

## **Title: Praxis: Attention, Intention, Action**

Social change is an alignment of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice or KAP. We become mired when beset with "KAP gaps" arising from internal conflicts and external constraints. To traverse these KAP gaps, practitioners of mindfulness suggest that we align our attention, intention and action, by listening, reflecting and acting.

Sunday, January 30 th Praxis: Attention, Intention, Action Jim Fisher, Worship Leader  
ZOOM ONLY WORSHIP! Jill Jeude & Marta Rieman, Worship Associates  
1/30 Worship Service Zoom Meeting:

<https://uuma.zoom.us/j/94692752680?pwd=Z2R2eEQyVFJxWU4zcGxHTmxpc3ZDZz09>

Meeting ID: 946 9275 2680

Passcode: 728465

Phone: 646-876-9923

### **Spotlight ; Sue copies info into chat]**

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS** UUCE Board Member

**Spotlight Jill for: WELCOME and CENTERING THOUGHT: “[Let Them Not Say](#)”**

#### **Reading**

Let Them Not Say

Jane Hirshfield - 1953-

Let them not say: we did not see it.  
We saw.

Let them not say: we did not hear it.  
We heard.

Let them not say: they did not taste it.  
We ate, we trembled.

Let them not say: it was not spoken, not written.  
We spoke,  
we witnessed with voices and hands.

Let them not say: they did nothing.  
We did not-enough.

Let them say, as they must say something:



A kerosene beauty.  
It burned.

Let them say we warmed ourselves by it,  
read by its light, praised,  
and it burned.

—2014

**Spotlight Jim for intro:**

**#1 PRELUDE [Missa Papae Marcelli Agnus Dei I](#)**

<p><b>Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina</b> was an Italian Renaissance composer of sacred music and the best-known 16th-century representative of the Roman School of musical composition. He had a long-lasting influence on the development of church and secular music in Europe.</p>		 <p><b><a href="#">Missa Papae Marcelli Agnus Dei I</a></b> Nathan Lesser (UUCE) Bangor Symphony.</p>
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**Spotlight Jim Fisher for: CALL TO WORSHIP**

**Call To Worship by John B. Newhall, Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Church**  
We Are Unitarian Universalism

“Unitarian Universalism is a non-creedal faith tradition. In our faith tradition we believe that God is a question, a question to which we must always approach with wonder. A question to which each person has a different answer. Atheists, theists, humanists, seekers, Christians, Jews and many more covenant to wonder and search together with the knowledge that each person seeking will reveal new questions, deepen relationships and unfold our souls. We choose to wonder together. We choose to seek together. We choose to worship together. We choose to meditate and pray together. We choose to be together. We choose to gather together to be something greater. A community of seekers.”

**#2 OPENING HYMN [We Are](#)** Dr. Ysaye Barnwell UUA General Assembly 2020 virtual choir

**Spotlight Marta for: CHALICE LIGHTING**

**Spotlight Jill; ZOOM Host shares PP slide]**

**#3 AFFIRMATION OF COVENANT**

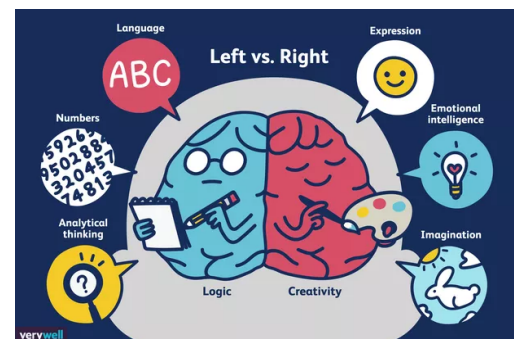
## #4 Spotlight Jim - Sharing Screen for: TIME FOR ALL AGES Parables of Monkeys and Frogs

### Time for All Ages: Monkeys in the Rainforest

Let's take a minute to talk about brains. We all have them. We'd be in tough shape without a brain. You may know by now that not all brains work alike. There are all kinds of reasons for this. We grow up in different families, go to different schools, learn to speak different languages, listen to different music and eat different foods. So, our environment has a big impact on how our brains work. Even so, when you think about how different you are, even from your brothers, sisters and parents, you have to wonder what makes us so different. Part of this may be how all the millions of tiny connections in your brain are wired. That's right, we have little bits of energy jumping around in our brains. If we really oversimplify how brains work, we can imagine our brain having two sides (or hemispheres).

