



Chalice Circle Packet

April 2020

What Does It Mean to Live Faithfully with Integrity?



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INTEGRITY

Ever since the collapse of the I35W bridge in 2007, we in the Twin Cities have learned to take the integrity of bridges seriously. But what do we know about the integrity of people, and systems, institutions and practices meant to carry us across the chasms stretched between our old familiar world to the far banks of a future we hope and pray will be better?

Here in our congregation, we say we are helping one another lead loving lives of integrity, service and joy. Just what does a loving life of integrity look like now?

The dictionary offers two basic meanings of integrity – *the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles*; and *the state of being whole and undivided*. Other sources, thoughtfully unpacking its meanings in different times and places, have noted that in the dominant culture of the United States, integrity is often regarded as an individual virtue and one measured by consistency. In different cultures, here and elsewhere, it is shaped by community and practiced with adaptability.

Today, in this time of contagion, what does it mean to live with integrity? How do we measure the integrity of the metaphorical bridges needed to cross between you and me, and us and them, and here and there, and then and now and yet to come? Some bridges, made of the most basic habits, are no longer sound. Handshakes and hugs. Community sings and face to face worship and breaking bread together. Even strategic planning, because things are changing so rapidly. Just a week ago, when I typed the letters “c-o-v,” my phone’s autofill offered the option of covenant. Now, its first suggestion is COVID-19. Is my brain’s autofill capable of keeping up in a more discerning way than that?

Integrity, as a matter of moral principle and one of wholeness, requires that we let go of rigid attachments to old ways and individualistic understandings, but not of our deepest values. We are asked to adapt. To go slowly. To step back and step up. To choose and take one step at a time in ways that leave no one behind.

The Canadian Buddhist teacher Pascal Auclair was once asked how he finds hope in a world with so much suffering. He paused. Then answered, *I don’t think much about hope. What I do think about, nearly every day, is what is my next right action?* Integrity is about asking that question, and placing it in conversation with our own deepest values, with one another, and with the changing world we share.

The losses we have already experienced and the ones yet to come are and will be many in this time of pandemic. Our grief is real; we need to feel it and share it. But we will receive gifts in this, too. If we listen carefully, we may discover and perhaps recover what really holds us together – across the 6-foot social distancing, across the chasms of our separate locations, identities and ideologies, across the wide gap between what is no longer and what is not yet.

Everything is connected. We know – scientifically, ecologically, emotionally and spiritually – this is how the world is made. Can we let the integrity of that truth hold and guide us now? Let's all practice. Align your next step with this truth. And the step after that. Leave no one behind. No one. Like this we will step into the unknown future. Like this we will help one another to live compassionately with integrity, service and joy. Like this we will make a bridge as we go into a future made whole by this knowledge that we are all connected, always have been, always will be.

Our reflection in chalice circle practices and sharing is just one of many ways we step into the future together.

Karen Hering
Associate Minister
adapted from the April 2020 issue of *CommUNITY*

Spiritual Practices

Option A

What Is My Next Step and Right Action?

It's easy to get overwhelmed, especially in times of rapid change and crisis, as we try to discern how to live out our values. But it doesn't require either a big plan or great vision. Living out our values can be as simple as naming our "next right action," as Pascal Auclair put it.

For this practice, take some time at the beginning of each day to consider what your next right action might be. Follow the practice outlined in the opening reflection:

Begin with a time of meditation – if possible, at least five minutes of stillness and silence. If you already have a meditation practice, begin with that, or use the following basic guidelines.

Settle into a comfortable position with paper and pen nearby and, if you can, set a timer for five minutes of silent meditation or prayer. If your thoughts wander during the five minutes, return to focusing on your breath, as many times as you need to during the five minute period. Let go of any distracting thoughts with every out-breath. Welcome a deeper silence with each in-breath.

