

## **UUA Music Leadership Credentialing Course**

Rhythm, Pitch, and Timbre:

The Elements of Multicultural Competence for Musicians

July 2012

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Co-facilitators: Dr. Mark A. Hicks and Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones

### **Post-Course Assignment**

#### **I. Support Team**

During the class, you will connect with a small group (no more than three persons) with whom you will pledge to encourage each other and hold each other accountable. You and your partners will meet twice, likely over the phone, to explore, practice, bridge, translate and grow your own and your congregation's competency as a multi-racial, multicultural community. We hope your team makes a strong connection, perhaps even checking-in with each other at the 2014 UUMN conference.

During the first meeting of your Support Team:

Reflect on your learning so far. Review the journal entries that formed part of your pre-course assignment. Include insights you gained from the course and, perhaps, the conference. Think about:

- What surprised or moved you in the course exercises and conversations?
- What insights did you gain about how music creates/supports a multi-racial, multicultural, theologically diverse context?
- Where were you enthused? Frustrated?
- What did you notice about yourself, others, and music as you moved through the week? What did you find puzzling?
- What next steps do you feel called to explore?

Help each other begin to brainstorm how to complete the Post-Course assignment, "Music for Moving Dreams."

#### **II. Activate the "Music for Moving Dreams" Initiative**

Those who study religion and sociology have found that music is a key factor that both attracts and sustains the inherent tensions that emerge in a diverse congregation. As with any art form, music can be a connective tissue that harkens the past while stretching us toward something new. Thus, in the work of developing a multicultural multiracial theologically diverse congregation, music is

one of the more encouraging strategies to welcome the stranger AND keep her at the table. This project asks you to develop a small learning community that can, over time, become the guiding force to support the work of building a Beloved Community. We are asking you to use music as a vehicle for moving dreams from the realm of a “lofty vision” toward behavioral practices that shift paradigms.

**Process:**

Based on your journaling/reflections before and after the July conference and your telephone conversation with your Support Team, identify a small group of people (no more than 7 to 8 people) who have an interest in developing a multi-racial, multicultural, theologically diverse congregation. Explain to participants that they will attend a two-hour meeting, followed by another short meeting to provide oral feedback on a musical experience presented during Sunday worship.

**Part One: Create a Small Learning Community**

1. Using the four versions of the “Star-Spangled Banner” modeled during the class (feel free to swap out a version if you find it useful), research the cultural background for each of these versions, and write liner notes for each version (feel free to use the liner notes from class as a launching point):
  - Who was the artist? What was the social context of the version? How did that version “speak” to its era? How does the version speak to the values of Unitarian Universalism?
2. Identify a small group from your congregation to experience the exercise and have a conversation about its meaning and implications. The purpose of this particular exercise is to model how to create a community of consciousness about how cultural traditions – lived experiences – shape values, emotions, social commitments, and so forth. The group members might come from groups such as your music committee, church board, worship associates, the church growth committee or the diversity task force. Allow two hours for the exercise and conversation. After the experience itself, engage your group in a dialogue about the joys and challenges that emerge when multiple visions of history, competing values, and strong emotional ties occupy the same space.

Learning goals include:

- raising people’s consciousness about the power of music as a tool for creating a supportive space to engage difference;
- demonstrating how to create and support the spiritual practice of both welcoming and sitting with difference and ambiguity;

- and, finally, using of music as a community-building strategy that welcomes people from different cultural groups.

### **Part Two: Musical Exercise with the Congregation**

Identify a piece of music that speaks to a cultural tradition not often voiced in your congregation.

