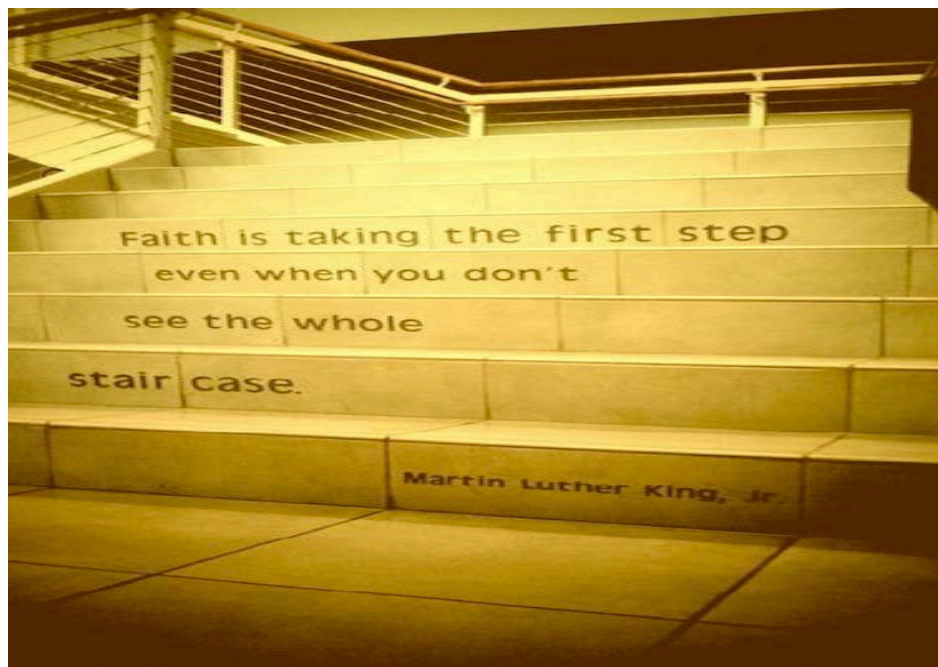


## *What Does It Mean To Be a People of Faith?*



*September 2018*

## *What Does It Mean To Be a People of Faith?*

*"I love the recklessness of faith. First you leap, then you grow wings."  
-William Sloane Coffin*

This we know: Unitarian Universalism calls us to be faithful doubters. Be cautious, says our tradition. Do not automatically believe what you've been told, especially when someone asks you to believe it based on their authority. Test it. Put it through the fire of your own experience, your precious power to reason and the gift of the scientific method. Yes, be cautious, bravely so.

But be reckless as well. This too is what our tradition equally lifts up when it comes to faith. Faithfully doubt, but right alongside that push yourself to faithfully leap. And again, bravely so. This second meaning of being a people of faith is what we lean into this month.

Simply put, UU faithfulness is not just about doubting what we've been told, but trusting what can be. The arc of the universe bends towards justice. The societal problems we face are not greater than our collective power to solve them. The personal burdens we carry are not greater than our capacity to overcome and grow from them. Life can be better. We can be more. These are all statements of faith that can't always easily be backed up by objective proof, air-tight logic or personal experience. And yet we lean into them anyway. We risk living as though they were true.

And we do so because something inside us or around us whispers, "There is more." Not necessarily more in the sense of an invisible world or reality beyond this one, but more in the sense of what's possible. As William Sloane Coffin captures so well, new and greater realities are not something one believes in as much as something that one creates by taking a leap. We convince ourselves that life can't be trusted, that people will let us down, that this is as good as it gets. And then a hunger rises up in us that says "act anyway," "trust anyway," "fear not," "try again." In this sense, our tradition challenges doubt. Some doubts are healthy; other doubts keep us small. Don't trust the impulse to stay small, says our tradition. Listen deeply to life's mystical whispers about there being more.

In other words, faith is an invitation, more so than a statement of belief. It's not so much something we have or think, as something that happens to us. So this month, friends, let faith lure you into new life. Doubt the voices trying to convince us of the logic of staying small. Know that life wants more from us and for us. Know that there is a mystical urge in us and around us that does not want us to be satisfied with the way things are or remain shriveled in the safety of small living. Listen for the faith-full whispers. Take a leap! Grow wings!

