



A River or a Rock

BY TIM TEMERSON, MINISTER, UU CHURCH OF AKRON, OHIO

I am guessing that you have heard what seems to be one of the most frequently used statements about Unitarian Universalism. This declaration is offered by some as a reason to celebrate our faith, while others make the exact same statement to point out a very serious flaw: “In Unitarian Universalism you can believe whatever you want.”

For those who offer these words as a compliment, Unitarian Universalism is all about individual freedom—the freedom to seek, to explore, to question and to believe what your heart and mind tell you is true. And that freedom at the heart of our faith is best exemplified by Unitarian Universalism’s lack of a creed or single test of faith that one must accept in order to be a UU.

For those who offer this same statement as a criticism of Unitarian Universalism, I think it’s fair to say that they view religions like ours as being too individualistic and too subjective. The absence of a creed that some view as being a positive strength is, to others, a glaring weakness which offers little sustenance to those who need to anchor their lives in some kind of over-arching certainty and truth about the meaning and purpose of existence.

Now, at this point I could easily launch into one my favorite sermon topics, which can be boiled down to “freedom good, creeds bad.” I’ve preached that sermon many times before and will undoubtedly do so again.

But I want to do something a little different. Rather than simply celebrating our commitment to religious freedom and our rejection of creeds and doctrines, I want to take some time to explore the philosophical and theological roots of our approach to religion, and especially our understanding of religious truth. Too often in Unitarian Universalism we skip over this step, instead jumping right to “we don’t like creeds” or “we can believe whatever we want” without ever taking the time to understand why.

So let’s begin with this whole question of religious truth. What exactly is it and where does it come from? Is there one truth, many truths, or no truth at all? And why exactly do we Unitarian Universalists reject creeds? Is it because we simply don’t agree with the specific content of existing creeds or is it because there is something about creeds in general that doesn’t fit with our understanding of the nature and meaning of truth?

As we consider these questions, I want to begin with a story that I first encountered in a seminary class on the history and development of the Jewish tradition. In that class we learned about the Torah and the Talmud, about the vast body of Jewish law known as Halacha, and about mystical traditions like Kabbalah and Hasidism. But if there is one thing that really stood out for me about the class, and that enriched not simply my knowledge of Judaism but also my understanding of Unitarian Universalism, it is the way in which the Jewish tradition approaches the search for religious truth and meaning.

And that approach is beautifully captured by a story from the Talmud. In the story, a legal dispute between two schools of thought—the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai—has been going on for years. God eventually resolves the dispute by deciding that while both sides have made arguments that are true, one side prevails because it has made its arguments with humility and good will and has listened to and learned from the truths contained in the arguments made by the other side.

Think for a minute about what the story is telling us about truth. Truth is not found in just one argument, in just one belief, or on just one side. Rather, it emerges in

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In a time of deceit
telling the truth is a
revolutionary act.
—George Orwell

A monthly for religious liberals

THINKING ABOUT TRUTH AND LIES

- A RIVER OR A ROCK
Tim Temerson
- LISTENING TO POWERFUL TRUTH
Emrys Staton
- THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE
Justin
- A POINT OF VIEW
JASON
- FROM YOUR MINISTER
Meg Riley
- RESOURCES FOR LIVING
Lynn Ungar
- TRUTH AGAINST THE WORLD
George Orwell

the interaction of different ideas and diverse perspectives. God rules on behalf of the House of Hillel because while the other side only listened to themselves and to their own ideas, the House of Hillel listened to and learned from the wisdom of the other.

In Unitarian Universalism, truth lives in and is revealed in the whole of life.

And as I came to learn in that class, this spirit of ongoing and continuous argument, commentary, listening and conversation is at the heart of the Jewish understanding of religious truth. While Judaism recognizes and affirms the sacredness of the Torah, the truth in the text only emerges out of continuous exploration and interpretation of its meaning. That is why so much of the Jewish tradition is a voluminous dialogue among different voices and commentators—a dialogue that both reveals the truth as it is understood at a particular moment in time and that is always laying the groundwork for future generations to develop new truths and new ways of understanding God, the world, and ourselves. In Judaism, the search for the truth and the conversation out of which truth emerges never ends.

