

OPENING WORDS

The living tradition we share draws from many sources. The third is: Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.

CHECK-IN

READINGS

(all quotations in these readings are from *A Chosen Faith*, by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church, Beacon Press, 1998)

I think that one of our most important tasks is to convince others that there's nothing to fear in difference; that difference, in fact, is one of the healthiest and most invigorating of human characteristics without which life would become meaningless. ~ Adlai Stevenson

None of us is fully able to perceive the truth that shines through another person's window, nor the falsehood that we may perceive as truth. Thus, we can easily mistake another's good for evil, and our own evil for good. A true, and therefore humble, universalist theology addresses this tendency, which we all share, while speaking eloquently to the overarching crisis of our times: dogmatic division in an ever more intimate, fractious, and yet interdependent world. ~ Forrest Church

Culture makes it possible for human relations to bridge the grave, for individuals who are so short of days to live with a wisdom derived from the dawn of time. Our job is not to worship history and culture like fetishes, but to feed them into our living, creative stream of personal life for spiritual and intellectual reprocessing. ~ Angus MacLean

It matters what we believe. Some beliefs are like walled gardens. They encourage exclusiveness and the feeling of being especially privileged. Other beliefs are expansive and lead the way into wider and deeper sympathies. ~ Sophia Lyon Fahs

... our growing awareness of the world as a global village requires that we seek to understand, and wherever possible, respect our neighbors' views. In each of the world's great faiths there is something authentic to appreciate and to hear. ~ John Buehrens

QUESTIONS Please respond to any of the questions you feel moved to answer or any of the readings that you find to be particularly meaningful.

Some of the questions are from session 4 of the study guide for the book *A Chosen Faith*, by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church, at <https://www.beacon.org/Assets/ClientPages/AChosenFaithdg.aspx>

1. Which religious traditions or other sources of wisdom particularly inspire you in your ethical and spiritual life?
2. As you think back along the path you have come in your religious growth, who are the people with whom you have engaged in dialogue regarding matters of faith, people with whom you spoke face to face – members of your family, schoolteachers, religious leaders, friends?
3. In what ways would you like to see our congregation become more inclusive of other traditions?
4. What do you think blocks Unitarian Universalists from really appreciating and learning from other traditions?
5. Do you recall an experience of mistaking another person's good for evil, or your own evil for good?
6. Do you recall in instance when you treated some aspect of culture or history like a fetish?
7. Describe a time when you held some of your beliefs like a walled garden.
8. Describe a time when you struggled to respect your neighbors' views.

CLOSING WORDS

Walk together, talk together, O ye peoples of the earth. Then and only then shall ye have peace. ~ a Hindu sage, from *A Chosen Faith*, Beacon Press, 1998

notes on people quoted

Adlai Stevenson (1900-1965), politician and diplomat, was twice the Democratic Party's candidate for President of the United States. His great grandfather was the principal founder of the Unitarian church in Bloomington, Illinois in 1859. Stevenson claimed that his "earliest recollections are uniformly Unitarian."

- <https://uudb.org/articles/adlaistevenson.html>
- <https://www.uua.org/midamerica/history/vignettes/history-vignette-16-adlai-stevenson>
- http://www.adlaitoday.org/ideas/adlai_life.html

Angus MacLean (1892-1969), Universalist minister, theological school professor and dean, played a major part in reshaping the philosophy and practice of religious education within the Universalist and Unitarian denominations during the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

- <https://uudb.org/articles/angusmaclean.html>

Sophia Lyon Fahs (1876-1978) was an editor, author, teacher, and religious activist who led a revolution in Unitarian religious education. Fahs' teaching and writing focused on a method of experiential learning that she hoped would enable children to develop their own ideas about religion and spirituality.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophia_Lyon_Fahs
- source of quote: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading-responsive-reading/it-matters-what-we-believe>

The Rev. Dr. F. Forrester Church (1948-2009) served the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City as senior minister since 1978 and as minister of public theology since 2007. He died September 24, 2009, of esophageal cancer. A frequent contributor to UU World, he is the author of many books.

- <https://www.uua.org/offices/people/forrest-church>
- <https://www.uua.org/pressroom/news/news/memorial-rev-dr-forrester-church-theologian-author>

The Rev. John Buehrens was president of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations from 1993 to 2001. He served congregations in Tennessee, Texas, New York, Massachusetts, and California before retiring in 2017. He is the co-author with Forrest Church of *A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism*, and author of many books.

- <https://www.uua.org/offices/people/john-buehrens>