



October 2018 Monthly Theme

# FAITH

*the practice of living the questions*

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*The intention of the themed year is to help Unitarian Universalists build a robust spiritual and ethical vocabulary. The themes are points of departure for religious liberals seeking to think, speak and act theologically, prophetically and prayerfully. The themes reclaim religious language, casting old terms in a new key to deepen spiritual grounding and sharpen moral reasoning. More at: [wbuuc.org/themes](http://wbuuc.org/themes) or sign up for a circle at [wbuuc.org/classes](http://wbuuc.org/classes).*

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## QUESTIONS

Do you consider yourself a person of faith?

What do you have faith in? What are you faithful to? Have the answers changed in different times in your life?

Is there a difference between doubting and questioning?

What does it mean to live into a hard, perhaps unanswerable question?

## QUOTATIONS

I beg you, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

~Rainer Maria Rilke

In today's "always on" world, there's a rush to answer. Ubiquitous access to data and volatile business demands are accelerating this sense of urgency. But we must slow down and understand each other better in order to avoid poor decisions and succeed in this environment. Because asking questions requires a certain amount of vulnerability, cultures must shift to promote this behavior. Leaders should encourage people to ask more questions, based on the goals they're trying to achieve, instead of having them rush to deliver answers. In order to make the right decisions, people need to start asking the questions that really matter.

~ "Relearning the Art of Asking Questions" Harvard Business Review

## POETRY

### Memory As a Hearing Aid

Somewhere, someone is asking a question,  
and I stand squinting at the classroom  
with one hand cupped behind my ear,  
trying to figure out where that voice is coming  
from.

I might be already an old man,  
attempting to recall the night  
his hearing got misplaced,  
front-row-center at a battle of the bands,

where a lot of leather-clad, second-rate  
musicians, amped up to dinosaur proportions,  
test drove their equipment through our ears.  
Each time the drummer threw a tantrum,

the guitarist whirled and sprayed us with  
machine-gun riffs,  
as if they wished that they could knock us  
quite literally dead.

We called that fun in 1970,

when we weren't sure our lives were worth  
surviving.

I'm here to tell you that they were,  
and many of us did, despite ourselves,

### Innocence

There is nothing more innocent  
than the still-unformed creature I find  
beneath soil,  
neither of us knowing what it will become  
in the abundance of the planet.  
It makes a living only by remaining still  
in its niche.

One day it may struggle out of its tender  
pearl of blind skin  
with a wing or with vision  
leaving behind the transparent.

though the road from there to here  
is paved with dead brain cells,  
parents shocked to silence,  
and squad cars painting the whole neighborhood  
the quaking tint and texture of red jelly.

Friends, we should have postmarks on our  
foreheads  
to show where we have been;  
we should have pointed ears, or polka-dotted skin  
to show what we were thinking

when we hot-rodged over God's front lawn,  
and Death kept blinking.  
But here I stand, an average-looking man  
staring at a room

where someone blonde in braids  
with a beautiful belief in answers  
is still asking questions.

Through the silence in my dead ear,  
I can almost hear the future whisper  
to the past: it says that this is not a test  
and everybody passes.

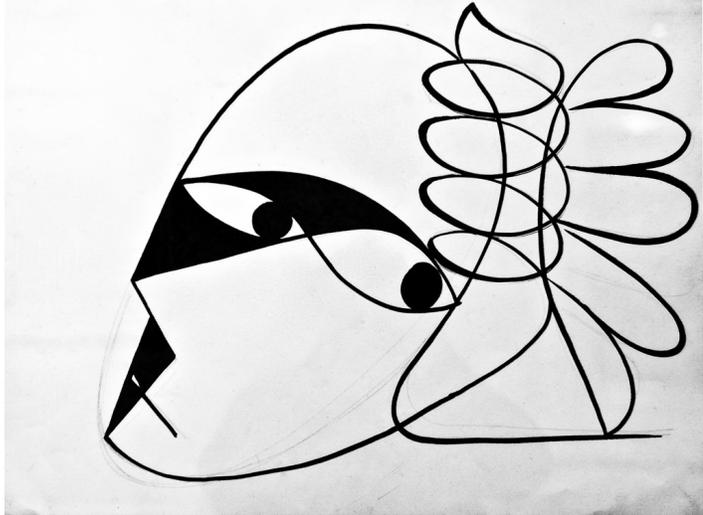
~ Tony Hoagland

I cover it again, keep laboring,  
hands in earth, myself a singular body.  
Watching things grow,  
wondering how  
a cut blade of grass knows  
how to turn sharp again at the end.