The left side is our logical engineer. It is looking at how things work, turning squiggles (symbols) on a piece of paper (letters and numbers) into words and understanding the meaning.

The right side of the brain is our creative artist. It is focused on emotions, art, dreams, relationships with others.



Some of us are really good at math or solving puzzles. Some of us are really good at painting, poetry and dreaming up new ideas. Most of us can do it all, but it may be more work for an engineer to understand why someone is sad or a poet to solve a quadratic equation.

### With that, I'll tell you a very short parable from India:

One dark night seven monkeys sat cold and shivering in a tree. It was cold outside. It was raining. One of the monkey's said, "We should build a house."  
"Yes," said the other monkeys, "let's build a house tomorrow."

But when the sun came up the monkeys forgot all about building a house. They ran and played and had fun in the sun... but when night came it got cold, and it started to rain.



Again the monkeys sat in the tree, they were wet and cold. One of the monkeys said, "Tomorrow we should build a house." "Yes," said all the others, "Tomorrow we will build a house."

But when morning came, and the sun came up, the monkeys started to run and play and have fun." They wanted a house at night, but during the day they just wanted to play. -THE END

I will leave you with a few questions:

- What side of the brain seems more important for the monkeys?
  - Are they engineers or dreamers?
- They imagine a house, probably a very beautiful house that they want to build. Why don't they build it?
- Sometimes our dreams are so big we can't figure out how to get started.
- Are there any small steps they could take to make their dream come true?

**Spotlight Marta; ZOOM host shares Music video**

**#4 OFFERING** Sugar Plum Fairy Salsa

**Spotlight Jill for: JOYS & SORROW**

**#5 MUSIC:** [Unity: Inside the Taj Mahal](#) by Paul Horn

**Spotlight Jim for: Prayer & Silence**

**Jim - Summarize Joys and Sorrows**

**Jim - Prayer**

I invite you to sit comfortably,  
Breath deeply.  
Clear away the clutter in your mind.  
The clutter will be fine without you.  
The sun is shining on new fallen snow.  
Yesterday's crisis has passed.  
A new day has begun.  
Consider this new day.

## Spotlight Marta and Jill

### READING 1

“A good will is good not because of what it effects, or accomplishes, not because of its fitness to attain some intended end, but good just by its willing, i.e. in itself; and, considered by itself, it is to be esteemed beyond compare much higher than anything that could ever be brought about by it in favor of some inclinations, and indeed, if you will, the sum of all inclinations. Even if by some particular disfavor of fate, or by the scanty endowment of a stepmotherly nature, this will should entirely lack the capacity to carry through its purpose; if despite its greatest striving it should still accomplish nothing, and only the good will were to remain (not of course, as a mere wish, but as the summoning of all means that are within our control); then, like a jewel, it would still shine by itself, as something that has full worth in itself.”

– Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals

### READING 2

Carlos Castaneda

“In the universe there is an un-measurable, indescribable force which sorcerers call intent, and absolutely everything that exists in the entire cosmos is attached to intent by a connecting link. Sorcerers, or warriors, were concerned with discussing, understanding, and employing that connecting link...Sorcerers, therefore, divide their instruction into two categories; one is for everyday-life state of awareness, the other is for the states of heightened awareness, in which sorcerers obtained knowledge directly from intent, without the distracting intervention of spoken language.”