# Spiritual Exercises

## Option A: **Six Word Faith**

Sometimes talking about faith can wind us in circles. Ultimately, our faith is too complex, visceral and personal to be easily shared. But some have tried to sum up their faith in six words alone. It's a practice that clarifies and amplifies what matters most to us. It helps remind us of and hold on to our deepest commitments. This month, try it for yourself. Come to your group with your own six words that describe your UU faith and share what this process was like for you. Here are some inspiring examples:

<http://blog.chron.com/believeitornot/2010/01/six-word-stories-of-faith/>

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/mysixwordstoryoffaith>

## Option B: **Ignore Your Doubts**

All of us know what it's like to lose our faith. We've been betrayed by a relationship, let down by our church community, or convinced that life just won't get better. Our greatest faith often involves the belief that life and others don't deserve our faith in them. But sometimes our doubts need to be doubted. Sometimes life and the people around us need to be given a second chance. This month pick an experience, person or group that you've lost faith in and risk giving it/them another try. Come to group ready to share whether or not the risk paid off, and more importantly, what it taught you about yourself.

## Option C: **Picture Your Faith**

Forget trying to explain it. Sometimes faith is best expressed through images. This month think about what faith *looks like* for you. Find or take a picture of yourself or others "living faithfully." Will it be an image of a singular person lost in prayer, a walk in the woods, two people holding hands, or two enemies putting down their guns? Whatever it is, come to your group with a photo and let it do the explaining for you. Here's some inspiration:

<http://www.purpleclover.com/life-reimagined/2684-30-photos-will-make-you-believe-humanity-again/>

<http://www.godvine.com/read/faith-in-humanity-114.html>

<https://www.slice.ca/breaktime/photos/35-heartwarming-photos-that-will-restore-your-faith-in-humanity/#!a9a7889997cb0dfe74fb2c0d635af38e>

# Your Question

*As always, don't treat these questions like "homework." You do not need to engage every single one. Instead, simply or take a picture the one that "hooks" you most and let it lead you where you need to go. And then come to your Soul Matters meeting prepared to share that journey with your group.*

1. **How is life calling you to leap?** Whether it is a big or little leap, life continually invites us to make a choice, invest in relationship or alter our path before we know all the facts or are giving guarantees. **What edge are you standing on right now?** And how is life calling you to jump? Or in the words of William Sloane Coffin, how is life calling you to be a bit reckless? ("I love the recklessness of faith. First you leap, then you grow wings.")
2. **Do you still believe faith is a dirty word?** For many UUs, the idea of "taking it on faith" is naive at best and dangerous at worst. But experience often teaches us that it's not that simple. How has the idea of "an act of faith" evolved in your life?
3. **Are you trying to grab hold of water? Are you so sure you need to be in control?** Alan Watts compares having faith to trusting yourself to water: "You don't grab hold of the water when you swim, because if you do you will become stiff and tight in the water, and sink." Where is there unnoticed water in your life? Why are you so unwilling to trust and let go?
4. **How radical is your faith?** UU minister, Rev. A. Powell Davies, wrote, "There are no problems greater than our power to solve them. There are no burdens greater than our strength to overcome them." Do you share this faith? If not, how would your life change if you did?
5. UU's often talk about putting their faith in action, what does this mean to you? How do you live your faith in your everyday life? More importantly, **could someone recognize your faith by watching your daily living?**
6. **Why don't you share your faith?** Sometimes we are reluctant to share our faith with others. Have you held yourself back from proclaiming and sharing the good news of Unitarian Universalism? Are you sure evangelism isn't just another word for "sharing the gift you have been given"?
7. **Are you embarrassed by your faith?** Unitarian Universalism can sometimes be uninviting, even hostile, to those of us who believe in "things unseen" or have faith in things that science can't prove. Are you keeping pieces of your faith secret out of fear of your UU family seeing or treating you differently? **Is it time to share your entire faith with your spiritual community?**
8. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

## Recommended Resources:

*As always, this is not required reading. We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our group. They are simply meant to get your thinking started, and maybe to open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be “a people of faith.”*

### faith

noun

1. confidence or trust in a person or thing.
  2. belief that is not based on proof.
- Synonyms: acceptance, belief, conviction, loyalty, hope, doctrine

## Wise Words:

I want to write about faith,  
about the way the moon rises  
over cold snow, night after night,  
faithful even as it fades from fullness,  
slowly becoming that last curving and  
impossible  
sliver of light before the final darkness.  
But I have no faith myself  
I refuse it even the smallest entry.  
Let this then, my small poem,  
like a new moon, slender and barely open,  
be the first prayer that opens me to faith.  
- *David Whyte*

