, generous out of stingy, simple out of complex." Donna Schaper

**Day 5:** "Solitude, well-practiced, will break the power of busyness, haste, isolation, and loneliness. You will see that the world is not on your shoulders after all." Dallas Willard

**Day 6:** "Anybody can observe the Sabbath, but making it holy surely takes the rest of the week." Alice Walker

**Day 7:** "Like a path through the forest, Sabbath creates a marker for ourselves so, if we are lost, we can find our way back to our center." Wayne Muller

**Day 8:** "Sabbath is the time set aside to do nothing so that we can receive everything...." Eugene H. Peterson

**Day 9:** "Sabbath requires surrender. If we only stop when we are finished with all our work, we will never stop, because our work is never completely done." Wayne Muller

**Day 10:** "The command is, 'Do no work.' Just make space. Attend to what is around you. Learn that you don't have to DO to BE. Accept the grace of doing nothing. Stay with it until you stop jerking and squirming." Dallas Willard

**Day 11:** "Sabbath is the time to receive



silence and let it deepen into gratitude, to receive quiet into which forgotten faces and voices unobtrusively make themselves present, to receive the days of the just completed week and absorb the wonder and miracle...." Eugene H. Peterson

**Day 12:** "Some keep the Sabbath going to church, / I keep it staying at home, / With a bobolink for a chorister, / And an orchard for a dome." Emily Dickinson

**Day 13:** "A world without a Sabbath would be like a man without a smile, like summer without flowers, and like a home—stead without a garden. It is the most joyous day of the week." Henry Ward Beecher

**Day 14:** "We have to remember to stop because we have to stop to remember." Judith Shulevitz

**Day 15:** "Most of the things we need to be most fully alive never come in busyness. They grow in rest." Mark Buchanan

**Day 16:** "Sabbath is a time to transition from human doings to human beings." Matthew Sleeth

**Day 17:** "Finding a way to establish substantive, sustaining Sabbath time in your life is absolutely essential to human well-being." Rev. Scott Alexander

**Day 18:** "I rarely feel such clear signs of fatigue and anxiety on days that are filled with travel, meetings and assignments—only when I stop to rest. Without Sabbath, I would be dangerously ignorant of the true condition of my soul." Andy Crouch



**Day 19:** "Sabbath is like the scary free fall of faith, in microcosm. And it is good for our hearts to practice." Marcia Lebar

**Day 20:** "The Sabbath is the day on which we learn the art of surpassing civilization." Abraham Joshua Heschel

**Day 21:** "Sabbath observance invites us to

stop. It invites us to rest. It asks us to notice that while we rest, the world continues without our help. It invites us to delight in the world's beauty and abundance." Wendell Berry

**Day 22:** "Sometimes, I have loved the peacefulness of an ordinary Sunday. It is like standing in a newly planted garden after a warm rain. You can feel the silent and invisible life." Marilynne Robinson

**Day 23:** "At our best, we become Sabbath for one another. We are the emptiness, the day of rest." Wayne Muller

**Day 24:** "Sabbath is to lead us to reflect on life itself—where we've been, where we're going, and why. Sabbath time takes quiet and serious thought and a search for meaning." Joan Chittister

**Day 25:** "Sabbath is not dependent upon our readiness to stop." Peter Scazzero

**Day 26:** "The etymological root of the word Sabbath means to stop—doing, producing, thinking, to stop time, in essence, to allow oneself the void in which to receive, instead of constantly striving 'to be.'" Savannah Blaze Lee

**Day 27:** "Sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest." Walter Brueggemann

**Day 28:** "Sabbath is both a day and an attitude to nurture such stillness. It is both time on a calendar and a disposition of the heart. It is a day we enter, but just as much a way we see." Mark Buchanan

**Day 29:** "When we live without listening to the timing of things, ...we are on war time, mobilized for battle. ...No living thing lives like this. There are greater rhythms, seasons and hormonal cycles and sunsets and moonrises and great movements of seas and stars." Wayne Muller

**Day 30:** "We need to ask ourselves why we are so busy. Sabbath helps us to question our assumptions. ...The Sabbath heals us from our compulsion to measure ourselves by what we accomplish, who we know, and the influence we have." Ken Shigematsu

**Day 31:** "Six days a week we seek to dominate the world, on the seventh day we try to dominate the self." Abraham Joshua Heschel



## Remember the Sabbath

Wayne Muller

In the relentless busyness of modern life, we have lost the rhythm between work and rest.

