



# South Fraser Unitarian Congregation



*What does it mean to be a  
Community of Healing?*

SFUC Thematic Packet  
October 2017

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## A Note from the Minister

Healing is a journey deep within oneself -  
a search for soul, the essence of the self.  
It seeks to balance the inner and outer worlds, to connect and to integrate.  
Healing is the reuniting of the body, mind and spirit.

Diane Mariechild, *Mother Wit*<sup>1</sup>

On Sunday, September 24<sup>th</sup> in the service entitled *Keeping Our Promises*, I talked about broken promises creating a barrier between me and other people. I asked if I couldn't even keep promises to myself, how on earth could I even look past those broken promises to see another being. In *The Four Agreements*, Don Miguel Ruiz talks about the importance of being impeccable with our word – saying that in essence that “a sin is anything that you do which goes against yourself. You go against yourself when you judge or blame yourself for anything. ... Self-rejection is the biggest sin that you can commit. In religious terms, self-rejection is a ‘mortal sin’ which leads to death. Impeccability, on the other hand, leads to life.”<sup>2</sup>

In the process of becoming impeccable with my word, I went through a process of becoming more whole, more of who I authentically was – and it was only in community and with other people that I was able to practice this new way of being with myself and in community. In the process of becoming more whole, I found I was integrating more of a mind, body, spirit balance – I was healing myself through being in community.

This business of creating a place or community of healing for people who come through our doors requires dedication and a willingness to dig in - to listen away each other's pain, to battle the bad guys and gals, to ask forgiveness when we are not the good guys and gals we so want to be, or to look at what is broken and needs attention. So yes, it is easy to remember that it takes work.

But what if we just as easily remembered that it takes perception and sight as well?

Or to be more exact, what if we remembered that healing always *begins* with perception and sight?

Would we more easily remember that time we were blessed with the experience of looking through each other's eyes? It wasn't a perfect view. We weren't able to see or understand “the other” completely. But we were at least able to see them differently. And in doing so, the healing began.

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<sup>1</sup> *Divine Sparks: Collected Wisdom of the Heart*, p. 190

<sup>2</sup> Don Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*, p. 31

Would we more easily remember the first time we felt seen? And how that made us want to give that gift to others?

Would we more easily call to mind those moments when we were able to see our “enemies” in their wholeness? Those moments when our frames of them as all bad and us as all good gave way to the truth that they are as complex, fragile and flawed as we are.

Would we more easily tell the story of when we first realized that we were part of propping up the system? The system that subtly and not so subtly gives some a hand while keeping the hands of others so securely tied behind their back?

Would we more easily remember what happened when we confessed our lie or admitted our addiction? How when we stopped trying to hide it from the sight of others, it somehow loosened its hold on us?

There was a magic in all this looking, seeing and being seen. Remember that? In each case, we learned that healing is not entirely up to us. There was an otherness at work. We just got the ball rolling. We weren’t “the healers”; our wider view simply set the stage. Opened the door. Healing then slowly made its way in and joined us as a partner.

And seeing healing as a partner – rather than solely as a product of our will and work - we were able to be more gentle with ourselves. We realized that manageable steps and doing what we can were just fine; heroics didn’t always have to be the way. We were able to put down the weight of the world for a while, knowing and trusting that healing had a life of its own – that it has the ability to grow and take root even while we rest, maybe even because we took the time to rest.

In the end, maybe that is the most important thing to remember this month: besides always beginning with a wider view, healing also means making room for rest. Too often being a community of healing gets reduced to a matter of work, vigilance and never letting up. So we need these reminders that healing is a partner, not simply a product of our work.

Maybe even trying to partner with us right now...

Join us on Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 after the service for our monthly themed small group ministry discussion circle. Come prepared to talk about your experience engaging in one of the spiritual practices listed in this packet.