“Faith is not something to grasp, it is a state to grow into.”  
-*Mahatma Gandhi*

“We all have [the] absolute right to reach out, without holding back, toward what we care about more than anything. Whether we describe the recipient as God, or a profound sense of indestructible love, or the dream of a kinder world, it is in the act of offering our hearts in faith that something in us transforms.... We [don’t]...stand on the sidelines but [leap] directly into the center of our lives, our truth, our full potential. No one can take

that leap of faith for us; and no one has to. This is our journey of faith.”  
-*Sharon Salzberg, Faith*

“Faith is a state of openness or trust. To have faith is like when you trust yourself to the water. You don’t grab hold of the water when you swim, because if you do you will become stiff and tight in the water, and sink. You have to relax, and the attitude of faith is the very opposite of clinging and holding on. In other words, a person who is fanatic in matters of religion and clings to certain ideas about the nature of God and the universe becomes a person who has no faith at all. Instead they are holding tight. But the attitude of faith is to let go and become open to truth, whatever it might turn out to be.”  
-*Allan Watts*

“To have faith requires courage, the ability to take a risk, the readiness even to accept pain and disappointment. Whoever insists on safety and security as primary conditions of life cannot have faith.”  
-*Eric Fromm*

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of beauty is not ugliness, it’s indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, but indifference between life and death.”  
-*Elie Wiesel*

“So far as I can see, all the great leaders—and the great exemplars of religion—possessed...faith in life’s essence, in its hidden meaning, in its moral claim, and in the rightness of its inner spiritual

guidance. And by this the great ones lived their lives. So must we. There are no problems greater than our power to solve them. There are no burdens greater than our strength. We shape—by every moment of our lives—the great decisions. Then let us venture still!—with reason as a lamp to guide us—but lighted with the light of faith.”

- *Rev. A. Powell Davies*

“I love the recklessness of faith. First you leap, then you grow wings.”

- *William Sloane Coffin*

“Doubting is not a sin. Doubting is an invitation to enter into the mystery more deeply, to go beyond the superficial.”

— *John Aurelio in Returnings*

“True faith can only grow and mature if it includes the elements of paradox and creative doubt. Such doubt is not the enemy of faith but an essential element in it. [True and life-giving] faith does not bring the false peace of answered questions and resolved paradoxes.”

- *Kenneth Leech*

“Faith cannot save you from the claims of reason, except insofar as it preserves and protects that wonderful, terrible time when reason, if only for a moment, lost its claim on you.”

- *Christian Wiman*

“Faith – one’s sense of the ultimate character of existence – not only centers the mind and provides a resting place for the heart. It is also the orienting guide of the hand. Faith determines action. Faith is manifest in act. Faith is intimately related to doing.... Our faith is revealed in our behavior.”

- *Sharon Daloz Parks*

## Poetry

### What We Need Is Here

*Wendell Berry*

<http://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=2144>

Horseback on Sunday morning,  
harvest over, we taste persimmon  
and wild grape, sharp sweet  
of summer's end. In time's maze  
over fall fields, we name names  
that rest on graves. We open  
a persimmon seed to find the tree  
that stands in promise,  
pale, in the seed's marrow.  
Geese appear high over us,  
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,  
as in love or sleep, holds  
them to their way, clear  
in the ancient faith: what we need  
is here. And we pray, not  
for new earth or heaven, but to be  
quiet in heart, and in eye,  
clear. What we need is here.

### The Virgin Monologue

*Jim Burklo*

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/virgin-monologue>

“‘God did it’ isn’t an explanation,” said Joseph.

He got no account for the baby’s chromosomes,

No description of the mechanism that Transmuted the divine shadow into royal blood.

“‘The devil made me do it’ would have sounded better to me,” said Joseph, Though it never did him any good when he said it to his old girlfriends.

It was a mystery to him,

What moved him to listen for the rhyme  
And puzzle for the reason

That Mary gave him the news in the  
manner that she did:

A mystery that put him at peace.  
There was something in the way she  
held his hand  
That no medical journal article could  
correlate;  
Something in the way she gazed into his  
eyes  
That eluded the grasp of genomic  
research.  
“I don’t ask you to believe what I am  
saying,” she said,  
“I don’t ask you to take my word for it.  
I just ask you to love, as if.  
Love me as if I were yours,  
Love this baby as if he were yours,  
As I love you as if you were mine.”  
Love "as if" makes every child divine  
Love "as if" fits all in David’s line  
Love "as if" this love was meant for you  
Love "as if" the Christmas tale is true.