For those faith traditions rooted in a single creed, religious truth resembles a rock—solid, unmoving, and unchanging. Truth is like a piece of property that one faith can claim and own to the exclusion of others. But for traditions like Judaism and, as I will argue, Unitarian Universalism, religious truth resembles a river of continuous and ongoing revelation, interpretation, and conversation—a river that never stops moving and that is always creating



great and profound truths out of the interaction of countless ideas and voices. Religious truth, therefore, can never be fully or definitively found in just the words of one person, one sacred text, or even one religion, because truth is always emerging, always unfolding, always carrying us along a marvelous journey of discovery and exploration.

It is this understanding of religious truth that informs Unitarian Universalism. From our beginnings 450 years ago during the Protestant Reformation right up to the present day, Unitarian Universalism has been rooted in an understanding of truth that is open, pluralistic, and diverse. We see truth as living in and emerging out of all things and all people. Religious truth lives in sacred books like the Torah, the Koran, and the Bhagavad Gita. Religious truth lives in the rhythms, regularities, and processes of nature and the universe. Religious truth lives in the words and deeds of prophetic and spiritual leaders like Jesus, Gandhi, and the Buddha. Religious truth lives in the creative imagination—in music, in the visual arts, and in works of literature and poetry. And religious truth most certainly lives in you—in your experiences, your stories, your joys and your sorrows, your hopes and your dreams.

There is no limit, no end, no boundary or barrier privileging one source of truth over another. In Unitarian Universalism, truth lives in and is revealed in the whole of life.

And it is this reality of truth as evolving and emerging out of the diversity of life itself that explains why we Unitarian Universalists do not have a single creed or dogma. Reality is simply too diverse, too mysterious, too complex, and too dynamic to be captured by one statement, by one belief, by one text, or even by one religion. Our problem with creeds isn't that they are wrong; a creed, in fact, is one more source of spiritual truth and wisdom. Our problem with creeds is that they are absolute and not reflective of the dynamism and diversity of creation.

With a creed, truth is final and the conversation is closed. In Unitarian Universalism, truth is never final and the conversation never ends.

Which leads me back to that statement about Unitarian Universalism being a religion in which you can believe anything you want. I think our commitment to truth as an always unfolding and ever-flowing river, to truth as the living product of the interaction of an infinite number of sources and of an unending conversation, has led some, including many Unitarian Universalists, to conclude that when it comes right down to it, Unitarian Universalism is so wide open, so inclusive, and so free that we lack anything resembling shared truth. In Unitarian Universalism, when it comes to truth it is basically every person for themselves.

Well, I'm here to tell you that nothing could be further from, well, the truth. You see, in addition to our unending commitment to the search for truth, we also have a belief in the existence and authority of a particular kind of religious truth—truth that emerges not from a single creed but rather from the agreements we make with one another. For Unitarian Universalists, finding truth is covenantal rather than creedal.

When we say that Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal rather than a creedal faith, it simply means that we UUs journey together guided not by a single creed written in the distant past but instead by a set of promises and agreements that we make with each other about what we believe and how we will live. Of course, covenants, like all agreements, are subject to review and revision. Covenants change as new ideas, new needs, and new realities emerge. But even though they are subject to change, covenants, and especially religious covenants, are affirmations of deep and profound truths—truths that can be just as meaningful and just as important as any creed. Covenants change and grow, but they are not expressions of an ambiguous “believe whatever you want.”

The truth that lives in our covenants defines and shapes who we are and how we live as Unitarian Universalists. Our covenants lift up and affirm beliefs and values that guide us as people of faith. Think for a moment about the most important covenant in Unitarian Universalism—the covenant that affirms our seven Unitarian Universalist principles.

These seven principles are a reflection of who we are as people of faith. They emerged out of a long and inclusive dialogue among Unitarian Universalists about our most deeply held beliefs and convictions. The Seven Principles are reviewed from time to time and can be changed. But while the content of these principles has changed in the past and will undoubtedly change in the future, today they serve as an affirmation of our deepest truths and convictions and as a call to live our lives as a shared journey rooted in those things we believe and value most: love and freedom, compassion and justice for all people and for this planet.