## Jim intros

**#6 MEDITATIVE HYMN: [Step By Step: The Longest March](#) (Solo by Marta Rieman - Raymon) A Preamble to the Constitution of a Coal Miners Union.**

**Spotlight Jim for: SERMON Praxis: Attention, Intention, Action**

## Sermon

First, thank you again for allowing me to join you this morning to consider Living with Intention. It's a good theme for January, when we make or intend to make New Year's Resolutions. Days are growing longer, gardeners are planning their seedbeds and many of us take on new aspirations for an unfolding year.

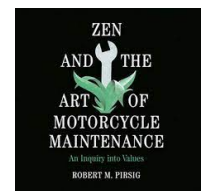
I am fortunate to be following four sermons this month, all of which have considered intentions. Sara used material from Soul Matters in her first sermon of the year, “*What Hunger Has Your Heart?*”. She said, “Living with intention is a process of reaching within to understand our inner voices.” Sara's second sermon, “Intent vs. Impact: Considering What Matters” follow a second line of thought about the consequences of our intentions and our actions. Marta presented our third service, “A Beautiful Death” which I think showed how

intention can be compressed into one very important day. Last week Jeff Juede and a number of volunteers talked about how they begin their days with intention. Each of the speakers illustrated intention as practice, or the exercise of mindfulness in everything from breathing to cleaning the kitty's litter box.

I'm afraid I'm more of a mechanic than a philosopher. So when Soul Matters expressed living with intention as a process of turning inward and understanding that the matter in your soul really matters, I was standing on the outside, with a magnifying glass in one hand and a screwdriver in the other, asking "so what am I supposed to do?" This is a question of Praxis, how we turn theory and concept into practice.

I have given much of my life to observing, analyzing and seeking to alter human behavior through education, changing the environment, incentives and taxation, and even regulation.

In Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Robert Pirsig considers the differences between right brain creatives and left brain mechanics.



Persig's left-brainers are "classicist", the type that appreciate the motorcycle for its many parts and how the parts function in a complex mechanical operation. They are engineers and mechanics. These left-brainers are most likely to look at culture and society in similar, functional ways. How do race, class, gender, education, status, ideology and other measurable attributes guide human interaction? Why do people put on weight in suburban environments? How does poverty contribute to violence? How do we prevent flooding due to sea level rise?

On the other side Pirsig characterizes right-brainers as "romanticists", the type that appreciate the sense of the motorcycle, the freedom, the wind in your hair, the total experience. They are the cultural dreamers and creative force behind music and art. What will make our town beautiful? What is quality of life? Tell me about your feelings.

This is a broad brush and I cannot do justice this morning to Robert Pirsig, a book that made an enormous impression on me in high school as I weighed my decision between liberal arts and engineering. We all have strengths. Some of us in math, some in writing, some in art, some in maintaining our fragile relationships. There is ample evidence that we manage these right-brain/left-brain biological differences throughout our lives, building strengths in areas that did not come easily, or failing to capitalize on our abilities.

The theme for January is Living with Intention. Like most words, "intentions" has a variety of meanings.

In her influential philosophical work titled Intentions Elizabeth Anscombe considers three uses of 'intention':

1. As a verb, We intend to do y.
2. As a noun, We are acting with the intention of doing y
3. As an adverb, A is acting intentionally.

(Source: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/anscombe/>)



Which among these is “living with intention?” The answer may depend on your perspective.

### Another Parable:

Three frogs are sitting on a log.  
One decides to jump. How many are left?



Answer: Three. The frog made a decision but took no action.

1. Our monkeys and frogs live in the world of intending to do something, that of intending and perhaps planning some future action, but perhaps never acting. We live on the cusp between intention and action. It is likely that you had to juggle several competing intentions this morning, dropping some and acting on others. I could give a lengthy sermon just on the issue of procrastination, but I might never get it written. A crisis, like this weekend’s snow storm, reminds us of the myriad preparations we had intended, the recharged cell phones, the buckets of water, the batteries in the smoke detectors, and telling our children that we love them.

