

“Practice Makes Presence: Building a Spiritual Life That Holds”

Dianne M. Daniels; UUCN, May 17, 2026

Transformation doesn't happen through intention alone—it is built through practice. This sermon explores how daily choices, courage, and consistency shape a spiritual life that can truly hold us. What we return to again and again ultimately becomes who we are.

OPENING

There is a difference between wanting a spiritual life... and having one.

Most people want one.

Most people believe in something, Value something, and hope for something.

But **wanting** a spiritual life... and **living** one... are not the same thing.

Because spiritual life is not built on moments.

It is built on practice.

It is built on what you return to—again and again.

So today I offer this claim:

Transformation is sustained through practice, not intention.

Because intention inspires us.

But practice shapes us.

WHAT

Let's begin with what we mean by practice.

Practice is **not** perfection.

Practice is repetition.

It is what you do consistently enough that it begins to form you.

Because here is the truth: You are not shaped by what you believe once, or even what you believed in the past.

You are shaped by what you practice repeatedly.

Spirituality as Foundation

One of the resources I used to inspire this sermon says:

“My spirituality is my foundation... living according to my values produces consistency.”

That's the key word: consistency.

Not intensity.

Not inspiration.

Consistency.

Because life is unpredictable, but your response does not have to be.

When your spirituality is your foundation, your response is guided.

Not by impulse. Not by fear.

But by values.

Practice Creates Stability

Another reflection that inspired me says:

“My faith is bigger than my difficulties... I rely on my faith to guide me through the choices I make each day.”

That's what practice does. It creates stability.
It gives you something to return to when life becomes uncertain.

Because life will become uncertain.
Situations will arise that challenge you.
There will be moments when you are unsure.

And in those moments, you will not rise to your ideals.
You will fall to your practices.

Courage as Practice

And those practices can include courage.

Not one-time courage.
Daily courage.

Consider this statement: "I live my life with courage... I meet challenges head-on and move forward."

That is not a personality trait.
That is a practice.

Because courage is not something you either have or don't have.
Courage is something you use.
And the more you use it, the more available it becomes.

Living Your Truth

Practice also means living your truth.
Not occasionally.
Not when it's convenient. Consistently.

“It is important for me to live my own truth... I live according to my beliefs even when they are different from others.”

That is not easy. But it is necessary.

Because without that—you begin to shape your life around approval instead of integrity.
And that is not sustainable.

Practice Requires Honesty

And all this rests on **honesty**.

Living honestly is very important to me... I must first be honest with myself.

That’s where practice begins. Self-honesty.

Because if you are not honest with yourself:
about your habits, about your fears, about your choices,
Then your practices will not align with your values.

Faith and Direction

And finally, practice involves trust.

I believe the universe has a plan for me... but I have the responsibility to take action. That balance matters.

Faith is not passivity.

Faith is participation.

Faith says: There is meaning here.

Practice says: And I will show up for it.

SO WHAT

So what does all this mean?

It means that most people struggle spiritually, not because they lack belief, but because they lack practice.

The Problem with Intention

Let's be honest.

We have good intentions.

We intend to be kinder, be more patient, live with integrity, and show up differently

But intention fades.

Because intention is *emotional*.

Practice is structural.

Intention depends on how you *feel*.

Practice continues whether you feel like it or not.

When Practice Is Missing

Without practice:

Your values become occasional.

Your faith becomes situational.

Your behavior becomes reactive.

And your life becomes inconsistent.

You are one person on Sunday—and another on Tuesday afternoon.

Not because you are insincere.

But because nothing is anchoring you.

Practice Builds Integrity

Practice creates alignment. And alignment creates integrity.
Integrity is not perfection. It is consistency over time.
It is knowing what you believe and living in a way that reflects it

Standing in and on Your Values

“I can stand up for my beliefs in the face of opposition... not standing for something means falling for anything.”

That’s where practice shows up.
Because it is easy to hold values in private.

It is harder to live them publicly.
It is harder to hold them when challenged.
It is harder to maintain them when it costs something.
That’s where practice matters most.

Practice Expands Your Life

Practice also opens possibilities.

I endeavor to be adventurous... I seek new experiences and embrace the unknown.

That’s spiritual too.
Because a practiced life is not rigid.
It is responsive, open, and willing to grow.

NOW WHAT

So, how do we build a spiritual life that holds?
Let me give you four practices.

1. Choose Your Anchors

What brings you back to yourself?

Reflection, Prayer, Journaling?

Silence, Walking, Reading?

Choose something and return to it daily.

Because you need anchors.

2. Practice Small, Consistent Actions

Don't wait for big moments.

Practice in small ways:

Speak kindly

Tell the truth

Show up

Follow through

Because small, consistent actions shape identity.

3. Align Your Life with Your Values

Ask: Do my choices reflect what matters to me?

If not—adjust.

Not perfectly, but intentionally.

4. Return When You Drift

You will drift - that is part of being human.

But practice means returning.

Again and again, without shame, without quitting.

Just returning.

CLOSING

Let me leave you with this: You are already becoming ***something***.

The question is not *whether you are being shaped*.
The question is—what is shaping you?

Because your life **will** reflect your practices.
So choose them wisely.

Choose what you return to.
Choose what grounds you.
Choose what aligns you.

Because over time—practice becomes presence.
And presence becomes power.

And power becomes the life you are living.
So do not wait to become who you are called to be.

Practice it. Live it. Return to it.

And trust that over time—it will hold.

Amen. Ase. Blessed Be.