

Renaissance Module
Unitarian Universalist History
Leaders Guide

By Gail Forsyth-Vail
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Table of Contents

About the Author.....	3
Introduction.....	4
List of Timelines.....	9
Session 1 Heresy.....	10
Session 2 Founders.....	14
Session 3 Reformers.....	18
Session 4 Missionaries and Builders.....	22
Session 5 Humanists.....	26
Session 6 Making Life Religious.....	30
Session 7 The Living Tradition.....	33
Session 8 Final Projects.....	36

About the Author

Gail Forsyth-Vail is the Director of Adult Programs at the Unitarian Universalist Association. She is a Credentialed Religious Educator, Master Level, who served congregations for twenty-two years before joining the UUA staff. She is the author of *Stories in Faith: Exploring Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources Through Wisdom Tales* and co-author of *Harvest the Power: Developing Lay Leadership*, *Bridging: A Handbook for Congregations*, and *Wisdom from the Hebrew Scriptures*, as well as editor of the UUA blog *Cooking Together: Recipes for Immigration Justice Work*. She was the 2007 recipient of the Angus MacLean Award for Excellence in Religious Education.

Introduction

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist History Renaissance module. This module gives religious educators the background in our history that will help them be more effective as professional religious educators, bringing a deeper knowledge of our tradition as they serve the faith development mission of Unitarian Universalist congregations and organizations.

The module examines history in two ways: 1) introducing the broad themes of our theological and institutional history; 2) providing deeper knowledge of individuals and events which illustrate the broader themes. It is a program filled with stories of our faith and stories of our people, with each event and individual put into historical context. Religious educators are often called upon to share our history, and this approach gives them a method of sharing history that allows engagement with that history. Because religious education is the vehicle by which we guide children, youth, and adults to live their faith in the world, this module offers a glimpse of how our faith has called people to action in their times and places.

This module also includes a guided tour of some of the worship and faith development resources that religious educators might use in the course of their work. Tapestry of Faith stories from a number of programs for children, youth, and adults are included in the readings. Hymns and readings from *Singing the Living Tradition* are placed in their historical context, both to increase participants' familiarity with worship resources and to give them a sense of how the theology of each era is reflected in the hymns and readings we still use today.

Module Leaders

A team of two should facilitate this program. Leaders should be:

- Knowledgeable about Unitarian Universalism and religious education
- Committed to the Unitarian Universalism and to the professional development of religious educators

- Effective at facilitating group process
- Able to thoroughly prepare for each session, including becoming comfortable with the technology used
- Willing to track participant participation in sessions and assignments
- Willing to offer honest feedback and suggestions when presented with final project proposals.

While knowledge of Unitarian Universalist history is helpful, it is not a requirement for effectively leading this program. Willingness and ability to adequately prepare for each workshop, to research answers to questions raised by participants and to encourage participants' own research is far more valuable for creating a good learning and experience than is extensive knowledge of Unitarian Universalist history.

Participant Requirements

This module is an online learning experience comprised of eight ninety-minute sessions with reading and assignments for each. Credit will be offered for full participation in the module. Full participation includes:

- On-line attendance at eight 90-minute sessions
- Reading, reflection, and exercises to prepare for each session, which will require about two or three hours' time
- Submission of a 250-word post after each session with an idea for application of your learning in your professional work. Submissions will be collected and shared, creating a large file of ideas for all members of the group
- Preparation of a final project and presentation, working by oneself, with a partner or with a group.

Technical requirements

This module requires the use of a videoconferencing platform that includes the ability to screen share audio, video, and document files, as well as internet sites. It also requires the use of a shared document program such as GoogleDocs or Dropbox. Please consult with your sponsoring district, cluster, or group for recommendations about which platform to use and guidance in using the chosen platform.

Participants and facilitators must have a computer with internet connection and a video camera.