Summing up Unitarian Universalism in a sentence or two (the so called “elevator speech”) is never easy because we don’t have a creed. But don’t mistake our lack of a creed for an absence of truth or conviction. We have beliefs, we have convictions—we have deep and lasting truths. Of course, the truths we affirm today may someday change and are never carved in stone. But as people of faith, we find meaning and inspiration in the journey those principles challenge and inspire us to make: a journey that calls us to listen, to learn, and to grow, and that challenges us to build a world that is free and fair and just—not only for ourselves but also for the whole human family. Those are our truths, our principles, our values. They are the river that carries us along our journey. ■



Listening to Powerful Truth

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Who in your life speaks truth to you?

In the sixth chapter of the Dhammapadam it says:

Regard the person who sees your faults as a revealer of treasures.

Associate with that skilled person as one who is wise, who speaks reprovingly.

Keeping company with such a person, things get better, not worse.

They should exhort, instruct, and restrain you from poor behavior.

To the good, they are endearing, To the bad they are unpleasant.

We need people in our lives who can speak truth to us—people who notice our faults. But more than that—and I love this twist—upon being revealed to us, our faults are transformed into treasures. Treasures, because if we are willing to accept honest and truthful feedback, we can become more aware of who we really are. We receive an opportunity to know ourselves better, and to change our ways. Or, as it says, to be restrained from poor behavior.

The teaching tells us, “Keeping company with such a person, things get better, not worse.” We all benefit from those friends and acquaintances who can be honest with us. The question for us today is.... can we hear it?

One of the bedrocks of Unitarian Universalism is the free and responsible search for truth. All kinds of truth. Scientific truths, political truths, historical truths, and more. We continually evolve as a faith community, discovering religious, moral, and philosophical truths. All of these truths matter, but I’m particularly interested in the kinds

of truth that come from social and political movements, from justice-oriented movements.

We’ve all heard, I imagine, of the concept of speaking truth to power. For me, that idea invokes a deep emotion, something that feels inspiring and invigorating and empowering. It is the way of the great prophets and leaders. I imagine some of us have experienced moments in our lives where we were able to speak truth in the presence of someone that needed to hear it. An employer, a politician or some person in a powerful position—someone has heard your words of truth, whether pre-planned or spontaneous.

Or perhaps you have witnessed this act taking place. When we see someone eloquently and boldly proclaiming the truth, standing up and holding a person or a system accountable, we cheer them on, right?

For example, I watched a video recording from a San Francisco city council meeting in which Cat Brooks, a co-founder of the Anti Police-Terror Project in the Bay Area, addressed the city council and police chief shortly after Mario Woods, a Black man, was killed. He was shot by San Francisco police officers something like 20 times on a sidewalk—an event documented by bystanders with cell phones. These are Ms. Brooks’s words to the city council and police chief:

We see what happens, and you trot yourself out and tell us that we are not intelligent enough to understand that we saw a Black man gunned down execution style in broad daylight in the streets of San Francisco... and somehow you think that talking to us like we are children, who have not been examining, studying, watching you and your system for hundreds of years as we figure out how to tear it down, push back, and eventually win. As you continually talk to us like children, you are inciting the rage of the people. I want to be clear with you that a new day has come...

To San Francisco, to Oakland, to Baltimore, to Ferguson, to Atlanta, there is a movement sweeping this country, and we are not going to stop until you stop killing us.

I got goose bumps listening to Ms. Brooks speak. And then I wondered, did those in power really hear her? Do they actually hear any of this?

It's not hard to look at the world today and see all kinds of truths being spoken to power. The big truths about climate change, about racism, truths about the real motivations for wars.

And within the broad truths are many more specific truths: That indigenous and poor communities are often the most severely impacted by climate change. That, when we look at police violence and prison abuse, it's our transgender friends and family and community members who are treated most brutally, especially trans folks of color. That women and families take the brunt of the violence from veterans exposed to the violence of war, or the violence of occupation, or the violence of colonization, the violence of migration and the violence of poverty.

