

A People So Bold: DVD Discussion Guide

By Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh

This guide is intended to accompany the showing of all or part of *A People So Bold*, a DVD conversation on social justice, theology, and practice in Unitarian Universalism hosted by Rev. Meg Riley. This guide will assist facilitators in leading group discussions and reflections. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt the guide to best fit your groups needs and constraints.

The guide includes several sections: one to accompany each of the DVD's nine segments, plus appendices which provide background on the speakers and some of their terminology. Each segment of the DVD has a corresponding section in this discussion guide.

The goals of this guide dovetail with the goals of the DVD, which are:

- To equip individuals, groups, and congregations to reflect on social justice deeply and meaningfully,
- To offer wisdom, thought, and inspiration that nurtures Unitarian Universalists' work for justice,
- To spark further conversation on theology and social justice within our congregations, and
- To inspire actions that serve the greater good.

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Intro & How to Use

This segment of the video is best used for a group that will be watching more than a few segments of the DVD. It provides an overview of the DVD's purpose and defines what the project is and is not.

Outline

- A. Chalice Lighting
- B. Introduction & Discussion
- C. Conclusion

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold* DVD
- DVD Player, TV/Screen, and Speakers
- Chalice, Candle, and Matches
- Singing the Living Tradition* (1)

Time: 30-40 Minutes

A. Chalice Lighting (5 minutes)

Welcome participants. Recruit a volunteer to light the chalice.

Offer opening words 434 from *Singing the Living Tradition* as the volunteer kindles the flame.

B. Introduction and Discussion (20-30 minutes)

Watch "Intro & How to Use" segment of video (6:54)

If you have plans for when each of the segments of *A People So Bold* will be shown, share them with the group.

Solicit questions and comments:

Which part of the video do you look forward to the most? What parts do you expect might feel challenging?

Are there ways your congregation already helps you reflect on social justice? If so, how?

Is the concept of Unitarian Universalist “theology” familiar to you? How would you describe Unitarian Universalist theology?

What does it mean to have a theology of social justice? What might one such theology look like?

C. Conclusion (5 minutes)

Invite participants to reflect and share with these or similar words:

Imagine a Unitarian Universalist theology of social justice. You don’t need to have it all worked out. Just imagine what it might be like. Imagine it written in a sermon or a newsletter column. What’s a word that you would want to be in that theology? Take a minute to think of a word that you think is very important to have in a theology of social justice. [Pause]
I now invite you to share those powerful words with the group. If you’d like to pass, you may.

Go around the room with each willing participant sharing a word.

Theological Roots

This section explores how Unitarian Universalism grounds us in our work for social justice, exploring the question “What does social justice have to do with Unitarian Universalism?” As Rev. Meg Riley explains, “this section isn’t long but it is dense.” She will appear a few times in the segment to clarify and or frame some of speakers’ ideas. Further, as facilitator you may wish to refer to this guide’s Glossary in order to understand and explain some of the terminology used. Meg encourages listeners to “take the time to hear themselves think,” which this guide makes possible. Meg also points listeners to the book, *A People So Bold* (Skinner House 2009), which includes an essay from each of the DVDs speakers.

Outline

- A. Chalice Lighting
- B. Our Roots
- C. Present or Future
- D. Emotional Culture
- E. Conclusion

Time: 75-150 minutes (may be spread over two or more meetings)

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold* DVD
- DVD Player, TV/Screen, and Speakers
- Chalice, Candle, and Matches
- Writing paper - at least one sheet per participant.
- Pens or pencils - at least one per participant.
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnal - one per participant.
- Optional: Newsprint and markers for writing discussion questions that do not appear on-screen

A. Chalice Lighting (5 minutes)

Welcome participants. Recruit a volunteer to light the chalice.

Offer opening words 436 from *Singing the Living Tradition* as the volunteer kindles the flame.

B. Our Roots (30-90 minutes)

Note: The length of this discussion varies significantly, and depends on whether you pause the DVD twice for two 30 minute discussions, or once for one ten minute discussion, or any combination of the options presented below. Plan in advance how you will allocate the time and lead the process.

Introduce the Theological Roots segment of the video:

Today we have an opportunity to reflect on how Unitarian Universalism grounds us in work for social justice. You'll hear and speak about our faith's theological roots and be introduced to some theological concepts that can inspire us as we seek to make the world more just, equitable, and compassionate.

Introduce the speakers that participants will hear from in the next segment: Paul Rasor, Rebecca Ann Parker, Dan McKanan, and Jill Schwendeman (see Appendix A for biographies.)