## Articles, Podcasts and Videos

### Podcast: Practicing Doubt, Redrawing Faith

<https://onbeing.org/programs/adam-gopnik-practicing-doubt-redrawing-faith-dec2017/>

The wise and lyrical writer Adam Gopnik muses on the ironies of spiritual life in a secular age through the lens of his many fascinations — from parenting, to the arts, to Darwin. He touches on all these things in a conversation inspired by his foreword to *The Good Book*, in which novelists, essayists, and activists who are not known as religious thinkers write about their favorite biblical passages. Our ancestors acknowledged doubt while practicing faith, he says; we moderns are drawn to faith while practicing doubt.

### The Doubt Essential to Faith

[http://www.ted.com/talks/lesley\\_hazleton\\_the\\_doubt\\_essential\\_to\\_faith](http://www.ted.com/talks/lesley_hazleton_the_doubt_essential_to_faith)

In writing a biography of the Prophet Muhammed, Lesley Hazelton discovers a side of doubt that she believes could end religious fundamentalism.

### A Faith That Is Anchored and Sustained

<https://onbeing.org/blog/omid-safi-a-faith-that-is-anchored-and-sustained/>

It’s not enough to know about the root of our faith. Or even the root of the root of the faith. We need the root of the root of the root of the faith. But what does it mean to speak of the root of a faith, the marrow of our existence?

### Stories of Faith: losing it, talking about it, constructing it, and working within it

<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/202/faith>

### Evolving “Faith”

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/evolving-faith/95>

This podcast from journalist Krista Tippett explores what’s happening to faith in America.

### Atheism 2.0

[http://www.ted.com/talks/alain\\_de\\_botton\\_atheism\\_2\\_0](http://www.ted.com/talks/alain_de_botton_atheism_2_0)

Should we be dividing up the world into people who have faith and people who don’t? Alain de Botton talks about a new meaning of faith, one that doesn’t divide us.

### A Year of Living Biblically

[https://www.ted.com/talks/a\\_j\\_jacobs\\_year\\_of\\_living\\_biblically](https://www.ted.com/talks/a_j_jacobs_year_of_living_biblically)

Author AJ Jacobs lives a year according to the Bible to investigate whether it will change his faith. He helps us laugh and reconsider our own faith practices.

### **Religion, evolution, and the ecstasy of self-transcendence**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan\\_haidt\\_humanity\\_s\\_stairway\\_to\\_self\\_transcendence?referrer=playlist-faith\\_in\\_the\\_modern\\_world#t-53726](https://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_humanity_s_stairway_to_self_transcendence?referrer=playlist-faith_in_the_modern_world#t-53726)

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt asks a simple, but difficult question: why do we search for self-transcendence? Why do we attempt to lose ourselves? In a tour through the science of evolution by group selection, he proposes a provocative answer.

**Our American Faith:** Do you have faith that America is the greatest country on earth?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMqCLUqYqrs>

### **Why We Need Rational Faith in the Human Spirit**

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/04/04/erich-fromm-anatomy-of-human-destructiveness/>

“Optimism is an alienated form of faith, pessimism an alienated form of despair... To have faith means to dare, to think the unthinkable, yet to act within the limits of the realistically possible.

### **This I Believe**

During its four years on NPR, *This I Believe* engaged listeners in a discussion of the core beliefs that guide their daily lives.

<http://www.npr.org/series/4538138/this-i-believe>

<http://thisibelieve.org>

### **Erich Fromm on Human Nature, the Common Laziness of Optimism and Pessimism, and Why We need Rational Faith in the Human Spirit**

<https://www.brainpickings.org/?s=faith>  
Optimism is an alienated form of faith, pessimism an alienated form of despair. If one truly responds to man and his

future, i.e., concernedly and “responsibly,” one can respond only by faith or by despair. Rational faith as well as rational despair are based on the most thorough, critical knowledge of all the factors that are relevant for the survival of man. The basis of rational faith in man is the presence of a real possibility for his salvation: the basis for rational despair would be the knowledge that no such possibility can be seen.