All this truth is being spoken, along with reports, exposés, documentaries, self-published blogs and videos and books, whistleblowers and congressional hearings. We've got letter-writing campaigns and online petitions, independent news stations, university classes, endless hours of YouTube videos. Bold protesters interrupt politicians and block streets while speaking truth through megaphones. Dashboard cameras and bystander cell phone footage capture police violence. There are Department of Justice investigations, Government Accountability Office investigations, outside investigations, inside investigations, independent investigations. Investigations of investigations. Pages of discovery and evidence and findings and de-classified documents....

Our world today is saturated in truths. There is no lack of clear, distilled, well-researched truth.

So again I ask, is "power" listening to all that? Communicating truth is effective only when it is heard and understood and believed. It seems to me that with all this truth being spoken, if power were actually listening, things would be changing a whole lot faster.

"Learn to listen."

While I was in seminary, the concept of prophetic speech was constantly ringing in our minds. Most of us took it as a given—speaking truth to power was an expectation of our upcoming careers.

In the final year of my program, when we were searching for a new president for the school, the candidates each gave a lecture so we could hear them and get a sense of who they were. One of these candidates, Rev. Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock, was the one I remember. She is known for some powerful research into the concept of moral injury—the idea that soldiers' souls can be deeply wounded or damaged in the course of war. Here I am nearing the end of seminary, and Dr. Nakashima Brock gives her talk about speaking truth to power, and she says... it's ineffective.

It's no use to speak truth to power, power doesn't care about truth, it doesn't listen to truth, it's not threatened by truth. You're wasting your breath. Hearing that was like being up in a hot air balloon, and having someone shoot a hole in it. I thought about that statement, my lofty, prophetic ideals careening back towards the ground. What did she mean? Was she right? Was it true?

Well, if I imagine myself sitting on that San Francisco city council, and hearing someone speaking truth that I might not want to hear, then yes, what Dr. Nakashima Brock said makes sense.

Because, if I'm honest about this, I need to recognize that quite often, I am "power" or a representative of power. When I acknowledge and identify as being on the side of power, I can easily see the times where someone was speaking truth to me, and I didn't want to hear it or believe it. How do I hear that person who is pointing out my faults, or pointing out how I'm complicit in oppressive systems?

For instance, I can certainly acknowledge the big truth of patriarchy. It exists, and it takes the basic form of men being more entitled to power and privilege in society. One of the ways patriarchy manifests itself is through sexism. By sexism, I mean both big picture systemic discrimination, like how men still receive higher wages than women for similar work, and also the sexism that plays out in day to day life, such as women being catcalled, whistled at, and stared at on the streets by men. And I'm still OK with hearing these truths—and the many others that go along with it.

But when it comes to me, personally, that's when my reaction starts changing. I am sexist, and I have done and said sexist things. Hearing that truth is much harder.

And what if it's really specific? What if someone calls me out on particular behaviors that are sexist—that I interrupted and spoke over a woman at a meeting, and I dismissed her ideas. When it gets personal, I know that I start to find ways to deflect and avoid the truth. A strong desire to defend myself wells up in me.

That's the moment, the point to focus on—the moment when I shut down and become defensive. Maybe that's what Dr. Nakashima Brock is getting at in her assessment that speaking truth to power is ineffective. If power is unwilling or unable to hear it, you're wasting your breath.

Perhaps some of you have heard of the book called *The Four Agreements*, by

don Miguel Ruiz, published in 1997. The agreements are to be impeccable with your word, to not make assumptions, to not take things personally, and to do your best.

The son of the original author released a new version a few years ago called *The Fifth Agreement*. What is this new amendment to the first four? “Learn to listen.” As much as listening is an intellectual endeavor, it is also profound spiritual work.

What is just as impressive as the moments when people are speaking truth to power are the times when power is able to listen to that truth. When those in power don’t flinch, don’t deflect, don’t defend, but rather listen, and ask questions. How do we train ourselves to listen more, to listen better, to listen more deeply?

This is our challenge, our calling...to act like the “Skilled Person” of the reading from the Dhammapada—the one who welcomes honest, critical feedback, who even seeks it out. And who treats the feedback as treasure, who is grateful for hard and powerful truth.