Watch the first part of the "Theological Roots" segment of the DVD. You can pause the DVD for discussion at two different places.

At 06:31 Meg asks listeners to reflect on the following questions:

What was most resonant for you in the discussion so far?

How would you describe the relationship between social justice and Unitarian Universalism?

What stories would you tell?

What parts of history would you lift up?

What would you say about your congregation today?

At 07:53 listeners are invited to reflect on the following question, which appears on screen:

On-Screen Question, 7:53

What gifts does Unitarian Universalism offer you as someone who wants a more just and equitable world?

Whether you pause at 6:31, 7:53, or both, you may lead the group in reflection and discussion with this process, which can take anywhere from 10-30 minutes, depending on time you allot for each piece. Options:

- A. Offer a time of silence for individual reflection and writing.
- B. Form the group into pairs or triads in which participants take turns sharing their responses and ideas.
- C. Bring the whole group back for a summary discussion, asking for highlights of the small group discussions.

C. Present or Future (15-20 Minutes)

Explain that this section begins with comments and questions from two Unitarian Universalists in the audience. Tell participants that Paula Cole Jones will refer to her home congregation, All Souls in Washington, DC. For the purpose of understanding her reference it's valuable to know that All Souls is much more multicultural than most Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Play the DVD, continuing with panelists' discussion of our theological roots and their relationship to social justice.

Pause at 14:42 and invite the group to reflect on the on-screen questions.

On-Screen Questions, 14:42

Look through the hymnal with the question: Where do we ground our hope?

What difference does it make if we ground our social justice work in the imperfect present as opposed to focusing on the future?

Distribute hymnals.

You may choose to use a process of individual reflection and small-group work as suggested above for Part 1 of this segment. Or you may invite the whole group to just start right in looking at the hymnals and responding to the questions.

Emotional Culture (20-30 minutes)

Tell participants that Part 3 of “Theological Roots” continues with discussion about Unitarian Universalism’s “emotional culture,” and begins with questions from Unitarian Universalists in the audience: Adam Gerhardstein, Rev. Ned Wight, and Rev. Dr. Thandeka.

Explain that Rebecca Parker, in responding to their questions, is going to use a familiar term in an unfamiliar way, and it may seem surprising. Tell the group:

Rebecca will talk about white supremacy being part of Unitarian Universalist identity and culture. She is not talking about the KKK or any kind of white supremacist organizations.

She’s using the term “white supremacy” in the way it’s often used in anti-racism work: to describe a system of racial privilege and power that benefits white people and harms non-white people.

Specifically, she’ll speak of the emotional consequences of a white supremacist culture—a culture that presents white people as rational and emotionally controlled, while at the same time associates people of color with strong emotions and irrationality. You’ll have an opportunity to discuss Unitarian Universalist culture, and white supremacy, after we watch this lively discussion on-screen.

Watch video. Pause at 20:23 to display questions for discussion.

On-Screen Questions, 20:23

Share with someone else a memory of community based justice work.

What do you think Rebecca Parker means by placing our history in white supremacist culture?

What's your congregation's emotional culture?

How does it affect justice work? (i.e. does it encourage or discourage risk taking as an activist, an ally?)

To respond to the first question, invite participants to reflect for a short time, then form pairs and share memories.

Invite participants to respond to the second and third questions in the large group. If, at the end of the video, the group's seems energized about discussing UU culture you may wish to skip the first question (about memories of community based justice work) or to offer it third.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Invite participants to reflect and share with these or similar words:

Take a few moments to think of something that you're inspired by in Unitarian Universalism's theological tradition. Think of a way you can say it in a few words. [Pause.] I invite you to share those things that inspire you about our Unitarian Universalist theology.

Go around the room with each willing participant sharing a few words.

Theological Wings

This segment begins by exploring the too-frequent disconnect between our professed religious values and our actions, and continues with discussion of the relationship between beliefs, inclusion, and justice. Highlighting the ways language, storytelling, and beliefs affect our work in the world, this provocative segment is designed to engage participants in thinking beyond boundaries.

Outline

- A. Chalice Lighting
- B. Stories Matter
- C. Racial Justice at the Center
- D. It Matters What We Believe
- E. Good & Evil
- F. Conclusion

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold DVD
- DVD Player, TV/Screen, and Speakers
- Chalice, Candle, and Matches
- Singing the Living Tradition* (1)
- Copies of a *UUWorld* article about Unitarian Universalist voting rights work in Selma, Alabama in 1965: view and print from <http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/2356.shtml>. (Facilitators should read this article as background whether or not they choose to distribute it.)
- Copies of a *UUWorld* article about the “Black Empowerment Controversy” within Unitarian Universalism: view and print from <http://www.uuworld.org/2000/0300feat3.html>. (Facilitators should read this article as background whether or not they choose to distribute it.)

