



Touchstones Project

a monthly journal of Unitarian Universalism

March 2023

Trust

Wisdom Story



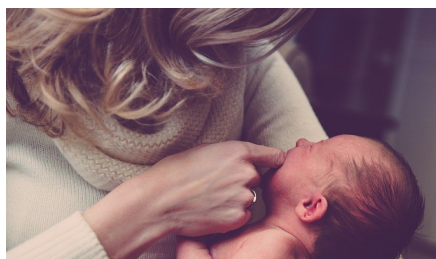
Introduction to the Theme

We are born to trust. It is in our DNA, and we prefer trust over distrust whenever possible. However, we know that cultivating the ability to trust in infants and young children depends on bonding and attachment. So often, people use these two words as synonyms, but though related, they are distinct.

Bonding refers to a parent's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors concerning their baby. If the bonding is strong, the parent's care for the baby will be good enough, and the infant will thrive. Of course, this care can't be perfect, nor should it. The term "good enough mother" was first used in 1953 by British pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott. Carla Naumburg writes,

"Children need their mother (or primary caretaker) to fail them in tolerable ways on a regular basis so they can learn to live in an imperfect world." These "failures" are vital because they help a child deal with stress and anxiety as they respond to adversity. Overcoming these "failures" help the child build resilience. However, if the primary caretaker's bonding is weak, it will impair the relationship, often with tragic consequences, including emotional neglect.

Attachment involves the type and quality of relationship that an infant builds with primary caretakers. This



process develops over the first year or two of life. Elizabeth Gutierrez writes, "During the first two years of your baby's life, 'attachment' is the word used

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Trust & Regeneration

As Martin Buber wrote, human beings are promise-making, promise-keeping, promise-breaking, and promise-renewing creatures. We evoke trust, fulfill it, betray it, and then seek to make amends. The making of amends is regeneration. It encourages us to take the risk of trust again, which is always risky business. Still, we are wise to trust the process that renews both promises and trust. However difficult trusting can be, perpetual distrust is a wasteland where Spring never comes and hope never blooms. The traditional emblem displayed in all Transylvanian Unitarian churches features a dove encircled by a serpent. It admonishes us to "be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves." May we trust wisely and well.

A Theme-Based Ministry Project

This project is supported by subscriptions from Unitarian Universalist congregations.

The Empty Pot

Demi, adapted from the original

Long ...ago, the Emperor ...was old and dying. He loved children but had none of his own. ...The Emperor decided to choose one ...to be the next Emperor.

The Emperor ...loved plants... So, nobody was surprised by the test he offered the children of the land.

The Emperor called all the children to his palace. He said, "I will give one seed to each of you. Come back in one year. When I see what you have grown..., I will choose the next Emperor."

The children ran from the palace smiling. All they had to do was grow a seed, and they would be the Emperor. ...Most of the children decided to wait a while to do their planting, and as the year went by, many children forgot their seeds.

...A boy named Chen took care of his seed right away. Just like the Emperor..., Chen loved plants. ...

...Chen found a clay pot made by his Grandfather. ...He washed the pot and dried it carefully. Next, Chen ...filled the pot with ...soil. Then he planted his seed...

Chen set the pot in the sun. Each day, he lightly sprinkled water on the seed. But nothing grew....

...Some weeks went by. The other children boasted to each other of the wonderful large plants they had grown, but Chen's seed did not grow. He tried moving the pot to another window. He tried watering his plant more, and even singing to his plant. But ...his seed did not grow.

...A year ...passed. ...Chen was

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Regeneration

Seed of Honesty

(Continued from page 1) **Wisdom Story**

ashamed that his seed had not grown.

His wise Grandfather said, "You did your best, Chen. You were caring and patient. Be honest with the Emperor and explain that you did your best. ..."

...Chen returned to the palace with his empty pot.... The children lined up to present their plants. The first child had a large plant with thick leaves, a ginseng plant that could be used to make paper and medicine. The next child had a eucalyptus plant, a healthy, strong plant that soon would become a tree big enough to produce food for many animals. When Chen's turn came, he was so sad about his empty pot.

Feeling very embarrassed, Chen held his empty pot up for the Emperor to see. Chen explained how he had lovingly cared for his seed. Chen talked about his love for his Grandfather, who had made the pot. He told the Emperor everything he had done to care for the seed and how sad he felt that the seed would not grow.

