

Nite Hunt ([00:00:02](#)):

Hello, I'm Nite Hunt. My pronouns are he/him. And this is OurTable: Trans spirituality conversations. OurTable is a project of enfleshed where we create spiritual nourishment for collective liberation. You can learn more about our work at enfleshed.com. As the trans faith, intern at enfleshed, I'm excited to be the host of OurTable an audio project that brings trans people together to have the spiritual and religious conversations we want to have on our terms. OurTable will be made up of four conversations each with a different theme and different guests. Today, we're talking about ritual practices with our phenomenal guests, Nathan Bakken and Reverend Coleman. Ritual practices, whether they be around prayer, food preparation, clothing, singing, et cetera, are almost always gendered. From gender prayer spaces to clothing to achieve the gendered customs for food preparation. The way we are often presented to religion is gendered. An example of my earliest memory of experiencing gender and a religious space as part of a social practice was when I went to a church event with my grandmother, my brother and my cousins. It was a potluck Easter event that was between the ages of nine and 10. Even so young, I was expected, and of course I did want, to be in the kitchen, learning the recipes, cooking, preparing the tables, et cetera. All the boys who were working with the deacons were expected to help set up the table and help settle the arriving guests and then had to break down everything at the end of the event. So kids weren't expected to do everything the adults were doing. We still had to learn the parts and deviancy was not tolerated. When we pushed back against the basics of these rituals who prepares the food versus who gets to take the first bite is when things start to get messy. Today, I want to talk about the rituals formal and informal that have shaped our religious and spiritual lives and how we create new ones that are free from toxic gender norms. But first let's begin with some introductions,.

Nite Hunt ([00:02:01](#)):

Reverend Yunus, would you like to introduce yourself.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:02:04](#)):

My name is Reverend Yunus Coleman. Um, my pronouns are he/him/his. Um, and let's see, I think you want us to describe who we are in the world and we go to that next. Yes. Okay. So it's hard to describe that, you know, for me being that I don't mind saying my age, I'm 63 going on, will be 64 this year, um, to describe myself as hard because the list gets long. Y'all don't have that much time. Okay. Um, so I will condense it down to, I am a black trans masculine person who is an interfaith minister. That is where my heart lies. I have a job, but that's not my, where my heart is. My heart is in ministry for the trans community.

Nathan Bakken ([00:03:01](#)):

My name is Nathan Bakken. I use they/them pronouns. I am a white non-binary gender non-conforming person. I am a spiritual director and a contemplative Witch. I am a writer and an amateur home baker. I am somebody who spends a lot of time sitting with ghosts of the communities that I'm a part of and sitting with the lineages that I hold. And a dear friend described me as somebody who takes the time to honor the connections that are formed. Um, and so I think that's a few ways that I described who I am and what I bring to the world. Thank you.

Nite Hunt ([00:03:52](#)):

Thank y'all. I really appreciate your introductions and, you know, telling where your heart lies into world, where your heart lies in the world and like where y'all like places, both physically and spiritually. So I

appreciate that. Thank you. Um, so getting started with the questions, what would you consider to be a moment your faith, religion, spirituality felt like home to you if it ever has.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:04:17](#)):

And Nathan, you can always jump in when you're ready.

Nathan Bakken ([00:04:21](#)):

Okay. Do you want me to go first? I'm ready. All right. Um, I was thinking about this a lot, cause I think my knee-jerk reaction is to say that very rarely have I felt home in a lot of spiritual spaces. I was raised Roman Catholic and come from a very large Catholic family and a story that kind of popped up as I was thinking about this question was in March of 2018, I'd come home to Seattle for my nephew's baptism. And prior to this trip, while in seminary, my tarot practice became a, an offering, an original practice. I started offering to other people and being able to sit with them and read cards with them and provide care in that way. And to my surprise, one of the people asking me to read cards for them was my mother. And when I was flying home from Boston on this trip, my mom asked me that I bring my cards with. And so I show up at the baptism, it's a beautiful service. My nephew, my nephew is baptized into the Catholic church, little infant baptism, whole white dress, the whole nine. And we go back to my parents, just like family and family, friends. And I spent the afternoon at the baptismal party reading the cards of my cousins and my aunt. I have the opportunity to read my grandmother's cards in my childhood bedroom. Um, and as I read cards, it sparked a conversation with my family about my Catholic and my not Catholic grandmothers who were tea leaf readers in Iowa who were psychics in Wyoming. Um, I heard my grandfather say witchcraft isn't real, but we don't disrespect it. Um, and that day in 2018, it revealed that this kind of superstitious practice that I had found in college in undergrad from my like queer and trans chosen family, like those were the people who brought tarot into my life, um, that practice shared lineages with my own family of origin in my own Catholicness. And it was that like my own great grandmothers became possibility models from the past that I can like exist in this paradoxical way as kind of this like bizarre Catholic, witch person and that experience offered me a feeling of home that I keep coming back to. Yeah.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:07:08](#)):

That is awesome.

