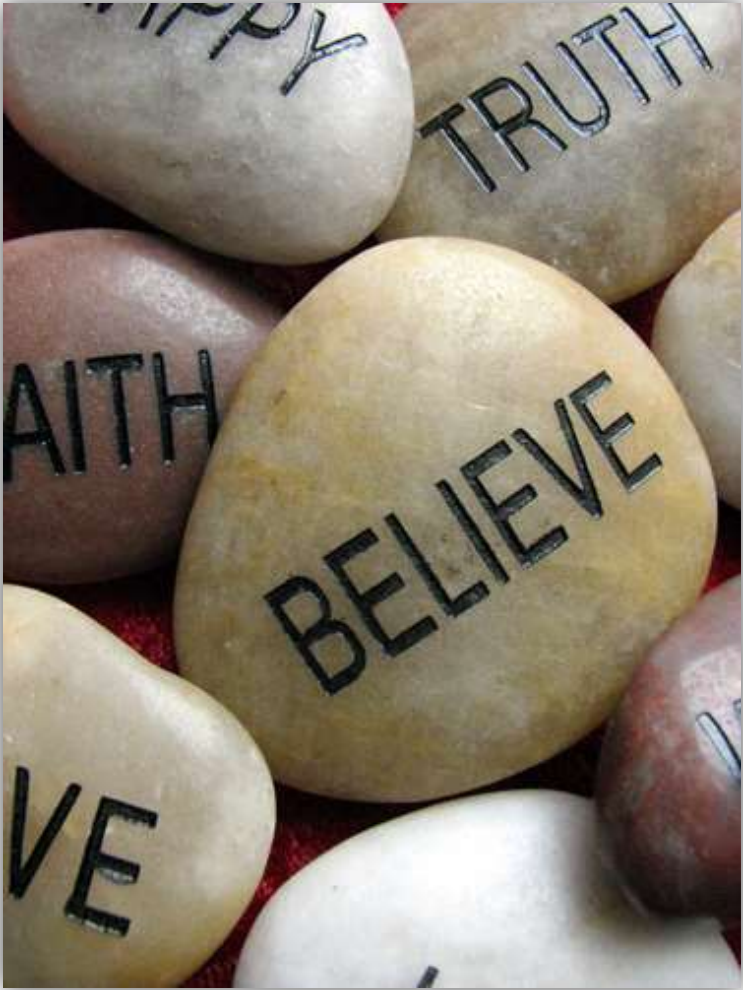


# Statements of Faith



*Coming of Age Youth*  
*May 3, 2015*



## Lila Goehring

When I was first asked to sit down and write a draft of my faith statement, I recalled a few inspirational quotes, googled the seven principles, maybe drew some flowers, and then said to myself “This is something you’re going to have to write really late at night after having caffeine. Because then you’ll think of everything, get really deep, and uncover all the mysteries of life. After all, people write poetry at night.”

And obviously, being the honor student that I am, I finished this thing at 11:42 the night before the deadline. I know how this stuff goes.

And this faith statement made me nervous. I’m a 16 year old kid, what do I know about life? How should I be able to answer these questions?

We talked about a lot of things in Coming of Age, like God, Why bad things happen to Good people, and quite an extensive conversation about homelessness. I have to say, our discussions were the best. It’s so interesting hearing other people talk about how they see the world. People passionately talking about what they believe are my favorite kind of people.

And the other stuff-I have no idea if there’s a God. That might be something that makes me a UU, because that’s acceptable here. For me, I’m okay with not knowing, and that doesn’t keep me up. But what I do know is this. Some people need God. And I think I figured out why. Everyone has something that makes them feel a little less lost. For some people it’s drinking, for some it’s raising a family, for some it’s working hard, and for some, it’s religion. It doesn’t have to make sense, it’s just what people need.

And quite honestly, I don’t think there’s an answer for why bad things happen to good people. I know so many people who have been hurt and I always wish I can answer when they ask “why me?”. I think the world would be a lot easier if we understood that. And here’s the thing-you’re allowed to be angry, but the world is not working against you. As an anonymous poet said “The flowers do not bloom for you and when your mother shouts ask her if she is okay instead of thinking she hates you. The world walks beside you and is silent. It does not trip you up or carry you.