The Emperor smiled and spoke. "There is only one among you who is honest enough to be the next Emperor.... The seeds that I gave you had been boiled so they would never grow. These wonderful plants some children have shown me did not come from the seeds I gave them."

Now some of the other children looked ashamed because they had not been honest. ... "Only one child cared for the seed even when it did not grow.... Only Chen gave the seed all it needed and asked for nothing. Only Chen was honest enough to show me an empty pot. Chen will be the next Emperor."

Chen moved to the Emperor's palace with his Grandfather. The old Emperor taught him many things about gardening and much more. And when the Emperor died, he was smiling because he knew that Chen would care for his land with love and honesty.

For a reading of the children's book, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7pH9eZLPC> (6:00)

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home/session13/60162.shtml>

Living with Trust

Vulnerability and Betrayal

Martha Nussbaum

Trust ... is different from mere reliance. One may rely on an alarm clock, and to that extent be disappointed if it fails to do its job.... Similarly, one may rely on a dishonest colleague to continue lying and cheating, but this is reason, precisely, not to trust that person.... Trust, by contrast, involves opening oneself to the possibility of betrayal,



hence to a very deep form of harm. It means relaxing the self-protective strategies with which we usually go through life, attaching great importance to actions by the other over which one has little control. It means ...a certain degree of helplessness.

Is trust a matter of belief or emotion? Both, in complexly related ways. Trusting someone, one believes that she will keep her commitments, and at the same time one appraises those commitments as very important for one's own flourishing. But that latter appraisal is a key constituent part of a number of emotions, including hope, fear, and, if things go wrong, deep grief and loss. Trust is probably not identical to those emotions, but under normal circumstances of life, it often proves sufficient for them. One also typically has other related emotions toward a person whom one trusts, such as love and concern. Although one typically does not decide to trust in a deliberate way, the willingness to be in someone else's hands is a kind of choice, since one can certainly live without that type of dependency... Living with trust involves profound vulnerability and some helplessness...."

Source: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2016/05/03/martha-nussbaum-anger-and-forgiveness/>

Not Me, but We

Weaving Trust

Trust is essential. It can take a long time to build and a moment to destroy.

Trust

1. Creates psychological safety
2. Deepens relationships
3. Facilitates risk-taking
4. Enhances communication
5. Strengthens cooperation
6. Encourages self-confidence
7. Invites openness and vulnerability
8. Reduces stress
9. Increases feelings of optimism/hope
10. Promotes the golden rule

Trust is a foundation for many things we hold most precious, including love, family, and friendship. But, importantly, trust is not about "Me"; it is about "We" because trust creates "We."

Without trust, faith is not possible. Without faith, hope is not possible. Without hope, life seems futile. Without trust, truth is suspect, relationships are damaged, and love seems pointless.

Trust is the foundation of human life. Our interactions are more collaborative, productive, and meaningful when trust is present. When distrust exists, we may experience insecurity, anxiety, and anger, and our ability to work together is often compromised. Distrust in relationships and within groups, organizations, and society is harmful. Restoring trust can be very difficult.

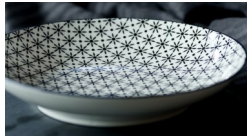
The ripple of distrust can become a tsunami engulfing a society, spreading like cancer. But ultimately, a healthy society is only possible with trust. The problem is that we do not know the tipping point when systemic distrust will overwhelm and destroy a society's social cohesion.

David Brooks writes, "Social trust is a measure of the moral quality of a society—of whether the people and institutions in it are trustworthy, whether they keep their promises and work for the common good. ...When people in society lose faith or trust in their institutions and each other, the nation collapses." Amber Hye-Yon Lee adds, "Trust in fellow citizens is the backbone of a well-functioning democracy." Unfortunately,

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Readings from the Common Bowl

Day 1: "A [person] ...who trusts every-one is a fool and a [person] ...who



trusts no one is a fool. We are all fools if we live long enough." Robert Jordan

Day 2: "Though he'd trusted her with his life countless times, it felt much more frightening to trust her with his shame." Leigh Bardugo

Day 3: "Friendship—my definition—is built on two things. Respect and trust. Both elements have to be there. And it has to be mutual. You can have respect for someone, but if you don't have trust, the friendship will crumble." Stieg Larsson