Readers

Participants and leaders will read selections from five required books. Participants are invited to substitute the listed video alternative for two of them, but leaders should prepare for the session by doing the reading:

- [*Unitarians and Universalists in America: A People's History*](#) by John Buehrens (Skinner House, 2011)
- [*For Faith and Freedom: A Short History of Unitarianism in Europe*](#) by Charles A. Howe (Skinner House, 1997)
- [*Stirring the Nation's Heart*](#) by Polly Peterson (UUA, 2010)
- [*Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism*](#) by Mark Morrison-Read (Skinner House, 2011)
- [*Singing the Living Tradition*](#) (Unitarian Universalist Association, 1994)
- Optional: [*Long Strange Trip*](#), Parts 1-4 DVDs (Ron Cordes, 2011, 2012). These DVDs can be used as an alternative to readings from the Buehrens and Howe books.

Goal and Learning Objectives

The goal of this program is to give participants a sense of the broad scope of Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist history and some of the key stories that are part of that history, so that participants are able to:

- Understand context for historical stories they tell in worship, small group, classroom, social media, and other settings
- Explain the history of our movement to lay people, to youth, and to children in age-appropriate ways
- Understand and explain how the history of their own congregation or geographical area fits in with the history of the broader movement
- Understand and articulate the history behind some of the theologies and traditions that are important to contemporary Unitarian Universalism
- Understand how we came to be who we are as a movement- and what strengths and challenges our history offers.

Participant Guide

The participant guide offers session-by-session background information and specific reading and activity assignments.

Written Sharing

After most sessions, participants will be asked to share in writing an idea for how the material from that session could be applied to their work. Shared ideas are to be about 250 words, tagged appropriately, and added to an electronic file available to all..

Leaders should keep track of the participant contributions to the shared file, and be prepared to offer a positive comment or two to stimulate conversation, if necessary and appropriate, in the opening segment of each session.

Final Project

Working alone or with a group of up to four people, participants prepare a final project that uses what they have learned about our Unitarian Universalist history in their professional work. Details and suggestions can be found in the Participant Guide, Session 8. The project should take about three hours to prepare. An individual project should take about 5-6 minutes to present, and a group project, about 15 minutes. Total presentation time is 70 minutes; adjust the presentation times for the group to accommodate the number of presentations.

Participants must submit a statement of what they plan to do and with whom they will be working well ahead of the final session. (For a module that meets once a month, two weeks ahead is appropriate). You must approve the final project plan before they proceed. You may offer suggestions or request a revision if appropriate. Keep these points in mind as you evaluate the plan:

1. Does the project plan offer a practical application of something the participant(s) has learned about Unitarian Universalist history?
2. Does it fulfill one or more of the goals of the program (see above)?
3. Is the presentation plan clear? What form will it take?
4. Is it possible for the participant(s) to complete this project in three hours and to present it in the allotted time? If the project looks overly ambitious (or, conversely, not substantive enough), suggest changes.

List of Timelines

Timeline Session 1	Heresy
Timeline Session 2	Founders
Timeline Session 3	Reformers
Timeline Session 4	Missionaries and Builders
Timeline Session 5	Humanists
Timeline Session 6	Making Life Religious

Session 1: Heresy

PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated selections from the readers. Optional: Watch the video selections recommended for this session.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance to participants.

ACTIVITY 1: Introductions to Equipment and One Another (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Greet participants as they join the meeting. As appropriate, give a short tour of the features of your chosen platform (such as how to mute and unmute). Using a list of participants alphabetized by first name, ask each in turn to say their name and location. If your platform does not provide an alphabetized list of participants visible to all, ask participants to remember who came after them in the list for the purposes of the next activity. The purpose is to help participants distinguish different voices.

ACTIVITY 2: Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that participants will share Reading 566 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading one line each in alphabetical order. Say, “After you have read your line, say the name of the person who follows you in the alphabet, so they know it is time to read their line. I’ll begin, to be followed by the person who comes first in the alphabet. We’ll do the reading one time to

practice this process, and then a second time so we can attend to the words of Francis David.”

Invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space or use the Illuminations app on their phone.

ACTIVITY 3: Covenant (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION

Invite participants to create a covenant for how they will work together in this group. Suggest these agreements:

- Arrive on time to module sessions. Test equipment and gather materials before the appointed gathering time
- Read the materials in advance of the session. Take notes that will be helpful to you in the discussion
- Share written ideas at least ____ days ahead of the sessions
- As time allows, read other participants' written reflections before the next session
- Be aware of your participation in discussions, and make every effort to share the floor.