All life requires a rhythm of rest. There is a rhythm in our waking activity and the body's need for sleep. There is a rhythm in the way day dissolves into night, and night into morning. ...

We have lost this essential rhythm. Our culture invariably supposes that action and accomplishment are better than rest, that doing something—anything—is better than doing nothing. Because of our desire to succeed to meet these ever-rising expectations, we do not rest. Because we do not rest, we lose our way. ...

In our drive for success, we are seduced by the promises of more: more money, more recognition, more satisfaction, more love, more information, more influence, more possessions, and more security. Even when our intentions are noble and our efforts are sincere—even when we dedicate our lives to the service of others—the corrosive pressure of frantic over-activity can nonetheless cause suffering in ourselves and others.

A “successful” life has become a violent enterprise. We make war on our own bodies, pushing them beyond their limits; war on our children, because we cannot find enough time to be with them when they are hurt and afraid, and need our company; war on our spirit, because we are too preoccupied to listen to quiet voices that seek to nourish and refresh us; war on our communities, because we are fearfully protecting what we have, and do not feel safe enough to be kind and generous. ...

Despite ...good thoughts and equally good intentions, ...work in the world rarely feels light, pleasant, or healing. Instead, as it all piles endlessly on itself, the whole experience of being alive begins to melt into one. ...

Our lack of rest and reflection is not just a personal affliction. It colors the

way in which we build and sustain community, it dictates the way we respond to suffering, and it shapes the way we seek peace and healing in the world. ...

What makes life fruitful? The attainment of wisdom? The establishment of a just and fair society? The creation of beauty? The practice of loving-kindness? Thomas Jefferson suggested that human life and liberty were intimately entwined with the pursuit of happiness. Instead, life has become a maelstrom in which speed and accomplishment, consumption and productivity have become the most valued human commodities. In the trance of overwork, we take everything for granted. We consume things, people, and information. We do not have time to savor this life, nor to care deeply and gently for ourselves, our loved ones, or our world; rather with increasingly dizzying haste, we use them all up, and throw them away. Can this be the happiness of which Jefferson spoke? ...

How did we get so terribly lost in a world saturated with striving and grasping, yet somehow bereft of joy and delight? I suggest that it is this: We have forgotten the Sabbath.

Before you dismiss this statement as simplistic, even naïve, we must explore more fully the nature and definition of the Sabbath. While Sabbath can refer to a single day of the week, Sabbath can also be a far-reaching, revolutionary tool for cultivating those precious human qualities that grow only in time.

If busyness can become a kind of violence, we do not have to stretch our perception very far to see that Sabbath time—effortless, nourishing rest—can invite a healing of this violence. ...

Without rest, we respond from a survival mode, where everything we meet assumes a terrifying prominence.

...when we are moving faster and faster, every encounter, every detail inflates in importance, everything seems more urgent than it really is, and we react with sloppy desperation. ...

Sabbath time can be a revolutionary challenge to the violence of overwork, mindless accumulation, and the endless multiplication of desires, responsibilities, and accomplishments. Sabbath is a way of being in time where we remember who we are, remember what we know, and taste the gifts of spirit and eternity.

... “Remember the Sabbath” is not simply a life-style suggestion. It is a spiritual precept in most of the world's spiritual traditions.... How can forgetting the Sabbath possibly be morally and socially dangerous? ...

Sabbath honors the necessary wisdom of dormancy. ... A period of rest—in which nutrition and fertility most readily coalesce—is not simply a human psychological convenience; it is a spiritual and biological necessity. A lack of dormancy produces confusion and erosion in the

life force.

