



# White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church

Grow Your Soul & Serve the World

[www.wbuuc.org](http://www.wbuuc.org) | 652.426.2369 | 328 Maple Street | Mahtomedi, MN 55115

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## *Theme for January*

### **Faith – the practice of devotion to the possible**

Each month, our church gathers around a monthly theme and practice to guide our congregational life: worship, small groups, religious education, justice, and classes. Use these readings for reflection around the dinner table, in your own prayer practice, alone or with others.

More online at [www.wbuuc.org/themes](http://www.wbuuc.org/themes). If you are interested in a monthly theme Sharing Circle, contact: Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer [revluke@wbuuc.org](mailto:revluke@wbuuc.org) or 651.426.2369x103

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### **QUESTIONS**

What do you have faith in?

What practices do/could you engage in to devote yourself to 'the possible'?

What restores you when you lose faith in the world, in others, or yourself?

What helps you greet each day in faith, hope, and love?

### **QUOTES**

Faith is taking the first step even when you can't see the whole staircase.

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Of course, I am a heretic. The word *haireisis* in Greek means choice; a heretic is one who is able to choose. Its root stems from the Greek word *hairein*, to take. Faced with the mystery of life and death, each act of faith is a gamble. We all risk choices before the unknown.

- Forrest Church

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

- Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)

You cannot tread the Path until you become the Path yourself.

- Zen Buddhism saying

A person will worship something, have no doubt about that. We may think our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of our hearts, but it will out. That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives, and our character. Therefore, it behoves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshiping we are becoming.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

To make bread or love, to dig in the earth, to feed an animal or cook for a stranger—these activities require no extensive commentary, no lucid theology. All they require is someone willing to bend, reach, chop, stir. Most of these tasks are so full of pleasure that there is no need to complicate things by calling them holy. And yet these are the same activities that change lives, sometimes all at once and sometimes more slowly, the way dripping water changes stone. In a world where faith is often construed as a way of thinking, bodily practices remind the willing that faith is a way of life.

- Barbara Brown Taylor, from An Altar In the World: A Geography of Faith

## POETRY & LYRICS

### *I Believe*

I believe there are some debts that we never can repay  
I believe there are some words that you can never unsay  
And I don't know a single soul  
Who didn't get lost along the way.

I believe in socks and gloves knit out of soft grey wool  
And that there's a place in heaven for those who teach in the public school.  
And I know I get some things right  
But mostly I'm a fool.

*Chorus: I Believe in a good strong cup of ginger tea,  
And all these shoots and roots will become a tree.  
All I know is I can't help but see all of this as so very holy.*

I believe in jars of jelly put up by careful hands,  
I believe most folks are doing about the best they can,  
And I know there are some things that I will never understand.

I believe there's healing in the sound of your voice,  
And that a summer tomato is a cause to rejoice,  
And that following a song was never really a choice, Never really.

I believe in a good long letter written on real paper and with real pen,  
I believe in the ones I love and know I'll never see again,  
I believe in the kindness of strangers and the comfort of old friends,  
And when I close my eyes to sleep at night that its good to say, "Amen"

I believe that life is comprised of smiles and sniffles and tears,  
And in an old coat that still has another good year,  
And I know that I get scared some times but all I need is here.  
I Believe

- Carrie Newcomer

Be patient towards all that is unsolved in your heart...  
Try to love the questions themselves...  
Do not seek the answers, which cannot be given  
because you would not be able to live them.  
And the point is to live everything.  
Live the questions now.  
Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it  
Live along some distant day into the answers.  
- Rainer Maria Rilke

What in your life is calling you?  
When all the noise is silenced,  
the meetings adjourned,  
the lists laid aside,  
and the wild iris blooms by itself  
in the dark forest,  
what still pulls on your soul?  
In the silence between your heartbeats  
hides a summons.  
Do you hear it?  
Name it, if you must,  
or leave it forever nameless,  
but why pretend it is not there?  
- The Terma Collective (“terma” is a Tibetan word meaning ‘hidden treasure’)

## **READINGS & EXCERPTS**

### *Personal guidelines:*

**Come from Gratitude:** To be alive in this beautiful, self-organizing universe--to participate in the dance of life with senses to perceive it, lungs that breathe it, organs that draw nourishment from it--is a wonder beyond words. Gratitude for the gift of life is the primary wellspring of all religions, the hallmark of the mystic, the source of all true art. Furthermore, it is a privilege to be alive in this time when we can choose to take part in the self-healing of our world.

**Don't be Afraid of the Dark:** This is a dark time, filled with suffering and uncertainty. Like living cells in a larger body, it is natural that we feel the trauma of our world. So don't be afraid of the anguish you feel, or the anger or fear, for these responses arise from the depth of your caring and the truth of your interconnectedness with all beings. To suffer with is the literal meaning of compassion.

**Dare to Vision:** Out of this darkness a new world can arise, not to be constructed by our minds so much as to emerge from our dreams. Even though we cannot see clearly how it's

going to turn out, we are still called to let the future into our imagination. We will never be able to build what we have not first cherished in our hearts..

Roll up your Sleeves: Many people don't get involved in the Great Turning because there are so many different issues, which seem to compete with each other. Shall I save the whales or help battered children? The truth is that all aspects of the current crisis reflect the same mistake, setting ourselves apart and using others for our gain. So to heal one aspect helps the others to heal as well. ...

Just find what you love to work on and take joy in that. Never try to do it alone. Link up with others; you'll spark each others' ideas and sustain each others' energy...

Act your Age: Since every particle in your body goes back to the first flaring forth of space and time, you're really as old as the universe. So when you are lobbying at your congressperson's office, or visiting your local utility, or testifying at a hearing on nuclear waste, or standing up to protect an old grove of redwoods, you are doing that not out of some personal whim, but in the full authority of your 15 billions years.

- Joanna Macy

### ***Spiritual Practices: Faith***

#### ***Enhances Trust; Balances/Counters a Hardened heart, Difficulties***

#### **The Basic Practice**

In the broad scope of the spiritual life, we see faith not as something you have but as something you are in — a relationship. It involves an awareness of and an attunement to God's presence in our everyday experiences.

Practicing faith, then, is like developing any relationship. You have to give it time and attention. It requires you to see, hear, feel, and constantly remember your partner — God. Have confidence in the relationship's viability, even when you are facing mysteries, doubts, and paradoxes. Trust in this faith, even to the point of staking your life on it.

#### **Why This Practice May Be For You**

Many people assume that the chief challenges to faith are disbelief and doubt, but the real stumbling block to faith is resistance to God or the hardened heart. In the Biblical traditions, the heart is used as an image for the deeper self, the true and total person. The hard heart is not open to the sacred. It is similar to eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear.

Difficulties can be catalysts to faith. During a dark night of the soul, sometimes all we can do is trust that this, too, will pass. Facing illness, death, or the myriad other challenges in our lives, we are strengthened by the knowledge that a Greater Power watches and waits with us. In the long run, it's the relationship that matters.

- From <http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/practices.php?id=8>