Propose a process for making sure that all have a chance to share during discussions, and invite suggestions for making the process smoother. This process will vary according to the technology you are using. For example, will the facilitator call on people to speak or will participants just “jump in”? Will the software platform allow people to “raise hands?” Make sure all understand the agreed-upon process.

ACTIVITY 4: Opening Discussion (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion, asking, “What did you learn about Unitarianism or Universalism from your reading for this session? What interested or intrigued you?”

ACTIVITY 5: Going Deeper (20 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion using these questions as guides:

- What about heretic stories is still relevant today? Are we still heretics?
- Our tradition has a legacy of defining itself as a counter to religious orthodoxies. What are the strengths and challenges of this legacy? If the group has trouble with this question, here are some ideas:
 - Strengths include openness to new ideas and rejection of religious notions and practices that no longer serve
 - Weaknesses include the danger of defining our faith in the negative, i.e. what we *don't* believe
- What parts of the stories of heretics can we make relevant and interesting for UUs today? How can we simplify this information and not get bogged down in obscure theological arguments?

ACTIVITY 6: Partner Church (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share your screen and go to the UU Partner Church Council website: www.uupcc.org. Say:

Unitarianism in Transylvania goes back to the time of Francis David, and has survived many challenges. Today, a large number of Unitarian Universalist congregations have

“partners” in other parts of the world; many of those partnerships are with Unitarian Congregations in Transylvania, congregations who had to struggle to maintain their religion and culture through the years of twentieth century dictatorship in Eastern Europe.

Invite participants to explore the Partner Church Council website at their leisure. Call special attention to the “Pathways to Partnership” brochure and the religious education materials which can be found under the “Resources” tab. Lead a time of sharing, asking participants who have experience with Partner Churches to share some of what they and/or their congregation have experienced and learned from the partnerships.

ACTIVITY 7: Closing (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from Session 1, Heresy, and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to share it with the group in written form (roughly 250 words). At the end of the module, each participant will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing history in their work. Introduce the shared document you have created for reflections, and share your screen to familiarize participants with how it works.

Close the session with the poem “Outwitted” by American Universalist poet Edwin Markham who lived from 1852-1940:

He drew a circle that shut me out —

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But love and I had the wit to win:

We drew a circle that took him in.

Session 2: Founders

PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the assigned selections from the readers. Optional: watch the video selections recommended for this session.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance to participants.

ACTIVITY 1: Gathering (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Greet participants as they join the meeting. As appropriate, give a short tour of the features of your chosen platform (such as how to mute and unmute). Using a list of participants alphabetized by first name, ask each in turn to say their name and location. If your platform does not provide an alphabetized list of participants visible to all, ask participants to remember who came after them in the list for the purposes of the next activity. The purpose is to help participants distinguish different voices.

ACTIVITY 2: Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that participants will share “The Great End in Religious Instruction” by Channing, Reading 652 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading one line each in alphabetical order. Say, “After you have read your line, say the name of the person who follows you in the alphabet, so they know it is time to read their line. I’ll begin, to be followed by the person who comes first in the alphabet. We’ll do the reading one time to practice this process, and then a second time so

we can attend to the words of Channing” Invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space or use the Illuminations app on their phone.

Review the covenant you created in the first session.

ACTIVITY 3: Sharing (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the first session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another’s ideas. Affirm everyone’s good work.

ACTIVITY 4: Opening Discussion (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion, asking, “What did you learn about Unitarianism from your reading for this session? What did you learn about Universalism?”

ACTIVITY 5: Going Deeper (20 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion choosing one of these questions as your beginning point, and moving on to others if time permits:

- These stories and readings bring alive the role of women in helping to shape our faith in North America. What similarities do you see in the roles played by Judith Sargent Murray and Hannah Adams? What differences? How might we highlight the roles played by women in the way we talk about our history?
- Are the different origins of the two traditions from which Unitarian Universalism grew significant today? Does it matter today that Unitarianism came out of the Standing Order and that Universalism challenged the Standing Order? How does your congregation

reflect the established social order and how does it challenge the established social order?