I think people forget how lonely it can be to be a child and how confusing it is to be a teenager. God, middle school was the worst. But even if I could erase it, I don’t think I would because that would be wrong. I would never erase anything. I don’t go around saying “everything happens for a

reason” because that’s no excuse for people treating you like crap and besides, you’re the one writing your life story and you learn from everything. People treating me like crap has taught me to find good friends, and being sad has taught me to do things that make me happy.

And high school has been somehow so beautiful, yet I’ve cried more than my entire life put together—including middle school. High school will teach you how to get three hours of sleep and take 4 tests the next day. High school will teach you how to cry and question your worth over a number. High school will teach you how to cheat. But deep down, you know it doesn’t matter, because you’ve also learned how to find people you love, and how to survive. High school will teach you how to fail. It will teach you how to see what matters, and you’ll realize that it’s not about a grade.

Because 5 years from now you won’t remember your SAT score or the boy who broke your heart. What you’ll have learned is that you have to stay alive and that you have a lot to offer the world. You will be okay.

The Queen Gilda Radner once said “While we have the gift of life, it seems to me that only tragedy is to allow part of us to die—whether it is our spirit, our creativity, or our glorious uniqueness.”

If you love something, buy 15 of it and dedicate your life to it. Don’t erase what you don’t like, learn from it. Your demons are here to teach you a lesson, and they never give up but that also means that they are fighting a losing battle. If you want change in the world, do something about it. We are all people and we are all lost so be nice.

Coming of age is not something that happens once. Coming of age happens every day. My faith statement would have been different a day ago, it’s different when I’m upset, and it’ll definitely be different 3 months from now. Who knows what I’ll believe tomorrow?

It’s your life and you are writing the story. It’s okay to mess up, because you can try again tomorrow. Just make sure it’s something you’d want to read.

“Courage is not the absence of fear but rather the judgement that something is more important than fear. The brave may not live forever but the cautious do not live at all. From now on you’ll be traveling the road between who you think you are and who you can be. The key is to allow yourself to make the journey.”



## Sydney Haines

I believe it is important to know yourself. If you don't know yourself, how do you live? I believe you should live your life to the fullest. Life gives you a lesson and that's why I think bad things and good things happen in our lives. I believe we all learn from our mistakes or the events that life gives us. We all have to go through the bad things to get through life because if we keep holding on to the past, how do we move on to our future?

I believe that something in this universe does take part in our life and somewhat controls it, but does not control it until the day I was born and until I die. I do not believe there is just one "god". I believe there are many out there and the one I know for sure is out there is Mother Nature. I believe Mother Nature does control the world. She does not control humanity and what they think or do but she controls what the temperature will be like.

I believe in the 7 principles of Unitarian Universalism. I believe as being a UU you should accept every religion and not judge what they believe in. I believe you should respect people's religion and what they have to say on it but I don't believe that you should try and force someone to believe what you think is right or what you believe in. You can have an opinion but you shouldn't force your opinion on someone. I believe you should just have an open mind and accept others for who they are.

I believe there is no bad place after you die (most people would call it "hell"). I believe death is supposed to be peaceful. The afterlife should be the best life because you already learned your lessons and lived through your first life. So I believe that hell is just a thing to scare people so they will do good things in life. I do believe in spirits or ghosts or souls or whatever you want to call them. I believe when you die, your spirit comes out of you and goes wherever you want to go. So that is why you experience things that are paranormal because whoever died wanted to stay on earth.

I believe there is a good place to go when you die (most people would call it "heaven"). I believe you can call it whatever you have the option to go there when you die. You can make this heaven whatever you want it to be because it is your after life and you get to choose how you want it to be.



## Hunter Jepsen

As a young growing man, I have many aspirations for what I want to do in life. I won't be able to achieve these aspirations without having a specific list of goals and life rules to follow.

I believe that as I grow, I will become a better, and more knowledgeable person.

I believe that as a person I have no ceiling to stop me from reaching my highest level.

I believe that as people we all should treat other people the way we want to be treated, no person should be treated badly, or be made to feel sad.

I believe that as a person who wants to achieve goals, that there is no goal can't achieve, and that I should push myself for the greatest goal.

I believe that if we believe, we can achieve.