Time: 100-150 minutes (may be spread over two or more meetings)

A. Chalice Lighting (5 minutes)

Welcome participants. Recruit a volunteer to light the chalice.

Offer opening words 453 from *Singing the Living Tradition* as the volunteer kindles the flame.

B. Stories Matter (20-30 minutes)

Introduce the video segment:

The segment begins with a compelling presentation by Rev. Bill Sinkford, the Unitarian Universalist Association's immediate past president. Bill describes our Unitarian Universalist history of social justice with a different lens than many Unitarian Universalists would use to view that same history.

Introduce the speaker, William Sinkford (see Appendix A for his biography).

Play the first part of Theological Wings. Pause when Bill finishes speaking (3:14).

Ask,

President Sinkford named a number of historical events and occurrences. Were you hearing about some of them for the first time? If so, which ones?

Sinkford claims that understanding not only our "feel good" stories of social justice but also our "feel bad" stories of conflict and failure can help us in our quest for social justice. What are some ways that claiming both kinds of stories can help our religious movement? How might such a claiming help you?

What in our history of justice (and injustice) are you interested in learning more about?

Distribute articles about Selma and the Black Empowerment Controversy.

C. Racial Justice at the Center (30-40 minutes)

Introduce the next segment of the video by introducing the next speaker, Paula Cole Jones (see Appendix A for biography.)

Continue showing the video, and pause at 8:30 to consider the on-screen questions.

On-Screen Questions, 8:30

How do we find support from each other in our areas of privilege, so we'll dare to take risks and make mistakes?

Where does the power of transformation live in your congregation most vitally?

Note that each of these is a deep question, which requires thoughtful reflection. You may lead the group in reflection and discussion with this process:

- A. Offer a time of silence for individual reflection and writing.
- B. Form the group into pairs or triads in which participants take turns sharing their responses and ideas.
- C. Bring the whole group back for a summary discussion, asking for highlights of the small group discussions.

D. It Matters What We Believe (20-30 minutes)

Introduce the speakers in the next piece of the video, Kate Lore and Kat Liu. (See biographies in Appendix A.)

Continue showing the video, and pause at 12:42 for discussion of the on-screen questions:

On-Screen Questions, 12:42

How does your congregation shape beliefs about who is welcome, who is relevant, and who belongs?

What is the next step you are called to take in this work?

Again, each of these is a deep question, difficult for all but the most extroverted “think out loud” types to dive into. Further, the first question might generate some critical responses as well as some defensiveness. You will likely find it helpful to remind participants to own their own perspectives, respect others’ perspectives, and speak for themselves.

Before moving into group discussion, you can set aside a time for individual reflection and journaling, or offer a process of reflection and small groups as outlined above.

E. Good & Evil (20-40 minutes)

The next part of Theological Wings features Unitarian Universalist theologian Sharon Welch, Taquiena Boston, as well as Meg Riley and former President Sinkford.

When the video segment concludes, invite participants into reflection and discussion:

At the beginning of “Theological Wings,” Meg Riley invited us to tune into our bodies and notice sensations: noticing support for what we are hearing, noticing resistance. How are your bodies doing? Calmer? More tense?

What in “Theological Wings” was easy to hear? What was harder to hear?

What are you still chewing on; still trying to make meaning of?

Meg Riley asks two questions about stories, which you may invite the group to consider:

What stories help us to move forward with our own institutional history around racism? To accept that we’re a movement of both abolitionists and slaveship captains, liberators and oppressors?

How will *you* find the words to tell the next chapter of *your* story?

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Invite participants to reflect and share with these or similar words:

Take a few moments to think about something you're taking away from today's program. I invite you to share it in a few words, and of course you may pass if you wish.

Go around the room with each willing participant sharing a few words.

Transformative Faith

This segment explores “What it means to create congregations that can be laboratories of learning about how to practice our faith.”

Outline

- G. Chalice Lighting
- H. Building the Sacred Fire
- I. Crisis and Clarity
- J. Expanding Church
- K. Conclusion

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold DVD
- DVD Player, TV/Screen, and Speakers
- Chalice, Candle, and Matches
- Singing the Living Tradition* (1)

Time: 50-75 minutes

A. Chalice Lighting (2 minutes)

Welcome participants. Recruit a volunteer to light the chalice.

Offer opening words 445 from *Singing the Living Tradition* as the volunteer kindles the flame.

