

# ALL SOULS UNITARIAN CHURCH

## September Theme Faith

### **Opening Reading/ Chalice Lighting**

Faith has no other language than symbols... Faith is the courage to say yes to one's life. Paul Tillich

**Check-In** How goes thy spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? 2-3 sentences

### **Business**

**Leadership Retreat: August 23<sup>rd</sup> 9 am to 4 pm Please Register ASAP.**  
**Branches Extravaganza September 14<sup>th</sup>**

### **Revisit the Covenant**

**Claim time for Deeper Listening** Deeper listening is a time at the end of our meeting where you can be listened to uninterrupted for what is essentially an extended check in if you have more you need to say than the initial check in. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes.

**Centering** Take a moment to breathe, feel your feet on the floor and your body in the chair. After a few minutes of breathing, find your heartbeat (either by listening to your ear or placing your fingers on your pulse). See if you can hold the attention of your heartbeat and listen to the sounds in the room. (1-2 minutes) Our goal would be to bring this sense of calm and way of listening to the readings and to one another, keeping our attention toggling between self and what you are listening to.

**Readings** (Read through readings and questions twice, one time per facilitator, with reflection space in between followed by Quaker Style sharing. Try to stay in I statements and personal stories and not shift into third person and facts. Try to leave space between speakers.)

From Faith Works Jim Wallis

People often ask me, "Where have you found the strength to stay involved for so long?" or "How have you stuck with it and not burned out?" I've asked those questions of myself But more often I've asked myself how I can make the most difference in the world. For me, the answer to both questions is the difference that faith makes. What do I mean by faith? I like the definition used by the biblical writer of Hebrews: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Simply put, faith makes hope possible. And hope is the single most important ingredient for changing the world.

Many people today would like to find some way to practice their faith or spirituality, despite the excesses, corruption, or narrow regulations of religion that have turned them away. I believe the making of the modern Christian, Jew, or Muslim will be through action. When put into action, faith has the capacity to bring people together, to motivate, and to inspire, even across former dividing lines. We demonstrate our faith by putting it into practice and, conversely, if we don't keep the power of faith in the actions we undertake, our efforts can easily lead to burnout, bitterness, and despair. The call to action can preserve the authenticity of faith, while the power of faith can save the integrity of our actions. As the biblical apostle James put it many years ago, "Faith without works is dead." Indeed, faith shows itself in works-faith works.

Faith **author unknown**

You hunch in the crate  
with your nose sticking out  
awaiting the treat earned  
with your obedience, your blind  
faith in me. I can't stand it! A dear,

dear friend is sick tonight,  
but you don't know anything  
about that sort of thing,  
with life and death hanging  
in the balance:

you only know that after the last walk  
you climb into your crate,  
and when I lock it, you trust  
that I'll be there in the morning,  
like yesterday and today,  
to free you for the morning walk.

## Questions

1. **What does faith mean to you? How has the meaning changed for you over time?**
2. **How does your faith show up in your life? In your thoughts? In your actions?**
3. **Think of a time when you lost your faith? What did that look like? Share your story. If you regained your faith how?**
4. **What is the difference between faith and optimism? Faith and hope? Faith and belief? Faith and trust?**
5. **Why is faith blind? Can you have faith and reason? If so, how do you navigate their co-existence?**
6. **How do you know when someone has a strong faith? When they are faithful?**

**Deeper Listening** If time is claimed by an individual, group listens to speaker uninterrupted for that designated time. It is best to have a timer of sorts so that facilitator can listen fully as well.

## Check Out

One sentence about where you are now that we have been together for the past hour and a half. (How did you show up? Would you share more or less? Would you do anything differently? Focus your likes and dislikes on your own behavior)

## Closing reading/Chalice Extinguishing

Faith is not merely a way of knowing; it is a way of participating. Robert Ellwood