

I don't think it's a stretch to say that we live in doubtful times. Fake News – something we'd never even heard of a few years back – is being attributed to anything someone doesn't want to believe is true.

Climate change is fake news. The death toll from Hurricane Maria is fake news. A strong economy is fake news. Some people claim all of Fox is fake news. And don't even get me started on the internet! That's a sermon all by itself.

Can you have too much doubt? If everything seems to rank the same in the cacophony of words coming at us, how do we, as thoughtful, responsible human beings, responsibly seek truth and meaning in our life? Today is the first in a monthly series exploring our Unitarian Universalist Principles. We have seven which we, as UUA member congregations, have covenanted to affirm and promote:

- 1: The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- 2: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- 3: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- 4: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- 5: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- 6: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- 7: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

There is also an 8th principle – which was introduced at General Assembly this past summer – which many congregations have adopted. It reads:

8. We journey toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

All good things – but how relevant are these words to our daily lives? I'm extending an invitation to everyone to really think about these things we claim – and enter into deeper conversations around how we can support one another in living lives by these principles – really own them. Now – just to be really Unitarian Universalist – we're not going in the prescribed order. Today we're beginning with #4 – a free & responsible search for truth and meaning – because I think I need it. I'd like to challenge the common perception – or at least my perception – that this meant reading and study, and trying to soak up as much information about the world around us as possible. This was my impression of Unitarian Universalism when I first got here. It is all in our head.

But today, especially in today's climate, I believe that we find truth through relationship. Through our interactions with one another – the people we know, the conversations we have, the spaces in between one human and another where something new is uncovered. Which is why today our senior youth group is going to share their experiences this past summer in Detroit. It was called a “service trip” and they did offer their hands and hearts to good work. But it was also an experience – a place where they lived out this profound principle of searching for truth and meaning.

I'm going to invite them up now, so we can hear, in their own words, what they discovered on their trip.

[... Senior Youth Group Presentation](#)

Thanks so much everybody!

One thing this says for me – the free and responsible search for truth and meaning doesn't have to be dull – You can have a great time and learn more in a few days of working with folks than years of study might bring. We talked earlier about fake news – and the difficulty of finding truth in today's world. That's true – it's a jungle out there. But – interactions with real live humans – especially ones where you are working for a common goal with shared ideals – can open truth and meaning to us in ways we might never imagine.

How many of you have found that the times you've reached beyond your comfort zone and explored seeming differences with others ended up giving you gifts of understanding and experience you never expected? I know that's been my own. Our teens traveled a long way. They met people very different from themselves and learned how good it feels to stretch, to offer and to receive – and how all of that teaches us more than we might ever imagine about truth and meaning in our lives.

I invite you to join me next Saturday morning for our first Principled Living Discussion – right here in the living room at 10:30 am. Bring your own insights, your struggles, the experiences of truth which need to be rubbed up against something in order to shine. I doubt we'll uncover all the truth that is waiting to be found but I hope - like our kids – that we'll have a really good time in the process.

Amen & blessed be