I believe that every person has the right to be happy, because there is nothing in life that shouldn't make us happy.

I believe that hard work will make the dream work.

I believe that everything happens for a reason, because even if we are faced with hard times, or challenges in life, the way that our life is after these times is how the world wants us to live.

I believe that every person should be respectful, because it'll help us to grow and become a better person.

I believe that every little mistake or, or big mistake in our lives helps us grow to become a better overall person.

I believe that every person should have the feeling of comfort, in any type of way, either in family, a team, a group, a community, or a friendship.

I believe that every person should have an education. Doesn't mean they need to go to college, or have a masters or bachelors degree because we can be educated in many subjects, like welding, plumbing, or woodshop.

I believe that grades don't show an individual's intelligence.

I believe that we are our own enemy. The only person that can stop us is ourselves.

I believe that only the strong can survive our world, or challenges in our lives.

I believe that every person should be viewed equally.



## Alan Kerns

*Faith is a matter of trust. But it's not what I have trust in, but what I must have trust in.*

I have faith that the world will allow me to make my own decisions and take my own steps to improve myself. That's not to say that I necessarily have faith in everyone in the world, but my very life, which only came about because the child before me was a miscarriage, is an immense gift. So what do I do with this gift? Life isn't everything-you can always be a better person. More fit, more intelligent, more empowered. People say you have to play the hand you're dealt, that you can't change much in your life. But what's stopping you from becoming fit, becoming smarter? It's all about trust. Being able to trust yourself and trust that you can find and correct your faults and struggles. And this goes to a need for this trust, because it's the only method that allows me to improve. Now, just because you need to trust in your ability to improve doesn't mean that you're flying solo. I have a mutual trust with my family. I talk to them about my struggles and faults, something you need trust for. Your introspection needs to be the trigger. In 7th grade I couldn't run a mile. Your family can offer support, which you have to have full faith in. My brother got me running. You need to continue your improvement, and have full persistence. I now run cross country. It's the trust I have in myself to realize what needs to be done, and the trust in my family that makes me a better person. And that is everything to me. And just as my family is my helper in my struggles, I need to know kindness to be the helper in other peoples' problems. Not everyone knows that they can completely change their life for the better, but with fraternity we can achieve it all. These are the core decisions I have made in my life. They define me: They change my life and the lives of others. And the world has given them to me. A 17% change. But I made it. So I pay my trust back. We can't begin to understand the world. So who are we to question it?

Help doesn't end with my family. Because I need to improve physically and mentally, but I need to trust that the people in this church can guide me spiritually. Everyone here listens and affirms my beliefs, helps me question and grow in a spiritual manner. Because I am spiritual. Not religious. I take matters into my own hands and work towards them, I don't need a god. But I am spiritual. I know the interpersonal connections I have to make and I trust myself to do so. Hearing from everyone here, I fully realize what I can develop in knowledge. And so I learn tolerance. Not to be confused with acceptance. But it's very important to hear everyone's ideas. I don't have



to accept it as my idea too. But if we listen, we can be joined in fraternity, the ultimate form of trust.

Spirituality and self-improvement are my core most values, and I trust them to guide me. Without them I am lost. This trust is my gift from the world. And in unlikely circumstances, as is often the case, I received two more gifts. While sitting in a field, just thinking, they came to me. Spiritual, not physical gifts. This field around me was brimming with white clover flowers. Every direction as far as I could see. But then, 2 inches in front of me, the most brilliant pink and purple clover. That clover is very important to me. Amongst hundreds, thousands of flowers, one stood alone. That flower had complete trust that it's pink and purple message was correct that it spoke out. So when I'm the odd one out, I need to have trust, like the flower, that what I'm doing is right. Sometimes the unpopular belief is right. When people told me I was fat, or that I couldn't do something, I said no and I changed. I owe where I am today to that flower. Immediately after that I received my second gift. As I was holding one of the blooms, a bumble bee perched upon the flower. A few seconds, then gone. Flower to flower, never tiring, not scared of me. That bee was happy and content with its work. And this is possibly the most important lesson of all. You have to have trust and love for what you're doing. It's a struggle to go flower to flower, to make flashcards to study, to run another mile, but you have to appreciate why you're doing it. You have to look forward to the brighter tomorrow. And that's how you put in your work. That's how you improve.