I will tip my hat here to Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything by author BJ Fogg Director, Behavior Design Lab at Stanford University. Fogg suggests that we should try and lower our expectations. It's easier to accomplish goals if they are much smaller. We may not have assembled a complete emergency kit for this storm, but we have some of the elements in hand. We can give ourselves a High-Five for remembering to bring the snow shovel in the house.

The challenge of following through on our intentions is many times greater when we must act collectively as a church, a town or a nation. How do we go from intention to action on really big challenges like climate change when that requires everyone and every country to make fundamental changes in our behavior? Are there small changes we can make collectively that will get us from intention to action?

2. Anscombes second use of intention, as a noun, is “the intention of doing something (in the future).” An engineer will focus on the relationship of cause and effect, or what Anscombe calls the “consequentialist” justification for action. This use of intention heads off into another fundamental area of philosophy best articulated by Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism in which our intention is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. There is a lot of power in the world of cause and effect. Thinking about climate change, the need for decisive action on a global scale may only occur when all nations realize there is a clear cost to inaction.

Anscombe was not persuaded by this utilitarian connection between intention and action. This is particularly the case when we do not take proper account of the impacts of our actions on others. Anscombes most crippling example of consequentialist rationality was the United State decision to decimate the civilian cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic bombs. Our intention was to defeat the Japanese Army and end World War II. Arguably the use of atomic weapons accelerated these outcomes. As Unitarian-Universalists, we have to ask whether the ends justify the means.

3. Maybe I missed the boat with respect to the theme of living with intention. I will blame my right-brain deficit disorder. My life-long challenge with procrastination and acting on intentions and my drive to understand the world through scientific inquiry, to look for cause and consequence have led me to seeing intention as a precursor to action.

What of Anscombes third meaning? Is the point of living with intention to act intentionally? Is our goal to have an intention, a meaning or moral basis for what we are doing?

This is certainly compelling. Who wouldn't want to have a fundamental reason for their actions?

What is the source, the moral basis or good will for our lives and our actions? Are we, as Sara put in her first sermon, "reaching within to understand our inner voices?"

I return to the first reading from Immanuel Kant,

"A good will is good not because of what it effects, or accomplishes, not because of its fitness to attain some intended end, but good just by its willing,

If despite its greatest striving it should still accomplish nothing, and only the good will were to remain, then, like a jewel, it would still shine by itself, as something that has full worth in itself"."

If this is so, then what is this higher moral ground, this good-will? What is the source of our inner voices? This is not my strong suit. My inner voices are all too often yelling at each other in fierce debate about the right thing to do.

The contributors to this month's sermons have in various ways pointed to a meditative process, popularly called "mindfulness", as a way to clarify our thoughts, regain balance and act with greater certainty on our best intentions. Prayer, transcendental meditation, yoga and a host of other disciplines can help us to better align our understanding, intentions and actions.

The next step, however, is difficult. How do we align with others? Can we of liberal religious intentions gather around the table with representatives of all faiths, cultures and nationalities and agree on these truths, these measures of good will? Is it the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you?" Thou shalt not kill? Beware of false prophets. Oh dear, it is easy to go off the rails.

The second reading, from Carlos Casteneda is part of a genre of writings on universal intentions. I imagine many of you read at least some of Casteneda's books, such as The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge or A Separate Reality.

He wrote,

“In the universe there is an un-measurable, indescribable force which sorcerers call intent, and absolutely everything that exists in the entire cosmos is attached to intent by a connecting link.”

It turns out that Casteneda’s work may have been more fiction than anthropology. I believe that this genre of new age philosophy risks the pitfalls of credal religions, using the intent of God, a holy scripture or a mystical universal purpose to justify actions. If we approach God as a question, we may not get simple answers.

There you have it, three ways to live with intention, each having some strengths and some challenges. We will have to use all three, the verb, the noun and the adverb.

### The Birds and the Shivering Monkeys

This is another interesting tale/ story from the collection of Hitopadesha Tales. Once upon a time, there was a huge tree on the banks of a river. The tree made a comfortable home for the family of birds who had built their nests on its branch. The birds were living there happily as the tree with its widespread branches sheltered them from scorching sun and heavy rains.

