

“Living the Values: Faith Beyond the Moment”
Dianne M. Daniels; UUCN, May 3, 2026

Spiritual insight alone does not transform a life—embodiment does. This sermon explores what it means to live our values with consistency, integrity, and intention, even in the small, everyday moments. A faith that is practiced—not just professed—becomes the steady foundation that carries us forward.

Embodiment as Spiritual Practice

There is a moment in every spiritual life when belief is no longer enough.

Not because belief is wrong.

Not because belief is unimportant.

But because belief, by itself, does not transform a life.

There comes a moment when what we **say** we believe begins to ask something more of us.

It asks to be lived.

It asks to be practiced.

It asks to show up—not just in our thoughts, but in our choices, in our relationships, in our habits, in the quiet, ordinary moments of everyday life.

And that is where we find ourselves today.

Because over these past months, we have been doing real work together.

We have learned to pay attention.
We have learned to stay present in tension.
We have found courage.
We have practiced sustainability.
We have embraced possibility.

And now we arrive at the next question:
What does it look like to actually live this?

Not just on Sunday.
Not just when it feels easy.
But in the daily unfolding of our lives.

So today I offer this claim: **Spiritual insight means nothing without embodiment.**

Because a faith that is only spoken is fragile.
But a faith that is lived becomes steady.

WHAT

Let us begin with what we mean by embodiment.
Embodiment is the movement from belief into action.

It is the alignment between what we say matters and how we actually live.

It is the moment when our values stop being ideas—and start becoming habits.

Because it is one thing to say we value love.
It is another thing to practice patience when we are frustrated.

It is one thing to affirm justice.

It is another thing to speak up when silence would be easier.

It is one thing to believe in interdependence.

It is another thing to show up for one another consistently.

Embodiment is where faith becomes visible.

Faithfulness as Practice

One of the reflections that helped inspire this sermon says:

“I am faithful to myself and others... I live by my morals and values. I do what I think is right, even when the consequences are challenging.”

That is embodiment.

Faithfulness is not a feeling.

It is a practice.

It is what we do when it would be easier not to.

It is the quiet discipline of aligning our actions with our values—even when no one is watching.

And let me say this clearly:

Faithfulness to others begins with faithfulness to yourself.

If you are not grounded in your own values, you will drift.

If you are not clear about what matters, you will be pulled in every direction.

If you are not anchored, you will be exhausted.

Roots and Values

Consider this statement:

“My roots are firmly planted in positive virtues... I stay true to them and strive to share them with others.”

That image that came to mind...it matters.

Roots.

Because roots do not always show.

Roots are not visible.

Roots are not celebrated.

But roots determine everything.

If your roots are shallow, you will be easily shaken.

If your roots are deep, you will endure.

And spiritual life is about tending roots.

Not just collecting ideas.

Not just attending services.

Not just agreeing with principles.

But planting yourself in values deeply enough that they begin to shape your reflexes.

Faith as Stabilizer

And this is where faith becomes stabilizing.

Another reflection reminds us: “My faith is like a firm foundation. I feel grounded and secure... my daily choices reflect my values.”

That is embodiment.

Faith is not just what you believe when things are going well.

Faith is what holds you steady when things are not.

Faith is what guides your decisions when you are uncertain.

Faith is what returns you to yourself when you begin to drift.

And here is the key:

Faith stabilizes you when it is practiced—not just when it is professed.

Faith in Difficult Moments

And be very certain that this beautiful, perfectly imperfect life will test that.

One reflection says: “Having faith makes my tough situations manageable... I rely on my faith to get through them.”

That is real.

Because it is easy to say what we believe when nothing is at stake.

But when life becomes difficult—when relationships are strained, when decisions are unclear, when the future feels uncertain—that is when authentic faith is revealed.

Not in what we **say**. But in what we **do**.

Clarity of Priorities

And embodiment requires clarity.

“When you are clear about your priorities, you make the best choices about how to spend your time.”

That is wisdom.

Because your life will always reflect your priorities.
Not your intentions.

Not your ideals.
Your priorities.

If something matters, it will show up in how you spend your time,
your energy, your attention.

And if it does not show up there, it may not yet be embodied.

SO WHAT

So what does all this mean? It means that there is often a gap.

A gap between what we believe—and how we live.
And that gap is where most spiritual struggle happens.

The Gap Between Belief and Behavior

Let's be honest, friends: Most of us know what we believe.

We believe in love.
We believe in justice.
We believe in compassion.
We believe in connection.

But belief is **not** the same as behavior.

Because behavior is shaped by:

Habit, fear, convenience, exhaustion

And if we are not intentional, those forces will override our values.

When Values Are Not Embodied

When values are not embodied:

We say we value rest—but we overextend ourselves.

We say we value kindness—but we react sharply.

We say we value justice—but we remain silent.

We say we value connection—but we withdraw.

And hold on, take a breath and relax - this is **not** about guilt.

It is about awareness.

Because awareness is where transformation begins.

Embodiment Requires Intention

Our earlier sermons on transformation reminded us:

Awareness leads to examination.

Examination leads to intention.

Intention leads to action.

Embodiment does not happen automatically.

It requires decision, repetition, and practice.

And most importantly—it requires grace.

The Role of Grace

Because you/we will not get it right every time.

You will drift, react, forget, and fall out of alignment.

That is part of being human.

But embodiment is not about perfection.

It is about return.

Return to your values.
Return to your commitments.
Return to your center.

Again and again.

Why This Matters

Because when values are embodied:

Trust grows.
Relationships deepen.
Communities strengthen.
And faith becomes visible.

People do not experience your beliefs through your words.
They experience them through your presence, your consistency,
and through your choices.

NOW WHAT

So how do we live this? How do we move from belief into embodiment?

Let me offer four practices.

1. Clarify What Matters Most

Ask yourself:

What are my core values?

Not what should they be?

Not what do I wish they were?

What actually matters to me?

And then ask: Do my daily choices reflect that?
Because clarity creates alignment.

2. Practice Daily Faithfulness

Faithfulness is built in small moments.
Not grand gestures. Small decisions.

How you speak
How you respond
How you show up

Faithfulness is a daily practice.
And over time, those small choices become your life.

3. Build Stabilizing Practices

What helps you return to yourself?

Prayer? Reflection? Journaling? Silence? Walking?

Whatever it is—use it. Consistently and intentionally.
Because you need practices that bring you back when life pulls you away.

4. Live with Integrity, Not Perfection

You will not always get it right.

That is not the goal.
The goal is integrity.

Alignment over time.
Consistency over perfection.

Returning, again and again, to who you are called to be.

CLOSING

Let me leave you with this. Faith is not proven in what we say.
It is revealed in how we live.
It is revealed in our choices.
In our relationships.
In our commitments.
In our daily lives.

So yes—Believe deeply.

But also—Live deliberately.
Live intentionally.

Root yourself in your values.
Practice faithfulness.
Return when you drift.
And allow your life to reflect what you truly believe.

Because in the end—A faith that is lived is a faith that lasts.

Amen. Ase. Blessed Be.