### **Wole Soyinka, the First African Writer to Win the Nobel Prize in Literature, on Faith, Medicine and the Healing of the Human Spirit**

<https://www.brainpickings.org/?s=faith>

### **Pilgrimage to Nonviolence**

Martin Luther King, Jr

<http://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=726>

A sixth basic fact about nonviolent resistance is that it is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. Consequently, the believer in nonviolence has deep faith in the future. This faith is another reason why the nonviolent resister can accept suffering without retaliation. For he knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic companionship... a creative force in this universe that works to bring the disconnected aspects of reality into a harmonious whole.

### **Faith and Science**

*Richard Rohr*

<https://cac.org/climate-change-2017-10-26/>

To rebuild spirituality “from the bottom up,” we must turn the valuable information of science and theology into transformation, change of heart, mind, and being. I invite you to learn about and connect with the suffering of someone or



some place and discern your own part to play in healing our collective brokenness.

### **A Faith that is anchored and sustained**

<https://onbeing.org/blog/omid-safi-a-faith-that-is-anchored-and-sustained/>

We too yearn for a faith that is robust, moist, grounded, and rooted.

This metaphor of faith as trees is an ancient one. Muslim sages loved to make a distinction between “roots” and “branches.” Faith has different branches, but they called us to focus on the roots. The branches are many, there are many rules and regulations. The sages called us to keep exploring what it is that roots us, that grounds us, that anchors us. Is it our family? Is it our reputation? Is it our income? Is it self-confidence?

### **The Tension of Faith: Why I Appreciate Christians Who Believe I’m Going to Hell**

*Seth Chalmer*

He told me, “If I get to heaven, and find out I’m wrong, and see all my Jewish and atheist friends there... I will cry tears of joy. I will shout, ‘Thank you God!’ I will be... so happy.”

Then, he paused:

“What I believe isn’t the same as what I want.”

I didn’t know what to say. Neil’s sympathy — his genuine love — didn’t fit into the only story I knew how to tell about people who believed in hell: that they were judgmental and hateful. It had never occurred to me that someone could believe something other than what he wanted.

### **Small Wonder**

*Barbara Kingsolver*

<http://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=923>

Our greatest and smallest explanations for ourselves grow from place, as surely as carrots grow in the dirt. I’m presuming to tell you something that I could not prove rationally but instead feel as a religious faith. I can’t believe otherwise.

### **To Know Your Mind, Pay Close Attention to It**

*Sam Harris*

<http://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=2232>

I argue that spirituality need not rest on any faith-based assumptions about what exists outside of our own experience. And it arises from the same spirit of honest inquiry that motivates science itself.

### **The Subtle Sensations of Faith**

*David Brooks*

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/23/opinion/david-brooks-the-subtle-sensations-of-faith.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/23/opinion/david-brooks-the-subtle-sensations-of-faith.html?_r=0)

### **Activism is an Act of Faith**

*By Tim DeChristopher*

<http://www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/280831.shtml>

### **The Day My Faith in America Died**

*By Paul Rauschenbusch*

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-rauschenbusch/the-day-my-faith-in-america-died\\_b\\_6268506.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-rauschenbusch/the-day-my-faith-in-america-died_b_6268506.html)

### **Belief is the Enemy of Faith**

*By Rev. Peter Morales*

An article exploring whether belief and faith are or should associated.

<http://www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/289346.shtml>

### **Becoming Fluent in Faith**

*By Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar*

<http://www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/284020.shtml>

### **Don't Be Stingy with Your Faith**

*By John Gibbs Millspaugh*

Not spreading the word about Unitarian

Universalism is a form of stinginess.

<http://www.uuworld.org/spirit/articles/23890.shtml>

## **Movies**

### **Bill Moyers on Faith and Reason (PBS)**

<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/faithandreason/>

In the three DVDs titled On Faith & Reason, he sits down with 12 noted scientists, novelists, philosophers, and religious writers and thinkers to talk about their quest for meaning and the tension between faith and reason in their lives.

### **Saved! (2004)**

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0332375/>

When a girl attending a Christian high school becomes pregnant, she finds herself ostracized and demonized, as all of her former friends turn on her.

### **Jesus Camp (2006)**

[https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/jesus\\_camp](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/jesus_camp)

The youngest foot soldiers for the Lord are shown in their native environment in this documentary. Becky Fischer is a children's pastor who runs "Kids on Fire," a summer camp for evangelical Christian children in North Dakota.

