

REFLECTIONS

HONESTY

Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the Unitarian Church of Calgary
Volume 1, Issue 9 • May 2015

Theme: What does it mean to live a life of Honesty?

It's not just about telling the truth and certainly not about possessing the right truths. It's about being true.

Our approach to the virtue of honesty is one of our most distinctive features as a religion. Whereas many faith traditions focus on the truths one believes, we Unitarian Universalists prioritize the truth of who we are. In other words, for us, to live a life of honesty is primarily about personal integrity rather than right belief. Ralph Waldo Emerson captured this well when he said, "Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves." I also love the way the Buddha gets at this. He said, "The only real failure in life is to not take your truth to its end, or not to begin."

So this month, we push each other to take one strong step toward living more deeply into who we are.

And that's certainly not as easy as it sounds. To live out of the truth of who you are requires first that you take an honest look at yourself. For some of us, that means confronting how empty or dispirited we feel about our jobs and facing the scary prospect of starting completely over with a brand-new career. For others of us, it requires being honest about how deeply we've been hurt in relationships and how we—consciously or unconsciously—sabotage or runaway from relationships because of that. For still others, it means looking at the way our lives don't reflect our values, leaving us to talk a good game but not look that different from the consumerist culture that surrounds us. In other words, living honestly is not for wimps! It may require giving our deepest selves a pep talk, but it also sometimes requires giving our deepest selves a good talking to.

And that's not to say that the point is to feel bad about ourselves. Rather living honestly is about getting on with the business of real living. To live falsely and out of alignment with your core values removes yourself from life; it keeps our real selves out of the game. It's to not truly be there! And life is too short for that!

So maybe the best way to sum up the message of this month is this: Be here! Get yourself in the game, your true self, your whole self! There is a quote by the poet David Whyte about being true to yourself:

It doesn't interest me if there is one God or many gods... I want to know if you are prepared to live in the world with its harsh need to change you. If you can look back with firm eyes saying this is where I stand. I want to know if you know how to melt into that fierce heat of living, falling toward the center of your longing.

In the end, my greatest hope is that you put this quote into your heart... and get it into your life.

In faith,
Chris
edited from words by Rev. Scott Tayler

May Services: Sunday 10:30

May 3rd

Honesty What a Concept

May 10th

The Real Mother's Day

May 17th

Traditional Aboriginal Ways

May 24th

Honestly, I Feel Love

May 31st

A Year, Honestly, Thanks!



Upcoming Services **All services are Sunday mornings at 10:30am**

May 3rd *Honesty What a Concept*

Description: Honesty is about being truthful, sincere, open, and genuine. Our first service to engage the monthly theme of honesty seems timely what with elections and a congregational meeting to follow the service.

The Annual Meeting follows the service at 12:15

Presenters	Rev Debra Faulk	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director and UUphonia
Service Associates	Danielle Webber, Student Minister		

May 10th *The Real Mother's Day*

Description: The history of Mother's Day is part of our Unitarian Universalist history – the honest history of that day is an springboard for to explore additional aspects of the idea of honesty.

This service will include a Child Dedication Ceremony

Presenter	Rev Debra Faulk	Music	Michael McKiel
Service Associate	Danielle Webber, Student Minister		

May 17th *Traditional Aboriginal Ways*

Description: As we seek to deepen relationships with First Nations we welcome Elders from the Aboriginal Friendship Center of Calgary (AFCC) who invite us to “An Introduction into Traditional Aboriginal Ways, an Aboriginal Teaching”. We also welcome Sandra Sutter, President of Board, AFCC to be with us this morning.

Presenters	Elders Darryl and Linda Brass	Music	Traditional Music
Service Associate	Andy Papadopoulos		

May 24th *Honestly, I Feel Love*

Description: One thing that many people have trouble honestly expressing is their emotions. Withholding the truth about how we feel, though, can leave us with regrets when we're no longer able to express ourselves honestly. In this service, we'll explore the consequences of not being honest about how we feel and why it's important to tell others what they mean to us.

Presenter	Chris Rothbauer, Intern Minister	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director
Service Associates	Rev Debra Faulk		

May 31st *A Year, Honestly, Thanks!*

Description: Wow has the Church year really flown by already! This will be Chris's last service with us and so we express our gratitude to him. This is the wind-down of the Children's Religious Exploration program, so we express gratitude to all who made it a successful year. Honestly there are so many to thank this will be a service of honest gratitude!

