Who among us, hasn’t wanted a second chance? Sometimes in little ways, to make amends for a poor choice of words, or a rush to judgment, or an unintended slight. Apologies, sincere and heartfelt, can go a long ways in these instances. And, if accepted, we come out the better for it, more empathetic and understanding on our end, and ideally heard, understood, and forgiven, on the other.

Occasionally the challenge is much bigger, and we need to reinvent ourselves, after spiraling down some deep hole that we can’t easily get out of. Perhaps we have fallen prey to mental illness, addictions of various kinds, bad habits, toxic behaviours, or debilitating pain and grief. These scenarios require us to rearchitect ourselves more profoundly, and redemption and forgiveness can be much harder to come by.

Still, we persist, because we want to heal, and we need others to see and recognize our new emergence. To tend to us with their open-hearted acceptance.

But what does it mean to get a second chance spiritually?

We may have spent a lifetime following a particular spiritual tradition or path, only to find that it no longer feeds our soul, or that we were following it for all of the wrong reasons, to please our families, perhaps, out of sense of obligation, or somewhat unthinking tribal allegiance. Or it simply no longer

continued on next page
addresses questions that we have come to be committed to in a way that is satisfactory.

Alternatively, we might realize, after some tremendous jolt to our system triggered by a significant loss, usually of someone or something we loved dearly, that we must now have deeper meaning to inform us.

An existential crisis can result, our own Dark Night of the Soul, filled with despair, heartbreak and longing, where despite our wanting to be lifted up, we are unable to rise to the occasion.

This is when we need to give ourselves a spiritual second chance.

And the first step before we embark on our demanding and uncertain journey is to ask for help. In this case from a spiritual companion, director, or guide. Someone trained to support and inspire us as we overcome our doubts and anxieties, and reach for the horizon, in spite of our fears.

As our companions listen us into action, they will allow us to release our traumas and shame, so that we may begin to inhabit our new spiritual form, and our exploration of unknown waters, with courage and steady determination.

In the process, our own insights into the Eternal will emerge, ripen and mature, so that our own spirituality will now become deeply embedded. And with that, our understanding of our journey will become infused with confidence, conviction, and deep insight into what the spiritual leaders of the ages were really telling us, which we hadn’t truly heard, or understood, before.

And then, and only then, will we be able to give others the second chance that they too so need and deserve.

Rev. Seifu Anil Singh-Molares
Executive Director, SDI
Though we may feel isolated or divided, love gives us the power to discover deeper ways of knowing, to explore our spiritual lives, and to transform communities and societies so all people can flourish.

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In the morning, when I talk to God, I say,
I would love to find a clean pair of boxers
waiting for me on the laundry rack,
but then don’t worry about me, God;
you must have much bigger matters to worry about – in fact,
tell you what,
why don’t you cure an African child of tuberculosis instead.

Prayer probably doesn’t work that way, number one,
and also, you’re not to play with God.
But I think She understands.
She’s known me longer than the Mississippi.

Every day I love God abundantly, and in return
she remunerates me in poetry. These days,
the poems flow easy, just
crazy easy.
Hey God, how about a poem, I say, and then they come –
these silly, worthless, light, fluffy, lovely poems.
If anyone were to ask where my inspiration comes from,
I’d probably have to laugh.
Where does your breath come from?

None of this chitter chatter amounts
to much. My life is birdsong
on someone else’s pleasant walk.
And happily so.
I will say this though:

If one day you meet me and I smell a bit pongy,
I hope that you might
join me in praise
for the uneven calculus of prayer.

And if on another day, I find those undies,
let’s curse the fresh air, and cry,
what gives, God, what gives?

Bob Janis-Dillon is a minister living in Merseyside, Northwest England and serving three Unitarian congregations in Wigan, Warrington, and Chester. His debut poetry collection, Not Due Out Anytime Soon, is not due out anytime soon. Bob is delighted to hear from you at bob.janis.dillon@gmail.com.
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then
all the world will be grief
and the air shrill with silence.
Wait in the emptiness
for every touch is absence.
Remember
it is Mystery that draws you
beyond the jaws
grinding you into the night.

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Listen

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