One day, when the sky was overcast with dark clouds, it rained very heavily. Some monkeys who were playing nearby the tree got drenched and ran for shelter under the tree. All of them were shivering with cold. When the birds saw the monkeys in the pitiable condition, one of the birds said, “O Monkeys, you would not have to shiver like this, if you had built a home like us. You would not have to suffer like this. If we can build our nest with small beaks, then why cant you. By God’s grace, you have two hands and two legs. Why don’t you make a nice shelter for yourselves?”

On hearing this, the monkeys got annoyed and swore to teach a lesson to the birds. They said to themselves, “These birds are not afraid of the rain or of the cold wind. They are living comfortably. That is why they are criticizing us like this. Let the rain stop, we’ll show them how to build a home”. As soon as the rain stopped, the monkeys climbed up the tree and destroyed the nests of the birds. They also broke the birds’ eggs and threw the young ones down.

The poor birds flew here and there in misery. They were full of regret for their words and realized that they should not have given advice that was not asked. Advice should only be given to learned, wise and to those who ask for it.

So, let me apply a simple model to human intention that for some of you may seem rather left brained. That’s what engineers do. I’ll begin with an acronym that I hope will stay with you even as the details slip away. The acronym is KAP and stands for Knowledge, Attitude and Practice. If you like you can draw a metaphorical parallel with knowledge being the head, attitude being the heart and practice being the hand.

KAP models have been particularly popular in public health since the 1960s. KAP, under various names, has been a means for giving meaning to our lives. One example is the 4H movement: Head, Heart, Hands and Health.



The KAP model provides a structure to apply scientific thinking to questions of human values and behavior. The process of learning, particularly learning that engages the participation of those for whom we are planning, helps us to understand our intentions, their intentions and to support beneficial actions.

In preparation for this morning I wrote pages of examples from my domestic and international work. I think you are probably done with this sermon even if I am not.

So, I'll invite you to consider one example in the final lap. How should school curricula take on the issue of racial bias in America?

This is topical now as a wave of states and school districts are restricting curricula about race. The new Governor of Virginia Glen Youngkin banned teaching of Critical Race Theory and related curricula on his first day in office. We may ask about the intention of these restrictions and perhaps weigh the higher moral questions that are raised.

K: Have the lessons about race, black history, and diversity training contributed to knowledge? Can we measure greater awareness of the history of race in America when this material is presented in the classroom? Are core concepts like prejudice and discrimination understood. Do we see a similar decline in knowledge when these materials are removed?

A: Have the lessons about race affected the attitudes of students? Do students express greater or less empathy to people of other races? Or, as argued by opponents of diversity education, have these lessons stigmatized or polarized students, labeling them or their communities as racist?

P: Finally, have the lessons changed the practice or behavior of students? Are they practicing greater interest in knowing and celebrating racial diversity? Have we moved, as Martin Luther King hoped, from desegregation to integration?

There are surely going to be KAP gaps, where our efforts to improve knowledge, attitudes and practices fail, or have unintended consequences.

By pulling this or any issue apart, this cultural motorcycle, I am hoping we can reach a common ground. I think we will need all three intentions:

- the intention to act
- the intention to change the world through our actions
- to act with intention

The pursuit of knowledge, the open discussion of attitudes and an understanding of the consequences of our intentions and our actions is our best hope.

May it be so.

## SpotlightMarta intros

### #7 **CLOSING SONG/HYMN** [We'll Build a Land](#)

[Woyaya](#)

### Spotlight Jim for: **BENEDICTION**

The closing benediction is the lyrics from Woyaya:  
Woyaya was first recorded by Ghanaian band Osibisa. It translates as we are going.

We are going, heaven knows where we are going,  
But we know within.  
And We will get there, heaven knows how we will get there,  
But we know we will.  
Yes We will get there, heaven knows how we will get there,  
But we know we will.