Presenters	Rev Debra Faulk Chris Rothbauer, Intern Minister, Shannon Mang, DRE	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director and UUphonia
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Getting Started: May's Spiritual Exercise

Thinking about Honesty

Catch Yourself in a Lie...and Listen to What That Lie is Trying to Tell You.

We all do it. Every single day. We lie. Big lies, little lies, white lies, well-intended lies and sometimes, not so well-intended lies. Often there is a pattern. And that pattern tells us something about ourselves. In school, some of us cheated a little here, a little there. For some of us, this was about laziness and just not wanting to do the work. But for others, it likely had something to do with a deep fear of not being perfect and thus not deemed “good enough.” As parents, maybe your most prominent pattern of lying involves protecting your kids from the harsher realities of life. I have a friend who still tells her child that Santa and angels are real because she wants her daughter to “hold onto magic” for just a little while longer. I have another friend who hasn't yet told her son that she has cancer. For her, this is about not wanting her son to look at her with pity or feel she has to take care of her mom.

You get the point: Our lies don't just tell us what we're trying to get away with; they also tell us what we're wrestling with. So how do your lies speak to what you're wrestling with? Do they say you're scared? Kind? Protective? Distrustful? Lazy? Driven? Too driven?

That's what this exercise is all about. Here are your instructions:

1. Spend a few days—maybe even a week—paying extra attention to when, how and how often you lie.
2. Identify a pattern.
3. Figure out what that says about you and what you're wrestling with.
4. Try to boil that down into one word or sentence. (“I figured out I'm scared to trust people with my truth” or “I realized that I'm more conflict-avoidant than I thought” or “I thought this was about me being compassionate, but now I'm not so sure.”)
5. Come to your TLC ready to talk about this sentence and the insight connected to it.

For Inspiration

Remember that these readings serve as “jumping off points.” They are not here to tell us how to “do it right.” Rather they serve as windows into how others have thought about what it means to be a person of deep listening. Hearing about the journeys of others, we are better able to think through our own.

There’s a lot here. Don’t attempt to absorb or analyze it all. Rather, think of it as a treasure chest that you are sifting through to find the jewel that speaks most strongly to your heart. Come to the meeting prepared to share the selection that resonates with or speaks most powerfully to the story of your own life right now.

"In human relationships, kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths." – Graehm Greene

"The easiest thing of all is to deceive one's self; for what a man wishes he generally believes to be true." – Demosthenes

"Being entirely honest with oneself is good exercise"
– Sigmund Freud

"Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth." – Alfred Lord Tennyson

"The truth shall make you free" – John 8:32,
Christian Scriptures

"Believe those who are seeking the truth. Doubt those who find it." – Andre Gilde

"The pure and simple truth is rarely pure and never simple." – Oscar Wilde

"Lying is the most simple form of self-defence." – Susan Sontag

"Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves but deal in our privacy with the last honesty and truth." – Ralph Waldo Emerson

"This above all: to thine own self be true" – Polonius, *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

"The only failure is to not take truth to its end, or not to begin." – The Buddha

"It Doesn't Interest Me"
By David Whyte

It doesn't interest me if there is one God
Or many gods.
I want to know if you belong or feel
Abandoned.
If you know despair or can see it in others.
I want to know if you are prepared to live in the
world
With its harsh need
To change you.
If you can look back
With firm eyes
Saying this is where I stand. I want to know
If you know
How to melt into that fierce heat of living
Falling toward
The center of your longing.
I want to know
If you are willing
To live, day by day with the consequence of love
And the bitter
Unwanted passion of your . . . defeat.