## Spiritual Practice – Promise

*Please choose one of the following spiritual practices to engage in and be prepared to discuss your experience at our theme small group ministry on Sunday, October 29th at 3:00 after the service.*

### Option A: Admit Exhaustion

One way we allow healing into our lives is to widen our view of what it means to be in pain. Too often pain is equated only with dramatic ruptures such as sudden loss or a devastating diagnosis. But often – maybe even more often than we all admit – it’s about the slow creeping of us never allowing ourselves to rest and replenish.

So this month, finally do it: **Admit to yourself that you are exhausted! And do something about it!**

To get you there, carry John O’Donohue’s poem, *A Blessing For One Who Is Exhausted* with you throughout this month. You can find it in the quotes section of this packet. Read it regularly. Meditate on it whenever you can.

In the first part of his poem, he offers numerous phrases to capture the nature of exhaustion. In the second half, he offers phrases that describe many ways to rescue yourself from it.

**Come to your group ready to share one line from the poem that captures the nature of your exhaustion and one line that captures the way out you are committing to.**

Maybe even consider committing yourself to doing *each* of the healing tasks that O’Donohue recommends. In other words, make it a checklist and do each of them (in your own way) before your group meets:

- take refuge in your senses
- open up to small miracles
- watch the way of rain
- imitate the habit of twilight
- draw alongside the silence of stone
- stay clear of those vexed in spirit

### Option B: Cultural Healing

Here is a definition of healing from a report on Inuit healing in contemporary society:

*Healing is a process rather than a single act, a process that relies upon an individual’s readiness to change and to resolve their problems through self-examination and self-awareness. ... Crucial to Inuit healing is the integration of Inuit cultural values in the*

*counselling and the strong belief held by all the healers that an individual must find their strength through their culture.*

Reflect on some common features of Inuit healing:

- Personal readiness
- Holistic
- Telling One's Story
- Flexibility
- Immediate intervention
- Compassion and empathy
- Inuit cultural knowledge

Choose at least one of these questions to spend some time either writing about in your journal or talking about with a trusted friend:

1. How do these features of Inuit Healing confirm or differ from your own experience(s) of healing?
2. What part does your own cultural knowledge and cultural practices play in your healing?
3. Why is developing cultural values and skills essential for healing?

**Come back to the group with thoughts on your understanding and experience of healing as it arises from your own cultural knowledge and practices.**

**And if you like, how these thoughts relate to anything you may be learning from different Indigenous cultures.**

### Option C: Show Others Your Healing Place

Healing also happens when we expand our understanding of where it comes from. We know it comes from the people who love us, but it often also comes from the places we love. To honor this, you are invited this month to share your healing place with your group. This of course will serve as a way of re-connecting you to this space and reflecting on why it means so much.

In particular, here's your assignment:

#### **Turn your healing place into a tangible and portable form!**

In other words, take a picture of your place and bring it into your group. Or maybe instead of a picture, bring in an object from your healing place, or something that represents it. For instance: a shell from "your beach," a leaf from "your forest," your dog's leash representing your walks, your ski pole or maybe even the paddle from your canoe.

*And don't forget that music creates its own healing space!* Maybe your healing place is not a physical space but a state of mind that you only have access to when you play that healing song. If so, bring it in and play that song for your group.

Here's some inspiration to help you on your way:

- [The Science of Healing Places](#)
- [Healing Songs](#) (in addition to the ones featured later in this packet)

## Option D: Open Your Eyes to a Politics of Healing

As the political race rushes into its last leg, everyone is focused on winning. It's a "race" after all; so taking sides and beating the other side becomes the frame. But with a winner right around the corner, maybe it's time to start focusing on *understanding* the other side. In fact, none of us will "win" if we fail to find the healing that comes with understanding.

So this month, you are invited to engage one particular person's quest toward political healing: psychologist, Jonathan Haidt. He offers a unique frame for understanding the Left-Right political divide. Your assignment:

### **Explore Jonathan Haidt's way of framing the political divide, then see if it heals a real life political divide in your life!**

Here's a list of works by and about Haidt for you to read. Remember, your task is not to come to your group with a book report or analysis of Haidt's theory. It is a story, not an analysis, you are asked to share. A story about how looking anew at "the other side" healed an actual relationship in your life.