Two natural things in my life. Beautiful, simple, and everything I have faith in.



## Mason Lorch

I have always had difficulty with faith--understanding what it is, what it does, and what role it has in my life. I tend to be a very rational person so it is hard for me to understand something like faith, which does not make much sense when thought about from a rational perspective. In order for me to develop my faith, I had to first define and understand it. This statement is a summary of what I came up with.

My simplest definition of faith would be 'trust without certainty.' I believe faith is akin to trust in the way that both are things that give us integrity from which we derive our creativity and our motivation. Faith and trust give us the security and purpose to live as we do, though by very different means. Our perception of all things happens inside our minds--our perception of the physical world and of rational thoughts, but also of less finite things such as ideas and emotions. We normally put trust in rational things. We have trust in things that are logical: things that are supported by evidence. The certainty of these things gives you integrity and conviction. It is clear to me, however, that people can find these qualities in less rational things. People find these qualities in ideas that are statistically improbable or even impossible. They find hope in things that are far beyond their understanding. Faith allows you to trust while not having to remove doubt.

Another thing faith does is creates meaning. When you look at life or the universe from a completely rational perspective, you find that it has no intrinsic meaning or purpose. things simply happen as they do and life merely propagates itself. Faith allows us to give meaning to things. This is something unique about being a conscious being.

I have mentioned that faith has been a difficult topic for me. For this reason it has taken a very long time for me to discover what role faith has in my own life. This being said, it is profoundly more important than I previously thought. As I have also said before, I am a very rational person. I tend to think rationally about things most people would not. I now know that this creates an imbalance. It is thought by some that the reason humans have faith is that faith is necessary to live as social beings. The human, or more specifically the human mind, is a complex and diverse thing that is difficult to understand and predict. Faith may be necessary for humans to trust each other enough to live in community. I have found this to be true. This leads me to believe that faith is essential in any social interaction or human connection, and therefore it is extremely important in order to live a balanced and righteous life. Yet I have also found that I must maintain a balance between my reliance on

faith and my reliance on rationalism. Some people rely too heavily on faith whereas I tend to rely on rationality. Often times I see the effects of this in my social life. Under social pressure, I find it difficult to act like myself. I often consciously avoid people and effectively shut down my personality. The only thing that seems to help this is being around people whom I know well and trust. My family and friends are, to me, the most prominent examples of these people. They allow me to open up and enjoy life. They inspire me and make me feel that my life is going somewhere. This happens, I think, because of the connection between us. I have faith that I have affected their lives just as they have changed mine.

I have thought for a long time about faith and what it means to me. In doing this, I have shed light upon a hitherto unknown aspect of my life. I may now look at the world from new angles and see things in different ways.



## Ian Mack

The way I see it, the body is made up the way the ancient Egyptians said it was. There is the ren (name), ba (personality), ka (vital spark), Sheut (shadow), and the ib (heart). The important ones are ba and ren, name and personality.

Your name is composed of your life's experiences. Your personality is what makes you who you are. And I feel my spirituality has greatly influenced them both. When you get a cut, sure it hurts but it heals in time. But when you get a new idea, it changes the way you think.

When I was young and in my foster family I didn't get to start growing my spirituality because it was being forced. They were evangelistic Christians, and I didn't agree with them.

For a while I've known that I don't believe in gods or goddesses. To me it's just too farfetched of an idea for me to believe. I guess what I'm saying is that your spirituality is like a rough edged rock in the ocean. At first it's nothing to really look at. But as life goes on it becomes a shiny stone to cherish for a long time.

Yeah that's pretty much it.



## Kaley Mack

People are always asking me what I believe in, and until recently I wasn't sure. One of the most asked questions I get is, why do you think bad things happen in the world? I think bad things happen so that we can learn from what happens and become stronger. Also so that we can learn from others mistakes so that the same things don't happen over and over again. There is one person in specific that has always helped me learn from my mistakes. I would have to say that one of my biggest helpers or heroes is my mom. She is always there for me when I need her most. She helps me learn from my mistakes a lot which is nice because then the next time I'm in that situation, I know what to do. She has been a big part of my spiritual journey and she has helped me find myself. She has taught me things I would have never know about myself, and my past. I would have never known these things without her. One of the main things this church teaches me is to believe in who or what I want to believe in. On my journey of faith I have found I am agnostic. I don't believe in one specific god. I do believe that there is a greater being but I am not sure that it is God. I also believe that if there is a god that he or she is in everything and everywhere.