First, we need to acknowledge the places where we hold positions of power— then the listening follows.

With brilliant truth being spoken to the powerful in social movements such as those addressing racism and poverty and gender and climate and all these issues that we and our planet are currently facing, I constantly need to remind myself: *Hey, I’m being asked to listen and understand this—to really hear and respond to what these prophetic folks are saying.*

Even the simple statement Black Lives Matter is a truth being spoken to power, to me, to all of us. As such, it is a treasure.

May we hear the truth around us, and respond with gratitude for the treasures we are given, striving to become skilled people who are ever in pursuit of truth. ■

The Truth Shall Set You Free

BY JUSTIN, CLF MEMBER INCARCERATED IN CALIFORNIA

From Untruth lead me to Truth. From Darkness lead me to Light. From Death to Immortality. — The Upanishads

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set ye free...” yet here I sit with a life sentence for just that—telling the truth. Now, don’t mistake this for a “woe is me” moment! I have been incarcerated for 15 years. When I harmed my victims, I thought I knew a truth. But it wasn’t the Truth.

I became a Druid in 2006 (still UU, but a new path too!). A motto of revival Druidry is *Y Gwir Yn Erbyn Y Byd*—The Truth Against the World. I knew that as a Druid I would be expected to speak Truth. But first, I had to discover it!

As I studied Paganism, Buddhism, Northern Tradition Druidry and some Judaism, I saw many truths. And a Truth started forming. As I grew and began to “know myself,” my Truth began to solidify. And with the realization of the Truth came the shame and guilt of the pain I inflicted on innocents.

Now, knowing the depth of lies I’d entertained, I cleaned house, questioning every assumption and rebuilding the vessel I was, to be worthy of carrying Truth. I’d lied and lied for *so* long that the only antidote was radical honesty. Not easy when disclosing my crime could hold a death sentence rather than life.

But where the Light of Truth shines, darkness and lies cannot abide. I’m okay, but within, well, I’m great! I can see the potential I didn’t as a child and teen. I share freely the revelations, changing the world one Truth at a time. ■

A Point of View

BY JASON, CLF MEMBER INCARCERATED IN FLORIDA



Have you ever seen the movie *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*? There was a scene between Obi Wan Kenobi and Luke Skywalker in which Luke said Obi Wan lied about his father being dead. And Obi Wan replied that he’d told the truth “from a certain point of view.”

How many things in our lives do we view as true... from a certain point of view? Religion? Sure, I guess you could argue that all faiths are true from the point of view of their followers. Politics? Okay, no argument there. What about love and betrayal? Friendship? Wars? Or “the good of the many”?

It seems too easy for all of us to justify what could arguably be a warped “point of view” as the reason or cause for so much that is wrong in the world. And you can’t even call it “evil,” since that is also interpreted from “a certain point of view.”

I wish I knew of a solution to the problem that didn’t involve forcing one “truth” on everyone. I could say that you’d know the truth when you hear it. But even then, you’d be acting from a point of view.

Maybe the answer is to accept your truth, but also try to see things from another person’s perspective. And then, maybe you can decide which one is the truth... from a certain point of view. ■



From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY
SENIOR MINISTER,
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My roommate in college was a chronic liar. Though in ways we were close to one another, her constant lies ensured that we could never be too close. To this day, I don't know if her father really died during our sophomore year or if that was another lie. Actually, I don't even know if the living father she talked about was a real person at all or a fantasy person she wished to know. In retrospect, her lying says to me that she wanted big parts of herself to remain safe and out of reach.

“Post-truth” is yet another lie.

Because of her lies, I could never relax. I was on edge and uncomfortable. I hesitated to assert anything she had said before, because her lies were not even consistent from day to day, and I didn't want to hear new lies that would pour out if I seemed to challenge her about that inconsistency—though sometimes I fantasized about pinning her to the wall and demanding “The Truth” about various things.