At the end of your meditation, notice the stillness within you and in that stillness ask yourself: what is your next right action on this day? If answers come fleetingly, dismiss them, again breathing in and breathing out silently until a single answer settles in your heart with the satisfying weight of truth. If nothing comes to mind, wait patiently for a word, an image or a phrase and use that to begin your writing. Perhaps your writing will unveil what is calling you.

Pick up your pen and write briefly. What one thing are you called to do to be of service today?

As you begin your day, do that one thing. If you have time to do more, repeat the above practice until the next right action becomes clear in your heart.

Come to your circle prepared to describe what you have learned from this practice.

Option B

Naming What Is Essential Now?

We are talking a lot about essential services these days, and each governmental “Stay-at-Home” order names the essential services for which we may venture out of our homes for basic needs and wellbeing. Are we making a similar effort ourselves to name what we regard as essential to live with wholeness and integrity and wellness? As our lives move into radical new arrangements during this time of pandemic, what is most essential to you and how might you preserve that without spreading or contracting illness?

Make a list of what is essential to you – for yourself, for your loved ones and for the larger community and world you share. Do this in brainstorming fashion first. Then review the list. Which items on the list have been challenged by the pandemic and related restrictions? For each of those items, ask yourself if there are new ways to preserve them while living under “Stay-at-Home” rules. Then ask, are there items on the list that actually have been or might be supported or encouraged by our pandemic times?

Add to the list over several days. Then, take some time to consider it as a whole and write from this prompt, following wherever it leads:

What is essential to me now....

Option C

Remembering Our Way into Integrity

If integrity is about acting in alignment with our values, acting honestly, acting faithfully, in this sense, it might seem to be forward-looking. But it is also about looking backward. It’s not just about how well we act; it’s about how well we remember the important life lessons come our way. Some of them stick and some slip away. Our integrity is determined by whether we remember them or forget, whether we hold our life lessons close or let them evaporate.

So this practice asks: What life lessons do you want to make an extra effort to remember?

Begin by creating a list of “5 life lessons I want to remember.” Revisit the list over time, recalling when in your life each lesson was important – either because you remembered it or because you forgot it. You might also ask yourself what those life lessons are teaching you in this time of great challenge and crisis.

Bring your list to your circle gathering and be ready to share one or two items on the list that were most surprising or engaging or relevant to your life today.

Questions to Ponder

Read through the questions below and notice which one(s) 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 it 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. As you absorb the unfolding impact of the pandemic moving across our globe, what core values help to steady you? What will it mean to hold fast to those values even as you practice flexibility in how you live your daily life?
2. Do you think of integrity as something individual or something shaped by your community? As a matter of consistency or adaptability? How do those beliefs affect your efforts to live with integrity in today's world and times?
3. Is integrity harder or easier for you now than it was when you were young? Why do you think that is so?
4. What did your family of origin teach you about telling the truth? How about telling the truth *of yourself*?
5. Which of society's lies was the hardest for you to shake off: "You are what you have," "You are what you do" or "You are what other people say or think about you"?
6. How might you finish the sentence, "If you really knew me you would know...."? What would be at risk if you shared this truth with more people in your life? What might be at risk by *not* sharing it?
7. Can you imagine a workplace/family/relationship/community where you wouldn't have to wear a mask?
8. Whose voice is making it hard to hear your own voice?
9. Do you *feel* authentic? What does that feel like?
10. Do your friendships have integrity? What makes that true?
11. Does your spiritual life have integrity? What tells you that?
12. Where in your body do you experience the feeling of *not* living with integrity? What might you do with that feeling to move into a posture of greater integrity?
13. **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 hear it. Or maybe the question or call you need to hear is waiting in one of the quotes listed below. Consider looking there!

Resources

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. They will not be analyzed in our circles. 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 what it means to be part of a people of resilience.