## Angelika Marsh

Hi I am Ang. I am a 9th grader at Lawrence Upper School.

I'm not sure if there is god. I had not really thought about if I do or don't believe in a god until we started talking about it in Coming of Age classes and I joined bible club this year at school. Right now, I'm still exploring. I don't believe in heaven and hell. While you are alive and on Earth you should be a nice person and help others because you only have one chance to live in this world.

I believe that all people in our world should have equal rights, like women getting equal pay for the same jobs as men, all races being treated fairly by the police, people with disabilities being able to get the support they need, and gays and lesbians being able to marry like everyone else. People like my cousins who are gay shouldn't be looked at like something is wrong with them because they are gay. I believe that all human beings should be treated with respect. I also believe that everyone should have the right to have food, housing, an education, and health care.

I am an athlete and play a lot of sports for my school like basketball and volleyball. What makes us a community and a team is that we work together during the games, talk to each other on the bus, and support each other at school. Just like I believe our church community is a team. We help and support one another at church and it is part of my faith to help others in our community such as when we went to feed the homeless. When I struggle with something like homework or a problem I either go to my friends or my family. I am so glad to have my parents, brothers and friends to get help because some kids don't have this support and struggle their whole lives since they have no one to go to. I also know that I can rely on Jen, my mentor, and the UU church community for help when I need it. This is what church should be, a place where everyone feels welcome and supported.

Thank you Jen and the coming of age group for helping me to write this faith statement and understanding more about the Unitarian Universalist faith.



## Connor May

Here in lies the beliefs of Connor Patrick May:

I am a Unitarian Universalist and hold the seven principles as law in my everyday life. Specifically the 1st and last principle in my everyday life. I hold the Scientific Method beneath the seven principles, but above all other beliefs. The scientific method can explain in detail anything as long as there are facts to back it up. Therefore, I cannot approve or deny if there is a "God" (in any sense/religion). I believe Humanity has the ability to make decisions both good and bad. I believe that human nature has shaped the world as we know it and that it will decide whether or not our race survives.

I do not believe that we can know if there is a God or not until we die or have an event in which he or she intervenes. However, I will respect all other religions and their views of god. I am allowed to state my beliefs, but I will not allow myself to get involved in a religious argument. I will allow myself to intervene on social justice issues no matter the cause, whether it be religious or other.

I believe that all people are able to express their sexuality in a consensual manner. Consent above all. Sex should be practiced in a safe and consensual environment. People have the right to indulge in their sexual fetishes as long as it is consensual and safe. All people are equal, no exceptions. All people should have complete control over their bodies and should not be denied that right due to laws (specifically Abortion laws). Sexuality should not inhibit friendship or relationships.

I believe that birth is induced by sexual intercourse and is a series of chemical reactions within the body. I believe that birth and death are mysterious occurrence and are amazing, however, they are not induced by a God or any other ethereal being.

I believe that spiritual meditation is healthy and should be practiced often. It can be practiced at church or by some hobby or anything that anybody decides. At this current time I practice spiritually by drawing, singing, eating, and experiences both good and bad.

I believe that when someone dies that it induces a series of chemical reactions that cause the decomposition of the physical body. Billions of organisms benefit from the death of every person. When I die I would like to not be pumped with formaldehyde and naturally decompose in the wild. I believe that there is an unknown energy that is released when you die and may imprint on certain places. I classify the dead as the recently

dead, and the long dead. The recently dead are people who have died but live on in the memories of people who knew the person. The long dead are the people who live on in history and there is no one who remembers them except by stories told about them or historical occurrences that included them.

I believe that I have the right to vote for what I believe to be right in my mind and in accordance to the previously stated beliefs until I believe otherwise. I will reserve the right to not be tied to a party. I currently identify mostly with the democratic party and will only vote with extensive research into the person in question or legislation in question.

I do not believe in Jesus Christ and the Holy ghost. I do believe that Jesus of Nazareth had great teachings and he was a great person but not that he is Christ (the messiah). I believe in part the teachings of Buddha. I believe that he was an amazing man and was incredibly wise.