B. Building the Sacred Fire (18-33 minutes)

Introduce the first speaker, Dr. Mark Hicks (see Participant Biographies in Appendix A).

Watch “Transformative Faith,” and pause at 6:00 with these questions on the screen:

On-Screen Questions, 6:00

Where do you hear “yes” to help transform you and your community?

Where do you find the breathing space to create the sacred fire?

What kind of spiritual practice helps you find your truths?

Help frame the questions for participants by explaining:

Each of these questions is about how you connect to your source – your source of inspiration and hope, the very ground of your being.

Invite participants into a process of reflection and discussion, utilizing two or more of the following modes.

- A. Offer a time of silence for individual reflection and writing on all three questions.
- B. Form the group into pairs or triads in which participants take turns sharing their responses and ideas.
- C. Bring the whole group back for a summary discussion, asking for highlights of the small group discussions.

C. Crisis and Clarity (15-20 minutes)

Speakers in this segment are: Rebecca Parker, Jill Schewendemen, Louise Green, and Meg Riley. Introduce speakers that have not already been introduced to the group. (See Appendix A for speaker introductions.)

Pause the DVD at 13:00 to consider the questions on the screen:

On-Screen Questions, 13:00

Has a crisis clarified or changed your congregation's priorities about spending resources of time, attention, and money?

What else besides crisis might shift congregational focus?

Lead a discussion with the whole group, encouraging participants to speak from their own experience. Invite them to share stories and impressions from their perspective within the congregation.

D. Expanding Church (10-15 minutes)

Play the next, brief section of the DVD, in which Kate Lore presents a metaphor for a prophetic congregation.

Pause the DVD at 14:20 to reflect on the questions

On-Screen Questions, 14:20

- What are the walls at your congregation now?
- What would it take to expand them?

Invite participants to gather in small groups to consider and discuss these questions. Offer 5-10 minutes for discussion, then ask for small groups to share highlights of their small conversations with the large group.

E. Conclusion (5 minutes)

Invite participants to gather in a circle, if possible. Close with the words of one of the panelists, Rev. Dr. Rebecca Ann Parker:

Your gifts—whatever you discover them to be—
can be used to bless or to curse the world.

The mind's power,
the strength of the hands, the reaches of the heart,
the gift of speaking, listening, imagining, seeing, waiting
any of these can serve to feed the hungry,
bind up wounds, welcome the stranger,
praise what is sacred, do the work of justice, or offer love.

Any of these can draw down the prison door,
hoard bread, abandon the poor, obscure what is holy,
comply with injustice, or withhold love.

You must answer this question:

What will you do with your gifts?

Choose to bless the world.

The choice to bless the world can take you into solitude
to search for the sources of power and grace;
native wisdom, healing and liberation.

More, the choice will draw you into community,
the endeavor shared, the heritage passed on,
the companionship of struggle,
the importance of keeping faith,
the life of ritual and praise, the comfort of human friendship,
the company of earth, its chorus of life welcoming you.

None of us alone can save the world.

Together—that is another possibility, waiting.

Covenant

Outline

- A. Chalice Lighting (2)
- B. Covenant as Aspiration (15)
- C. Discussion (20-30)
- D. Optional: Creating a Covenant (20-30)
- E. Conclusion (3)

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold DVD
- DVD Player, TV/Screen, and Speakers
- Chalice, Candle, and Matches
- Newsprint, Markers, and Tape
- Singing the Living Tradition* (1)

Time: 40-80 minutes

A. Chalice Lighting (2 minutes)

Welcome participants. Recruit a volunteer to light the chalice.

Offer opening words 418 from *Singing the Living Tradition* as the volunteer kindles the flame.

B. Covenant as Aspiration (15 minutes)

Watch “Covenant” segment of video (9:48). Participants may find some of the language Paul Razor uses to be unfamiliar. Terms such as “polity” and “prophetic” are defined in this guide’s glossary.

C. Discussion (20-30 minutes)

After the video concludes, solicit and respond to clarifying questions. Then choose from the following discussion questions to get participants talking.

- As Meg Riley asked in the video, “If you were charged with being Unitarian Universalist in a court of law, would there be enough evidence to convict you? If so, what would that evidence be?”