- How do you respond to Buehrens' analysis of the differences between Unitarians and Universalists in terms of geography, education, and social class (pages 12 and 13 of Buehrens' book)?

ACTIVITY 6: *Singing the Living Tradition* (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Remind participants of the materials in *Singing the Living Tradition* authored by those heretics and founders listed at the end of Background and Preparation for Session 2 in the Participant Guide. Say, "This and each of the next six sessions include material from the 1994 UUA hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*. Exploring this material will give you a sense not only of the theology, worship practices, and concerns of the times they were written, but also of the theology, worship practices, and concerns that are still with us."

Ask, "How does knowing something of the context enhance your understanding of those materials? How might you use these materials in your work?"

ACTIVITY 7: Closing (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from Session 2, Founders, and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but they are asked to share it with the group in written form (roughly 250 words). At the end of the module, participants will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing history in their work. As necessary, explain the shared document you have created for reflections, and share your screen to familiarize participants with how it works.

Close the session with the words of Hosea Ballou, Reading 705, in *Singing the Living*

Tradition:

If we agree in love, there is no disagreement that can do us any injury, but if we do not, no other agreement can do us any good.

Let us endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.

Session 3: Reformers

PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated selections from the readers.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance to participants.

ACTIVITY 1: Gathering (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Greet participants as they join the meeting. As appropriate, give a short tour of the features of your chosen platform (such as how to mute and unmute). Using a list of participants alphabetized by first name, ask each in turn to say their name and location. If your platform does not provide an alphabetized list of participants visible to all, ask participants to remember who came after them in the list for the purposes of the next activity. The purpose is to help participants distinguish different voices.

ACTIVITY 2: Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that participants will share “The Oversoul” by Emerson, Reading 531 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading one line each in alphabetical order. Say, “After you have read your line, say the name of the person who follows you in the alphabet, so they know it is time to read their line. I’ll begin, to be followed by the person who comes first in the alphabet. We’ll do the reading one time to practice this process, and then a second time so we can attend to the

words of Emerson.” Invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space or use the Illuminations app on their phone.

Review the covenant you created in the first session.

ACTIVITY 3: Sharing (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another’s writings. Affirm everyone’s good work.

ACTIVITY 4: Opening Discussion (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion, asking, “Among the reformers whose work is highlighted in this set of readings, who most inspires you?”

ACTIVITY 5: Lifting Up Voices from the Margins (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Say, “Julia Ward Howe and Francis Ellen Watkins Harper were both very famous in their lifetimes, and yet are only footnotes to the way we tell our Unitarian Universalist history today. Why do you think this is the case? What are some ways to bring their work forward and link it to UUs of today?”

Invite participants to turn their attention to the list of *Singing the Living Tradition* hymns and readings authored by reformers from this period. (This list can be found in the Participant Guide). Lead a discussion, asking:

- What do you notice about this list? Whose voices are represented? Whose are missing?

- Is the selection of readings and hymns representative of our history, based on your reading?
- If you were to re-create the hymnbook, what changes would you make, if any, to the list? Point out that there has been a great deal of attention paid to Margaret Fuller, for example, in recent years.

ACTIVITY 6: Going Deeper (25 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion, asking, “What are the benefits to teaching history through stories of famous UUs? What are drawbacks to this approach?” If you need to prime the conversation pump, here are some suggestions:

- Benefits
 - Stories of individuals are accessible and easy to tell
 - Unitarian Universalists can be proud of influential and famous forebears
 - This approach fits with our second source, i.e. words and deeds of prophetic women and men
- Drawbacks
 - Stories of individuals can be presented with minimal context or sense of where they fit in the chain of events
 - We sometimes “claim” people whose association with Unitarian Universalism is tentative or questionable
 - This approach minimizes the contributions of those who were not famous, including those whose labor was largely invisible and/or those on the social margins

ACTIVITY 7: Closing (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from Session 3, Reformers, and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to share it with the group in written form (roughly 250 words). At the end of the module, each participant will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing history in their work. As necessary, explain the shared document you have created for reflections, and share your screen to familiarize participants with how it works.