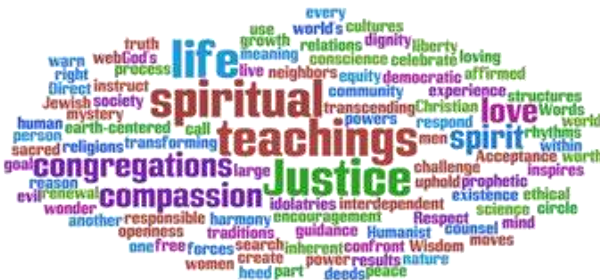
I partly believe in the zombie apocalypse, but mostly in being ready for any kind of disaster. I believe in the general idea of ghosts. I believe in the imprint of energy on physical objects and events we cannot explain.

I adopted some of my beliefs from Bob Erdman (a member of the church at this time), That the question of if there is a god is not important and shouldn't have time wasted on its contemplation. Also a belief from Randy Leeson: The recent dead and long dead principle described earlier.

In short, if I had to use a label for my religious beliefs, I would be an Agnostic, I believe in the Scientific Method, I believe in the ability to make decisions for yourself, and finally, the ability to make a life happy with a hug. Slight humanist with some doubts in humanity. My beliefs could be summarized by this quote from Gandalf, a character from J. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings.

“Saruman believes it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. I found it is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay... small acts of kindness and love.”

Gandalf the Grey





## Allison Norris

I did not grow up going to a U.U. Church. I went to a Christian Church because that is what my mom believes in and that's who I live with. My mom's side of the family all have different beliefs. They all believe very highly in God. My Grandma and Grandpa are both Catholic. My mom grew up Catholic. My Aunt & Uncle are both Orthodox. I started attending a U.U. church when Colleen married Sandy. I come to this church regularly. It is a place where I feel welcome. I have a lot of friends here who I have grown up with. We all love each other like family.

When you walk into the doors of any Unitarian Universalist church you always feel welcome, no matter if you're in a different congregation you always feel like you are home. You are always greeted with a warm smile or a hug. Since I teach spirit play during first service and during second service I attend RE class, I don't get to go to many services, but when I do it's always a joy to go and watch and listen to service. The highlight of service is when we stand up and sing the most beautiful and powerful songs together. I also like when we have a moment of silence because it makes the mood of the people very calm. I really like joy's and concern's, it's important that we all talk about what's on our mind's good-or bad. When we talk about that we all come together as a family to celebrate the joy's and send healing thoughts about the concern's. Going to service makes me very relaxed and calm. It makes the troubles of the previous week go away, it makes the new week a little easier.

I think my beliefs have changed very much. When I was little I used to think that God was the only option to believe in. When I came here and I was open to all new exciting things I never knew existed. It opened me up to being a U.U.

I believe that everyone should be treated equal no matter what race, gender or religion. Each person is important. That is something that everyone needs to learn. Every one should be able to have their own voice. We should always be kind in all we do.

I think it's really important that we search for what is true to us. A lot of other churches don't have people from the congregation that believe in different things, they mostly all believe in one thing. But people from our church all believe in different things. We are very open to learning about new religions because we are free to learn together and I think that it's interesting that we can learn about different religions from all over the world and not get judged and can come back to our religion. As a

Unitarian Universalist you can believe in whatever you want and no one will treat you differently.



## Salvatore Smith

My name is Salvatore Smith and I strongly believe in this statement. I have tried to write this without influence from any other beliefs, which was surprisingly hard because most people put their beliefs up on billboards and neon signs.

I believe that it is extremely important to, when writing a faith statement or any other task, to be truthful especially to yourself. If I can believe myself and have more fun in life, my life will be more enjoyable and will lead to me becoming a better person.

I believe that my body is a gift and I will not poison it for I only have one and it would be disrespectful and a waste. I always have upheld the golden rule in my heart (do unto others as you would have them do unto you) for other people are just like us and deserve to be preserved just as much as we do.