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"There's just some magic in truth and honesty and openness." – Frank Ocean

"'Honesty' in social life is often used as a cover for rudeness. But there is quite a difference between being candid in what you're talking about, and people voicing their insulting opinions under the name of honesty." – Judith Martin

"Honesty is the quality I value most in a friend. Not bluntness, but honesty with compassion." – Brooke Shields

"I feel like my honesty gives people the freedom to talk about things they wouldn't otherwise." – Jane Fonda

"We see in the Gospels that it's the lame, the poor, the blind, the prostitutes, the drunkards, the tax collectors, the sinners, the outsiders, and the foreigners who tend to follow Jesus. It is those on the inside and the top who crucify him (elders, chief priests, teachers of the Law, and Roman occupiers). Shouldn't that tell us something really important about perspective? Every viewpoint is a view from a point, and we need to critique our own perspective and privilege if we are to see truth." – Richard Rohr, Catholic theologian

"We do not err because truth is difficult to see. It is visible at a glance. We err because this is more comfortable." – Alexander Solzhenitsyn

"If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;... Be honest and frank anyway." – Kent M. Keith, "The Paradoxical Commandments"

"Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom." – Thomas Jefferson

"It is discouraging how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit." – Noel Coward

"The very spring and root of honesty and virtue lie in good education." – Plutarch

"Bertolt Brecht lamented that he lived in an age when it was almost a crime to talk about trees, because that meant being silent about so much evil. Walking past a stand of tall, still healthy elms along Chicago's lakefront, I think of what Brecht said. I want to celebrate these elms which have been spared by the plague, these survivors of a once flourishing tribe commemorated by all the Elm Streets in America. But to celebrate them is to be silent about the people who sit and sleep underneath them, the homeless poor who are hauled away by the city like trash, except it has no place to dump them. To speak of one thing is to suppress another. When I talk about myself, I cannot talk about you. You know this as you listen to me, disappointment settling in your face." – Lisel Mueller

"I try to use unconditional love in small amounts, she said, so People really appreciate it. The rest of the time, I just try not to yell." – Brian Andreas

"The most delusional fantasies can be made to masquerade as sanity if you've got the political power to reinforce them." – Penny Skillman

"I speak the truth, not so much as I would wish, but as much as I dare; and I dare a little more, as I grow older." – Michel de Montaigne

"The trite saying that honesty is the best policy has met with the just criticism that honesty is not policy. The real honest man is honest from conviction of what is right, not from policy." – Robert E. Lee

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"Most people opt for a life of very limited honesty and openness and relative closedness, hiding themselves and their maps from the world. It is easier that way. Yet the rewards of the difficult life of honesty and dedication to the truth are more than commensurate with the demands. By virtue of the fact that their maps are continually being challenged, open people are continually growing people. Through their openness they can establish and maintain intimate relationships far more effectively than more closed people. Because they never speak falsely they can be secure and proud in the knowledge that they have done nothing to contribute to the confusion of the world, but have served as sources of illumination and clarification.

Finally, they are totally free to be. They are not burdened by any need to hide. They do not have to slink around in the shadows. They do not have to construct new lies to hide old ones. They need waste no effort covering tracks or maintaining disguises. And ultimately they find that the energy required for the self-discipline of honesty is far less than the energy required for secretiveness. The more honest one is, the easier it is to continue being honest, just as the more lies one has told, the more necessary it is to lie again. By their openness, people dedicated to the truth live in the open, and through the exercise of their courage to live in the open, they become free from fear." – Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*

See, on some level, we are all telling the truth no matter what. Our husbands and wives know when we are lying to them, even if they haven't allowed what they know to be true to fully enter consciousness. Our lying is ultimately useless, except insofar as it serves as "manners." We pretend we don't know." – Douglas Rushkoff, media analyst, documentary filmmaker and author, *Program or Be Programmed*

"The high road is always respected. Honesty and integrity are always rewarded." – Scott Hamilton

"Truth can be a powerful agent for change, and when we release it into the world we must do so with accuracy and care. What we say to others is one of the gifts that derive from spirit, even if our message at times is necessarily unpalatable. Not to be aware of the impact of our words would be an arrogance, a failure of empathy. To give truth excessive emphasis or to let it out too quickly can sometimes be just as regrettable as neglecting to tell the truth at all." – Mike George, *Discover Inner Peace*

"There's no such thing as a secret. There's just denial—agreement to pretend we don't know. I concluded this after watching a performer a couple of years ago, a fellow who could tell when people were lying and when they were telling the truth. He did it like a parlour trick on stage, but his services have been used by governments, police, jury selectors, and so on. And pretty much every technique he was using to discern the truth was based on one cue or the other that the liar was giving. What poker players call a "tell." And these "tells" are part of the overall communications matrix. They are part of the 93% of human communication that takes place non-verbally.