Nite Hunt ([00:07:11](#)):

That's pretty cool. I'm glad you're her family was like very accepting of it and that's pretty cool. You discovered that family history

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:07:19](#)):

That is quite wonderful. Um, so for me, um, it actually came much later for me, um, in my life. Um, cause I had been exploring a lot of things. Um, I, you know, I'm at my center, a follower of Christ, um, though I am an ordained interfaith minister. Right. Um, I do say follower of Christ as opposed to a Christian, right. Which, which means something else and for me, um, but that the moment I think, um, that it, it rose up for me was the day, um, that I was allowed at my church to hold a healing circle. And the reason why it's so significant is because I am a, um, a, um, uh, a, a Reiki master teacher and I used all Reiki practices, um, for that healing circle. And no one looked at me like I was crazy. No one matter of fact it was a, actually a very large turnout, um, considering, uh, some of the other events that we would have at that church. Um, I think half the church showed up for this healing circle. And, um, and, and

there was just something about it that made me know that I would have been, I had really truly began to walk in my calling as healer. Um, you know, not just as an and I wasn't even a minister yet. Right. Not quite, not quite. I was almost there. I was in seminary. Um, but you know, to get that certification and I'm not talking about the piece of paper that says that I'm a Reiki master, but get that certification during that healing circle, um, uh, from people who I loved and admired in the church, my pastor included, you know, who, um, my pastor, my pastor's wife, um, who was a lesbian couple. I mean, it was, it was remarkable. It really was. And it did something. And when I having, you know, moments of feeling, you know, am I doing what I'm supposed to be doing? Spirit invariably brings that day, brings that whole moment back to me to say, no, you you're doing exactly what you're supposed to be doing. So, so that, that, you know, there were a couple of little hot spots before that, but that was like the big one. That was the big one. Um, so, so yeah, so it was just that moment of being able to fully practice and be completely myself in a room full of people who totally accepted that.

Nite Hunt ([00:10:11](#)):

Thank you for sharing that. And that's amazing, like getting to be like, I feel that right, like being in community of being like, okay, like you're like I get to be myself here and then like share other like spiritual practices that, you know, contributed to community contributed to your church and being like accepted there. So that's, that's amazing. And thank you for sharing that. Um, and I love how, um, I love hearing saying you were saying you're a follower of Christ, but not Christian because I've heard that before. And, um, I like, I I'm, um, I graduated with my bachelor's in religious studies from UCSB. So like, I've gotten a chance to hear more, uh, folks talk about that of like, um, like believing in Jesus and like maybe believing in the Trinity, but not necessarily like believing everything that necessarily follows being a Christian. And so, um, yeah, thank you for sharing that,

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:11:10](#)):

Um, you know, conversation they're having, um, you know, that is why I like to distinguish, um, for myself. And I know a lot of people that need something different for them even, even using the same term follower of Christ still means something totally different for other people. Um, and for me, it is just me in its simplicity means that his teachings is what I found, not The teachings of Paul or, or necessarily there's some stuff Paul talks about. That was real cool. I get it. But, um, yeah, so, so just so we're clear about, about what I meant by that.

Nite Hunt ([00:11:53](#)):

Yeah. I feel that, um, especially cause like in my journey towards like finding a home in religion, like a lot of where my sense of home has come from is like either from my found family that I got to find in college that like introduced me to like tarot reading. Um, like, um, well I guess mostly tarot reading, but just other stuff that weren't like very traditional or like what's kind of seemed like bad growing up. And then just getting to experience that with like folks that really cared for me and really loved me and were just like doing their things. I was like, okay, I see like how I can now engage with religion where I don't feel like I'm fighting myself and just it being like having different things of like we're doing Passover and Easter. Right. So we have like, everyone's like doing their stuff and it's just so much fun of like, you know, everyone being in the house and being like, okay, at this time we're doing this stuff for this person. Then another time we're doing this stuff, but it's like, we're all going to have dinner and it's going to be fine. It's like, okay, everyone allergies, like we know like what people can and can't eat. Um, so like getting to do that in college with like my found family, there has, has always been fun or like driving up to see them and like us doing one can dinner or whatever. Um, but also like, I remember when I told my grandma I was going into religious studies and then converting to Islam and like, my

grandma has always been like my number one fan. And so she has always kept me like grounded and like making me feel like no matter where I choose to go, my religious journey is like, um, even if I don't necessarily find a home within like a church or in a synagogue or like within, um, a masjid, like I always know when I go with my grandma, like when I go see her and like I'm eating dinner with her, like that's always like my grounding that always feels like home. So I feel connected to like both y'all stories. So thank y'all for sharing that, um, which leads into, well, not directly leads into the next question I have, but, um, in parts of just, um, dinner for me has always been like the center of ritual right. Of like preparing food of like eating food with people, like no matter like, and I, when I love preparing food for Passover, cause I was like learning how to make, um, I forget latkes. That's what it's called. And like, that was really fun and like the cheese cloth and then, you know, boiling the potatoes and then dicing them and everything. So, and then cooking food with my grandma right. Of like cooking, um, collard greens, like that's one of my favorite like just like invested foods to make. Um, so I was wondering for y'all like what, what are your favorite go-to rituals that make you feel like at home or make you feel comfortable, you know, make you feel holy, like, well, what are those, what kind of rituals or practices do you reach for when you're doing that?