We, too, must have a period in which we lie fallow, and restore our souls. In Sabbath time we remember to celebrate what is beautiful and sacred.... It is a time to let our work, our lands, our animals lie fallow, to be nourished and refreshed. Within this sanctuary we become available to the insights and blessings of deep mindfulness that arise only in stillness and time.

When we act from a place of deep rest, we

are more capable of cultivating what the Buddhists would call right understanding, right action, and right effort. In a complex and unstable world, if we do not rest, if we do not surrender to some kind of Sabbath, how can we find our way, how can we hear the voices that tell us the right thing to do?



Source: excerpt from pages 1-7 in *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in our Busy Lives*, Wayne Muller, Bantam Books, 2000.



## Family Matters

### Lights Out Shabbat

Sarene Shulmison

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat write, “A young boy is visiting his grandparents for a weekend in Georgia when they are all surprised by a freak snow storm. It begins after they light the Shabbat candles. The electricity in the house goes out, but they continue with the meal. As the candles flicker, Grandfather tells stories about his childhood. The boy is so relaxed that he falls asleep dreaming that the snow is ‘a warm fuzzy jacket.’

In the morning, the boy makes a snowman with his grandmother and then they walk around the neighborhood. By the time they return, their creation is already melting. That evening, his grandfather shows him stars through a telescope. Then he leads them in a blessing over wine to mark the end of the Shabbat: ‘Thank you, O God, for making all things exist.’ And the boy adds, ‘Like snow in Georgia.’ They continue the ritual by smelling spices and lighting a special candle before wishing each other a *Shavuah Tov*, a ‘good week.’

Source: <http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/view/23162/lights-out-shabbat>

### Family Activity:

#### The Sabbath Box

As a family consider taking Sabbath time. It can be an hour, morning, afternoon, evening, or a day. Choose what works for your family, or start small and extend the time as taking this time-out feels more natural and comfortable. Wayne Muller, author of *Sabbath*, suggests making a Sabbath Box. As you begin your Sabbath-time, put things in



the Sabbath Box that you want to leave behind. The box can hold a cell phone,

car keys, and other small items. For larger items, like a television, write the name of the item on an index card and put it in the box. Adults may want to put in things like to-do lists. As you enter Sabbath-time and put things in the Sabbath Box

discuss what is going into the box and why. When your Sabbath-time is over, take the items in the box back out.

### Family Activity: Soul Sunday

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat write, “*Soul Sunday: A Family’s Guide to Exploring Faith and Teaching Tolerance* (May 2007) is Carrie Brown-Wolf’s guide for parents who want to educate and sensitize their children to the riches of the world’s religions and the benefits of the spiritual practice of hospitality. ... In the first section..., Brown-Wolf reveals how she and her husband decided to set Sunday evening aside to talk with their three children about spirituality. They used a variety of activities to spur discussions about cultures, families around the world, poverty, politics, peer pressure, and much more. They came up with *Ten Components for a Meaningful Life*—love, compassion, integrity, kindness, wisdom, purposeful work, peace, citizenship, appreciation, and faith. They explored five religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and discovered the joys of learning and sharing together.

“Part two of *Soul Sunday* presents 20 seasonal hands-on spiritual sessions based on faith traditions from around the globe. They have creative titles such as *Wheeling Religions*, *Ramadan Revelry*, *Mind the Matzoh*, *Mosaic Madness*, *Sister and Brother Bracelets*, and many more.”

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/view/18139/soul-sunday>

## Unplug & Connect

### The Digital Sabbath

Alex Soojung-Kim Pang

Trying to keep up with real time can exact a high price. It creates services to make online life and communication quicker and more frictionless—one-click purchasing; texts rather than e-mails. It disrupts life to make life more seamless. Trying to live at the speed of finance and commerce and communication forces us to focus on the present moment—the present instant—and erodes our ability to slow down and think. “Minds, organizations, cities, entire societies all need time to integrate and process new ideas,” futurist Anthony Townsend says. “If you think you have to constantly, instantly react, rest and contemplation and deliberation—the ability to think about what you’re doing—disappears.” Relentless, constant exposure to real time, he argues, “destroys both decision-making and contemplative ability.” ...