"You can defeat fear through humor, through pain, through honesty, bravery, intuition, and through love in the truest sense." – John Cassavetes

"Honesty is the cruelest game of all, because not only can you hurt someone - and hurt them to the bone - you can feel self-righteous about it at the same time." – Dave Van Ronk

"Honesty is the best policy." – Benjamin Franklin

Questions for Discussion

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework." You do not need to engage every single one. Instead, simply look them over and find the one that "hooks" you most. Then let it take you on a ride. Live with it for a while. Allow it to regularly break into—and break open—your ordinary thoughts. And then come to your TLC (Theme-based Listening Circle) meeting prepared to share that journey with your group.

1. **What is the most honest thing you need to do right now?**
2. **What percentage of your "true self" is living?** How much of the real you do people actually see? 80%? 60%? 20%? Seriously, try to put a percentage on it and then figure out how you feel about that?
3. **Who gets the real you? And is it the person you want to get the real you?**
4. **As you get older, are you more honest with yourself or less?**
5. **Did your parents steer you rightly or wrongly when it comes to lying and telling the truth?**
Were their example and lessons good ones or bad ones? And most importantly, what have you done with that legacy?
6. **How is your body dealing with your lies?** There's no getting around it: our relationship with honesty and lies affects our body. Our honesty or lack thereof leads to smoking, drinking, buying too much, eating too much, even paying doctors to surgically alter how we look.
How's your body holding up in the midst of your dance with inner truth?
7. **Do you need to be more honest about death?**
8. **What truths do your kids need to hear that you haven't told them yet?**
9. **What truth does your partner need to hear that you haven't told them yet?**
10. **Is your life really true to your values?** Are you really walking your talk? And could someone tell by comparing you to your neighbors?
11. **Is there a liar in your life that you need to confront?** A co-worker? A neighbor? A family member? A politician? A social injustice in your back yard?
And when are you going to get to it?

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Nurturing Honesty in our Children

The Empty Pot, a Chinese folk story about honesty.

(Adapted from a book written and illustrated by Demi, ©1996 Owlet Books)

Many years ago in China, the Emperor made an announcement. He was getting old and had no son. He needed to find someone to replace him as Emperor of China. He had always loved gardening so he decided to pass out flower seeds to boys throughout the kingdom. Whichever boy could grow the best plant would win the privilege of becoming the next emperor. Boys flocked to the palace for the seeds.

Among the boys was Ping, the best gardener in all the kingdom. His bok choy, sweet peas and melons were always the sweetest and freshest at the market. He thought surely he could win this contest. He carefully planted the seed the Emperor had given him in a pot with rich soil. He watered and cared for the seed, but nothing happened.

All around him, though, other boys planted seeds that quickly sprouted and grew. They laughed and taunted the boy with the empty pot. The boy planted his seed in a different pot with even better soil. He fertilized the soil with dried fish meal. Still, nothing grew.

Finally the day came to take the plants to the Emperor. The boy was despondent, but he took his empty pot and walked to the palace. The Emperor examined the other boys' strong, green plants with a scowl on his face. He frowned even more deeply when he saw the boy's pot.

"You brought me an empty pot," he exclaimed. Ping hung his head. He said, "I'm sorry, Emperor. I tried and tried to grow the seed you gave me, but nothing came up." Here it shows a page from the story



book that shows the boy approaching the Emperor with his pot. The Emperor stroked his chin and smiled. Then he said to the people, "May I introduce you to the new Emperor. You see, the seeds were cooked so they would not grow. I'm not sure how the rest of you grew plants, but they didn't grow from my seeds. He has been honest and noble."

Visit the web site <http://easyscienceforkids.com/all-about-the-empty-pot-a-chinese-folk-story-about-honesty/> with your child or children. There is a 10 minute video of children enacting this ancient story along with facts and activities and discussion questions.