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:14:28](#)):

Well, well, for me it depends actually. Um, cause there's no, you know, it's a go-to is the go-to in the moment that you go to it. You know what I mean? So, so, um, so like for instance, when we just, before we got started, I lit I lit sage because I really wanted to be in a different space spiritually. Right. Um, you know, and, uh, I've been told also that I better be careful because I'm in sniffing a lot of state sage. Right. But, but it is, it is the one thing that, that, that, that, that, um, turns the key and I'm using it in my I'm turning the key in my temple, but it also turns that key here, you know, where my heart is, where my spirit, where I feel my spirituality lies. So sage is really, I probably will use it for everything to just get into the next ritual that I might want to do. Um, I even have some growing in the backyard. Right. So when we, when we cut that back, I put it in some, some, uh, some vegetable oil simmer it down, and now I have Sage oil that I can take. Cause you know, you can't light stuff everywhere, you know, cause they don't know what they smelling most of the time. Right. So, um, I have my bottles of Sage spray that I'm spraying as soon as the, you know, whatever it is I'm about to do. I have, I had that Sage, um, and I know Sage is very significant for other groups, for other spiritual walks. It's very different. But for me, that is really what gets me like in the space that I need for communion. It gets me in the space that I need for laying on of hands. It gets me in the space that I need, um, to, to, to light a candle on my, on my altar. Right. So, so I guess it is the go-to it's the go-to for the go-to as I said. Yeah. So I guess I would put that.

Nathan Bakken ([00:16:27](#)):

One of the things that I love, because as I was kind of meditating online of like what this conversation would be, I was like, for me, ritual is all about how we mark time and like enter into something different. And yet, um, Nite, what you shared of like how I'm love cooking. I love baking. Um, and I was, and one of the ways in which my family mark, my like family of origin, marks time in the kind of the Advent and Christmas season is my mother and my grandmother and my aunts all come together and they make what they call is coffee cake. And then I became a food nerd and found out that it's actually like a Danish sweet bread and has nothing to do with coffee cake, but we call it coffee cake, even though it's not coffee cake. Um, but they come together every, like there was one weekend in November, they all come together and they spend literally eight hours making probably like 40 loaves of bread that they then like use as gifts to the community, family members, um, for our own Christmas like breakfast, dinner or breakfast meal. And I remember being like 17 and finally getting the courage to be like, I want to come

and I want to learn how to make this bread. And my mom being like, and I'm one of four boys, a score folks assigned male at birth, um, of 11 grandchildren, 10 of whom were assigned male at birth. And, and so it's for me to kind of deviate from my cousins and be like, no, I want to be in the kitchen. I want to be in this sphere to participate in this ritual and to learn that ritual for my own self. When I moved to Boston, that's how I would mark advent is I would make my grandma's coffee cake that's not a coffee cake and like give it to my friends in seminary. Um, and yet Reverend Yunus, when you were talking, I was like, oh, I have my altar. I have my go-to incense that I use when I want to like really get into this space. Um, I'm somebody who really loves contemplative prayer. I love meditation. I love sitting in silence and one of the benefits of incorporating incense and, and like incorporating the sense into meditation to like really invite an embodied that it doesn't just stay up in my head that my whole body is present is something that is really important. My ritual practice. Um, and, and I, I was thinking about like, how do I connect with my inner sense of holy and I love music. I love pop music. I love garbage pop music. I love Ferris Believe is a meditative song for me that, and I love kind of the folksy, country, Americana music with banjos and Dolly Parton is a guiding light of my life. And those songs, there are certain songs that I use as ritual that Dolly Parton's light of a clear blue morning is when I know that I'm going to have a rough day when I know my schedule is not what I want. That's how I, I wake up. And that's the first song I play to bless this day that even though I know it's going to suck and people are probably going to be annoying, there is a tomorrow after this day.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:20:08](#)):

That's awesome. That is awesome. So, so now y'all talked about food, so I have to put food in there. So, you know, during this pandemic, right. Um, I have a friend, uh, and on Sundays we have a dinner together because we both bought air fryers when new ritual is AirFryer cooking, okay. That's the new, the new, and we want it to have other people be a part of it, but they were like I'm not trying to get no airfried dinner, okay, well you are missing out because he and I on Sunday, name's about five in the afternoon. All the virtual services are done that we listen to or not listened to. What we do is we have this ritual where we virtually he's cooking, I'm cooking. And we, sometime we decide on what we're going to cook. Sometimes it's different. Sometimes it's the same. We try to make it different. So that this way we can swap recipes this Sunday, I'm going to try ribs and I'm trying lamb this time like that. But what's really funny about this ritual is that we can be talking and the AirFryer has a ding, it goes ding, when we hear the ding, it's like, okay. Right. It does something to us spiritually. I know that it does. You know, it's not just about that. We hear it and it's done. It's like, you know, cause food is life. Food is life. And we're like, oh my God, it's ready. Let's go, what are we doing? It's such a wonderful, wonderful ritual that we have created for ourselves. Um, we don't know if anybody else is going to enjoy it, guess what? We really don't care. It's ritual. Um, so that's what, that's the full part of it. And, um, wonderful that you mentioned music as well. Um, I'm a former opera singer. I used to be a diva, but back in my heyday. Right. And so classical music is still a thing for me. It really is a, still a thing for me. So I basically have it on, in the background all day, all night, it's some kind of blue, the violin or something is going. However, when I really, really want to go in and go in, it's the best expression that I can use right now. It's really, really, I will put on a redefine and it doesn't even happen because it's not that song. It's about that voice. It's about that tone. It's about that, that that's spiritual sound, right. That hits me right in the chest. And it puts me right where I need it. Matter of fact, you would have put it on right now. I would go in, I would really go, you know, it could've been pink Cadillac does doesn't matter. We fry ritual with everything that you need when you, when you get what you move out of it. Right. It doesn't matter. Who wants to make people want to make it one thing, it's not one thing it is a thing. It is, is your thing, whatever that is, you can plan up glasses and put water all the way all day long. If that's what works for you, then do that. You know what I mean? So I go in, I do go in every night.