What the [digital] Sabbath offers is a day in which it’s acceptable to step away from all of that. For one day a week, it’s all right to “collect rather than to dissipate time,” to “mend our scattered lives.” ... It’s a chance to learn how to collect rather than dissipate time; an invitation to experience a more majestic, mystical time that lengthens one’s capacity for attention and for presence; and an opportunity to make meaning in life. ...

Those who get the most out of the digital Sabbath use it as a time to rebuild themselves, to reengage with friends, to relearn and exercise treasured pre-digital abilities, to reconnect with the real world.

Turning off the million little requests and interactions that cascade into distraction and exhaustion is good.... The digital Sabbath is defined not only by what you turn off and ignore, but also by what you do with the pauses. Unplugging is the means; rediscovering a more human sense of time and rebuilding your spirit are the ends.

Source: <http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/25717>



# Be Still...Rest...Shalom!

(Continued from page 1)

time, the flow of time in predictable sequence. They also spoke of *Kairos*, the supreme moment, the moment that is qualitatively different in recognizable ways. It is time as peak experience, time as transcendence, time as transformation, time as fulfilment. Chronos versus kairos is the ordinary versus the extraordinary, the mundane versus the sacred, the desert versus the oasis. Kairos is Sabbath time. Abraham Joshua Heschel, a Polish-born American rabbi and one of the leading Jewish theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wrote in his book, *The Sabbath*, "There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord."

## ***Nurture Your Spirit: Sabbath Time***

The purpose of Sabbath time is to nurture your spirit. To empty yourself through quiet and non-action, to slow down and then to stop, to sacrifice doing for being rather than the opposite, which is how most of us spend our days. The poet Mary Oliver asked, "Listen—are you breathing just a little, and calling it a life?" You will only truly understand all the implications of this question when you enter Sabbath time. She asks, "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" Find moments of Sabbath time, even if it is just ten minutes at a time, to ponder her question, to ponder your life.

Occasionally we reach the end of a day, a week, a season, or a year and find ourselves overwhelmingly exhausted. *Be Still... Rest... Shalom.*

This is not simply the exhaustion of the body, which sleep might restore, but the exhaustion of the soul. *Be Still... Rest... Shalom.*

How hard to praise life's gifts when we are haunted by such incredible burden. How difficult to recognize joy or possibility, to experience contentment or purpose, to consider self-care a necessity rather than a luxury. *Be Still... Rest... Shalom.*

At times like these, sleep becomes an escape from such weariness, but not its

cure. At times like these, we continue to sleep while we are awake. We call this kind of sleep "depression," the physical, emotional and spiritual numbing that masks our pain and suffering at such great cost. *Be Still... Rest... Shalom.*

To reach this state, whether by overwork, stress, fear, doubt, or loss, is to also realize that an essential balance in our life has been lost. There is no quick fix to such spiritual dis-ease. *Be Still... Rest... Shalom.*

In times such as these, let us pray for salvation or wholeness, not for a superficial religiosity, but for the healing and wholeness that is our birthright and our destiny. *Be Still... Rest... Shalom.*

Let us not surrender to despair, but to Life itself. *Be Still... Rest... Shalom.*

Let us enter Sabbath time, that respite of prayer, meditation, stillness, and quiet that can restore our soul. *Be Still... Rest... Shalom.*

*Be still*, that you might become mindful of your sorrow and your joy. *Be still*, that you might come to know the deepest longings of your heart. *Be still* that you might become open to the healing possibilities in you and around you.

*Rest.* Set your burdens aside that this Sabbath time might bring you deep refreshment.

*Shalom.* In stillness and rest may you come to know a peace that passes understanding.

## ***Help Heal Our World: Sabbath Tasks***

The Unitarian Universalist Association offers an invitation to take time seriously, to take life seriously, to take yourself seriously, to take your gifts seriously, and to love the world. The invitation is this: *Nurture your spirit, Help heal our world.*

We nurture our spirit by entering Sabbath time, by restoring our soul, but the refreshment and renewal that we find there is not for ourselves alone, they are also for the world in which we have our being and becoming.