This same growing must be myself,  
not aware yet of what I will become  
in my own fullness  
inside this simple flesh. ~Linda Hogan

*This World is not Conclusion*

A Species stands beyond—  
Invisible, as Music—  
But positive, as Sound—  
It beckons, and it baffles—  
Philosophy—don't know—  
And through a Riddle, at the last—  
Sagacity, must go—  
To guess it, puzzles scholars—  
To gain it, Men have borne  
Contempt of Generations  
And Crucifixion, shown—  
Faith slips—and laughs, and rallies—  
Blushes, if any see—  
Plucks at a twig of Evidence—  
And asks a Vane, the way—  
Much Gesture, from the Pulpit—  
Strong Hallelujahs roll—  
Narcotics cannot still the Tooth  
That nibbles at the soul—  
~Emily Dickinson



**READINGS & EXCERPTS**

**Have Patience with Everything Unresolved by Shavawn M Berry**

What's most perplexing about life these days, is this overwhelming sense of limbo that most of the people I talk with feel. Everything is raw, ragged, confusing. There's no sense to be made or found anywhere. It seems there aren't answers to any of our burning questions.

It is as though we are forever in flux, walking a dead landscape of uprooted trees, smashed cars, swollen rivers spilling their banks. We wander in neighborhoods of broken houses full of random (and often useless) belongings. An egg beater. A wheel. One lonely shoe.

*Love the questions like locked rooms or books written in a foreign tongue.*

We want to feel some sort of solace, but there is none. There's just a sense that everything in this wide world is shifting, but nothing has shifted, yet.

*Live the questions.* And, perhaps, as Rilke wrote a hundred and ten years ago, we cannot live the answers. Yet.

So we must live the questions.

To me, this is what this particular time is all about. Living with this sense of foreboding. Living with the acid burn of negative potentials. Catastrophic climate change. The rapacious over-use of our natural world. The senseless killing of our own wildness, simply for the sake of killing.

We must live inside these terrible questions. These questions that make us ache, so we will become larger, more pliable, and more open.

*Finding our way into the answers.*

We cannot solve the problems we face with the same sort of thinking that created them. We cannot be so certain of which path to take. We must all become beginners. We are slowly cracking and breaking the outer shell (ego) in order to reveal the true. We have never been here before. We are brand new.

So, as I sit shaking in my boots and shitting my pants at the mere thought of all this change — of these paradigm shifts that are unseen in any lifetime before ours — I keep reminding myself, always be a beginner, always realize there is something to learn, always remember that you know far less than you think.

Be a novice. Be a blank page. Be embryonic in your sense of yourself. You are just learning the steps. You are just starting out. It is okay to be stupid or blind or to not have the answers. It is okay to be wrong, to make mistakes, to muck it all up. This is all part of the process of becoming. Of enlightenment. Of living.

*Love it all.*

The confusion. The mess. The raw, red rims of your eyes. Love the experience of being born. Love the experience of watching the old way of life die. Watch everything burn. Watch everything go. Don't be afraid.

This. This is how you find your way. You don't notice the changes as they come. You just wake up, one bright morning — sky the color of robin's eggs — and you realize that you are there. And you open the door and smell the restless air and say a prayer of profound thanks.

## **MUSIC**

Question for the Angels – Paul Simon

Where Do We Come From – Brian Tate [Hymn 1003]

Woyaya – Loughy Amoa, Solomon Amarfio, Robert M. Bailey, Roy Bedeau, Francis t. Osei, Whendell K. Richardson, and MacTontoh [Hymn 1020]