### **The Way (2010)**

[https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_way\\_2011](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_way_2011)

The Way is a powerful and inspirational story about family, friends, and the challenges we face while navigating this

ever changing and complicated world. Martin Sheen plays Tom, an irascible American doctor who comes to St. Jean Pied de Port, France to collect the remains of his adult son (played by Emilio Estevez), killed in the Pyrenees in a storm while walking The Camino de Santiago, also known as The Way of Saint James. Rather than return home, Tom decides embark on the historical pilgrimage to honor his son's desire to finish the journey.

**Raw Faith** (a documentary on a UU minister:

<http://www.marilynsewell.com/raw-faith-film/>

*Raw Faith* is an intimate and revealing documentary that follows two years in the private life of Marilyn Sewell, an outspoken and socially progressive Unitarian minister who has re-energized her Portland, Oregon community.

## **Books**

### **My Bright Abyss**

*Christian Wiman*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/26/books/review/my-bright-abyss-by-christian-wiman.html>

"If you return to the faith of your childhood after long wandering, people whose orientations are entirely secular will tend to dismiss or at least deprecate the action as having psychological motivations — motivations, it goes without saying, of which you are unconscious. As it happens, you have this suspicion yourself. It eats away at the intensity of the experience that made you proclaim, however quietly, your recovered faith, and soon you find yourself getting stalled in arguments between religion and science, theology and history, trying to nail

down doctrine like some huge and much-torn tent in the wind.

### **Waking Up**

*Sam Harris*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/opinion/sunday/frank-bruni-between-godliness-and-godlessness.html>

Had Harris at last found God? And is “Waking Up” a stop-the-presses admission — an epiphany — that he slumbered and lumbered through the darkness for too long?

Hardly. Harris is actually up to something more complicated and interesting than that. He’s asking a chicken-or-egg question too seldom broached publicly in America, where religion is such sacred and protected turf, where God is on our currency and at our inaugurations and in our pledge and sometimes written into legislation as a way to exempt the worshipful from dictates that apply to everyone else.

### ***Lincoln’s Battle with God: A President’s Struggle with Faith and What It Meant for America***

Stephen Mansfield

<https://www.amazon.com/Lincolns-Battle-God-Presidents-Struggle/dp/1480506427>

Finding God can be difficult even in times of joy. But consider the times—and profound sorrows—of Abraham Lincoln. His beloved mother died a painful death before Abe’s tenth birthday. His father was abusive when the man wasn’t absent entirely. Abraham was so beset by depression that he neared suicide on numerous occasions. He lost one son when the boy was the tender age of three. A second was eleven when he died, and this was less than a year after Lincoln assumed the presidency of a fractured nation.

Books by Anne Lamott: *Grace* (*Eventually*), *Traveling Mercies*, and *Plan B*.

### ***Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience***

*Sharon Salzberg*

[https://www.amazon.com/Faith-Trusting-Your-Deepest-Experience/dp/1573223409/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169325&sr=1-1&keywords=faiht+sharon+salzberg](https://www.amazon.com/Faith-Trusting-Your-Deepest-Experience/dp/1573223409/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169325&sr=1-1&keywords=faiht+sharon+salzberg)

In this beautifully written work, one of America’s most beloved meditation teachers offers discerning wisdom on understanding faith as a healing quality. Through the teachings of Buddha and insight gained from her lifelong spiritual quest, Salzberg provides us with a road map for cultivating a feeling of peace that can be practiced by anyone of any tradition.

### ***Fluent in Faith: A Unitarian Universalist Embrace of Religious Language***

*Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar*

[https://www.amazon.com/Fluent-Faith-Unitarian-Universalist-Religious/dp/1558966803/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169379&sr=1-1&keywords=Fluent+in+Faith%3A+A+Unitarian+Universalist+Embrace+of+Religious+Language++by+Jeanne+Harrison+Nieuwejaar](https://www.amazon.com/Fluent-Faith-Unitarian-Universalist-Religious/dp/1558966803/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169379&sr=1-1&keywords=Fluent+in+Faith%3A+A+Unitarian+Universalist+Embrace+of+Religious+Language++by+Jeanne+Harrison+Nieuwejaar)

Discussion about a Language of Reverence in the Unitarian Universalist community was propelled into energy and creativity in 2002, following a sermon by Rev. William Sinkford, then president of the Unitarian Universalist Association. The conversation since then has been both wide and deep. *Fluent in Faith* continues that conversation, calling us to embrace our religious language in all its diversity and wide range of

meaning. Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar sets forth a vision for Unitarian Universalism in which we can confidently and gracefully express our faith.