Lately, a similar discomfort and edginess has been constant as I've negotiated the U.S. political landscape. Oxford Dictionaries named “post-truth” the word of the year in late November, 2016. They describe “post-truth” as:

“relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” In this case, the “post-” prefix doesn't mean “after” so much as it implies an atmosphere in which a notion is irrelevant.

The folks at Oxford go on to analyze the indifference with which voters treated actual, measurable, facts in several elections, including the vote in Britain to leave the European Union, and the Presidential election in the U.S. in 2016. In the U.S., since the election many of us have been dumbfounded by the constancy and ridiculousness of some of our President's lies. Why say things that are so easily disproven? I was helped in my understanding by Masha Gessen, a Russian journalist who documented Putin's rise to power and now writes about the similarities between Putin and Trump. She writes:

Lying is the message. It's not just that both Putin and Trump lie, it is that they lie in the same way and for the same purpose: blatantly, to assert power over truth itself.... They communicate a single message: power lies in being able to say what they want, when they want, regardless of the facts. [Putin] is president of his country and king of reality.

Assertion of falsehoods is a demonstration of power, pronouncing oneself king of reality. For those of us who are committed to some shared understanding of reality that is born out in evidence, it is sheer assertion of raw power over us to declare that we are now “post-truth.” There is nowhere to go in a conversation with someone who insists, despite all evidence, that 2 plus 2 is 7 or the War of 1812 took place in 2014. We are left stranded on an island, alone, wondering if there is a bridge that can reconnect us to the person we are trying to communicate with.

I've read studies that say confronting people with inconsistencies in their beliefs causes them to double down on them. I'm sure I'm included in “people” here, but I will say that being confronted with facts that contradict my opinions has actually changed my mind from time to time, if the facts come from reliable sources. The term “liberal” in “liberal religion” means that we are open to new ideas, new

learning, new ways of thinking. That doesn't, however, mean all ideas are equal, or worthy of respect.

Back in the 1990s, when I was obsessed with the so-called “religious right” and read a great deal of their literature, I was stunned to learn that they traced the beginning of the fall of America to the Unitarian's takeover of Harvard in 1805. They remember with longing that, prior to the Unitarians, students memorized the Bible and did not challenge its authority. Unitarians were committed to critical thinking (which has been explicitly denounced in recent Texas Republican Party platforms, but has long been suspect.) This conflict between those who want to keep learning and evolving, developing a multidimensional and complex view of truth, and those who want Biblical authority to be the ultimate King of Reality, has been around for a long, long time, and it's not going anywhere. The permutations are new each day, as the same fundamentalist Christians who claimed to care about Biblical authority now seem to want only raw political power, waving aside wildly unethical behavior on the part of their leaders.

I comfort myself by knowing that truth has a power of its own. Over and over, I have heard the stories of people who kept insisting things that they knew were not true, to protect themselves from truths that eventually won out and broke them down. I comfort myself that, at some fundamental human level, “Post-truth” is yet another lie. ■

In a world full of half-truths, evasions and outright lies, the CLF works to share spiritual truths that speak to the heart. Please help us to continue to support the “free and responsible search for truth and meaning” by giving generously, either by mailing a check in the enclosed envelope or online at clfuu.org/give. ■

REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP



My friend Thomas Anastasi, now retired from the ministry, had a simple solution to the ongoing ministerial problem of what to put in the newsletter about upcoming sermons. Declaring what it is that you're going to say six weeks or so before you say it is always a tricky proposition, but Thomas had the answer, albeit one he had never tried. The solution, he said, is easy. Every newsletter cover would read something like this: Sunday, March 7—We will be talking about the truth. Sunday, March 14th—The truth will be told. Sunday, March 21—The truth, yours, mine and ours....and so on. The point, he said, is that the business of church is telling the truth. That's what we do at church, and so long as you know that, then the particular focus or area in which you plan to tell the truth is not terribly important.