- What do this segment's stories about the youth group and the Peace Action group say to you about what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist? To practice Unitarian Universalism?
- Theologian Paul Razor states that covenants ought to describe the kind of community we want to create. What are some of the primary characteristics of Unitarian Universalist community as you'd like to create it?
- Razor also invites us to look at covenant as a promise that we will work to make the world beyond our community more just. How might that look for our group? Would that be easily integrated into our group's vision and identity? Or would it be a stretch?
- Each speaker in the segment spoke of accountability to a covenant. How did they hold themselves accountable when their community fell short of its covenant? In your experience, what are some effective ways of holding ourselves and others accountable to our promises and commitments?

D. Optional: Creating a Covenant (20-30 minutes)

Invite your group to create or revise its covenant. If you already have a covenant, begin by sharing it with the group in print and/or verbally. The process for covenant creation or revision will vary significantly from group to group.

However, we offer some best practices:

- Offer a time for the group to generate ideas for the covenant.
- Offer time to clarify and discuss the ideas.
- Encourage thinking about not only "what we'll do or not do" but also "how we'll be."
- Encourage thinking about the group's vision for making the world a better place. How does the group's action contribute to creating a more just society?

- Include, as the video segment suggests, some means for holding one another accountable to the covenant.
- Ask for the group's active commitment and assent. A list of individuals' ideas is not adequate as a covenant. Each piece of the covenant must have the support of all covenanting parties.

E. Conclusion (3 minutes)

If your group has just created a covenant, invite participants to take turns reading it aloud.

If your group has not just created a covenant, invite participants to take turns briefly naming something—a value, a principle, an emotion—that they aspire to affirm and promote in their work for social justice.

Prophetic Church

This segment explores how our congregations can be “prophetic:” tellers of truth, creators of justice, makers of history.

Outline

- A. Chalice Lighting
- B. What is the Prophetic Church?
- C. Stories of the Prophetic Church
- D. Conclusion

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold* DVD
- DVD Player, TV/Screen, and Speakers
- Newsprint, Markers, & Tape
- Singing the Living Tradition* (1)

Time: 50-75 Minutes

A. Chalice Lighting (5 minutes)

Welcome participants. Recruit a volunteer to light the chalice.

Offer affirmation 459 from *Singing the Living Tradition* as the volunteer kindles the flame.

B. What is the Prophetic Church? (20-30 minutes)

Explain to participants:

This segment is called “Prophetic Church.” The word “prophetic” is used in liberal religion in a certain way—a way you might be unfamiliar with.

Ask participants how they might define “prophetic.” The word is commonly used in reference to predicting the future. If participants have not come up with a definition that is compatible with the video’s definition, offer this definition:

The ancient biblical prophets, like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos did more than receive messages from God and predict the future. The prophets were consistent voices for justice. They called on everyone – from kings to peasants – to change their ways and align their actions with the most high, most loving, and most just values of their society. But the prophets didn’t just speak – they lived their values, often at considerable risk. They were

able to read the signs of their times and lead their people in creating justice. A contemporary “Prophetic Church” is on the cutting edge, reading the signs of its times, creating a just and loving community in its midst, and advocating passionately for a better world.

Introduce the speakers, each of whom will talk about what it means to be a prophetic church. They are: Paula Cole Jones, Kat Liu, Paul Razor, and Kate Lore. (See Appendix A for biographies.)

Show the first part of the Prophetic Church segment, pausing at 8:53 for discussion. No questions will appear on screen – pause as Meg Riley concludes her recap of the previous speakers.

Offer these questions for discussion:

What are some characteristics of the prophetic church, as named by the speakers so far? (You may wish to take notes on newsprint)

What does “prophetic church” mean to you?

C. Stories of the Prophetic Church (20-30 minutes)

Tell participants:

The speakers are now going to share stories and moments of prophetic church. As you listen, think about: Do you have examples or stories of being a “prophetic church”—moments of making history instead of being pushed around by it? We’ll discuss after.

If you wish, you may introduce the speakers that appear in this next part of the video. They are: Nancy McDonald Ladd, Marilyn Sewell, Kate Lore, and Victoria Safford. (See Appendix A for biographies.)

Show the remaining part of the Prophetic Church segment. When the video concludes, ask:

What stories spoke to you? How?

What “Prophetic Church” stories come to mind for you?

Meg Riley invites listeners to visit UUA website to find a “large cache of congregational stories.” These can be found at:

<http://www.uua.org/congregationallife/justicediversity/index.shtml>. Encourage participants to send the UUA their prophetic congregational stories!

D. Conclusion (5-10 minutes)

Ask participants:

Think about the kind of story you want to create with your faith-based justice work. What story can we create together?

When you are ready, I invite each person to share one sentence from that story—from the story we aspire to create together.

Conclude by affirming “So may it be!”

Worship

This segment explores how worship, particularly its musical and ritual elements, can inspire and sustain our work for justice.