Word Definitions & Roots

Integrity

Integrity stems from the Latin word 'integer' which means whole and complete. So integrity refers to a sense of 'wholeness' of character connecting one's inner values with choices made in daily life. When you are in integrity, people should be able to visibly see it through your actions, words, decisions, methods, and outcomes. Living with integrity means there is only one you. You bring that same you wherever you are, regardless of the circumstance. You don't leave parts of yourself behind. (Adapted from SoulMatters)

In mathematics, an integer is a number that isn't divided into fractions. Just so, a person of integrity isn't divided against him or herself.

Authur Gordon

Integrity (from the Oxford Dictionary):

1 the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. **2** the state of being whole and undivided.

Wise Words

Integrity goes beyond speaking the truth to include taking responsibility for how one thinks and feels and what one does. *Ben Dean*

Can you remember who you were, before the world told you who you should be? *Charles Bukowski*

You entered form to give a holy message. An envoy from the inconceivable is each of us.

When you have completed that courageous task you will be able to return to a world

that does not know sadness.

But so difficult your divine errand,
it will take a lifetime to accomplish,
love along the way. *Hafiz*

Be yourself, everyone else is taken. *Oscar Wilde*

I now know myself to be a person of weakness and strength, liability and giftedness, darkness and light. I now know that to be whole means to reject none of it but to embrace all of it. *Parker Palmer*

Integrity rarely means that we need to add something to ourselves: it is more an undoing than a doing, a freeing ourselves from beliefs we have about who we are and ways we have been persuaded to "fix" ourselves. *Rachel Naomi Remen*

The Artist is no other than someone who unlearns what they have learned, in order to know themselves. *e.e. cummings*

We all find ourselves bouncing around three very human lies that we believe about our identity: I am what I have, I am what I do, and I am what other people say or think about me.

Christopher L. Heuertz

We saw everyone around us smiling and repeating "I'm fine! I'm fine!" and we found ourselves unable to join them in all the pretending. We had to tell the truth, which was: "Actually, I'm not fine."

Glennon Doyle

Your representative is a version of you that's sent into the world in your place. It's a blander, less authentic person who stands in for you when it doesn't feel safe to expose the real you. Your representative is the one who ...

- Plasters on a fake smile when you'd rather be anywhere else than the meeting you're sitting in.
- Doesn't speak up, even when you've got an opinion, for fear of being judged.
- Knows exactly what to say to keep being liked and praised.
- Keeps you jumping through hoops, constantly trying to prove your worth.
- Has a bunch of acquaintances, but very few real connections.
- Most of us have been sending out representatives for so long that we can't remember not having one.

Rachel East

We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.

Kurt Vonnegut

To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all, — that is genius... In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty... Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I am different not less. *Temple Grandin*

The English word personality is derived from the Latin word for "mask." Simply put, our personality is the mask we wear. A mark of spiritual growth is when we stop polishing the mask and instead start working on our character. *Christopher L. Heuertz*

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

James Baldwin from The Fire Next Time

If you can believe in what you are and keep to your line — that is the most one can do with life.

Georgia O'Keefe

Poetry

Now I Become Myself, by May Sarton

Now I become myself. It's taken
Time, many years and places;
I have been dissolved and shaken,
Worn other people's faces,
Run madly, as if Time were there,
Terribly old, crying a warning,
"Hurry, you will be dead before--"
(What? Before you reach the morning?
Or the end of the poem is clear?
Or love safe in the walled city?)
Now to stand still, to be here,
Feel my own weight and density!
The black shadow on the paper
Is my hand; the shadow of a word
As thought shapes the shaper
Falls heavy on the page, is heard.
All fuses now, falls into place
From wish to action, word to silence,
My work, my love, my time, my face
Gathered into one intense
Gesture of growing like a plant.
As slowly as the ripening fruit
Fertile, detached, and always spent,
Falls but does not exhaust the root,
So all the poem is, can give,
Grows in me to become the song,
Made so and rooted by love.
Now there is time and Time is young.
O, in this single hour I live
All of myself and do not move.
I, the pursued, who madly ran,
Stand still, stand still, and stop the sun!