I have to say that I am inclined to agree with him. In a world where, as often as not, lying, deliberately or unconsciously, is the assumed behavior, the fact that a group of people are trying to tell the truth is so remarkable that everything else pales by comparison. We live in a wash of lies, some of them so pervasive that we cease to think about them beyond acquiring a layer of cynicism in all that we do. We assume that political leaders, no matter what the country, lie as a matter of course, and the only time we assume that something the American president talks about is true is if he declares it to be "Fake News!" When I watch television I assume that all the commercials are based on lies, if only the implicit underlying lie that happiness can and should be purchased. I assume that the news which reaches me is edited for the comfort of media and politicians, and whatever comes to me through

social media is frequently a complete fabrication. And this web of lies doesn't even touch all the "white lies," stereotypes, and lies of omission; our delusions, dismissals of unpleasant truths, and deflections of uncomfortable questions that run through almost everyone's private and social lives. Nor does the daily round of semi-truths and falsehood even glance upon the very large-scale cultural lies that we live with, such as the idea that Columbus discovered America, or even the notion that more is always better.

We live in such a complex web of lies that the very notion of telling the truth, or even knowing the truth, becomes suspect. Indeed, differences in perspective being what they are, if you take four people embroiled in a controversy, or even in a perfectly ordinary event, and gather the story from each of them separately, what you will find is not one seamless narrative—the truth—but rather a related complex of related half-truths, wishes, fears and perceptions, all of which may be mutually exclusive, but equally "true."

In her essay "Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying," Adrienne Rich writes:

There is no "the truth," "a truth"—truth is not one thing, or even a system. It is an increasing complexity. The pattern of the carpet is a surface. When we look closely, or when we become weavers, we learn of the tiny multiple threads unseen in the overall pattern, the knots on the underside of the carpet. This is why the effort to speak honestly is so important. Lies are usually attempts to make everything simpler—for the liar—than it really is, or ought to be.... An honorable human relationship—that is, one in which two people have the right to use the word "love"—is a process, delicate, violent, often terrifying to both persons involved, a process of refining the truths they can tell each other.

I think that's what Thomas meant when he talked about church being about telling the truth. It doesn't mean that any one of us has come up with the final and absolute truth about any issue large enough to be called religious. But it also doesn't mean that church is a place for the casual dismissals of the truth that confront us moment by moment in our daily lives. Nor is church a place for the jargon-y pseudo-truths of the mind divorced from heart and soul, or for the sentimental outpourings of the heart that fails to acknowledge a place in the world and a responsibility to that place. Church is for something more even than tossing notions back and forth, priding ourselves on our openness as we let the world run through and past us.

To delve deeper into the truth demands a rigorous attention, both to yourself and to all the others with whom you have committed to speak the truth. It requires the ongoing courage to ask the questions that will lead down the treacherous, useful paths, the tenderness to listen with an open heart for truths that ring clear even in places that we are terrified to have struck. It means that our words have to stand up in the world, that we have to put the weight of our convictions into action in order for our words to have enough meaning to qualify as *truth*.

Rich concludes her essay:

It isn't that to have an honorable relationship with you, I have to understand everything, or tell you everything at once, or that I can know, beforehand, everything I need to tell you. It means that most of the time I am eager, longing for the possibility of telling you. That these possibilities may seem frightening, but not destructive to me. That I feel strong enough to hear your tentative and groping words. That we both know we are trying, all the time, to extend the possibilities of truth between us. The possibility of life between us.





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Being in a minority, even in a minority of one, did not make you mad. There was truth and there was untruth, and if you clung to the truth even against the whole world, you were not mad.

by **George Orwell**, from his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, published in 1949

The CLF Invites GA Delegates

Would you like to represent the Church of the Larger Fellowship at General Assembly (GA) this summer? The CLF is entitled to 22 delegates at the UUA's General Assembly in Spokane, Washington, on June 19-23, 2019. You will also be able to attend workshops, concerts, programs, and worship services galore, while meeting Unitarian Universalists from near and far. And as a delegate you will be able to vote during general sessions. You can also meet our minister, Rev. Meg Riley, and members of the CLF Board and staff.

Our delegates are asked to attend and usher at the CLF Worship Service and to volunteer an additional two hours for CLF. CLF delegates vote their conscience in general sessions and are responsible for their own expenses. If you'd like to participate in GA 2019 in this role, please fill out the online application at clfuu.org/delegate-application. Visit the UUA's General Assembly website at www.uua.org/ga for details. ■