Day 4: "Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters." Albert Einstein

Day 5: "For there to be betrayal, there would have to have been trust first." Suzanne Collins

Day 6: "The opposite of interpersonal trust is not mistrust. It is despair. This is because we have given up on believing that trustworthiness and fulfillment are possible from others. We have lost our hope in our fellow humans." David Richo

Day 7: "...if you are ever going to have other people trust you, you must feel that you can trust them, too ...even when you're falling." Mitch Albom

Day 8: "To be trusted is a greater compliment than being loved." George MacDonald

Day 9: "Lying is ...a refusal to cooperate with others. It condenses a lack of trust and trustworthiness into a single act. It is both a failure of understanding and an unwillingness to be understood. To lie is to recoil from relationship." Sam Harris

Day 10: "Trust no friend without faults." Doris Lessing

Day 11: Everyone suffers at least one bad betrayal.... The trick is not to let it destroy your trust in others.... Don't let them take that from you." Sherrilyn Kenyon

Day 12: "Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less

scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone." Fred Rogers

Day 13: "The trust of the innocent is the liar's most useful tool." Stephen King

Day 14: "Spread your courtesy across the doorposts of everyone you know, but reserve your intimacy with the ...

trustworthy friends who are going where you are going." Israelmore Ayivor

Day 15: "Trusting is hard. Knowing who to trust, even harder." Maria V. Snyder

Day 16: "When people cheat..., they diminish themselves—they threaten their ... self-esteem and ...relationships with others by undermining the trust they have ...in their ability to be true." Cheryl Hughes

Day 17: "Trust starts with truth and ends with truth." Santosh Kalwar

Day 18: "Stop ...two-faced people..., the ones who have split personalities and untrustworthy habits. ...If they tell you stuff about another person, they're going to tell your business to other people."

Amaka Imani Nkosazana

Day 19: "Trust is the glue of life. ...It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships." Stephen R. Covey

Day 20: "To borrow against the trust someone has placed in you costs nothing at first. You get away with it, you take a little more and a little more until there is no more to draw on. Oddly, your hands should be full with all that taking, but when you open them, there's nothing there." Jeanette Winterson

Day 21: "I have come to realize that being trustworthy does not demand that I be rigidly consistent but that I be dependably real." Carl Rogers

Day 22: "Da [Irish for Dad] used to say that lies were easy, but trust was hard. Trust is like faith: it can turn people into believers, but every time it's lost, trust becomes harder and harder to win back." Victoria Schwab

Day 23: "The soul speaks its truth only under ...trustworthy conditions."

Parker Palmer

Day 24: "The best way to convince a skeptic that you are trustworthy and generous is to be trustworthy and generous."

Steven Pinker

Day 25: "Sharing secrets is the way in which women tie themselves together, for it reveals complicity and trust. Holding secrets shows trustworthiness and a sort

of quiet defiance."

Kathleen Kent

Day 26: "We often hear of someone saying, 'So you don't trust me....' They get defensive and angry because someone questions their actions, and they think they are above being questioned or having to prove their trust-

worthiness. But none of us is above questioning." Henry Cloud

Day 27: "A détente ...can only be as strong as the least trustworthy on either side." Laini Taylor

Day 28: "The process of building trust is an interesting one, but it begins with yourself, with what I call self-trust, and with your own credibility, your own trustworthiness. If you think about it, it's hard to establish trust with others if you can't trust yourself." Stephen M.R. Covey

Day 29: "Sometimes the ones you trust aren't the most trustworthy. Just better actors." Veronica Blade

Day 30: "I will always be an addict even if you put the word 'recovering' in front of it. I will always have to work ten times as hard to be trusted, to be trustworthy, but that's the price I have to pay for my mistakes." Emma Scott

Day 31: "It was all a part of being trustworthy—of being a piece of sea glass. High tides, low tides, storms, sand and mistakes all contributed to the polishing process. Though difficult to endure at the time, the demanding elements helped smooth the surface, transforming one into a better person.... A person who learned from the harsh environment, who knew the storm would end, and who felt confident she would still be in one piece." Maria V. Snyder





A Theology of Trust

A theology of trust is grounded in our first principle: “the inherent worth and dignity of every person.” It invites us to trust others and encourages us to be trustworthy. Trust is the unseen foundation in the parable, *The Good Samaritan* (Luke 10:25-37).