### Extra Material Not Used

#### #1 Liberia - Family Planning

I use KAP in my work in West Africa on family planning. To wit, what should be done to assist people to achieve their preferred family size?

**K:** Do they have sufficient Knowledge about reproduction and contraception?

**A:** Do they profess a desire to plan their pregnancy? Do they feel empowered to overcome barriers such as spousal resistance and cost of contraceptives?

**P:** To what degree are they practicing an effective means of contraception?

I employed a crew of Liberian census takers going door to door in squatter settlements gathering information through short, structured interviews. Respondents gave us a wide range of answers on the KAP spectrum, providing us with a basis for implementing strategies ranging from use of radio to educate and shift attitudes, identifying trusted sources of information and distribution of contraceptives.

For example,

- Interviewer: "Do you use any form of contraceptive?"
- Respondent: "Yes, I use the rope."
- Interviewer: "Describe the rope"

- Respondent: “I have a blessed rope tied around my waist and it prevents pregnancy.”
- Interviewer: “When did you put on the rope?”
- Respondent: “When my baby was born.”
- Interviewer: “When do you take it off?”
- Respondent: “When my baby stops breastfeeding.”

The rope is a kind of proxy for lactational amenorrhea, or the contraceptive hormonal effect of breastfeeding. To the user, it appears to prevent unwanted pregnancy. The data support its efficacy.

Of course things don't all work out as planned. Shortly after we completed our study, Liberia erupted in a violent civil war, putting a halt to most family planning activities and disrupting distribution channels for years.

## #2 COVID

Leap ahead with me to the COVID pandemic, and consider how you can apply KAP as a way to better understand where we are and why the US is leading the world in mortality from this challenging, yet largely preventable disease.

Clearly the US has gone off the tracks with respect to COVID infections, hospitalizations and deaths. Can we understand our abysmal performance through an analysis of knowledge, attitudes and practices?

Knowledge: What does an individual know about this disease? Are they aware of how to reduce their risk of infection or hospitalization? Are they aware of resources that are available?

There has been a steady progression of scientific findings regarding COVID. We have come to understand the biological nature of COVID19 and its variants, how it is transmitted, the medical and non-medical strategies to reduce our risk. Very safe and effective vaccines were developed in a remarkably short amount of time. Yet, there has been a cacophony of false information, shucksters selling ineffective and even toxic treatments, opportunists denying the risks of COVID for serious medical harm, and much of this coming from political leaders including our former president. So, it is fair to conclude that there remains a significant knowledge deficit in a significant portion of the US population.

Attitude: How do they rate their risk of getting sick? What is their sense of “self-efficacy”, that or do they think they are able to control their risk? Do they worry that they might infect others? What information sources do they trust?

Our medical and scientific experts have provided a very solid case for self-efficacy, through vaccination, masking, and social distancing. The first wave of immunization was impressive, with people, particularly senior citizens going to great lengths to be vaccinated. We isolated ourselves in our homes, wore masks and disinfected everything provided we could find disinfectant in the stores. Over time our emotional commitment appears to have waned. Even as infection rates spiral higher than they have ever been, families are shopping without

masks, displaying an attitude quite at odds with actual risk. I conclude that a significant proportion of the US population is not attitudinally prepared to deal with COVID.

Practice: Are people vaccinated? Do they wear a mask? Do they practice social distancing? Have they been infected and recovered?

Immanuel Kant is a famous defender of the intention principle. For him, it is central that one does not just act outwardly in accordance with one's duty, which he terms "legality" (Legalität). Instead, the agent should also be inwardly motivated by the right intention, which he terms "morality" (Moralität). On this view, donating a lot of money to charities is still in some sense morally flawed if it is done with the intention of impressing other people. According to Kant, the main intention should always be to do one's duty: the good will consist in doing one's duty for the sake of duty. [The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) Tim Jankowiak [timjankowiak@gmail.com](mailto:timjankowiak@gmail.com) Towson University