Movies to watch with the children in your life.... then discuss what you learned about honesty:

Shrek (2001)
Grey Owl (1999)
Antz (1998)
The Mask (1994)

And for older children/ adolescents :
The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (1994)
Patch Adams (1998)
Dead Poet's Society (1989)

Resources for Reflection on Honesty

BOOKS ON HONESTY

Getting Real: Ten Truth Skills You Need to Live an Authentic Life by Susan Campbell

Meeting the Shadow: The Hidden Power of the Dark Side of Human Nature by Connie Zweig, editor

A Little Book on the Human Shadow - Robert Bly

Dance of Deception - Harriet Lerner

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion by Jonathan Haidt

The Secular Conscience: Why Belief Belongs in Public Life by Austin Dacey

Days of Destruction by Christopher Hedges

People of the Lie – Scott Peck

The Grace of Silence: A Family Memoir by Michele Norris

Honesty by Sam Harris

MOVIES ON HONESTY

Big Fat Liar (2002) dir. Shawn Levy

Big Fish (2003), dir. Tim Burton

Cool Runnings (1993) dir. Jon Turteltaub

Liar, Liar (1997) dir. Tom Shadyac

Pickpocket (1959), dir. Robert Bresson

Sex, Lies, and Videotape (1989), dir. Steven Soderbergh

Slumdog Millionaire (2008), dir. Danny Boyle

ARTICLES ON HONESTY

“Tell the Truth, and Live Longer. (No Lie!)” – <http://bit.ly/1bwer9B>

“How Lies Work” – <http://bit.ly/1GjPECs>

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VIDEOS AND WEB-BASED RESOURCES ON HONESTY

Post Secret-- A website where people post anonymous confessions. <http://postsecret.com/>

"The Truth About Dishonesty," Dan Ariely https://youtu.be/XBmJay_qdNc

"Meet JR," A must-watch video/interview about a street artist that uses art to tell and confront people with the truth. <http://bit.ly/1HmgolT>

Anne Lamott on "Writing That's Too Honest Can Be "Devastating" <http://bit.ly/1HueTR7>

Pamela Meyer on How to spot a liar (TED Talk) <http://bit.ly/1cuipff>

SONGS ABOUT HONESTY

"Honesty" - Billy Joel

"Lyn' Eyes" - The Eagles

"It's a Sin to Tell a Lie" - Pat Boone

"Little Lies" - Fleetwood Mac

"Rock Salt and Nails" - Flatt and Scruggs

"Truth and Honesty" - Aretha Franklin

I would like to see a show of hands
Nothin' concealed, roll up your sleeve
Nothin' up my sleeve except my heart
And I believe we've come apart

I would like to see you play your cards
Reveal your hands and show your heart
Maybe we could get it back

With truth and honesty that's what we need to hold on
To the good stuff we believe in
Before we land up loose and sad and free
Before we find that it's gone
We could pull it back together, truth and honesty
Open up your hands, show me your heart

Let's stay up till dawn and talk it out
Nothin' concealed, no alibi, returnin' to light
Before we start, then all we do is fall apart
If I can see the sunlight in your eyes

Then maybe we all could shine, yeah
Maybe we could get it back, oh baby, yeah baby

Oh, truth and honesty that is what we need to hold on
To the good stuff we believe in
Before we land up loose, sad and free
Before we find out all that is gone
We could pull it back together with truth and honesty, oh
Open up your hands, show me your heart

Truth and honesty, oh, that's what we need to hold on
To the good stuff we believe in
Before we land up loose and sad and free
Before we find out that it's gone
We could pull it back together, truth and honesty

Truth and honesty, you know what we need, sure
enough within
To the good stuff, the good stuff baby
You got to be real, you got to be real, you got to be
sugar
To the good stuff we believe in, you got to, you got to



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Looking Ahead

The content for these packets is a group effort. We welcome submissions of your ideas of readings, stories, videos, visual images, questions, and spiritual exercises for each month's topic. While not everything will make it into this collection, it is useful for our worship team and our group facilitators. You can send submissions for April's topic of "Sustainability" by the third Sunday, April 19th, to debra@unitarianscalgary.org

Themes for Spring 2015

May – Honesty

June – Imagination

Theme-based Listening Circles (TLCs) for 2014-15

Theme-based Listening Circles are now meeting all over the city! An opportunity to connect with others to delve more deeply with the theme of the month. If you are interested in a group send an inquiry tlc@unitarianscalgary.org

September 2015-June 2016

Themes for September 2015 – June 2016 are now being considered

If you would be interested in Theme Based Listening Circle and would like to be a facilitator or participant next year send a message to tlc@unitariancalgary.org. The hope is that there will be TLC in various locations and times.

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Thanks to all who contributed and appreciation for the Canadian Unitarian Congregations participating in the thematic ministry sharing circle, and Rev. Scott Tayler's Soul Matters Sharing Circle.