[The Righteous Mind](#), by Jonathan Haidt (How misunderstanding political mindsets divides us and how understanding them can heal us! - )

#### **Articles by or referencing Haidt:**

- <http://www.vox.com/2016/2/5/10918164/donald-trump-morality>
- <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/calling-truce-political-wars/>
- <http://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-07-20/the-republican-convention-translated-for-liberals>
- <http://freitashugo.blogspot.com.br/2016/03/howtomakeaconservative.html>

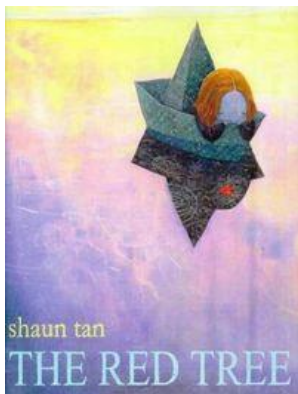
## **Questions To Live With**

*As always, don't treat these questions like "homework." You do not need to engage every single one. Instead, simply find **the one** that "hooks" you most and let it lead you where you need to go. And then come to the thematic small group meeting prepared to share that journey with your group.*

1. **Have you been trying to change what can only be healed by embrace?** ("Cure seeks to change reality; healing embraces reality." - Fred Recklau)
2. **When was the last time you visited your "healing place"?** When in pain, sometimes we need to be around people who love us. Other times we need to be surrounded by places we love.

3. **Are you ready to let yourself be forgiven?** Is it possible that you are the only one who thinks you don't deserve healing?
4. **Are you exhausted?** Have you been running on empty for so long that you no longer notice? Is it time to notice? Is it time to rest and restore, and let yourself heal?
5. **Is it time to admit to yourself that you are in pain?** Is it time to stop pretending? Is it time to tell others you are in pain?
6. **What one small step can you make today toward healing your broken heart?** It won't happen all at once. But it also won't happen on its own.
7. **What would happen if you admitted it wasn't just their fault?**
8. **Is taking on the care of the broken things of the world breaking you?**
9. **Are you looking for love in all the wrong places?** Is love's power to heal and make whole eluding you because it's left the building or because your definition of it is too narrow?
10. **Are you ready to heal from your failure?** ("Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing." - Denis Waitley)
11. **What if talk of healing needs to wait?** ("Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound." - *Dr. Yolanda Pierce*)
12. **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.

## For Families of All Ages and Sizes



### Children's Book of the Month

The Red Tree by Shaun Tan

Watch the Book Here:

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

This book explores dark journeys that sometimes we go through and hope that the darkness will end. Beautiful illustrations.





## Youth Book of the Month

Eleanor and Park by Rainbow Rowell

Good Reads Choice 2013 Winner & also ALA's Top Ten Challenged (Banned) Books

This book is mature, but explores deep issues including bullying, abuse and self-image. Eleanor and Park follows two misfits living in Omaha in the 80s.

## Family Discussion

What are some things that help you feel better when you are sick or sad?

How can/do we as a family support one another during tough times?

What can we do to help our community during times of illness or grief?

## Activity

Create a care package together that can be ready for when someone you know needs it.



## Quotes on Healing

### Singing the Living Tradition Reading No. 552

My Help Is in the Mountain

My help is in the mountain  
Where I take myself to heal  
The earthly wounds  
That people give to me.

*I find a rock with sun on it  
And a stream where the water runs gentle  
And the trees which one by one give me company.*

So I must stay for a long time  
Until I have grown from the rock.

*And the stream is running through me*

*And I cannot tell myself from one tall tree.*

Then I know that nothing touches me  
Nor makes me run away.