How will you nurture the world, which has given you so much, which has given

you everything?

Do you take for granted all that you have received? Do you view these gifts as your due? Do you believe that all of these came to you solely as a consequence of your own effort?

Or do you understand just how utterly dependent you are on the world and on those around you for the life you have, for the opportunities, for the blessings.

Unitarian Universalist minister Ralph Helverson wrote, "We have religion when we stop deluding ourselves that we are self-sufficient, self-sustaining, or self-derived...."

Do you have religion, this religion that we call Unitarian Universalism, this religion that invites you to nurture your spirit, but that also challenges you to help heal the world?

"Listen—are you breathing just a little, and calling it a life?" "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" (Mary Oliver)

Your answer should not just be about you, but about you in the world, about just how precious your life is, but also about just how precious the lives of others are.

Your answer should take heed of the bell that tolls, ringing out joy and sadness: Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee? Do you hear the bell sound? Does its echo reach your heart?

One purpose of Sabbath time is to renew us so that we may undertake Sabbath tasks, those tasks that take us out of ourselves because we have are committed to love as covenant, a covenant that includes the world, those tasks that take us out of ourselves because we have gained some wisdom for life; those tasks that take us out of ourselves, because we understand what compassion in action really means.

To paraphrase Mother Teresa, "Not all of us can do great things, nor do we have to. But all of us can do small things with great love, and we must."

Sabbath Time renews us so we can do the Sabbath Task of helping to heal our world.





## Gone to the Fields

### Camas Lilies

Rev. Dr. Lynn Ungar

Consider the lilies of the field,  
the blue banks of camas  
opening



into acres of sky along the road.  
Would the longing to lie down  
and be washed by that beauty  
abate if you knew their usefulness,  
how the natives  
ground their bulbs  
for flour, how the settlers' hogs  
uprooted them, grunting in gleeful  
oblivion as the flowers fell?  
And you—what of your rushed  
and useful life? Imagine setting it  
all down—  
papers, plans, appointments,  
everything—  
leaving only a note: "Gone  
to the fields to be lovely.  
Be back  
when I'm through  
with blooming."  
Even now, unneeded and uneaten,  
the camas lilies gaze out  
above the grass  
from their tender blue eyes.  
Even in sleep your life will shine.  
Make no mistake. Of course  
your work will always matter.  
*Yet Solomon in all his glory  
was not arrayed like one of these.*

Source: <http://www.lynnungar.com/camas-lilies-2/>

## Rest, Even from the Thought of Labor

(Continued from page 2) **Heschel on Sabbath**

Heschel, "when the control of space, the acquisition of things of space, becomes our sole concern." As Heschel explained, "Labor is a craft, but perfect rest is an art. It is the result of an accord of body, mind, and imagination. To attain a degree of excellence in art, one must accept its discipline.... The seventh day is a palace in time which we build. It is made of soul, of joy...."

Unitarian Universalist minister Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons writes, "...time is the ultimate form of human wealth on this earth. Without time, all other forms of wealth are meaningless. It is this insight about time—completely obvious but frequently forgotten—that makes keeping a Sabbath day both spiritually profound and politically radical." For Heschel, "the Sabbath as a day of rest, as a day of abstaining from toil, is not for the purpose of recovering one's lost strength and becoming fit for the forthcoming labor. The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life. Man is not a beast of burden, and the Sabbath is not for the purpose of enhancing the efficiency of his work.... The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays; the weekdays are for the sake of Sabbath. It is not an interlude, but the climax of living." Building on these sentiments, Levy-Lyons writes, "The goal of a Sabbath practice is not to patch us up and send us back out to the rat race, but to represent in the now what redemption looks like, what justice

looks like, what a compassionate social order looks like. It reconstructs the rest of the week from the viewpoint of the Sabbath as unjust and untenable. The Sabbath lifts up a holy vision of the world and performs deeply political work: it builds an 'outside' to society. The self that emerges from such a Sabbath and re-enters the week is a changed self—a newly radicalized self who can no longer tolerate injustice." In this, we see the connection for Heschel between Sabbath and Selma.