The Book of Hours, I, 12 by Rainer Maria Rilke

May what I do flow from me like a river,
no forcing and no holding back,
the way it is with children.

Then in these swelling and ebbing currents,
these deepening tides moving out, returning,
I will sing you as no one ever has,
streaming through widening channels
into the open sea.

The Laughing Heart, by Charles Bukowski

Your life is your life
Don't let it be clubbed into dank submission.
Be on the watch.
There are ways out.
There is light somewhere.
It may not be much light but
It beats the darkness.
Be on the watch.
The gods will offer you chances.
Know them.
Take them.
You can't beat death but
You can beat death in life sometimes.
And the more often you learn to do it,
the more light there will be.
Your life is your life.
Know it while you have it.
You are marvelous
The gods wait to delight
In you.

The Way It Is, by William Stafford

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

Music

For a playlist inspired by the opening reflection on this month's theme, visit this [Spotify link](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7LNhAoSVPQE1Q36OqtWIng?si=55RWXx7zQMkLvLo-FG1w4Q). (Note: you may have to register for a free Spotify account to listen to more than 30 seconds of each song.)
<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7LNhAoSVPQE1Q36OqtWIng?si=55RWXx7zQMkLvLo-FG1w4Q>

For detailed notes about these recording artists, see the end of this packet.

Videos & Podcasts

Cornel West, 3-minute excerpt from his speech at the 2017 UUA General Assembly

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZirJUk_Xfw
“How shall integrity face oppression? That is one of the most fundamental challenges of today because we live in an age of mendacity. It's an age in which lies are ubiquitous. [And so] integrity has to do with what is the quality of your courage and your willingness to bear witness radically against the grain even if you have to sacrifice something...”

The 7 Deadly American Sins - FreeQuency An indictment of American's Integrity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLthZDCO6Ww>
Dominique Christina's powerful poetry slam performance during the finals of the 2014 Texas Grand Slam.

When to Take a Stand – and When to Let it Go, Ted Talk by Ash Beckham

https://www.ted.com/talks/ash_bekham_when_to_take_a_stand_and_when_to_let_it_go#t-718102
A call to embrace the “integrity of duality” and resist cowardly and unnecessary path of either/or and choosing sides.

[My identity is a superpower -- not an obstacle | America Ferrera](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjquHTj4HIY&fbclid=IwAR3gylBD1CjFMuLU3IfN9xglWJhCC86S0_eqao8kb9UR6tf4Qqoz7ph3xcg

“Change will come when each of us has the courage to question our own fundamental values and beliefs. And then see to it that our actions lead to our best intentions.” America Ferrera says that in order to create the presence needed for possibility and change, we need to stop resisting the truth of who we are and to start existing authentically in the reality we live in.

[True You - Invisibilia Podcast](#)

<https://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/533946953/true-you>

What happens when you discover a part of yourself that is so different from who you think you are? Do you hold on to your original self tightly? Do you explore this other self? Or do you just panic?

Articles

[Designing Your Life by Anthony Ongaro](#)

<https://www.breakthetwitch.com/intentional-living-values/>

"If the small ways we show up each day align with the vision of the life we want, we're much more likely to look back on a life encompassing our vision over the years."

[by any means necessary, by adrienne maree brown](#)

<http://adriennemareebrown.net/2010/05/19/by-any-means-necessary/>

“there are a plethora of internal and external dangers to the soul – it is so hard to keep your integrity intact, especially if you long for change, if the current world disappoints you or makes you furious... what if what’s needed isn’t sexy, intimidating, violent...what if what is needed is forgiveness?...are we able to be that militant?...”