Close the session with the words of Theodore Parker, Reading 683, in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

*Be ours a religion which, like
sunshine, goes everywhere;
its temple, all space;
its creed, all truth;
its ritual, works of love;
its profession of faith, divine
living.*

Session 4: Missionaries and Builders

PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated selections from the readers.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance to participants.

ACTIVITY 1: Gathering (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Greet participants as they join the meeting. Using a list of participants alphabetized by first name, begin at the end of the alphabet this time, and ask each in turn to say their name and location. If your platform does not provide you with an alphabetized list of participants visible to all, ask participants to remember who came after them in the list for the purposes of the next activity.

ACTIVITY 2: Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that participants will share “Stand by this Faith” by Olympia Brown, Reading 569 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading one line each in reverse alphabetical order. Say, “After you have read your line, say the name of the person who is before you in the alphabet, so they know it is time to read their line. I’ll begin, to be followed by the person who comes first in the alphabet. We’ll do the reading one time to practice this process, and then a second time so we can attend to the words of Brown.” Note that this is one of two Olympia Brown readings in the

hymnbook. (The second is Reading 578). Invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space or use the Illuminations app on their phone.

Review the covenant you created in the first session.

ACTIVITY 3: Sharing (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another's writings. Affirm everyone's good work.

ACTIVITY 4: Opening Discussion (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion, asking, "If you were to write a story for Tapestry of Faith of a person or event you encountered in your reading, whose story would it be?"

ACTIVITY 5: Going Deeper (25 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion choosing one of these questions as your beginning point, and moving on to others if time permits:

- How did the experiences of Unitarians and Universalists in the South, Mid-west, and West differ? How were they similar? Here are points for discussion:
 - Unitarians and Universalists in the South, Mid-west, and West all had to navigate relationships with power centers in the northeast
 - Money was a serious issue in all three regions

- There are differences in the kinds of challenges faced- climate, infrastructure, lack of social institutions, hostility to liberal theology
- Congregations in the south were primarily Universalist; in the West, primarily Unitarian; in the Mid-west, there were both.
- Based on what you know of your own congregation, how does it fit into the larger story?
- How is Unitarian Universalism today shaped by the events and people in this set of readings? Here are suggestions to move the conversation, if needed:
 - The Western Unitarian Conference and Free Religious Association argues for freedom of belief and held that moral actions were more important than belief
 - The congregations served by the Iowa Sisterhood, Athalia Irwin, and others addressed the practical needs of the people for community and support, as well as for religious message that addressed the challenges of daily life
 - Women played a significant role in the congregations of the Mid-west, West, and South.

ACTIVITY 6: Lifting Up Voices from the Margins (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion, asking:

- What response do you have to the stories of those who were on the margins of the denomination due to race, gender, social class, and geography? What does this tell us about our heritage- both positive and negative?

ACTIVITY 7: Closing (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from Session 4, Missionaries and Builders, and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to share it with the group in written form (roughly 250 words). At the end of the module, each participant will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing history in their work. As necessary, explain the shared document you have created for reflections, and share your screen to familiarize participants with how it works.

Say, “We will close with the words of a well-loved hymn that captures the spirit of the western Unitarians, Hymn 187, ‘It Sounds Along the Ages’ in *Singing the Living Tradition*.”

Invite three people who did not have a chance to say a line in the opening to each read the lyrics of one of the verses.

Session 5: Humanists

PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated selections from the readers.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance to participants.

ACTIVITY 1: Gathering (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Greet participants as they join the meeting. Using a list of participants alphabetized by first name, begin at the beginning of the alphabet, and ask each in turn to say their name and location. If your platform does not provide you with an alphabetized list of participants visible to all, ask participants to remember who came after them in the list for the purposes of the next activity.

ACTIVITY 2: Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that participants will share “Unto the Church Universal” by John Haynes Holmes, adapted from Keshab Chandra Sen, Reading 474 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading one line each in alphabetical order. Say, “After you have read your line, say the name of the person who follows you in the alphabet, so they know it is time to read their line. I’ll begin, to be followed by the person who comes first in the alphabet. We’ll do the reading one time to

practice this process, and then a second time so we can attend to the words of Chandra Keshab Sen, as adapted by Holmes.” Invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space or use the Illuminations app on their phone. Note: There is further information about this reading in the Participant Guide.