Outline

- A. Chalice Lighting
- B. Grounding & Transformative
- C. Ritual & Power
- D. Conclusion

Time: 50-75 minutes

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold* DVD
- DVD Player, TV/Screen, and Speakers
- Copies of your congregation's hymnals
- Two copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* (if it's not your congregation's hymnal).
- Invite the participation and leadership of a song leader for part D, Conclusion. Ask that person to come prepared to teach the group a justice-related song.

A. Chalice Lighting (5 minutes)

Welcome participants. Recruit a volunteer to light the chalice, and at least one other person to read responsive reading 441 with you.

Offer responsive reading 441 from *Singing the Living Tradition* as the volunteer kindles the flame.

B. Grounding & Transformative (20-30 minutes)

Introduce the segment by asking:

How can worship help ground or guide us in our work for social justice?

Listen to some ideas and examples from participants. Explain:

This segment of the video explores the ways that the musical and ritual elements of worship can help us grow, change, and work for a better world.

Introduce the video's next speaker, Annaease Hastings (see biography in Appendix A.)

Show the Worship segment of the video, pausing at 3:15.

On-Screen Questions, 3:15

What songs hold you in hard times?

What hymns hold your commitment to justice?

What is your congregation's most powerful experience of music as a transformative force?

In response to the first two questions, invite participants to share titles or lines from songs and hymns that inspire and ground them. Though these need not be songs that have been sung in your congregation, you may make hymnals accessible to participants to find the songs that move them.

In response to the third question, invite participants to reflect not only on the most powerful music they've heard in the congregation, but also on that music's transformative effect.

In the video, Meg Riley mentions web resources on cultural misappropriation. These can be accessed at:

<http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/culturalmisappropriation/>.

C. Ritual & Power (20-30 minutes)

This part of "Worship" discusses the meaning of ritual and the culture that surrounds it. You may wish to introduce the speakers, Rob Hardies, Rebecca Ann Parker, Dan McKanan, and Jill Schwendeman. (See biographies in Appendix A.)

Watch the video and pause at 10:30.

On-Screen Questions, 10:30

What rituals of transformation does your congregation do well for children, youth, and adults?

How does worship help create *a people so bold*?

Invite participants to consider these questions in silence before sharing. During the sharing, encourage participants not to get too hung-up on the words “do well.” Some in the congregation might think the annual Coming-of-Age Sunday is done well, others might disagree. The value of the discussion is in discerning how transformation happens: how we let ritual reach us and change us.

D. Conclusion (5-10 minutes)

If you feel skilled at leading rituals, you may wish to conclude by offering a brief ritual, such as a blessing of hands, that empowers participants to work for justice.

Conclude with the group learning and singing a song that can inspire justice work. (You may have engaged a song leader other than yourself for this purpose.)

Healing a Broken World

This segment of the DVD can be used in worship, as a sermon with two preachers, or in a workshop. Guidelines for usage in each are presented below.

In Worship (25 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold* DVD
- DVD Player, Projector, Screen, and Speakers
- Recruit someone to queue, start, and stop the DVD.

You can design a worship service around this segment of the video. Watch the video in advance and choose hymns and readings that complement the video's message. You can find many possibilities for openings, closings, and chalice lightings on the UUA's Worship Web at <http://www.uua.org/worshipweb>.

Include "The Art of Blessing the Day," a poem by Marge Piercy, as one of the service's readings. It is referenced in Victoria Safford's sermon. The poem appears in Piercy's collection of poems by the same name (Knopf, 2000), and can be found online at <http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/authors/piercy/poem.html>.

When you are leading the worship, frame the video presentation with the words of Meg Riley, or similar words.

In this presentation, Taquiena Boston and Victoria Safford reflect on the question, "How does Unitarian Universalism hold brokenness, suffering, and oppression?" Taquiena's reflections are those of an African American woman forging a liberal religious identity throughout her life. Victoria shares the experience of a white, suburban, female, UU minister.

I hope that their reflections cause you to create your own narrative about how you understand the hardest parts of life: racism, torture, war, and all of the other destruction which is present on this planet. Only by hearing each other into speech can we learn how to move ahead.

Start showing the segment at 0:58.

In a Workshop (60 Minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold* DVD
- DVD Player, TV/Screen, and Speakers
- Newsprint and Markers
- Writing paper and pens/pencils
- Chalice, Candle, and Matches
- Two copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*
- A comforting object that can be passed from person to person as they speak, such as a smooth stone, a bean bag, or a flower.