[Why It Doesn't Pay to be a People-Pleaser](#) by Christine Carter

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_it_doesnt_pay_to_be_a_people_pleaser

“Pretending takes a huge conscious effort— it’s an act of self-control that drains your brain of its power to focus and do deep work. That’s because performing or pretending to be or feel something you’re not requires tremendous willpower... pretending always backfires in the end. Living inauthentically makes life hard and cuts us off from our sweet spot—that place where we have both ease and power.”

Books

***The Missing Piece*, by Shel Silverstein**, illustrated children’s book about discovering the wholeness of ourselves just as we are. (Multiple PDFs of this book are available on-line.)

[Conflagration, by John A. Buehrens](#)

A dramatic retelling of the story of the Transcendentalists, revealing them not as isolated authors but as a community of social activists who shaped progressive American values. They understood that none of us can ever fulfill our own moral and spiritual potential unless we care about the full spiritual and moral flourishing of others. (NOTE: Buehrens is scheduled to preach at Unity Church in April 2020.)

***A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*, by Parker Palmer**

Parker Palmer speaks to our yearning to live undivided lives—lives that are congruent with our inner truth—in a world filled with the forces of fragmentation. Mapping an inner journey that we take in solitude *and* in the company of others, Palmer describes a form of community that fits the limits of our active lives.

***An Indigenous People's History of the United States*, by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz**

The UUA's 2019-2020 [Common Read](#), this powerful book speaks to communal integrity and how there can be no collective integrity until a community is honest about and aware of its history. More [here](#).

Movies

The Emperor's Club, 2002 feature film starring Kevin Kline as a passionate and principled Classics professor who finds his tightly-controlled world shaken and inexorably altered when a new student, Sedgewick Bell, walks into his classroom. What begins as a fierce battle of wills gives way to a close student-teacher relationship, but results in a life lesson for the professor that will still haunt him a quarter of a century later.

Won't You Be My Neighbor? 2018 Documentary from filmmaker Morgan Neville offering an intimate look at America's favorite neighbor: Mister Fred Rogers. A portrait of a man whom we all think we know, this emotional and moving film takes us beyond the zip-up cardigans and the land of make-believe, revealing that Fred Rogers was in fact the person of compassion and imagination he appeared to be.

Milk, 2007 Biopic about assassinated civil rights leader, gay activist and elected official Harvey Milk. Sean Penn, starring as Milk, received an Academy Award for his performance.

NOTES ON PERFORMERS FEATURED IN THE SPOTIFY [MUSIC PLAYLIST](#)

"Bridge Over Troubled Water", Stevie Wonder
Stevland Hardaway Morris (*né* Judkins; born May 13, 1950), known professionally as Stevie Wonder, is an American singer, songwriter, musician and record producer. A prominent figure in [popular music](#), he is one of the [most successful songwriters and musicians](#) in the history of music. Through his heavy use of [electronic instruments](#) and innovative sounds, Wonder became a

pioneer and influence to musicians of various genres including [pop](#), [rhythm and blues](#), [soul](#), [funk](#) and [rock](#).

"Little Bombs", Aimee Mann

Aimee Mann (born September 8, 1960) is an American [singer-songwriter](#). Mann began her career in the 1980s as the bassist and a vocalist for 'Til Tuesday, and wrote their top-ten single "[Voices Carry](#)". She released her debut solo album, *Whatever*, in 1993, and has released several albums since. In 1999, Mann recorded songs for the [soundtrack](#) to the Paul Thomas Anderson film *Magnolia*, which earned [Academy Award](#) and Grammy Award nominations for the song "[Save Me](#)". She has won two [Grammy Awards](#) and was named one of the world's ten greatest living songwriters by [NPR](#) in 2006.