A lawyer, probably a Pharisee who knew the Torah, tested Jesus asking, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He expected that Jesus would spark controversy with his answer. Instead, Jesus asked, “What is written in the law?” The lawyer quoted Deuteronomy 6:5, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might,” and part of Leviticus 19:18, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” When Jesus agreed, the lawyer was embarrassed. To salvage his reputation, he asked another question to test Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”

While Leviticus 19:13-18 makes clear that “your neighbor” is a fellow Israelite, Jesus answered the question in a way that turned reality on its head. His parable continues to challenge and instruct. Those listening to Jesus understood what he was demanding, but our cultural level of biblical literacy makes it difficult to understand just how profound it was.

The adjective “good” to describe the Samaritan is inadequate. Patrick Curran writes, “In German, the Samaritan is called *der Barmherzige Samariter*—the compassionate or the merciful Samaritan.” This is an improvement. But the “Radical Samaritan” captures the parable’s true intent.

The story occurs on the road from

Jerusalem to Jericho, called the *Way of Blood*, because of the dangers posed by robbers. Jericho, with its oasis, is the oldest settlement in

the world, continuously inhabited for at least 11,000 years with archeological evidence in the tell of 20 settlements. Notably, the Battle of Jericho in 1400 BCE launched the Jews’ conquest of Canaan to occupy the Promised Land.

Located on the Jordan Valley’s West Bank, Jericho is 17 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Jesus, who traveled that road at least twice, began the parable, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho....” Jerusalem sits at 2,575 feet above sea level, while Jericho is 846 feet below sea level due to the enormous geological rift that shaped the region’s topography. As a result, the rough, winding, remote road through the barren Judean Desert is steep, descending over 3,400 feet.

Jesus continued, “...he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.” Though the man was presumed to be a Jew, a priest passed by, as did a Levite, without seeing if he was alive or rendering aid.

Both worked in the Temple in Jerusalem and likely lived in Jericho. A priest traveling to the Temple for ritual duties had to remain ritually clean, according to Leviticus 21.1, and could not touch a dead body. While the Levite appeared to be going to the Temple, ritual purity did not apply since Levites worked as musicians, guards, artisans, scribes, treasurekeepers, judges, teachers, etc. Further, the priest was “going down” to Jericho and would not have had to serve in the Temple for another 24 weeks. According to Numbers 19:11-12, a

purification ritual would only have taken seven days. Regrettably, both men ignored Leviticus 19:16, “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life.” A pious Jew was required to either render aid or immediately bury the dead. Neither the priest nor the Levite was unique in failing to “love” the “other.”

We need context to truly understand why Jesus included a Samaritan in the

parable. First, the hostility between Jews and Samaritans was long-standing, reaching back to the 930 BCE secession when ten of the tribes of the House of Israel created the Northern Kingdom known as Israel (or Samaria) and the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi established the Southern Kingdom known as Judah.

The Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom in 721 BCE. The Jews who were not killed or deported intermarried over time with gentiles that the Assyrians brought into Israel. This Jewish remnant of the Northern Kingdom became known as Samaritans since the ten tribes were never allowed to return.

The Southern Kingdom experienced a similar fate 135 years later. The Babylonians conquered them in 586 BCE, destroying the First Temple and much of Jerusalem. The victors deported the Jews to Babylon. They remained in exile for 48 years until they were allowed to return. They immediately began rebuilding Jerusalem and the Second Temple. However, the Samaritan’s offer of help with rebuilding seemed duplicitous. The Jews rejected the offer partly because they considered the Samaritans impure because of intermarriage. In retaliation, the Samaritans (Ezra 4) sought help from outside powers to stop the rebuilding of both Jerusalem and the Second Temple. They were able to halt construction for 18 years.

The Jews completed the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 516 BCE. The Samaritans built their own Temple on Mount Gerizim around 450 BCE.

Due to hostility, Jews in Galilee refused to travel directly to Jerusalem through Samaria, taking longer routes to the east or west.

In 113 BCE, John Hyrcanus, the high priest of Judea and a military commander, went to war with Samaria. The siege lasted a year, but he won. Hyrcanus enslaved the Samaritans and forced them to convert to Judaism. In 110 BCE, he destroyed their temple on Mount Gerizim. In 6 CE, a band of Samaritans defiled the Temple at Jerusalem.