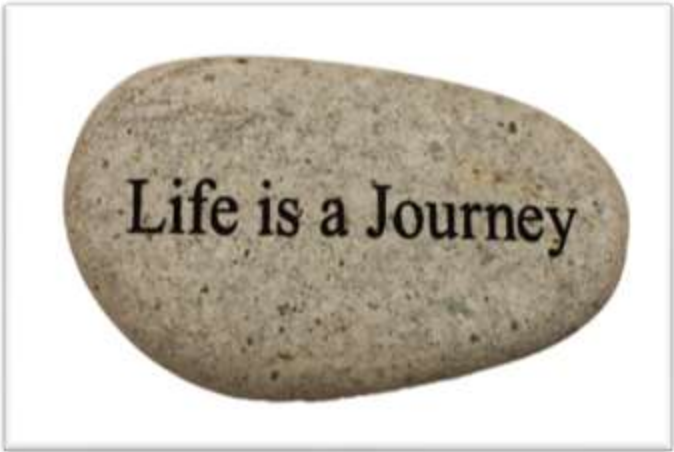
In my utopic world everyone is equal. Which seems too much to ask but imagine if everyone were equal not only in wealth but in opportunity. Everyone would be kinder; everyone would be respected by fellow kin. But this travels beyond my faith statement and into what I believe in others. For now I try to take from society what I need though it does not always work out. I guess that's human nature.

Possibly my biggest belief is my belief in (not in the common view) not winning life. It is every day that I see so many people inside their perfect houses with perfect jobs and families; they "won". Don't take it the wrong way but being a naturally bored person I would be bored after I "win" life. I started noticing this over the years so I created a list that ensures that I will never "win." It has over one hundred pages from flying helicopters to driving around the world, and I am constantly trying to update it for I cannot "win" life until I complete this list.

Now most people's definition of faith is what god you believe in. Well I don't know, and to explain, most of my life I was Atheist. But then I started realizing a pattern that most adults come to believe in some higher power. So what I would say is that I do not know if I believe in a God but I trust that my later in life self will know for sure what god is or what happens to me after death.

The world is a toolbox in which we, the human race, are to enjoy. Let's put two and two together and be creative. The more we take interest in the world, the more we will have fun and not lose hope. And in

the end that's what it really boils down, to isn't it? Looking back on your life and saying "you know I had a damn good time."



## Rebekah Swango

I'm a short and small fraction of the entire span of the universe, a tiny part of something huge and beautiful. My actions and inactions either effect nothing or change everything, and I think I'm comfortable with both extremes. In the organized chaos of creation, there doesn't have to be a fixed agenda for anyone to follow, and everyone on this planet is just trying to make sense of who they are and their own existences, myself included. As many others, I don't have a clear or definite answer to either of these. Though it is not quite as terrifying as it once was to not know why I'm here or who I am, life is lived to give you an exploration of these questions, even if at the end of it you still have no explanation.

I've always felt a disconnect between myself and how I'm perceived by others and myself. There really is no part of myself I find completely solid, but I've found that a point of living is to constantly change and evolve yourself. I don't have to be the same person I was a year, month, week, day, or even a hour ago. I actually get bored if I don't change something about myself every few months. My thoughts and opinions don't have to remain constant and I do not have to be the person that people want or think that I am. Still, I try to improve the things I dislike about myself as much as I can. Such as striving to be more present by not worrying about the past and future, and making peace between myself.

A good or "moral" life is lived if you accomplish the purpose you've set for yourself. For me, I find faith in words, stories, music, and ideas. I want to inspire people and create my own memory on the world while improving it for the better. There's always been a need inside me to help other others, but I also want to meet my own demands simultaneously. The world and it's people should be cared for and everything, no matter how small, is worth something. The diversity in the universe is what composes something beautiful and every chapter of it is needed to be whole. Everything should be appreciated, and nothing is a waste of space nor time. Art and words and poetry is just what adds to the entirety, but it's what makes us all human. It shows us what it's like to feel and all in all, isn't that our reason to be here? To feel everything and love and feel emotion so fully even if we don't understand a single part of it. In all the misunderstanding and distress, humanity is still a beautiful thing. Everything might not be clear to me now, and anything I think can shift or warp with time, unfolding into a clearer solution. Now is the time to grow and explore, setting up a framework of the person I hope to one day be and the goals I will achieve- I have a right to be here.