*My help is in the mountain  
That I take away with me.*

Nancy Wood

**Definition:** to make healthy, whole, or sound; to become well

**Synonyms:** alleviate; reconcile; soothe; repair; mend; revive

Help me, hear me, hold me, heal me.

Prayer from UU Wellspring participant

It's not forgetting that heals. It's remembering.

Amy Greene, *Bloodroot*

“I heard an elder speak of the importance of our languages and our culture. He said that our words are powerful; our stories are elastic; our languages are music: they dance, they move and they are medicine for our people. He said they are a spirit within themselves and we are only the channel that brings them to life. I write because I know what he said is true.”

Nicola I. Campbell

“Why did we add ‘healing’ to the name of the CUC’s *Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Reflection Guide*? In looking at the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools, it seemed to me that once people learned the truth about our shared history of colonization, we need to also have justice and healing from past and ongoing colonization, otherwise we cannot get to reconciliation.

Also, we have heard from various Indigenous educators that Indigenous people and communities have work to do on their own, and non-Indigenous people and communities have work to do on their own, and there is healing and work to do between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and communities. This work is part of the process of all of us healing from the effects and systems of colonization.”

Rev. Meg Roberts

***from Kindness***

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,  
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.

You must wake up with sorrow.

You must speak to it till your voice  
catches the thread of all sorrows  
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,  
only kindness that ties your shoes

and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,  
only kindness that raises its head  
from the crowd of the world to say  
It is I you have been looking for,  
and then goes with you everywhere  
like a shadow or a friend.

Naomi Shihab Nye, full poem [here](#)

Each of us has a unique part to play in the healing of the world.

Marianne Williamson

Sometimes our transformations bring out the best in us, and sometimes they do not. When the ground breaks open because of an earthquake, you can be certain that everything — absolutely EVERYTHING — will be upturned, unearthed, or cracked open. When you get cracked open, you will not always love what you discover about yourself. ... You wish you were different. And wishing that you were different always, always, always hurts. This is all very natural. But we can choose in these difficult moments of self-doubt and regret and confusion whether or not we are going to hate ourselves for any of it, or whether we are going to practice self-love. ... [Because] self-honesty without self-love is nothing but self-abuse.

Elizabeth Gilbert, full reflection [here](#)

***from A Blessing For One Who Is Exhausted***

Draw alongside the silence of stone  
Until its calmness can claim you.  
Be excessively gentle with yourself.  
Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.  
Learn to linger around someone of ease  
Who feels they have all the time in the world.  
Gradually, you will return to yourself,  
Having learned a new respect for your heart  
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.

John O'Donohue, full poem [here](#):

When you don't give people the chance to say "I hurt," they end up saying "I hate."

Rev. Don Wheat

When there's a fresh wound in your heart, keep it open until it heals. Air it out. Understand it. Dive into it. Be fierce enough to become it. If you ignore it, it won't be able to breathe. If you ignore it, it will merely deepen, spread and resurface later, wanting to release. And when later happens, it will hurt even more, because when later happens, you won't know what you're bleeding for. Remain with it until it clears, and watch the beauty pour into your openness. Remain open to feel lightness. Remain open to feel free.

Victoria Erickson

Trauma victims cannot recover until they become familiar with and befriend the sensations in their bodies. Being frightened means that you live in a body that is always on guard. Angry people live in angry bodies. The bodies of child-abuse victims are tense and defensive until they find a way to relax and feel safe. In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past... As I often tell my students, the two most important phrases in therapy, as in yoga, are "Notice that" and "What happens next?" Once you start approaching your body with curiosity rather than with fear, everything shifts."

Bessel A. van der Kolk,  
*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*

To heal means to rediscover that divine idea, that place of wholeness, within each of us. Our task in recovery or in the spiritual journey is to peel away the layers between us and the deeper Self. We can use the image of a vast ocean that is barricaded away by a dam that keeps us from knowing it exists. Even though our intellect may learn there is an ocean, we cannot conceive of it because we have never directly experienced it. And then, for an instant, we transcend the barrier, and we see and feel the ocean directly. Once this has happened, we become strongly motivated to experience it again.