Nite Hunt ([00:23:40](#)):

No, thank you. I love hearing that my, my grandma got an air fryer, so now she got an air fryer and she got a, um, the, the croc, not the pressure cooker. So my grandma's like a pressure cooker and she's like, I'll put it in the air fryer. She like, just come over and eat. If it was about food, I'm always trying to go over there. Like my roommate already knows where maybe be like, are we cooking? I'll go to my grandma's house and love to get some leftovers, but I love that for you. That's amazing. Um, but I loved hearing about like, what I'm really hearing is just like having those in-between moments, right. That like really set the tone of like creating the rituals because like it comes to be, it's not just like one thing, like you can walk into which there are those too, but I love hearing about the ones that, you know, you've really created for yourselves and like also like taking onto the ones that have been created and like embodying those. And so I'm wondering how have they changed or like, have you seen, like, have they changed for you or been embodied different, like being trans or like going along your trans journey or like, um, have those sense of embodiment changed or like been like different spaces now that like has been trans done something different or like being or has it always been just like, like one in the same, like, you know, it's kinda like mixed ice cream, right. It's just, it's always been there together.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:25:15](#)):

Well, I'll jump in. Um, I actually feel that, um, once I discovered my transness, I didn't always know what that was. I couldn't put a name on it. Um, and just, just for, um, a note, um, I, um, transitioned late in life. I transitioned in my fifties. Right. So this, so, but there was something about when I made that decision, right. Because I made this decision, um, shortly after seminary. I mean, it was like, I did a lot of stuff late, including going to seminary. I was like, what am I doing? What's I've lost my mind. Um, but there was, I feel that my transness actually enhanced my spirituality because now I have shed myself of some preconceived notions that I, that, that not only did other people have, but what I have for myself, I was able to get rid of that. There's freedom that occurs when you recognize yourself. Um, so that freedom also enhances your spiritual life and your ritual life. Um, and it's hard to quantify it. It really is. It's, it's very hard to quantify, but you know what it is. I know it's always hit my chest. You know what that is, you know, that, that third chakra, you know, you know what that is. And at then, and now when I see things, um, I don't, how can I put it? I think the Bible says you can look through a glass darkly, don't look through a glass darkly. Now, now everything is lit up and bright. And there's light in all my rituals, including older ones, including some of the old ones like communion, you know, um, to be trans and to take communion is, is to me, it literally brings tears to my eyes because I am I'm participating in something so sacred. Right. But I know the significance is that that communion and that that's on the cross and those things were for me as I am now, right. Those rituals are much more significant and much more meaningful for me now than they were before.

Nathan Bakken ([00:27:58](#)):

I'm just kind of marinating in what you just said in part, because I also am somebody who cries every time I receive communion. Um, it communion, that is one of the things that holds me in church space because not all church spaces is space I want to be in all the time, but I will show up on a communion Sunday. I will show up, um, to dip and growing up Catholic, where there's a very like rigid way to do communion. I went to a Methodist seminary and moving from Catholic communion to Protestant communion was one of the most stressful experiences of my entire life. Um, Episcopalian communion stresses me out Presbyterian communion and stresses me out and method like having to dip bread and grape juice the first time scared me. Um, and yet as I've grown, that's shifted and changed, but I am thinking about my transness and the rituals. I, I, the first thing that comes to mind and it might just be because I got my haircut yesterday. The ritual of having a haircut is one of the most stressful

experiences of my entire life. I hate it and not because I hate getting my hair cut. It's the, and I grew up going to barbershops and barbershops are where I feel the most comfortable. Like my ideal gender expression is like the Butchest lesbian on the face of the planet. And, and barbershops are still one of the most terrifying spaces for me to go into. It gives me the same anxiety, just like church. And when I was in Boston, I ended up finding a transmasculine barber. And it was like the first time I felt it was like the first time I like heard those words that like you are loved and you are beautiful and you're affirmed. And you're validated and all those, gushy things, having a barber who I was able to be like, oh, I use these pronouns. And I really want a hairstyle that messes with gender just as much as I want to. And they respond by being like, okay, cool. I'm using masculine and feminine haircutting techniques on your hair. I am going in and using curves in this way. And I'm using sharp edges in this way. And we're going to like, do some gender fucking, even in your Butch haircut. And I was like, this is what I've been wanting my entire life. And when I moved from Boston to California, I had to grieve the loss of a barber for the first time. And when I think about like the trans rituals that really tap into the trans experience in a really like trans-centered way, I think of barbershops and just pure fear until you meet that one person who gets you and then it's just home and, and having to go back there once a month and be like, Hey, I just need to like, tighten this up. I just need to like, fix this. And that person is so important.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:31:22](#)):