## Cordelia Wheatley

This, my Heart I have offered to the moon  
Battered, broken, torn in places, but still beating to the rhythm of my own  
song.  
This, the Blood in my veins and the strings tangled around that core of  
brightness  
Each thread a bond and each bond an interminable link and each link an  
undying love  
This, the Light in my eyes and the shine showing the paths ahead  
The smile on my face as I stride ahead, nothing guiding me but my will  
This, my Mind so full of possibility and so tangled and convoluted  
Each synapse a story, the web a cityscape woven with the spark of an  
idea and a self  
This, the Breath in my lungs, a steady cyclical direction of ins and outs  
The words flowing outwards a song of freedom and wonder, spoken or  
not  
This, my Doom both a comfort and weakness, and the knowledge that all  
things end in time, and the fact that that is not a bad thing  
But even that end is never an end, the note desolation plays ringing into  
eternity with the energy of everythingness, never created or destroyed,  
eternally forming anew  
This, the Void that all would think is empty, but in reality  
Whether deep as the abyss, vast as the cosmos, small as the space  
between electrons, is but uncharted territory  
This, the Time I have filled with song, a melody bound in clockwork  
Beating on and on with the forward progression of the universe, glancing  
back but never quite stopping  
This, the Space I have filled with art, creation in the hands of one not  
meant to last  
The stories I found and the lives I lived through them, drawn in graphite  
and ink and stardust  
This, the Life I live, a garden made of crystal still growing and blooming  
and soaring to the sky  
A tangled net of atoms and cells and organs, pieces-parts fitting together  
so wonderfully into an existence  
This, the Rage held so dear, all flickering purple fire and burning  
compassion  
The drive to change the world and make things right, burning low in  
places but never quite lost  
This, the Hope kept so close, all shining gossamer wings and feathers  
lifted by thermals  
The belief in all that should be kept sacred and beautiful, the brightness  
looking forward to a brand new day

This, the essence of all I know wound into a glowing green spirograph  
A circle of twelve held so close and so dear, beating and blowing and  
pulsing and flowing  
A fundament made a story and a song, an orchestra and a lyric of  
wonder infinite  
I sing it and speak it, one who has called herself champion of souls  
Loyal and kind and diligent above all else, a heart once forged in ice  
thawed to an ocean  
Free and sprawling and endless and home to so many

This I know.

This is myself.

This is not the world.

This is not all there is to life.

Life cannot be bound in cadence and word, not all of it, not ever.

It remains, eternal and glimmering crystal, and simultaneously does not,  
transient vibrations of hope and love.

These, I set forth to the world as what I believe:

We live many lives, whether future or past, or here or far away, or as  
what man deign to call Homo sapiens or not.

The soul does not die, can only change form.

Even so, bits of us ever slip away to the universe as we as we are now  
die, scattered to both the cosmos and those that we cared for most.

Every belief is something precious, and should be respected and treated  
as such.

Though our experience as ourselves on this plane is limited, we must  
strive to make it a good experience for all that live through it.

Peace is something beautiful and fragile, and should be treasured.

Life is an infinite mystery, and there is no shame in being curious.

We are inherently good and kind at our fundament. Even in the darkest  
hour, there is still light somewhere.

We must not allow the good things about life to pass us by, nor the bad  
things unnoticed and unchanged.

Hatred is passed down, created out of selfishness on some ends and  
retribution on others. If we are consumed by it we are lost.

Creation is the essence of love, and the universe is kind.

Music, art, and stories are sacred things in this world, as they come from  
the heart.

Compassion is the heart of true connection.



**2014-2015**

**Coming of Age Youth and Their Mentors**

Lila Goehring	Kay Eckman
Sydney Haines	Lori McGee
Hunter Jepsen	Mark Eckman
Alan Kerns	Joel Slater
Mason Lorch	Eric vanBaars
Ian Mack	Jim Scott
Kaley Mack	Ann VerWiebe
Angelika Marsh	Jen Walton-Fisette
Connor May	Randy Leeson
Allison Norris	Michelle Bores
Salvatore Smith	Bob Erdman
Rebekah Swango	Shirley Kiernan
Cordelia Wheatley	Laura Sinclair

**Coming of Age Facilitators**

Elaine Bowen	Andrew Rome
Laura Sinclair	Jeff St. Clair

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