Review the covenant you created in the first session.

ACTIVITY 3: Sharing (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another’s writings. Affirm everyone’s good work.

ACTIVITY 4: Opening Discussion (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Say, “This period is given little attention in the standard telling of our history, perhaps because the social currents and events of the time were complex, as were the responses of our religious forbears.” Lead a discussion, asking:

- What did you learn from your reading that helped you to better understand this period of time?
- Which events and people did you find inspiring?

ACTIVITY 5: What Might Have Been? (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion, asking:

- What role did voices and perspectives from the denominational margins play in shaping our faith? Specifically, were the voices and concerns of Black people, immigrants, and labor part of our story? How?
- Can you imagine a story for “what might have been” if voices and perspectives from the margins had been more fully heard?

ACTIVITY 6: Facing a New Age (25 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion, asking:

- Where does your own faith and/or theological understanding match with the conclusions in Unitarians Face a New Age?
- If we set aside the dated language in the document and focus on the ideas expressed, what still seems current for Unitarian Universalism and what is dated?

ACTIVITY 7: Closing (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from Session 5, Humanists, and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to share it with other members of the group in written form (roughly 250 words). At the end of the module, each participant will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing history in their work. As necessary, explain the shared document you have created for reflections, and share your screen to familiarize participants with how it works.

Tell participants that they should also be prepared to share the founding story of a Unitarian Universalist congregation they know well at the next session.

Say, “We will close this session with the words excerpted from a speech by Fannie Barrier Williams, a Black woman and a Unitarian, addressing the World’s Parliament of Religions in 1893:

What can religion further do to advance the condition of the colored people? More religion and less church. . . . Less theology and more of human brotherhood, less declamation and more common sense and love for truth. . . . The tendency of creeds and doctrine to obscure religion, to make complex that which is elemental and simple, to suggest partisanship and doubt in that which is universal and certain, has seriously hindered the moral progress of the colored people of this country...It should be the province of religion, to unite, and not to separate, men and women according to the superficial differences of race lines.

Session 6: Making Life Religious

PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated selections from the readers.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance to participants.

ACTIVITY 1: Gathering (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Greet participants as they join the meeting. Using a list of participants alphabetized by first name, begin at the end of the alphabet, and ask each in turn to say their name and location. If your platform does not provide you with an alphabetized list of participants visible to all, ask participants to remember who came after them in the list for the purposes of the next activity.

ACTIVITY 2: Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that participants will share “It Matters What We Believe,” Reading 658 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading one line each in reverse alphabetical order. Say, “After you have read your line, say the name of the person who is before you in the alphabet, so they know it is time to read their line. I’ll begin, to be followed by the person who comes last in the alphabet. We’ll do the reading one time to practice this process, and then a second time so we can attend to

the words of Fahs.” Invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space or use the Illuminations app on their phone.

Review the covenant you created in the first session.

ACTIVITY 3: Sharing (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another’s writings. Affirm everyone’s good work.

ACTIVITY 4: Making Life Religious (40 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Say, “The history and development of the institutional expressions of Unitarianism and Universalism – the AUA and the UCA are not the big story here. The development of a twentieth century liberal theology, and the key role of educators in that process, is the big story.” Lead a discussion using these questions as guides:

- What ideas and practices from mid-twentieth century Unitarianism and Universalism are reflected in our faith today?
- What difference does it make if we put religious education and faith development in the center of the way we tell our Unitarian Universalist story?

ACTIVITY 5: Evangelism (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Say, “Both Unitarians and Universalists worked to spread their message, although by very different means. By mid-twentieth century, Universalist missionary efforts had dwindled, while the Unitarians, working through the fellowship movement, were still planting congregations.”

Invite participants to share stories of how the congregation they know best came into being. If there is time, talk about how the different kinds of origin stories are reflected in congregations of today.

ACTIVITY 6: Closing (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from the Session 6, Making Life Religious, and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to share it with the group in written form (roughly 250 words). At the end of the module, each participant will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing history in their work. As necessary, explain the shared document you have created for reflections, and share your screen to familiarize participants with how it works.