That is a blessing that is such a blessing. Um, I don't go to barbers anymore. I do it myself and I've created a ritual even out of that. Right. It's like, okay, I need, I need to get done. Like, you know, I get my, burn my Sage, I burn my Sage, you know, cause I'm getting ready to go, go in. And, um, and I do it myself because I actually couldn't take the stress anymore. I couldn't. Um, because you know, I'm not in a necessarily an affirming community. I'm not, you know, and though, you know, I'm masculine presenting, all it would take is, is a little something that they recognize that's not quite as masculine as it's supposed to be. Right. And, you know, and get the raised to eyebrow or get the questions, You know, like, are you married? And I'm like, you know, just cut the hair, man. This is why you got to know all of this, you know, you know, they turn the channel on the TV to like kickboxing. I don't know, something like that, even though I do love kickboxing. Um, but you know, you get to get dressed. Like I couldn't take it anymore. And during the pandemic, I really couldn't take it anymore because it's like, now I'm at my hair cut. I don't want, I just want it cut and needed to have a mask on. And you know, ain't nobody else got mad. Oh, it was like, I ordered myself a pair of Clippers and I was like, I'm going to figure this out. You know? And, and so now what, you know, I make it into a ritual. It's like, okay, on Saturday, I'm going to cut my hair. I'm going to trim my beard. I butchered it up a little bit, but it's okay. You know, and it becomes a thing, you know, becomes my, my hair ritual. Right. I think I did pretty good. You know, especially since it's close, you know? Um, but we need that. And I think what people don't understand is that whole life is a ritual. Their entire existence, our entire existence is a ritual. You know, the way you brush your teeth in the morning is a ritual. How you do it, do you put the, do you, do you squeeze your tube from, from the back end of the brush to the front end or from the front end to the back end? If you do it the same way every time that's a ritual.

Nathan Bakken ([00:33:52](#)):

I have to think about this. I think I was like, I was like, what am I doing? And the funniest thing is like, and I was talking about my partner is a law student and is the most ritualistic person I've ever met in my entire life. He's also like an AP kind of just like tolerate my woo-woo fuckery. Can I swear at that loud? Okay. Um, but he, uh, has a nighttime ritual, he has a skin care ritual, he has a morning ritual. He orchestrates his entire day around these little things and I'm over here being like, oh, I feel like I want to do this thing now. And I'll do like an immediate ritual that he has when I think about like brushing teeth,

I'm like, oh, he has the most regimented way to like, get to paste out of the toothpaste tube. And I'm over here, like squeezing it from the middle and like stressing him out. And.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:34:52](#)):

I get it I think I'm like that too, I squeeze mine from the from the end. You get in the middle and I'm like really dude? I stopped, God bless the dead. My mom. Um, she was in a minute because it was easier for her to grab it and just squeeze it, and I would be like hmm and ya know my whole being would just like cringe but living as living with, and sometimes they overlap depending on your frame of mind in that moment. But we all walking out, even as trans people, that was a ritual. You know, I will say this, I did have my top surgery also very late in life. Right. That's a sacrifice. That is a sacrifice of flesh, right. Everything we had to do after that sacrifice was ritualistic. Even though medically we knew what it was we needed to do. Got it. Medically, we gotta do this and we have to, but you know, we would get into a zone about taking care that is ritual. You know, so everything is ritual.

Nathan Bakken ([00:36:25](#)):

And those moments where I have many friends who have gone through top surgery and the ritual of bringing together, like the community of care that like one of my dearest best friends and one of my queerplatonic life partners had top surgery last summer. And they're, um, studying in Oahu in Hawaii. And I flew out to Hawaii for 10 days to quarantine in their apartment to tend to them, to that and make sure they had that. And like that the ritual of trans care about mutual aid of like, I'm just going to show up and I'm gonna, I'm going to do what you need me to do in that moment. If that's cleaning out your drains up, I'll clean out your drains.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:37:09](#)):

Exactly, exactly. But also like when we get people who aren't as forward thinking as we are to get them to participate in your ritual they don't realize what they're doing, but right. Because I didn't have that because I, um, um, had my surgery during the pandemic. So I knew I wasn't getting anybody to come and do nothing for me. Okay. And that's fine. I'm not, you know, I saying, but my brother allowed me to stay with him. And I was like, well, you gotta help me with this part here. Cause I, I can't do it. Cause I can't see, I can't see, you know, the chin gets him away, so you gotta help me out. And he's the nurse. Um, so, you know, for him, you know, it was, um, it was a medical ritual. He, even though he didn't put ritual on it, but I saw him, I literally saw him get into a zone when he had to do something for me, you know what I'm saying? And, and, and, and let's face it, our frontline workers, you know, they have sacred rituals. Anything that they do is sacred and it is a ritual. So we, and we can see it. They don't see it, but we can see it. And I saw him get into a space that let me know, okay. You know, he's he's and he's where he needs to be, to do what he needs to do, you know? Oh, this is awesome. We just talking about stuff right now. I know done went off all your questions by now.

