

# ALL SOULS UNITARIAN CHURCH

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## May Theme Truth

### Opening Reading/ Chalice Lighting

We know the truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart. [Blaise Pascal](#):

**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

**Branches extravaganza is May 16 @1:30**

**Summer Groups will meet on Thursdays**

### 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.)

## “Six Blind Men and An Elephant”: A Fable

A long time ago in the valley of the Brahmaputra River in India there lived six men who were much inclined to boast of their wit and lore. Though they were no longer young and had all been blind since birth, they would compete with each other to see who could tell the tallest story.

One day, however, they fell to arguing. The object of their dispute was the elephant. Now, since each was blind, none had ever seen that mighty beast of whom so many tales are told. So, to satisfy their minds and settle the dispute, they decided to go and seek out an elephant.

Having hired a young guide, Dookiram by name, they set out early one morning in single file along the forest track, each placing his hands on the back of the man in front. It was not long before they came to a forest clearing where a huge bull elephant, quite tame, was standing contemplating his menu for the day.

The six blind men became quite excited; at last they would satisfy their minds. Thus it was that the men took turns to investigate the elephant's shape and form.

As all six men were blind, neither of them could see the whole elephant and approached the elephant from different directions. After encountering the elephant, each man proclaimed in turn:

'O my brothers,' the first man at once cried out, 'it is as sure as I am wise that this elephant is like a great mud wall baked hard in the sun.'

'Now, my brothers,' the second man exclaimed with a cry of dawning recognition, 'I can tell you what shape this elephant is - he is exactly like a spear.'

The others smiled in disbelief.

'Why, dear brothers, do you not see,' said the third man -- 'this elephant is very much like a rope,' he shouted.

'Ha, I thought as much,' the fourth man declared excitedly, 'This elephant much resembles a serpent.'

The others snorted their contempt.

'Good gracious, brothers,' the fifth man called out, 'even a blind man can see what shape the elephant resembles most. Why he's mightily like a fan.'

At last, it was the turn of the sixth old fellow and he proclaimed,

'This sturdy pillar, brothers' mine, feels exactly like the trunk of a great areca palm tree.'

Of course, no one believed him.

Their curiosity satisfied, they all linked hands and followed the guide, Dookiram, back to the village. Once there, seated beneath a waving palm, the six blind men began disputing loud and long. Each now had his own opinion, firmly based on his own experience, of what an elephant is really like. For after all, each had felt the elephant for himself and knew that he was right!

And so indeed he was. For depending on how the elephant is seen, each blind man was partly right, though all were in the wrong.

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[Maybe] they know something you do not know.

People know that the Bible is not a self-help book full of easy answers, but a book of stories and wisdom that is meant to lead us into relationship and worship. There are hard and fast truths in it, yes, but they are surrounded by soft truths, and slippery truths, and sometimes truths, and truths that once were true but are no longer true, and truths that are only true if you are in the right state of mind, and truths that are only true if you are not hurting someone, and truths that are true in the moment but not if you are talking about the moment, and truths that can only be lived and should never be spoken, and truths that we cannot hear, and truths that are more than we can bear.

The truths of the Bible are utterly beyond anyone who seeks to own truth and who seeks truth above the spirit of God. ~Gordon Atkinson.

## **Questions**

How do you know/did you learn to tell when something is true?

Is there a difference between spiritual truth and other truths?

What truths have you gleaned from the Bible? From other spiritual texts or practices?

What is the relationship between truth and belief?

When experiences dictate that something is both true and not true how do you decide?

How do you make sense of the idea that: If everything is relative than nothing is true, if

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there is absolute truth then nothing is relative,

Try to stay in I statements and personal stories and not shift into third person and facts.

**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**

Chase after the truth like all hell and you'll free yourself, even though you never touch its coattails. [Clarence Darrow](#):