Welcome participants. Recruit a volunteer to light the chalice, and at least one co-reader for responsive reading 440.

Offer responsive reading 440 from *Singing the Living Tradition* as the volunteer kindles the flame.

Introduce this segment of the video with these or similar words:

“Healing a Broken World” consists of two Unitarian Universalists’ responses to the question, “How does Unitarian Universalism hold brokenness, suffering, and oppression?” Today, we invite you to reflect on this question as well—the video will be followed by a time for sharing.

Introduce speakers, if relevant. Biographies for Taquiena Boston and Victoria Safford can be found in Appendix A. Continue:

As you watch the video, listen for what strikes you – what touches your heart or calls to mind a memory? You can jot down notes for sharing later.

Watch the video to the end of “Healing a Broken World.”

Invite participants into a time of silent reflection on the question,

How do you understand the hardest parts of life: racism, torture, war, and all of the other destruction which is present on this planet? How might your faith hold this brokenness, suffering, and oppression in a life-giving way?

Encourage participants to think about what they have felt and witnessed. Offer up to ten minutes for silent reflection.

Gather participants in a circle, where they will be invited to share and listen to one another. Explain that some of us feel more comfortable telling personal stories than others, and that no one needs to share beyond what feels comfortable in this moment. Ask the group to covenant with one another about keeping personal stories confidential.

Define the circle as a “listening circle,” where the group will pass an object from speaker to speaker. Clarify that everyone has the right to pass. Share with the group the approximate amount of time they have per person.

Begin the sharing by passing the object to the first speaker.

Conclusion

Conclude by offering the poem “The Art of Blessing the Day” by Marge Piercy. It is referenced in Victoria Safford’s sermon. The poem appears in Piercy’s collection of poems by the same name (Knopf, 2000), and can be found online at <http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/authors/piercy/poem.html>.

Metaphors

This playful segment of the video is the result of Meg Riley’s invitation to convocation participants to share their metaphors for justice.

Outline

- A. Chalice Lighting
- B. Metaphors
- C. Sharing Your Metaphors

Time: 30 minutes

Materials and Preparation

- A People So Bold* DVD
- DVD Player, TV/Screen, and Speakers
- Chalice, Candle, and Matches
- Singing the Living Tradition* (one copy)

A. Chalice Lighting (1 minute)

Welcome participants. Recruit a volunteer to light the chalice.

Offer chalice lighting 447 from *Singing the Living Tradition* as the volunteer kindles the flame.

B. Metaphors (9 minutes)

Watch the Metaphors segment of the DVD (8:32)

C. Sharing Your Metaphors (20 minutes)

Invite participants to reflect on, and share, the metaphors that guide their justice work.

Conclude the time of sharing with the bumper-sticker phrase, “Metaphors Be With You!”

Appendix A: Participant Biographies

Taquiena Boston is a longtime member of All Souls Church, Unitarian, in Washington DC and director of identity-based ministries at the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Prior to assuming this role, she was an antiracism program associate in the Faith in Action staff group of the UUA.

Louise Green has been the minister of social justice at All Souls Church, Unitarian, in Washington DC since 2004. Louise was a lead community organizer with the Industrial Areas Foundation for eight years in Manhattan and Brooklyn, New York.

Paula Cole Jones, a past president of Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries, is lead consultant for JUUST Change, an antioppression consultancy program for UU congregations, and a facilitator for Beyond Categorical Thinking workshops. She is a longtime member of All Souls Church, Unitarian, in Washington, DC.

Annease Hastings has been the music director at Bull Run Unitarian Universalists in Manassas, Virginia for over 20 years.

Mark A. Hicks is the Angus MacLean Professor of Religious Education at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago, and most recently served as associate professor of educational transformation at George Mason University. Mark consults nationally with schools and government and nonprofit organizations on building inclusive, democratically minded, multiracial, and multicultural learning communities. He is a lay leader at All Souls Church, Unitarian, in Washington, DC and the Riverside Church in New York City.

Nancy McDonald Ladd is minister to the Bull Run Unitarian Universalists of Manassas, Virginia. She currently serves as president of the Chesapeake Area UU Ministers Association

Kate Lore has been directing the social justice program at First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon, for the past ten years. Kate brings sixteen years of

church leadership into her ministry and specializes in community organizing, leadership development, conflict resolution, and creative networking.

Kat Liu is assistant director of the UUA's Washington Office for Advocacy, where she is primarily responsible for providing electronic communications and resources to UU congregations and individuals engaged in legislative advocacy. She also holds the Environmental Justice portfolio—trying to bring a social justice lens to environmental issues.