Nite Hunt ([00:38:37](#)):

No, please. This is great. I love that. Like, this is, you know, it's nice just hearing about, you know, then innateness of just like how we engage, like with our transness like with our spirituality, like, and even if you don't label it as spirituality of just stuff like we have these things we create, you know, um, it just made me think about so many things that happen in life, but one of the things I've been consistently blessed with throughout my college career is I've had great roommates. Like I've had phenomenal roommates. And one of the things I would love, what I would see is this, when our schedules would sync up and then like, no matter what, we kind of wake up at the same time and then cook breakfast. And

then I just love seeing them. Like I had one roommate the way that she would make eggs in the pan, like she just cracked the egg in the pan and just scramble it, then just throw the stuff in and then she'd just eat it. And I would just watch her and be like, you didn't put no season at all in there, but she was like, you know, I'm just eating to eat. Cause you know, we both had to go to the gym in the morning cause we were on sports together, but it was just, I love that. And then we kind of go to sleep around the same time, you know? So I'd be like, oh, you know, I'm kind of tired. I just need to get home. And then even if I wouldn't go to sleep or I would stay up late, it was still nice. Just like being there and getting ready for bed and all that. And even my roommate now, like, um, we ended up working for, uh, quite a few months together at the same, a fast food restaurant. And so, you know, just the whole okay. You know, make sure in the rabbit settle, make sure that the cat is settled. Be like, no, we'll be back in however many hours and just working the shift together and just like having those small moments together. But like also it's like, okay, we need to be go early enough to like get some coffee. And then, you know, after work of being like, are you hungry? You know, what's still open and just like being there and caring for each other. And so, um, like, you know, y'all talking just reminded me of that. And I just love that, you know, just those little moments of being with people and just being like nothing specific, but just like getting to know someone and seeing the little things that they do and then like participating with their ritual of like helping them prep it, even if it's just like, oh, you know what? I know they like to eat this on the weekends or I like to eat this. They like to eat this morning. Just, you know, making sure that's available for them so they can, you know, do that and make sure they're comfortable. And it's just, no, but I, I love it. Just, you know, when you're talking about the haircut, I mean I could go on myself, but I, I would love to hear y'all talk more. Um, any who's but another question I would love to hear about is, um, and y'all kind of touched on it, but what's changed. Like I would love to hear more about the changes of like, you know, how has ritual practices like evolved for y'all um, whether it be with respect to just like living life or being trans, but like, how has it changed? Like, um, Nathan, you're talking about, you know, making the bread and now y'all, I'm assuming most of the kids are grown. So, you know, do you like lead the bread-making making ritual now? Just like, you know, you know, do you call the other folks into the kitchen and be like, you know, we gotta make these 40 breads for these folks? Um, no for Reverend units, like you said, you know, you have Sage is now what changes in your head space for setting that, but you know, when you were first doing seminary, was it a different incense or like, did you come into that incense or like, I would love to hear, you know, what is, what have been the journeys you've gotten to carry that the rituals of care you through? Mm.

Nathan Bakken ([00:41:51](#)):

I will say none of my cousins wanted to learn how to make the bread. I think I'm the only, yeah. I mean, it's, I mean, I'm also the like nostalgic traditionalist, which is very ironic being the only one.

Nite Hunt ([00:42:10](#)):

I feel that I feel that.

Nathan Bakken ([00:42:11](#)):

Invested in upholding family tradition, which LOL on that. Um, but as you were talking, I think one of the things rituals do is rituals also provide roles for people like that. One of the ways in which like tarot, which originated for me as a practice by being like me and my friends, 21, a bunch of like, queer angry kids in college, like I'm going to be like, does this person like me and how that practice as I've kind of journeyed, then realized I wanted to go to seminary and I wanted, and originally I went into seminary wanting to be an academic. Like I wanted to like seal away in the ivory tower and like just write books. And then I got to seminary and it kicked me on my ass. And it was like, LOL, you have to care about

human beings. Yeah. And I left seminary and tarot became the practice that not only held me, but when I was a barista for five years after seminary and when COVID hit, I lost my barista job. And I started doing tarot readings online for people in my community for friends, kind of just advertising on Facebook and Instagram and my community rallied. And I was able to pay my, for my, like that April, that month's rent came from tarot readings that my community asked me to hold. And the role that I had now that ritual practice has done for me is it changed my relationship and the role I have in my communities that I'm now kind of the point person that people reach out to is like, Hey, I don't want to, like, it's like, I have a therapist, but I need to, like, my therapist doesn't want to talk about God. Can I talk about God with you? And like reach out to me. I do, um, uh, tarot readings for my parents on an annual basis where like we sit down for an hour and I like draw cards. And my mom and my dad and I have a conversation about their hopes and their dreams and like what they want their future to be. And, and the way in which like it was through ritual, that my relationship to all these people changed and grew and developed. And, and I think that's deeply intertwined with my queerness and my transness that I'm not just like, I'm not just my mom's son and not even son like child. Like I'm not just my friend's friend. I'm also this like weirdo who gets to show up and have beautiful conversations with them and, and do it in a way that has healthy boundaries and like respectful or like centering their agency where like I straight up look at my mom and I'm like, I'm taking off the child hat and I'm putting on this hat because I need to say these things to you, but I need to, this is not coming from a place of your child. This is a different place. And I only learned to do that through these ritual practices and arguably teaching me how to like establish a healthy boundaries.

Nite Hunt ([00:45:32](#)):

Nice. Yeah. That's, that's amazing. And I, I love, you know, that journey for you just being like, you know, that tarot was that underlying things. So that's amazing. I too want to go to seminary just because I really want to talk to people. Like, I love talking to people as much as I don't like people, I love talking to people. So I'm just like, you know, seminary. I just like, I couldn't see like an traditional academic program, just having space for that. And I'm just like, no, like community is where it's at. So, you know, it's still a religious scholar definitely, but I'm like, let's, let's do this. Um, but thank you for sharing.