Notably, Jesus and his disciples traveled through Samaria twice. One trip involved his famous encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well (John 4:1-42), which resulted in gaining Samaritans as

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8 Ways to Build Trust with Your Kids

Andrea Loewen Nair

While building trust with children begins in infancy, it continues throughout life.

1. Listening

Listening ...is an action ...to seek to really understand his or her underlying message. ...We can show children we are listening by paraphrasing their words back to them, staying focused on feeling words.

2. Attuning to Emotions

Attuning ...is anticipating your child's needs based on verbal and nonverbal cues. ...A melting-down child ...really needs to sleep so ...focus ...on calming your child....

3. Making Eye Contact

People learn a lot about a person's intention by focusing on their eyes. When speaking to a child, ...gently look into his or her eyes.

4. Responding to Verbal and Nonverbal Requests

...In order to grow trust, ...requests for help need to be answered to the best of your ability. ...When a child says, "I'm scared," use words to show your child you will help keep her safe....

5. Keeping Promises

Part of keeping promises is to not use them to reduce your guilt or instead of saying "no." Promise what is reasonable and within your ability to (restfully) complete. Be reliable.

6. Telling the Truth

Get in the habit of not using white lies with your children. This helps children match verbal and nonverbal communication, reducing confusion.

7. Establishing Boundaries, Consistency, and Routine

...Routines and consistency ...help reduce conflict.... ...When we feel we are being treated fairly, we can let our guard

down. The setting and holding of boundaries grow a slightly different type of trust: a strong belief that a parent will uphold safety and integrity.

8. Being Open

Parents ...make mistakes. Being open about our shortcomings, fears, and struggles helps our children trust that doing so is safe to do. ...

Source: <https://www.yummymummyclub.ca/blogs/andrea-nair-connect-four-parenting/20141203/the-eight-actions-parents-can-do-to-increase-trust>

Building Trust with Teenagers

Dr. Lawrence Jackson

The following strategies can help build and maintain trust with teenagers.

1. Providing Space

Recognize that teenagers need space to share things openly.... A weekly check-in with your teens could be helpful to cultivate a space where trust is built.

2. Being an Intentional Listener

If teens do not feel heard, they may shut down and the opportunity to build trust disappears. ...Postpone your own agendas and be willing to tune into your teenager's world. This includes hearing their pain and trying to understand their perspectives even if you do not agree with them. ...Use the space in a way that helps teens know that you are invested in their world and there to support them.

3. Regulating Your Emotions

While teens may share things that disappoint you, try to regulate your own emotional experience. ...You might need to take the time necessary to step away and process if needed to have a more productive dialogue. You want to create a space where teens do not feel punished for expressing themselves. ...

4. Providing Opportunities

...Give teenagers a certain amount of autonomy to make their own decisions ...to grow, develop, and use the knowledge they have. While it may be hard to watch your child make decisions differently than you would, giving them the room to learn from those decisions and supporting them remains key to building trust.

5. Modeling Trust

...Keep your teen's personal information

private, so that they will continue to trust you with their vulnerable emotions and thoughts. By modeling how to trust, you can further build trust and help your teen learn what a healthy trusting relationship looks like as well.

Source: <https://www.gottman.com/blog/building-trust-with-teenagers/>

Family Activity:

Trust Walk

Use chairs and similar furnishings to create a kind of obstacle course in a room or rooms in the house. First, put a blindfold on a child. Turn them slowly around a few times so that they are not oriented to the obstacle course. Then have them hold one of your hands or your elbow and lead them through the obstacle course. Then reverse roles so they can lead you through the course. If children are too young, have one adult lead another adult through the obstacle course as the children watch the activity.

Family Activity:

Trust Fall

Stand or kneel on the floor (depending on the height of your child) and invite him or her to stand upright two or three feet in front of you. Invite them to fall backwards into your arms. To increase



their trust, catch them first after they tip backward just a little bit. Then allow the distance of the fall to increase. Keep checking in with them after each fall to make sure they feel comfortable.

Trust is the Coin of the Realm

(Continued from page 1) **Introduction**

to describe your relationship with [your baby] When your baby can count on you and trust you to meet ...basic needs for food, love, affection, and stimulation, the attachment becomes stronger, and [your baby] ...learns to trust you and the world.... ...As [your baby] ...develops trust, parts of [the] ...brain are strengthened to make them feel secure and handle stress better."