Christina Grof

Failure does come with healing...Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing.

Denis Waitley

### **The Way It Is**

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.

William Stafford

Letting ourselves be forgiven is one of the most difficult healings we will undertake. And one of the most fruitful.

Stephen Levine

When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." To this day, especially

in times of "disaster," I remember my mother's words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers – so many caring people in this world.

Fred "Mr." Rogers

### ***from A Litany for Those not Ready for Healing***

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

Let us not rush to offer a band-aid, when the gaping wound requires surgery and complete reconstruction.

Let us not offer false equivalencies, thereby diminishing the particular pain being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment. ....

Let us not rush past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child, someone's beloved son. ...

*Instead*

Let us mourn black and brown men and women, those killed extrajudicially every 28 hours.

...

Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and grief pouring from the lips of our neighbours and friends.

Dr. Yolanda Pierce, full litany [here](#)

## **Videos and Podcasts**

### **["At the Meeting House: Unitarian Universalism and HIV/AIDS"](#)**

Is healing possible when physical healing is not possible? When Rev. Kim Crawford Harvie got her first call to be the minister in Provincetown, Massachusetts, she thought it would be similar to the small-town church of her childhood. Only a few days into her ministry Rev. Kim was thrust into the crisis that would come to dominate her ministry: HIV/AIDS. Rev. Kim tells some of the stories of her time in Provincetown and shares some of the lessons she learned from ground zero.

### **["Disarming A Robbery ... With A Glass Of Wine"](#) Invisibilia podcast/video**

Healing through the simple magic of not responding in kind. "A few friends were enjoying a backyard dinner party when an uninvited guest appeared -- and things took a frightening turn. What do you do in the face of confrontation? Alix Spiegel, host of NPR's "Invisibilia" podcast, explains the concept of non-complementary behavior" -- the kind of behavior used by Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr., and others who respond to hatred with love. Watch what happens when a customary script is flipped."

### **[Guided Meditations for Healing the Body, Mind, and Spirit](#) by Stephen Levine**

### **[Healing Through a Haircut](#)**

Meet Josh Coombes, hairdresser for the homeless.

### **["How my mind came back to life — and no one knew"](#) TED Talk by Martin Pistorius**

Imagine being unable to say, "I am hungry," "I am in pain," "thank you," or "I love you," — losing your ability to communicate, being trapped inside your body, surrounded by people yet utterly alone. For 13 long years, that was Martin Pistorius's reality, after contracting a brain infection at the age of twelve. He had become a ghost. But then a strange thing started to happen — his mind began to knit itself back together.

### **[“Restoring the Body: Yoga, EMDR, and Treating Trauma”](#) with Bessel van der Volk for OnBeing**

Through his longtime research and innovation in trauma treatment, psychiatrist, Bessel van der Kolk, shares what he's learning about how bodywork like yoga or eye movement therapy can restore a sense of goodness and safety.

### **Brene Brown on [Blame](#)**

You are probably a bit of a blamer - most of us are. But why should we give it up? In this very short video, inspirational thinker Brené Brown considers why we blame others, how it sabotages our relationships, and why we desperately need to move beyond and heal the damage of this toxic behaviour.

### **[The Science of Healing Places](#)**

The light and smells in places like hospitals can often depress us. And, our favorite room at home keeps us sane. But why? Immunologist Esther Sternberg explains the scientific research revealing how physical spaces create stress and make us sick — and how good design can trigger our "brain's internal pharmacies" and help heal us.

## **Books**

### **[Nothing Gold Can Stay: The Colors of Grief](#) by Mark Belletini**

In twenty-two simple yet profound reflections, seasoned minister Mark Belletini explores the many and varied forms of grief.