Close the session with the words of Clinton Lee Scott, Reading 565, in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Session 7: The Living Tradition

PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated selections from the readers.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Review the final project instructions found in the Introduction and in Session 8 of the Participant Guide and prepare to answer questions and provide particulars about communicating with you for review of project plans.
- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance to participants.

ACTIVITY 1: Gathering (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Greet participants as they join the meeting. Using a list of participants alphabetized by first name, begin at the beginning of the alphabet, and ask each in turn to say their name and location. If your platform does not provide you with an alphabetized list of participants visible to all, ask participants to remember who came after them in the list for the purposes of the next activity.

ACTIVITY 2: Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that participants will share “Out of the Stars” by Robert T. Weston, Reading 530 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading one line each in alphabetical order. Say, “After you have read your line, say the name of the person who follows you in the alphabet, so they know it is

time to read their line. I'll begin, to be followed by the person who comes first in the alphabet. We'll do the reading one time to practice this process, and then a second time so we can attend to the words of Weston." Invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space or use the Illuminations app on their phone.

Review the covenant you created in the first session.

ACTIVITY 3: Sharing (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another's writings. Affirm everyone's good work.

ACTIVITY 4: Opening Discussion (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Say, "This session includes the beginnings of stories that are still being written." Lead a discussion, asking:

- Which stories or events make you proud to be a Unitarian Universalist? Which stories are you longing to share (or maybe already have)?

ACTIVITY 5: Sharing History in Our Work (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion, asking:

- What did you learn from your reading that helped you to better understand a current program, movement, challenge, or event that affects your work as a religious educator?
- How might knowing and sharing this information and perspective help you in your work?

ACTIVITY 6: Continuing the Stories (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Say, “Some of the stories from this session point to work that still must be done.” Invite participant to share some of their dreams for Unitarian Universalism, especially dreams that continue some of the work begun in the first fifty years.

ACTIVITY 7: Closing (15 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that participants are asked to work alone or with others to create a final project that brings their new historical knowledge into their professional practice. The project can be a short curriculum, a program, a presentation, a play, a video, or some other project of their choosing. This project will be shared with the group at the next session, so it must have some kind of presentation component. Call attention to the detailed instructions and list of suggestions in Participant Guide for Session 8. Provide contact information and deadlines for sending project plans for review. Allow a few minutes for participants to ask questions and to discuss with one another possible projects and collaborations.

Close the session with Reading 466, “Religion,” by Vincent B. Silliman in *Singing the Living Tradition*. You may wish to use the same process for shared reading as you used in the opening, assuring that anyone who did not have a chance to read in the opening does so as part of this reading.

Session 8: Final Projects

PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance to participants.

ACTIVITY 1: Gathering (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Greet participants as they join the meeting. Using a list of participants alphabetized by first name, begin at the end of the alphabet, and ask each to say their name and location. If your platform does not provide you with an alphabetized list of participants visible to all, ask participants to remember who came after them in the list for the purposes of the next activity.

ACTIVITY 2: Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting (5 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that participants will share “Principles and Purposes for All of Us,” Reading 594 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading one line each in alphabetical order. Say, “After you have read your line, say the name of the person who follows you in the alphabet, so they know it is time to read their line. I’ll begin, to be followed by the person who comes first in the alphabet.” Invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space or use the Illuminations app on their phone.

Review the covenant you created in the first session.

ACTIVITY 3: Sharing Final Projects (70 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Invite groups or individuals to present their final projects for the group. Affirm the work after each presentation, then guide a short conversation, inviting participants who watched the presentation to comment and ask questions of the presenters.

ACTIVITY 4: Closing (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

If there is time, solicit verbal feedback from participants about the format and content of the module. Explain that in order to receive credit for the module, they must fill in the [participant evaluation form](#) within one week. Encourage them to include some of the verbal feedback they have shared in the forms they will complete.

Close the session and the module with Reading 459, “This is the mission of our faith,” by

William F. Schulz in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

This is the mission of our faith;

To reach the fragile art of

hospitality;

To revere both the critical mind

and the generous heart;

To prove that diversity need not

mean divisiveness;

And to witness to all that we

must hold the whole world in

our hands.

Leaders of the module must complete the [leader evaluation form](#) within one week of the end of the module.