Heschel drew on a rabbinical *midrash*, or commentary, from around 300 CE about the Fourth Commandment: "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work. Is it possible for a human being to do all his work in six days? Does not our work always remain incomplete? What the verse means to convey is: Rest on the Sabbath as if all your work were done. Another interpretation: Rest even from the thought of labor."

Elsewhere Heschel wrote, "He who wants to enter the holiness of the day must first lay down the profanity of clattering commerce, of being yoked to toil. He must go away from the screech of dissonant days, from the nervousness and fury of acquisitiveness and the betrayal in embezzling his own life. He must say farewell to manual work and learn to understand that the world has already been created and will survive without the help of man. Six days a week

we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul. The world has our hands, but our soul belongs to Someone Else. Six days a week we seek to dominate the world, on the seventh day we try to dominate the self." And that is never easy.

Source: Touchstones



## Small Group Discussion Guide

### Theme for Discussion Sabbath

**Preparation prior to Gathering:** (Read this issue of the journal and *Living the Questions* in the next column.)

**Business:** Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

**Opening Words:** "Sabbath invites limited time to become expansive time. Sabbath makes spacious what is cramped. It makes large out of small, generous out of stingy, simple of complex. Sabbath is time that actively includes the presence of Spirit.... The purpose is spiritual leisure, to make a spiritual choice, to have time for your own purposes." *Donna Schaper*

**Chalice Lighting** (James Vila Blake) (adapted)

(In unison) *Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.*

**Check-In:** How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

**Claim Time for Deeper Listening:** This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

**Read the Wisdom Story:** Take turns reading aloud parts of the wisdom story on page one.

**Readings from the Common Bowl:** Group members read selections from *Readings from the Common Bowl* (page 3). Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

**Sitting In Silence:** Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

**Reading:** "Sabbath time assumes that if we step back and rest, we will see the wholeness in it all. We will naturally apprehend the good in how things are, taste the underlying strength, beauty, and wisdom

that lives even in the difficult days, take delight in the gift and blessing of being alive." *Wayne Muller*

**Living the Questions:** Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving on.

1. What does the Sabbath mean to you?
2. How did you live the Sabbath as a child? What is different now?
3. How has technology changed the possibility of taking Sabbath time?
4. What does rhythm in life have to do with the Sabbath?
5. What is the connection between the Sabbath and happiness?
6. What Unitarian Universalist Principles apply to the Sabbath?
7. What do the following have to do with the Sabbath: Food? Music? Prayer? Nature? Playing? Giving?
8. What makes keeping the Sabbath so difficult today?

The facilitator or group members are invited to propose additional questions that they would like to explore.

**Deeper Listening:** If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person who claimed time.

**Checking-Out:** One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together exploring the theme.

#### Extinguishing Chalice

(Elizabeth Selle Jones) (In unison)

*We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*

**Closing Words** Rev. Philip R. Giles (In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*



## Liberation Theology

### The Sabbath Right to Rest

*Judith Shulevitz*

So counterintuitive is the idea of organized nonproductivity, given the force and universality of the human urge to make things, that you can't believe anyone ever managed to lift his head from his workbench or plow long enough to think of it. ...The Jews ...brought into the world, not just the Sabbath, but something just as precious, and surprisingly closely linked. They invented the idea of social equality.

The Israelite Sabbath institutionalized an astonishing, hitherto undreamed-of notion: that every single creature has the right to rest, not just the rich and the privileged. Covered under the Fourth Commandment are women, slaves, strangers and, improbably, animals. The verse in Deuteronomy that elaborates on this aspect of the Sabbath repeats, twice, that slaves were not to work, as if to drive home what must have been very hard to understand in the ancient world. The Jews were meant to perceive the Sabbath not only as a way to honor God, but also as the central vehicle of their liberation theology, a weekly reminder of their escape from their servitude in Egypt.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/02/magazine/bring-back-the-sabbath.html>

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