### **[Restored to Sanity: Essays on the Twelve Steps by Unitarian Universalists](#)**

Unitarian Universalist writers reflect on their healing while walking the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve-Step programs. All tell their stories with great honesty and humility, providing inspiration and hope for those who struggle with addiction and for their friends and family members. Each Step is explored with two separate heartfelt essays, plus a meditation or prayer.

[The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma](#) by [Bessel A. van der Kolk](#),

[The Righteous Mind](#), by Jonathan Haidt

How misunderstanding political mindsets divides us and how understanding them can heal us.

[Here If You Need Me: A True Story](#) by Kate Braestrup

*“Here If You Need Me* is the story of Kate Braestrup's remarkable journey from grief to faith to happiness - as she holds her family together in the wake of her husband's death, pursues his dream of becoming a minister, and ultimately finds her calling as a chaplain to search-and-rescue workers. A celebration of the small miracles that happen every day when a heart is grateful and love is restored.”

## [List of books for children and families about healing](#)

## Articles

### [The Role of Spirit in the #blacklivesmatter Movement: A Conversation with Activist and Artist Patrisse Cullors](#)

Black Lives Matter chapters and affiliated groups are expressing a type of spiritual practice that makes use of the language of health and wellness to impart meaning, heal grief and trauma, combat burn-out and encourage organizational efficiency.

[“Songs when you need them: Ysaye Barnwell and the music of community, resistance, and power”](#) How art can help heal us.

[“The Nature of Healing”](#) an interview with Stephen Levine

### [35 Powerful Images of Kindness Found Within Conflict](#)

### [Unconscious Reactions Separate Liberals and Conservatives](#)

### [After a Century In Decline, Black Farmers Are Back And On the Rise](#)

These Black farmers don't stop at healthy food. They're healing trauma, instilling collective values, and changing the way their communities think about the land.

## Movies & Television

### [Wild](#) (based on the book by Cheryl Strayed)

With the dissolution of her marriage and the death of her mother, Cheryl Strayed has lost all hope. After years of reckless, destructive behaviour, she makes a rash decision. With absolutely no experience, driven only by sheer determination, Cheryl hikes more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail, alone. And it heals her.

### [God Said, Ha!](#)

Sweeney proves that humour is a lifesaver in the midst of pain, suffering, and setbacks -- including her brother's terminal cancer and her own cervical cancer diagnosis.

### [Dolphin Tale](#) (Family)

In an inspiring story of the bond between animals and humans, a boy named Sawyer discovers an injured dolphin, who is brought to a marine hospital and named Winter. Unfortunately, her injuries cost Winter her tail, without which she may not survive. But

with Sawyer's devotion, a marine biologist, and the brilliance of a prosthetist charged with creating a new tail, Winter may receive a second chance at life.

## Songs

### **[“Beautiful Dawn”](#) by the Wailin’ Jennys**

This song is poetry harmonized: “There’s only one way to mend a broken heart...”

### **[“When You've Got Trouble”](#) by Liz Longley**

Healing by remembering you’re not alone: “When you’ve got trouble, I’ve got trouble too.”

### **[“I Hurt Too”](#) by Kate Herzig**

Another beautiful song about the interconnectedness of healing: where you are hurting, I am hurting; your healing is my healing.

Also by Herzig: **[“Lost and Found”](#)** (healing from heartbreak):

### **[“Thank U”](#) by Alanis Morissette**

A song about healing that comes from the widest embrace. When we take the time to reflect on all of our experiences, what may have seemed a negative thing, can sometimes later be seen as a necessary step in a process that ultimately led to a greater good. Sometimes the greatest healing comes from simply saying thank you to what did not seem like a gift at the time.

## Healing Songs

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2013/mar/14/readers-recommend-songs-healing>

## Future Themes

We join with close to twenty other Canadian Unitarian congregations in engaging with these themes over the coming months. Thematic resource packets are available on our website, and through the Chalice Lighter as of the first weekend in the month.

November: Story

December: Presence

January: Prophecy

February: Interdependence

March: Risk

April: Transformation

May: Embodiment