Gutierrez continues, "On the flip side, insecure attachment is formed when a baby does not learn to trust that [a] ...parent will consistently comfort ...and try to meet their needs. Babies who are insecurely attached are afraid to explore their world and may prefer to be alone rather than spend time with others." People who are insecurely attached usually find it difficult to form attachments with others throughout their life due to several factors, including diminished trust.

Trust emerges in a relationship that involves two people, groups, or countries, the one who trusts and the one who is considered trustworthy. When trust is reciprocal, because both parties are deemed trustworthy, trust is enhanced.

We seldom give trust easily because it is risky. Trusting someone involves a calculus to understand their trustworthiness to reduce the risk of trusting them. The constellation of traits involving trustworthiness includes honesty, dependability, authenticity, transparency, integrity, reliability, responsibility, keeping confidences, and setting and keeping boundaries. This constellation makes clear that character counts in assessing trustworthiness. Of course, we may insist that we are trustworthy, but based on what evidence? In terms of trust, Stephen M.R. Covey, author of *The Speed of Trust*, writes, "We judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behavior." Therefore, we should conduct an inventory to assess the level of our trustworthiness, not just in easy things but in quite difficult things. Are we trustworthy based on action or just aspiration?

Trust can be conditional or unconditional. Adam Waytz writes, "Conditional trust is contingent on the behavior of another person, while unconditional

trust is not." He notes that research has determined "...that different psychological processes, and different brain networks, are responsible for conditional and unconditional trust." Much of the conversation about unconditional trust involves trust in God. Such unconditional trust in mere humans seems perilous since most people fall from their pedestal of trustworthiness from time to time. Therefore, it seems prudent to temper unconditional trust. However, making trust wholly conditional turns relationships into contracts. Perhaps Goldilocks was right; unconditional trust is too much, and conditional trust is too little. Following her lead, we are wise to pursue what we determine is "just right" by blending unconditional and conditional trust. This ratio will differ for each relationship. For example, unconditional trust will increase when we add love or affection to a relationship. Sam Lacrosse reminds us, "Trust must come before love; only after trust has been established may love prosper." When the self-interest of another person is hidden, as it often is, we are wise to decrease trust by making it more conditional. Charles Green's Trust Equation is an analytical model of trustworthiness that acknowledges that people's self-interest reduces their trustworthiness.

The psychology of color has associated the color blue with trust. This relationship reaches back to the 13th century in Coventry, a town in the Midlands of England. Blessed with rich grazing land that supported sheep farming and wool production, it became a center for textiles. The town became famous for its dyers, who produced *Coventry Blue* cloth using a technique that resulted in a fabric color that did not fade. As a result, people throughout Europe valued it. Coventry Blue gave rise to a proverb: someone who was trustworthy and steadfast was "true blue."

When George Shultz joined President Nixon's administration in 1969, Bryce Harlow, the president's counselor, offered advice that Secretary Shultz valued for the

rest of his life: "Trust is the coin of the realm." The term "coin of the realm" emerged in the 18th century in England and referred to the legal currency issued by the British monarch. Over time it came to mean something valued as highly as money.

To say that trust is the coin of the realm means that trust is everything. Holding this coin in our hand, we see that trust is "heads." Turning it over, we discover that truth is "tails." Trust is confirmed or destroyed in the crucible of truth. And often, truth is confirmed or destroyed



in the crucible of trust. While opinions vary, it is hard to say which comes first: trust or truth.

Unfortunately, another coin circulates in society. The currency of authoritarianism seeks to undermine the social fabric of trust. Heads? Distrust. Tails? Lies. This coin undermines truth and weakens trust. History teaches us that these two coins, trust and distrust, are always being coined. What matters is which one more people use in their daily lives.

In his negotiations on nuclear disarmament with the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s, President Reagan said on several occasions, "Trust, but verify." He learned the phrase in Russian from Susan Massie, an American scholar of Russian history who served as an informal messenger between Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. *Doverayay, no proveryay* is a rhyming Russian proverb well-known to the Russian people. The wisdom of this proverb is timeless. Verification suggests that we must extend trust with care and reconsider it as necessary since trust is both precious and vulnerable. So often, trust is betrayed by self-interest, per Green's Trust Equation above, or by jealousy, lies, gossip, manipulation, promise-breaking, and so much more. Despite this, we are wise to take the risk that trust requires because the steadfast trustworthiness of those around us who are "true blue" enriches our lives.

