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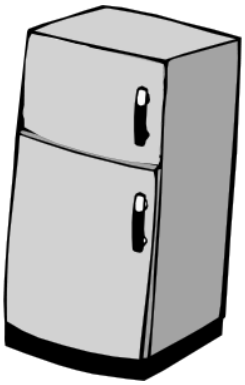

We Celebrate...

Our theme for February is Truth and Lies. Truth is kind of a different topic for Unitarian Universalists than for many other religions, because we accept that people could have very different ideas about religious questions like *What is God? What happens when you die? What is your purpose on this earth?*

People can, and do, have very different answers to those kinds of questions. And since there's no way to know which answer is "really

true," we figure that each person's answer is true for them.

Which is not the same thing as all answers being equally true. For one thing, there are lots of questions where you really can find out the right answer. And we respect that science is a very important process for helping us to find those right answers.

But even for those big religious questions that don't have a single right answer, it matters that we go looking for truth. We need answers that make sense, that are consistent with our values. Even in situations where there are many truths, there can also be lies, and it's our job to keep seeking truth.

We Honor...

There are a lot of ways to go searching for the truth. From boyhood Clyde Tombaugh loved to search the night skies with a telescope. And when the telescope he had wasn't powerful enough to do the kind of searching he imagined, he built a stronger one out of machine parts he found on the farm where he grew up, grinding mirrors himself to make lenses.

Clyde believed that there was another planet in the far reaches of the solar system in addition to the eight that people knew about. Another astronomer, Percival Lowell, thought the same thing, that there was a "Planet X" out beyond Neptune—but no one had ever found it.

Clyde went to New Mexico, and spent every night in an unheated observatory, searching the night skies. And one night, when he was 24, he managed to capture a picture of a strange shifting of light—the mysterious Planet X, which came to be known as Pluto.

Clyde became an astronomy teacher, and over the years he discovered more than one hundred asteroids, a comet, and a supercluster of galaxies, broadening our understanding of the truth about what is in the universe. He also founded a UU church in New Mexico.

Clyde died as a very old man in 1997. He was no longer around when scientists set rules for what defined a planet—rules that meant that Pluto wasn't a planet after all.

Clyde's wife, Patricia, said he would have been disappointed to lose Pluto as a planet, but as a scientist he would have understood that we have to keep searching for truth, and adjusting our understanding as truth is revealed.

Family Quest of the Church of the Larger Fellowship

Feb. 2019

Talk About It!

☺ In what situations is it hardest for you to know what is true?

☺ In what situations is it hardest for you to tell the truth?

☺ How do you feel if you find out someone has lied to you? What do you do?

☺ When have you knowingly lied? How did that make you feel?

☺ What is the biggest true thing that you know?

Act...

From social media to rumors that spread around schools, there are a lot of lies out there in the world pretending to be truth. Sometimes people really do want to trick us into believing outright lies. Sometimes people believe what they heard and pass on what they think is reliable information, that really isn't. And some lies, like those founded in racism and sexism, are such huge, society-wide lies, that most people don't recognize them as lies at all.

So one thing we can do to bring more truth into the world—in addition to committing to telling the truth ourselves—is to learn to recognize things that are false when we see or hear them.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself to test whether something is likely to be true:

Does this sound too good—or bad—to be true? (Then likely it isn't.)

Does this match with other things I know about the subject? (If not, it's a good bet you could use more info.)

Is the source reliable? (Not all sources of information are equal trustworthy. Sadly, not all people are either.)

Do different sources agree? (If something is important, it's a good bet you can find more than one source.)

Does the source I am learning this from have a particular agenda? (Check for bias.)

Be a truth-teller and a truth-checker!

Nurturing the Spirit

It turns out that intuition, our "gut sense" of what is true and false is very often wrong. Intuition, for instance, is a terrible way to do science. (OK, it really isn't science at all if you're relying on intuition instead of observing facts.)

However, there are plenty of situations in which it helps to slow down and check in with your intuition. When you don't know what to do, you can offer yourself some quiet space and a little time. You can ask yourself questions like "What do I want to have happen here?" "Who does this help? Who does this hurt?" "What's the best thing that can come from this choice? What's the worst?" "How will I know if I'd made the right choice?"

And you can listen to your body, to what makes you tense and what relaxes you, what makes you feel heavy and what makes you feel light.

We all have lots to learn, but we also already know quite a lot when we take the time to listen to what we have inside.

What truth do you want the world to know?

Practicing the Principles

Of course, our fourth UU Principle

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A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

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is at the heart of this month's exploration of Truth and Lies. There isn't ever a point where you have Truth figured out. Getting to the truth is an ongoing process, and one that is never done.

As Unitarian Universalists we commit ourselves to that process of searching for the truth. The search is free because we won't let anyone else be the ultimate authority for what we believe. And it is responsible because we understand that we ourselves don't have all the answers, so we need to listen and learn from those around us. We question our own assumptions as well as those of other people, testing ideas to see what is genuinely convincing.

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning isn't easy, but it is both exciting and important.

Learn more about Clyde Tombaugh: https://www.space.com/19824-clyde-tombaugh.html

Read the full story about Clyde that our piece was based on: https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/journeys/session9/132495.shtml

Test your ability to tell fake news from real: https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/07/03/533676536/test-your-fake-news-judgement-play-this-game