Nathan Bakken ([00:46:07](#)):

That's awesome.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:46:08](#)):

That is really awesome. It brought back a lot for me as well in listening to you. Um, yeah, so I would say that it has evolved as, as you've been saying, um, I will say before I became the person that I am now. Um, but there's still pieces of that person, that person, but the evolution it's full, it's almost full circle because before this I was involved with the church that was very evangelical. I mean the whole, I mean, all of this that we just talked about, your dead baby, they would be having calling on the holy ghost, laid out on the altar and they would, um, you know, I was one of those and I'm not denigrating it at all because I will be upfront and honest and transparent that group of people though, they were evangelical, they helped save my life. They really did it cause I was on correction. Um, that, that I needed stability. I actually needed to be celebrated, I needed to give up everything because I, you know, again, I'm being transferred. I don't care who knows. Everybody kind of knows already now I'm, I'm um, I'm a former crack addict. You know, when I gave that up, I needed something that was gonna keep me rigid. I needed it.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:47:53](#)):

So I had, I had that church and yet I went to AA, but that's another story. Um, and I did that for 10 years, 10, whole years. I did that, but that helped develop that thing that I need to understand about myself in my core. I needed to understand, I needed to be able to recognize what spirit the spirit was saying to me and the spirit wanted me to stay put, and I was good with that until I wasn't. Right. Then one day just said, okay, well, it's that story because it's basically saying get up and go, time to leave, got some other stuff for you to do. And I got up and I haven't been back since, you know, so it took that, but then that next really shoot section of my life, you know, I began to do everything that I was not taught not to do. You don't let anybody read your tarot cards, right? You crazy? That's some, that's some demon, you don't know who they calling on. You know that voice they get? You don't know who they calling on! You know? And, but, but when I got to seminary, I had the opportunity to just get rid of all of that and refurbish it. So, you know, I took bits and pieces of that person of that self, of those things that I hadn't learned them. I was taught. I brought the pieces that maintenance made sense and I left the rest. Some of it has crept back because, you know, as you get older, as you learn more, you realize some of that was really okay, it's really the same thing. They just didn't know. It was the same thing like Reiki. All Reiki is laying on of hands, maybe not quite touching, but it's the same thing. And now you can't touch people no way, because you gone get a lawsuit. So it's really the same thing. So, you know, I got the opportunity to take all of that and then membership and make it what it needed to be for me as a spiritual calling. I Identified with that a lot. Um, before that, You know, some of That was really wonderful, but it was, you know, it didn't, it didn't allow me to really have the freedom of being who I needed to be. You know. And I'm so glad that I listened. Okay. But they taught me how to listen. And don't when I left, he said to me, well, you know, how do you know you're hearing from God? How, you know, I was hearing from God in the last 10 years? I know that, I know that. I know, you know what I'm saying? So, so, so yeah, so it's evolved and, and um, you know, it's a, it's a becoming and I'm still becoming, you know? I started with just the Reiki and now I got tuning forks and I got crystals, I got stuff. You know what I'm saying? So I probably am a witch. Though that's not what I call myself, but I probably am, but that's okay. I know a group of people and they are trans. I identify a lot of them that don't even care. They're like, can you help me? Can you help in the community? Um, I had mentioned this to, uh, Nite. Um, they call me pops, you know, um, cause I'm also a father figure. There's ritual even in that, because then when I, when I meet them and we want to see pops, that's pops that they want to see. They don't want to see necessarily minister Rev. Yunus. They want to see, they want to talk to pops. And they'll just like, when you say your mom, I gotta, you know, gotta be that other person. The other thing I'm going to kind of loop in here is that we have that, there's an understanding that all of our spirituality is so in and out of ritual, sacrifice, kindness, love, all of that, is some ritual. We do these things because we love ourselves, but we love spirit and we love people. You don't just read cards just to be reading them. You'll just get a playing card, play pinochle. You know what I'm saying? You do them because you're called to do it.

Nite Hunt ([00:52:49](#)):

Thank you for that. And just, yeah, thank you to both of you. Just, I don't even have the words. It's, it's a feeling, you know, like I feel this in my heart. And so I love that. Like, I, I hope the listeners will get to feel that too of just, you know, just it, I mean, there is that too, like you said, there's that rigidness that comes with it, but there's also just that calling in the community of like being where we need to be. And like, I think we all hold different places in different people's lives for ritual of just being like, even if it's just, I remember driving to school to middle school and there was this Pepto Bismol, Pepto-pink Bismol car. And I knew I was on, I knew we were going to be on time. If we saw that car at a certain place on the freeway. And you know, they didn't know us, it was a million cars, It was traffic every morning driving to school, but you know, just that car stood out and I'm like, you know, there was a point when

we didn't see him for a while. And I was like, wow, I hope that people in the pink car are okay. You know, maybe they moved, you know, life happens, but just, you know, just, we all have, you know, hold these spaces, whether we know it or not of ritual in people lives. And I would love, I would love to have this conversation for four more hours. I'd love to talk to you all for five ever, but a time-check, um, we are coming up on the hour and I respect y'all's time and y'all's days. And, uh, we could talk more afterwards, but you know, just in respect to time. So the closing question, I would love to hear for y'all or just the advice, um, for the listeners, what, for other trans folks out there, what would you, what would you suggest of just, you know, finding their own ritual or just acknowledging the rituals that they have in their lives, you know, embodying that, or, you know, different people will be different points in their journey, listening to this and just, you know, whether they're finding ritual, creating ritual, what would you have to say to other trans folks out there about, you know, coming into those rituals or identifying those rituals for themselves?