Wanted: Radical Samaritans

(Continued from page 2) **Weaving Trust**
systemic distrust has often eroded democracies and opened doors to authoritarian regimes.

Fomenting distrust in government and opposition parties is a strategy of political warfare that provides a significant political advantage by energizing a political base. Yet, it results in enormous collateral damage to society, including fear, despair, insecurity, social unrest, anxiety, increased tribalism, and hyper-polarization. David Brooks writes, "The tribal mentality is based on mutual distrust. It is always us versus them, friend or enemy, destroy or be destroyed. Anger is the mode." In a vicious cycle, distrust leads to polarization, and polarization leads to more distrust.

The 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Report, *Navigating a Polarized World* (see <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2023/trust-barometer>), is very troubling. Edelman launched their trust barometer in 2001. They surveys 28 countries annually, comparing trust in Business to trust in Government, Media, and NGOs. The trust barometer addresses economic anxieties, institutional imbalance, class divide, and the battle for truth.

According to the report, there are four categories of polarization:

- ◆ *Less Polarized* (i.e., I see few deep divisions) with 7 countries;
- ◆ *Moderately Polarized* (i.e., I see deep divisions, but I think they are addressable) with 6 countries, *including Canada*;
- ◆ *In Danger of Severe Polarization* with 9 countries; and
- ◆ *Severely Polarized* (i.e., I see deep divisions, and I don't think we'll ever get past them) with 6 countries, *including the United States*.

The drivers of distrust include three levels: (1) Distrust in government and Lack of shared identity; (2) Systemic unfairness; and (3) Economic pessimism, Societal fears, and Distrust in media.

The result is a weakening of the social fabric. The report found that overall, 65% believe that "the lack of civility and mutual respect today is the **worst I have ever seen**, and 62% believe that "the social fabric that once held this country togeth-

er has **grown too weak** to serve as a foundation **for unity and common purpose**."

Comparing the percentage of trust from 2022 to 2023, Canada decreased from 54% to 52%, and the United States increased from 43% to 48%. Some call this a trust recession. The percentage who say their country is more divided than in the past is 60% in Canada and 67% in the United States. This cancer of distrust is global, but we can only address it locally.

The question becomes, "How many are willing to be a Good Samaritan?" According to the trust barometer, far too few will help (30%), live (20%), or work (20%) with the other side. So, 70% are priests and Levites, and only 30% are Good Samaritans. Frightening! One commentator writes, "we live in a *distrust-first society*." Because of this, we need people to work to rebuild trust and repair our communities' social fabric one relationship at a time.

Weave: The Social Fabric Project at <https://weareweavers.org/> was created in 2019 by David Brooks. The idea of weaving is not original to Brooks, but he has developed a vehicle to connect weavers, share strategies, and publicize their efforts.



To better understand weaving, see *What does it mean to be a "Weaver?"* by Daniel Christian Wahl at <https://designforsustainability.medium.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-weaver-ba418b4311fe#:~:>

The work of weaving seems well-suited to our congregations where every person's inherent worth and dignity matter regardless of skin color, political affiliation, immigration status, gender identification, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, etc. As Jesus said, "Go and do likewise." David Brooks writes, "When trust is restored, the heartbeat relaxes, and people are joyful together. Joy is found on the far side of ...giving yourself away." Source: Touchstones

Who is my neighbor

(Continued from page 4) **Faith & Theology**
followers.

As the parable continues, the plot twist is not that someone eventually helps the man but that the one who helps is a Samaritan, a man who had every reason to hate the half-dead Jew lying by the side of the road. But, the Samaritan, moved by compassion, took pity on the man, cleaned his wounds with oil and wine, and bandaged them, put the man on his donkey, and took him to an inn, likely in Jericho, and continued to care for him. The next day he gave the innkeeper money to care for the man until he returned when he would pay for any additional expenses.

Who is my neighbor? The question is interesting, but if proximity and connection are aspects of being a neighbor, the priest, Levite, and Samaritan were strangers. If the question was, "Whom can I trust?" the man lying on the side of the road would have assumed that he could trust the priest and the Levite but not the Samaritan. If the question was, "Who is trustworthy?" only the Samaritan saw the worth and dignity of the man lying on the side of the road.

