

FAITH

1 Faith is the submission of that part of the mind which has not seen God to the part which has.

Simone Weil

2 Faith does not eliminate questions. But it knows where to take them. **Elisabeth Elliot**

3 Faith is a knowledge within the heart, beyond the reach of proof. Faith is an oasis in the heart which will never be reached by the caravan of thinking. **Kahlil Gibran**

4 The faithful man perceives nothing less than opportunity in difficulties. Flowing through his spine, faith and courage work together: Such a man does not fear losing his life, thus he will risk losing it at times in order to empower it. By this he actually values his life more than the man who fears losing his life. It is much like leaping from a window in order to avoid a fire yet in that most crucial moment knowing that God will appear to catch you. **Criss Jami**, *Killosophy*

5 The practice of looking deeply helps you to understand better. As you understand better, your faith grows. **Thich Nhat Hanh** in *Going Home*

6 Christian faith is not blind faith. It is the wakeful expectation of God, which touches all our senses. The early Christians prayed standing up, looking up, with outstretched arms and wide-open eyes, ready to walk or to leap forward. We can see this from the pictures in the catacombs in Rome. Their posture reflects tense expectation, not quiet heart searching. We do not watch just because of the dangers that threaten us. We are expecting the salvation of the world. We are watching for God's advent. With tense attention, we open all our senses for the coming of God into our lives, into our society, to this earth. **Jurgen Moltmann**, *Passion for God* by Jurgen Moltmann, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel

7 Finding a spiritual refuge is a significant step on the journey of faith. A trustworthy refuge enables us to go against the misleading promises of an unexamined world, to move beyond conditioned attitudes and responses, to eschew superficial or heartless answers to our deepest questions. **Sharon Salzberg** in *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience*

Faith and Belief

8 . . . When we dwell on beliefs we ask all the wrong questions. My faith is much more about what I love than about what I think.

When the conversation shifts away from our beliefs to what we hold most dear, to what moves us at the depths of our being and what calls us, wondrous new possibilities emerge. We share and explore our deepest experiences. We discover what we have in common. Our attention naturally turns to how we want to live our lives and to the commitments we are willing to make. Our concern at the personal level becomes one of developing our awareness, of spiritual disciplines, of growth. At the interpersonal level, our attention turns to loving relationships. Finally, our attention turns to issues of compassion, justice, and interdependence. Faith becomes a relationship. Faith is about being faithful to what we hold sacred.

--**Peter Morales**, Faith and Belief: A new interfaith, multifaith spirituality is struggling to be born, UU World, September 2013.

9 Like grabbing a canoe for stability, depending on belief to keep us from going under is to grasp at the wrong thing. It is not our belief that we need to hold onto, but our faith. Though the two are often taken to mean the same thing, there is a subtle and critical difference. Faith is a deeply seated confidence, vital to our very existence; belief is only what we think is true, though we wouldn't stake our lives on it. Faith leaves room for mystery, belief does not. As Albert Einstein wrote in his personal credo, "The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mysterious."

Sometimes what seems most solid and stable is only an illusion of stability. Things that appear more ethereal, that may seem to be the toughest to grasp, are in fact the most stable and secure. Love, faith, and community may seem to be intangible ideals, but if nurtured they can serve as the very bedrock of our lives.

Beliefs can fall away. But the things that seem most insubstantial—perhaps because they can be the hardest to come by—have the greatest worth, and provide the steadiest base.

--**Jacki Clement**, "Faith and Belief", in UU World, Fall 2012

Tests of Faith

10 I like the story about a man who, while walking down a country road, meets an angel. The angel is carrying in one hand a bucket of water. In the other hand she carries a flaming torch. When the man inquires of the angel what she is about, the angel answers, "With this water I'm going to quench all the fires of hell and with the torch I am going to burn down all the mansions of heaven; and then we're going to find out who really loves God.

— **Macrina Wiederkehr** in A Tree Full of Angels

11 The Atheist's Prayer, Miguel de Unamuno

Hear my plea you, God who doesn't exist,
and in your nonexistence gather these, my grumblings.

You who never leave poor humans
without false comfort. You don't resist

our pleas and you disguise our desires.
The more you move yourself away from my mind,
the more I remember the calm fairy tales
my nursemaid told me to sweeten sad nights.

How vast you are, my God! You are so vast
that you are nothing but an Idea; reality is so narrow
however much it expands itself

to meet you. I suffer at your cost,
nonexistent God. For if you did exist
I too would truly exist.

Translated from the Spanish by Gaël Rozière and Patrice Vecchione

12 Sooner or later, we must face facts: There are some rocks we can't lift. They are too heavy for us. Human beings cannot supply all our own needs. We must turn, sometimes, to a power beyond our own.

Well, how do we know there is a power beyond our own?

We don't.

We don't know much of anything. We have no proof of anything in the Bible, or of anything else the church has taught.

We don't know the things of faith. We believe them. To believe is to follow, to order our lives in trust. To live in trust.

And so we believe in God, because we have no other help but God. If we are to lift anything at all, we must call on God for help, for the time quickly comes when we are taxed beyond our strength. Then we must ask for more or do without.

Of course, we can do without.

We can remain addicted.

We can remain in a paralyzing state of anger.

We can remain in a state of shame. We don't have to give the heavy load of sorrows to God. We can hang onto it. We can just stand there, allowing ourselves to be crushed by its weight.

We can do that.

But we don't have to.

— **Barbara Cawthorne Crafton**, *Let Us Bless the Lord, Year One*

For Reflection and Discussion

A What is your personal understanding of faith? Do any of the definitions offered resonate with you?

B Do you identify as a person of faith? What does that mean to you?

C Has your faith been tested? In what way or ways?

D What journey of faith has led you to All Souls?

D How does your experience at All Souls inform your understanding of faith?

--Mary Beth Hatem, for All Souls Church, Unitarian covenant groups