"The Weight", Staple Singers

The Staple Singers were an American [gospel](#), [soul](#) and [R&B](#) singing group. Roebuck "Pops" Staples (December 28, 1914 – December 19, 2000), the patriarch of the family, formed the group with his children Cleotha (April 11, 1934 – February 21, 2013), Pervis (b. 1935), and Mavis (b. 1939). Yvonne (October 23, 1937 – April 10, 2018) replaced her brother when he was drafted into the U.S. Army, and again in 1970. They are best known for their 1970s hits "[Respect Yourself](#)", "[I'll Take You There](#)", "[If You're Ready \(Come Go with Me\)](#)", and "[Let's Do It Again](#)". While the family name is Staples, the group used "Staple" commercially.

"Til I Collapse", Eminem

Marshall Bruce Mathers III (born October 17, 1972), known professionally as Eminem ([/ˌɛmɪˈnɛm/](#); often stylized as EMINEM), is an American rapper, songwriter, record producer, record executive and actor. He is one of the most successful musical artists of the 21st century. In addition to his solo career, Eminem was a member of the [hip hop](#) group [D12](#). He is also known for collaborations with fellow Detroit-based rapper [Royce da 5'9"](#); the two are collectively known as [Bad Meets Evil](#).

"I Shall Be Released", Chrissie Hynde

Christine Ellen Hynde (born September 7, 1951) is an American singer-songwriter and musician. She is a founding member and the guitarist, lead vocalist, and primary songwriter of the rock band [the Pretenders](#), as well as its only constant member.

“Winter Poems 1: Tranquilo”, Glenn Buhr, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Glenn Arthur Buhr (born December 18, 1954 in Winnipeg, Manitoba) is a Canadian composer and pianist.

“I Gotta Be”, Des’ree

Desirée Annette "Des’ree" Weekes (born 30 November 1968), known by her stage name Des'ree (/ˈdɛz(ə)reɪ/), is an English pop recording artist who rose to popularity during the 1990s. She is best known for her hits "Feel So High" (for which three different music videos were recorded), "You Gotta Be", "Life", and "Kissing You" (from the soundtrack of the film Romeo + Juliet). At the 1999 Brit Awards she received the Brit Award for Best British female solo artist.

“What Good Am I?”, Solomon Burke

Solomon Vincent McDonald Burke (born James Solomon McDonald, March 21, 1936 or 1940 – October 10, 2010) was an American preacher and singer who shaped the sound of rhythm and blues as one of the founding fathers of soul music in the 1960s. He has been called "a key transitional figure bridging R&B and soul", and was known for his "prodigious output".

“I Lost It”, Lucinda Williams

Lucinda Gayle Williams (born January 26, 1953) is an American rock, folk and country music singer, songwriter and musician.

“Next Right Thing”, Kristen Bell, Frozen 2

Kristen Anne Bell (born July 18, 1980) is an American actress, singer and director. She began her professional

acting career by starring in stage productions while attending the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. In 2001, she made her Broadway debut as Becky Thatcher in the comedy musical The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and appeared in a Broadway revival of The Crucible the following year. In 2004, she appeared in the action thriller film Spartan and received critical praise for her performance in the television drama film Gracie's Choice.

“Always Have, Always Will”, Ace of Base

Ace of Base is a Swedish pop group, originally consisting of Ulf Ekberg and three siblings, Jonas Berggren, Linn Berggren and Jenny Berggren. The group released four studio albums between 1992 and 2002, and sold 50 million records worldwide, making them the third-most successful Swedish band of all time, after ABBA and Roxette.

“Once in a Lifetime”, Angélique Kidjo

Angélique Kpasseloko Hinto Hounsinou Kandjo Manta Zogbin Kidjo, known as Angélique Kidjo (born July 14, 1960), is a Beninese singer-songwriter, actress, and activist of Nigerian descent who is noted for her diverse musical influences and creative music videos. In 2007, Time magazine called her "Africa's premier diva".

This packet was created for use at Unity Church-Unitarian, St. Paul, Minnesota, based on the Soul Matters Sharing Circle model of small groups and incorporating content from the Soul Matters packet on Integrity. soulmatterssharingcircle.com and unitychurchunitarian.org