At the parable's end, Jesus asks, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." So, Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." But what is likewise?

Likewise is seeing the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Likewise is being trustworthy. Likewise is reaching across divisions. Likewise is the Pharisee caring for a Samaritan who robbers attacked and left for dead. Likewise is harboring the outcast, the despised, the immigrant, and more, as *Sweet Honey in the Rock* sing in their song, *Would You Harbor Me?* (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YowTD8ZRKA> Length: 2:58)

Likewise is Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King renting a car in the winter of 1959 and driving from Jerusalem to Jericho, where MLK experienced the power of the parable. And likewise is the evening of April 3, 1968 at the Bishop

(Continued on page 8)

Small Group Discussion Guide

Theme for Discussion

Trust

Preparation prior to Gathering: (Read this issue of the journal and *Living the Questions* in the next column.)

Business: Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

Opening Words: "With faith to face our challenges, / With love that casts out fear, / With hope to trust tomorrow, / We accept this day as the gift it is— / A reason for rejoicing." *Rev. Gary Kowalski*

Chalice Lighting: (James Vila Blake) adapted (In unison) *Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.*

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Read the Wisdom Story: Take turns reading aloud parts of the wisdom story on page one.

Readings from the Common Bowl: Group members read selections from *Readings from the Common Bowl* (page 3). Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

Sitting In Silence: Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

Reading: "Trust is an intrinsic part of human nature.... Trust is most simply defined as the expectation that other people's future actions will safeguard our interests. It is the magic ingredient that makes social life possible. ...Without trust, we would be paralyzed, and social life would grind to a halt. When honored, trust promotes feelings of goodwill between individuals, which in turn benefits community. ...Once we recognize the role of trust..., we can appreciate why declines in trust can be so damaging to society."

Jeremy Adam Smith & Pamela Paxton

Living the Questions: Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving on.

1. When you were growing up, who were the most trustworthy people you knew? How did they make you feel? How did they support you?
2. Who taught you the importance of trust? How did they do this?
3. When did you discover that you could not trust someone? What were the circumstances? How did it make you feel?
4. How did you come to appreciate the importance of trust?
5. Have you been betrayed? How did you react to it? Have you come to terms with it? If yes, what helped? If not, what might help?
6. What has helped you to become trustworthy?
7. Do you think that we are experiencing a trust recession? If not, why not? If yes, what are the consequences? What can be done about it?

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person who claimed time.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice: (Elizabeth Selle Jones) (In unison) *We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*

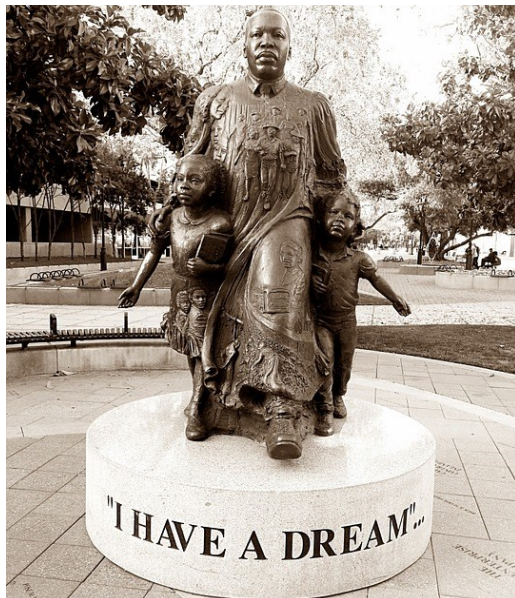
Closing Words:
Rev. Philip R. Giles
(In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*



Stop & Do Likewise

(Continued from page 7) **Faith & Theology**

Charles Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee, as a storm raged outside. There, King delivered his last sermon, *I've Been to the Mountaintop*, using the parable to justify support for the strike by the sanitation workers. King said, "And so the first question that the Levite asked was, 'If I stop to



help this man, what will happen to me?' But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'" King added, "The question is ... 'If I do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them?' That's the question." King did likewise in Montgomery, Birmingham, Washington, DC, Selma, Chicago, and Memphis.

Likewise is a theology of trust that compels us to be trustworthy and to act, despite the odds and the forces that want us to ignore reality and walk by. Instead, be a Radical Samaritan, stop, and do likewise.

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