

**Covenant Group Session**  
**Finding Faith as a Unitarian Universalist**  
**By Jennifer Timpe;**  
**First Unitarian Church of Alton, Illinois**  
**September 2015**

**Opening Words & lighting of Chalice:**

“Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.”

— Maya Angelou, *Celebrations: Rituals of Peace and Prayer*

“Faith is taking the first step even when you can't see the whole staircase.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

**Check-in:**

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing. Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted for approximately \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.

**Focus/Topic:            Finding Faith as a Unitarian Universalist**

“Faith is not about belief. Faith in fact has very little to do with what beliefs you hold, other than that it allows you to hold them. Faith is a sacred, deep, emotionally involved kind of trust. Faith is the kind of trust that you enter into with your whole being. Faith is the kind of trust that, when it has been broken, it hurts deep inside... but faith is the kind of trust that finds a way to trust again despite the hurt.”

~Rev. David Pyle, *The Meaning of Faith*

“I sometimes think we Unitarian Universalists and others of Liberal Religion have a harder time coping with the word faith than we have with words like “God” or “Salvation” or the dreaded “E” word... Evangelism.

I’ve been thinking a lot recently about why those of liberal religion struggle to articulate and live a concept of faith, even though I believe our tradition is profoundly faith-filled. I know, that’s weird to hear... but the theology, philosophy, cosmology, values, and principles of Liberal Religion are just about the most faith-filled understanding of what is that I have ever encountered. Our stated values and beliefs are, in my opinion, one of the most faith-filled professions that anyone has ever made.

That all people have inherent worth and dignity is not just a principle... it is an article of **faith**.

That the arc of the universe bends towards justice is not just an assumption... it is an article of **faith**.

That human capacity can have a positive effect on the cultures, lives, and world we share is not a provable concept... it is an article of **faith**.

That Love, Compassion, and Generosity build a better human community more in tune with our spirits and souls is not something we can empirically show... it is an article of **faith**.

That all people have the capacity for good within them is an article of **faith**.

That revelation is continuous, and that we seek that revelation through meaning making in our lives in an article of **faith**.

That we can **disagree**, even on articles of faith, and still be in religious community with one another is an article of **faith**, and one our own communities of faith regularly fail to live up to.

...

I am a Unitarian Universalist because of that faith-filled hopefulness and sacred trust that shouts that our faith is a "Faith in People, a Hope for Tomorrow's Child, and a confidence in a continuity that spans all time". I went looking for the most faith-filled religion I could find, and I found Unitarian Universalism. We do not hold faith in a book, or a prophet, or even a single idea. Our faith is in the entirety of all things... including ourselves.

And yet, we rarely seem to own that our shared beliefs, values, and theology rests in such a profound faith. And because we rarely seem to internalize what a profound faith we hold, we sometimes, and quite often, act as if we have little to no faith at all.

~Rev. David Pyle, Faith is Hard... and Liberal Religion Needs Some <edited for length and content>

### **Questions to consider before sharing:**

What does Faith mean to you?

How have these readings made you re-consider what role Faith plays in your life? Does it play more of a role than you thought? How so?

Has Faith affected the way you live your life on a daily basis?

Could you *let* Faith change how you live your life on a daily basis?

Where do you perceive a lack of Faith in your life but would like to have more? How can you achieve this?

**Guidelines for Sharing** – (leader reads these guidelines, or has another person do it, then can repeat the questions again)

We'll each speak for roughly \_\_\_\_\_ minutes, with no cross talk or interruptions. Cross talk means advice giving, blaming or trying to fix another person. It is wise to speak in the first person, "I think, I feel..."

When we are listening: Try to listen to each other as if you were listening to, or watching, your own thoughts. Let others' words simply fall down into your heart. It is not necessary to give the person reassurances that they are being heard, such as nodding or eye contact. By simply listening together we create a holding space for each speaker. Comfort and care can be offered after the group session.

When it is your turn to speak it is not necessary to respond to the persons who have gone before you, though you may find yourself building on what has been shared already. Find out what your own inner wisdom wants to say. Together we create a quilt of wisdom, the design is a surprise.

(Leader can re-read the questions here)

### **Likes & Wishes**

What did you like about this session? What would you wish to be different if anything?

### **Closing Words:**

"I have come to accept the feeling of not knowing where I am going. And I have trained myself to love it. Because it is only when we are suspended in mid-air with no landing in sight, that we force our wings to unravel and alas begin our flight. And as we fly, we still may not know where we are going to. But the miracle is in the unfolding of the wings. You may not know where you're going, but you know that so long as you spread your wings, the winds will carry you."

— C. JoyBell C.