Dan McKanan is the Ralph Waldo Emerson UUA senior lecturer at Harvard Divinity School. He has written three books on religious movements for social transformation in the United States and is currently at work on a general history of the religious left, to be published by Beacon Press.

Rebecca Ann Parker is president and professor of theology at Starr King School for the Ministry. She is author of several books of theology, each with an emphasis on justice and countering oppression. Before coming to Starr King, she spent ten years as a parish minister. She is dually affiliated with the United Methodist Church and the UUA.

Paul Rasor is director of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom and professor of interdisciplinary studies at Virginia Wesleyan College. He is an ordained UU minister with backgrounds in law, music, and theology.

Meg A. Riley is director of the Unitarian Universalist Association's advocacy and witness programs, and serves as president of Faith in Public Life: A Resource Center for Justice and the Common Good. She has served on the boards of the Interfaith Alliance, Equal Partners in Faith, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and Interfaith Workers for Justice and on the steering committees of dozens of national coalitions.

Victoria Safford is minister of White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church in Mahtomedi, Minnesota. She is author of numerous articles and essays and a meditation manual called *Walking toward Morning*.

Jill Schwendeman is director of youth programs at White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church in Mahtomedi, Minnesota. She served as executive director for two nonprofit coalitions in Illinois, North Suburban Peace Initiative and Families' and Children's AIDS Network.

Marilyn Sewell has been the senior minister at the First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon, for seventeen years. With backgrounds in English literature, social work, and divinity, and theology, Sewell has published several books including two books of women's poetry.

William Sinkford was elected as the seventh president of the UUA in June 2001, and served through June 2009. His presidency was distinguished by efforts to defend oppressed peoples. He is an outspoken critic of the war in Iraq, a nationally recognized champion of equal marriage rights for same-sex couples, and a passionate advocate for the people of Darfur. Under Sinkford's leadership, the UUA became the first national denomination to join the New Sanctuary Movement, and formally voted to work to combat global warming. He has been a staunch defender of religious pluralism and the separation of church and state. Sinkford freely shared his own spiritual journey and called on Unitarian Universalism to reclaim a language of reverence.

Thandeka is a founder of Affect Theology, which investigates the links between religion and emotions using insights from affective neuroscience. A published author and professor, Thandeka has most recently served as a visiting scholar at Claremont School of theology.

Dr. Sharon D. Welch is provost and professor of religion and society at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. While at the University of Missouri, Sharon was a senior fellow in the Center for Religion, the Professions, and the Public, and is currently a member of the International Steering Committee of Global Action to Prevent War. She is also the author of several books linking theology and justice.

Appendix B: Glossary

Audiences will have differing levels of familiarity with many of the concepts referred to by speakers in the DVD. The following terms are defined for the benefit of all participants' understanding.

Congregational Polity

“Polity” is a word related to politics. It refers to a social organization’s form of government. Religious organizations have many different kind of polity. In episcopal polity, the bishops govern the churches. In presbyterian polity, presbyteries (regional councils) govern the churches. In **congregational polity**—the form of polity embraced by Unitarian Universalist congregations—each congregation is largely autonomous. Our autonomous congregations covenant with one another to provide mutual services and support.

The Enlightenment

Unitarianism and Universalism took hold in the United States during a time known as “The Enlightenment” (18th and 19th centuries), during which American and European academics and revolutionaries emphasized such principles as freedom, reason, and tolerance.

Liturgy/Liturgical

“Liturgy” refers to patterns and traditions of worship. These can be weekly, such as a chalice lighting or a repeated song. Liturgies can also be seasonal and cyclic, such as special Easter rituals or annual altar-building for Day of the Dead. Unitarian Universalism is different from many religious groups because it does not prescribe particular liturgies for worship, weddings, funerals, or other events of import. However, each of our congregations has its own liturgical traditions.

Polity

(See Congregational Polity, above.)

Postmodernism

A literary, aesthetic, and social trend that began to rise in the latter half of the 20th century in Europe and America. To look at the world with postmodernist lenses is to critique hierarchies, certainties, grand narratives, and “objective” truths. Postmodernism sees the world as diverse, complex, and contradictory, yet deeply interconnected.

“William James’ Once-Born Types:”

In “Theological Roots,” Dan McKanan refers to terminology of the late and legendary psychologist William James, who in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) wrote about the “once-born,” people who have experienced little friction between their mindsets, way of life, and religion of birth, and the “twice born,” those whose life experiences have led them to alter their religious beliefs and practices. McKanan states that Unitarian Universalism has few “once-born” types in it.