1. As part of your own process, identify the cultural group(s) from which the song springs, including the song's history and the cultural values that you think are at work in the music, the lyrics, or the composer's and lyricist's "narrative." Identify two or three Unitarian Universalist principles that the song addresses.
2. Write a paragraph that will be printed in the order of service in the style of "liner notes." (**Please see the sample on "Lift Every Voice and Sing," prepared by Dr. Mark Hicks, at the end of this document.**) Your liner notes should include: the context for the song, and its use and meaning in its culture of origin. Explain (briefly) your interpretations of the cross-cultural connections, and how Unitarian Universalist principles and universal themes connect. Consider consulting with the Learning Community you have created in Part One about how best to balance oral and written learning styles within the audience; how much should be said out loud in an introduction, how much should be covered in the liner notes? The goal is for a large percentage of the congregation to engage with the music.
3. Perform the piece during a worship service. Following the performance (quite soon!), invite representatives from the Learning Community to process the impact of the music, paying special attention to the emotional terrain of the experience (connections, disconnections, lingering questions, curiosities, inspirations, and so forth). In a spirit of continuous improvement (as opposed to critique!), check in with group members on topics such as:
  - How was the music was received by the wider congregation?
  - To what degree did the music invite new connections?
  - How did the overall process expand new ways of thinking, feeling, being, doing?
  - As individuals and a collective, how did the process mitigate fears or anxieties you and they may have had about working with music and presenting it in this way?
  - What feedback does the group have for you in your role as teacher-musician?

**III. Write up what happened.** In approximately two pages, describe briefly but vividly your experiences with the “Star-Spangled Banner” Small-Group Exercise and with the Musical Exercise for the Congregation. Think about these questions:

- Did your “students” experience resistance or frustration with the “Star-Spangled Banner” exercise or the material? If so, how did the group work with those emotions?
- Did you and your students experience “aha” moments or breakthroughs?
- What learning goals did you achieve?
- For the Musical Exercise, describe the cultural group you focused on, the UU Principles you chose, and the ways in which you engaged the musicians and congregants in their encounter with this music.
- Summarize the conversation you had with members of your Learning Community following the performance.
- How do the pre-course readings help you to understand your experiences?
- Is there anything you would change the next time you offer these experiences?

#### **IV. Write a Cover Letter to Mark and Nancy**

Write a one- to two-page Cover Letter that reflects the whole of your experience with this class. This is where you get to share your personal journey through this course.

- Where did you travel as a result of leading a group of congregants on this journey?
- What new perspectives, approaches, and goals do you now hold?
- How does this experience relate to Unitarian Universalism and its future?
- What did you learn about the musician’s leadership role in creating/supporting the development of multi-racial, multicultural, and theologically diverse congregations?
- What’s next for you in this work?

## **Send Your Final Packet**

Prepare a packet that includes:

1. Names of the members of your Support Team and the dates this autumn on which your Support Team has held its conference calls or meetings (one-half page)
2. Two-page Reflection Paper on the “Star-Spangled Banner” Small-Group Exercise and the Musical Exercise for the Congregation
3. Your liner notes for the “Star-Spangled Banner” versions and for the Musical Exercise for the Congregation
4. Your Cover Letter to Mark and Nancy about your overall journey through this course and your plans for continued learning.

**FINAL PROJECT DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2012**

*Please e-mail your completed packet to: [jgartner@uua.org](mailto:jgartner@uua.org)*

**SAMPLE: MUSICAL EXERCISE – LINER NOTES**  
**“Lift Every Voice and Sing”**

**Words: James Weldon Johnson, 1871-1938**

**Music: J. Rosamond Johnson, 1873-1954**

**Principles:** Inherent worth, search for truth, interconnectedness

**Cultural values at work:**

1. Coming to voice – to name and validate one’s own story
2. Recognition of a common struggle to be seen and respected as human
3. Ritual of affirmation

**Liner notes:**

“Lift Every Voice and Sing” (now also known as “Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing”) was first performed publicly as a poem as part of a celebration of Abraham Lincoln's Birthday on February 12, 1900, by 500 schoolchildren at the segregated Stanton School. Its principal, James Weldon Johnson, wrote the words to introduce its honored guest, Booker T. Washington.

The poem was later set to music by Mr. Johnson’s brother, John, in 1905. Singing this song quickly became a way for African Americans to demonstrate their patriotism and hope for the future. In calling for earth and heaven to “ring with the harmonies of Liberty,” they could speak out subtly against racism and Jim Crow laws—and especially against the huge number of lynchings that accompanied the rise of the Ku Klux Klan at the turn of the century. In 1919, the NAACP adopted the song as the “Negro National Anthem.” By the 1920s, copies of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” could be found in black churches across the country, often pasted into the hymnals. In many civic settings in the Black community, the hymn is sung immediately after the “Star-Spangled Banner.”