Nathan Bakken ([00:54:48](#)):

Can I talk?. This connects to something I heard that Reverend Yunus said, uh, as you go through life, you start realizing retrospectively that there are bits of pieces of your past self that you get to carry forward and integrate into the person you brought in the present and a friend of mine, um, I think they posted this on Twitter. I don't know. These are not my words. I do not claim ownership with these words, but they, a friend of mine said something along the lines of it's cisness that tells us things have to stay the same and that things are permanent. And one of them that like cis-genderness tells us that are stable, that things are fixed. That things stay the same. And it's the beauty and the grace and the power of transness. The wisdom of it is that we get to be these beings in flux, these beings and static that when we think about rituals for like young people and for trans folks trying to figure out how do I become a person who honors ritual our existences as we've been talking about are the ritual. It's the bits and pieces of our past selves of the crystals, of the cards, of the prayers, of the recipes. And we integrate them in ways. And so there's an and that is something that's informed by transness because all of us were cisgender. We want things just to be stable and not evolving and transness is dependent upon that evolution, is dependent upon that ritual of change. Um, so I think for young people, what practices, what things make you feel home, but also invite you to, as, as spirit spoke to Reverend Yunus, like, get up and go. Sometimes the ritual is going to tell you to drop the ritual and do something and that's okay. And you should drop them and do something different.

Nite Hunt ([00:57:00](#)):

I appreciate that.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([00:57:02](#)):

That's awesome. I'm down with that. That's really kind of awesome. So, so just a little piece is that, you know, nothing is stagnant. Even cis is not stagnant. That is not cause that is ever evolving too. And we have to know that because it didn't even exist before. Right. The word didn't even exist before whenever, like 10 years ago decided to drop that word cause they needed one, the opposite-trans whatever. Cause we're all trans in some way or another, nothing is the same. It all transitions into, you could call us morphs. We are morphs, we are morphs whatever word you want to use. Okay. We are all that the universe is not stagnant. It is not, and neither are rituals, right? Um, so even though they may seem rigid, they really aren't, really, really aren't because 10 years from now that same ritual was going to be ever so slightly different because you're ten years older or you are now non-binary or you are now gender non-conforming, you are now trans, you are now gay. You are now, whatever it is that you are, you know, your rituals will evolve. So don't, don't, don't keep them stagnant. Because when you do that

in your rituals, all rituals grow like flowers to some extent. Um, just as I said, I went from Reiki to, you know, all kinds of different stuff, right? So all yours, all the other rituals that people had will change. Hey, you know your toothpaste ritual will change it. You go from one kind of toothpaste to another kind of toothpaste that has changed your ritual, you know, um, grow with it, allow it, allow it don't hold it back because that's holding yourself back, grow with it. If you need to some, drop them as, as, as Nathan said, but, but you replace it with something wonderful, as long as it's not harmful to you or others, but place it with something else. It might be something in the back of your head that you didn't even think of. Now that you've moved it out of the way. Now here it comes going forward. Oh, you know, why not light three candles at night? Why don't I just do that from now on? See what manifests itself. Because that's what either yourself or for yourself or for someone else. And God speaks through that. A lot of your understanding speaks to you that way.

Nite Hunt ([00:59:57](#)):

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Both for that. That was phenomenal. That was amazing. Like I I'm feeling it now. Like I like my heart is so warm and I just appreciate y'all sharing, like having this conversation, but you know, just sharing those last little tidbits of advice of just, you know, let you know, let it, let it come with you, let it change and change with it. But you know, whole, it's both like the hold steadfast, but don't hold so tight you're choking it to death. You know, it's like, sometimes you need to let it go. But sometimes it's good to identify being like, you know, this is what grounds me, so I need to do this to ground myself. But also there's something doesn't ground you, you know, like you said, get up and go let him go. And I just love that. Uh, I just, all the words, but in closing the biggest words, thank you. Thank you for being here. Thank you for sharing, you know, thank you all for being your whole self here and you know, sharing these vibrant stories and just bringing this energy and I love it and I loved y'all and thank you. It was great meeting you all. And I glad I got to, you know, put faces to the email chains all this time. Um, so yeah. Thank you.

Reverend Yunus Coleman ([01:01:10](#)):

It's been wholly wonderful.

Nathan Bakken ([01:01:12](#)):

This was truly a delight. I feel enriched and held and seen and heard and blessed by this conversation. So thank you.

Nite Hunt ([01:01:24](#)):

Yeah, I feel that's the word blessed. Yeah. I feel, it's funny. I'm getting into this internship and like meeting all these folks, like I hear that more and more often now and like, you know, beloved and blessed. And at first I was like, why, why does everybody keeps saying this? And you know, and now that I've gotten to talk to more people and getting to, you know, just these last couple months being with this internship, it's like, I feel that like, not like, you know, the ritual of it, of like, um, meeting with M and like, you know, the emails just, I feel, I feel blessed. And so I can't, I can't wait, you know, thank you. Thank you for this.