### **Faitheist**

*Christ Stedman*

[https://www.amazon.com/Faitheist-Atheist-Common-Ground-Religious/dp/0807014451/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169456&sr=1-1&keywords=faitheist](https://www.amazon.com/Faitheist-Atheist-Common-Ground-Religious/dp/0807014451/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169456&sr=1-1&keywords=faitheist)

In *Faitheist*, Chris Stedman tells his own story to challenge the orthodoxies of this movement and make a passionate argument that atheists should engage religious diversity respectfully.

### **Amazing Grace**

*Kathleen Norris*

[https://www.amazon.com/Amazing-Grace-Vocabulary-Kathleen-Norris/dp/1573227218/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169567&sr=1-1&keywords=amazing+grace+kathleen+norris](https://www.amazon.com/Amazing-Grace-Vocabulary-Kathleen-Norris/dp/1573227218/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169567&sr=1-1&keywords=amazing+grace+kathleen+norris)

Struggling with her return to the Christian church after many years away, Kathleen Norris found it was the language of Christianity that most distanced her from faith. Words like "judgment," "faith," "dogma," "salvation," "sinner"—even "Christ"—formed what she called her "scary vocabulary," words that had become so codified or abstract that their meanings were all but impenetrable. She found she had to wrestle with them and make them her own before they could confer their blessings and their grace. Blending history, theology, storytelling, etymology, and memoir, Norris uses these words as a starting point for reflection, and offers a moving account of her own gradual conversion. She

evokes a rich spirituality rooted firmly in the chaos of everyday life—and offers believers and doubters alike an illuminating perspective on how we can embrace ancient traditions and find faith in the contemporary world.

### **Acts of Faith**

*Eboo Patel*

[https://www.amazon.com/Acts-Faith-American-Struggle-Generation/dp/080700622X/ref=pd\\_sbs\\_14\\_1?encoding=UTF8&pd\\_rd\\_i=080700622X&pd\\_rd\\_r=WSM0ZE2VFPE3EA0KORGJ&pd\\_rd\\_w=mvsf0&pd\\_rd\\_wg=MWpMX&pvc=1&refRID=WSM0ZE2VFPE3EA0KORGJ&dpID=51ZaNT63U rL&preST=\\_SY344\\_BO1,204,203,200\\_QL70\\_&dpSrc=detail](https://www.amazon.com/Acts-Faith-American-Struggle-Generation/dp/080700622X/ref=pd_sbs_14_1?encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=080700622X&pd_rd_r=WSM0ZE2VFPE3EA0KORGJ&pd_rd_w=mvsf0&pd_rd_wg=MWpMX&pvc=1&refRID=WSM0ZE2VFPE3EA0KORGJ&dpID=51ZaNT63U rL&preST=_SY344_BO1,204,203,200_QL70_&dpSrc=detail)

*Acts of Faith* is a remarkable account of growing up Muslim in America and coming to believe in religious pluralism, from one of the most prominent faith leaders in the United States. Eboo Patel's story is a hopeful and moving testament to the power and passion of young people—and of the world-changing potential of an interfaith youth movement.

### **The Poisonwood Bible**

*Barbara Kingsolver*

[https://www.amazon.com/Poisonwood-Bible-Novel-Barbara-Kingsolver/dp/0061577073/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169842&sr=1-1&keywords=the+poisonwood+bible+by+barbara+kingsolver](https://www.amazon.com/Poisonwood-Bible-Novel-Barbara-Kingsolver/dp/0061577073/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534169842&sr=1-1&keywords=the+poisonwood+bible+by+barbara+kingsolver)

The *Poisonwood Bible* is a story told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them everything they believe they will

need from home, but soon find that all of it—from garden seeds to Scripture—is calamitously transformed on African soil. What follows is a suspenseful epic of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa.

**When Bad Things Happen to Good People**

*Harold Kushner*

<https://www.amazon.com/s?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=when+bad+things+happen+to+good+people+kushner&prefix=when+bad+th%2Cstripbooks%2C194&crid=298UBDFBFXU4L>

This packet was created based on the Soul Matters Sharing Circle model of small groups. To be used at Unity Church only.



<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/>