HOW TO CREATE A PRAYER AND MEDITATION SPACE IN YOUR UNIT

This document is intended to help units plan and create a prayer and meditation space in their local areas. This information is not a set of strict guidelines but offers flexible considerations for your unit. Use this document as a starting point for your efforts. For more information about supporting diverse faiths and spiritual practices locally, contact the Spiritual Life office at spirit@uchicago.edu.
1. GET SUPPORT
In order to successfully create a prayer and meditation space in your unit, it’s important to obtain formal support from local administrative leaders and relevant stakeholders. Identify whose support is crucial for the project and determine if there are other stakeholders to involve. Potential stakeholders include leaders who can approve the project, staff to provide ongoing resources and support, and intended users of the space (e.g., faculty, staff, and students). Schedule a meeting with Spiritual Life staff for additional support and resources. Share a formal proposal with your unit’s leadership and be sure to clarify any required approval process for creating the space.

2. PLAN AND CREATE THE SPACE
Because space at the University is limited, it is likely that you will repurpose an existing space for this project. Consider how repurposing an existing space will affect members of your unit and others in the building. Each unit and building is different, so take special considerations that may be unique to your own space/building/unit. Ideally, the space will be centrally located and close to a restroom.
CREATE A BUDGET
Develop a budget using the shopping list at the end of this document. Also, include upfront costs for preparing key card access, yearly key card access fees, and custodial maintenance costs. Although not required, adding key card access is recommended as it will connect your new space with the University’s network of spaces, and anyone with key card access will be able to access and use the space.

DECORATE THE SPACE
When planning the physical layout of the prayer and meditation space, opt for minimal and flexible characteristics. The space should feel welcoming, be comfortable, and not contain any religious or faith-based texts. A flexible space will ensure that people of different faiths and spiritual practices are comfortable using the space for their specific needs.

Neutral colors are recommended for decorating the space. Avoid colors and symbols that have religious or faith-based connotations. Also include a well-padded carpet. Additional items that should be placed in the space include a shoe rack and some small rugs for prayer. Consider other items that can facilitate prayer and meditation, such as floor cushions, mats, a small table, and storage space. Soft, warm lighting is preferred as it creates a peaceful and inviting atmosphere. Add signage to the outside of the room so that people know they can pray and meditate in this space.

DEVELOP USER GUIDELINES
Consider establishing user guidelines for the prayer and meditation space and sharing them with your unit and the Spiritual Life office. Guidelines can be useful for communicating use expectations of the space and outlining what activities the space is intended for (prayer and meditation and not yoga or napping, for example). The guidelines may also include information on access hours, whether the space is designated as a technology-free zone, and if maintaining silence is a user requirement. For a list of sample user guidelines, contact Spiritual Life at spirit@uchicago.edu.

SHARE THE SPACE
Communicate about the new prayer and meditation space with your unit. Use unit email lists, newsletters, social media, websites, and other communication channels to announce the creation of the space and encourage people to use it. Contact the Spiritual Life office to add your space to the list of existing prayer and meditation spaces on campus.
3. MAINTAIN THE SPACE
Once you’ve created and decorated the prayer and meditation space, make sure your unit can properly maintain it going forward. Consult with building custodians and clearly communicate the proper way to clean the space (for example, custodians should wear shoe-coverings when entering the space). In addition to connecting with custodians, consider including information about cleanliness and organizational expectations of users, which can easily be incorporated into the prayer space user guidelines. Display contact information inside the space so users can report any issues or concerns to the appropriate people.

SPACE EXAMPLES
Prayer and meditation spaces can look very different depending on location, budget, and size constraints. Consider setting up appointments to view different prayer and meditation spaces on campus, including those at Spiritual Life, Regenstein Library, and the Keller Center. Check out these examples of different types of prayer and meditation spaces on campus:
FAQs

1. Does my prayer and meditation space need to be close to a restroom?
   Yes, the space should be close to a restroom to facilitate the cleansing practices of certain faiths.

2. Do I need to consider gender separation?
   No, the space does not require any gender separation configuration.

3. Do I need to include religious iconography or religious texts?
   No, the space should be devoid of religious iconography or texts to keep it welcoming to all faiths and practices.

4. Who can I talk to if I have more questions or need more guidance?
   For information on programs and activities that occur in Rockefeller and Bond Chapels and in Spiritual Life, visit rockefeller.uchicago.edu and spirit.uchicago.edu. For guidance on prayer/meditation spaces, contact Jigna Shah, Assistant Dean and Director of Spiritual Life, at jigna@uchicago.edu. For spiritual care, please contact Maurice Charles, Dean of Rockefeller Chapel, at mcharles@uchicago.edu.

5. Where can I learn about meditation sessions on campus?
   A number of meditation options are offered regularly across campus, including sessions at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel and Bond Chapel. Learn more at bit.ly/UChicagoMeditation.

6. Are there other prayer and meditation spaces on campus?
   Visit spirit.uchicago.edu/spaces to view a list of on-campus spaces.

7. Where can I see examples of other campus prayer and meditation spaces?
   Get ideas and inspiration for creating a prayer and meditation space by doing an Internet search to see examples of similar spaces nationwide.

8. How do I set up key card access for the prayer and meditation space?
   Email the Department of Safety & Security at dss-support@uchicago.edu.
SHOPPING LIST GUIDE
Some suggestions for items to purchase for the prayer and meditation space include:
• Meditation cushions/floor pillows
• Lamps
• Shoe rack (preferably outside the space unless security is a concern)
• Storage container or cabinet
• Mats/prayer rugs
• Hooks/coat rack
• 1 – 2 moveable chairs
• Small table/shelf
• Plants
• Signage

LEARN MORE
For additional information, check out these resources:
• Rockefeller Memorial Chapel (rockefeller.uchicago.edu) and Spiritual Life (spirit.uchicago.edu) can help you learn more about religious and spiritual diversity.
• Interfaith Youth Core offers tips on how to create an interfaith room or space on campus: bit.ly/IFYCinterfaith
• Vercida suggests how to create a multi-faith room in the workplace: bit.ly/VercidaMultifaith
• View a list of current prayer and meditation spaces across campus at spirit.uchicago.edu/spaces.

ABOUT
This toolkit was developed in partnership by the University of Chicago’s D + I Studio, Spiritual Life, and input from faculty, students, and staff across the institution. To share your feedback, please email diversityinclusion@uchicago.edu.