

WORSHIP FOR ALL AGES

Leader's Guide



**THE RENAISSANCE PROGRAM
Unitarian Universalist Association**

2003

Worship for All Ages Module

Table of Contents

Introduction for Leaders	
Overview.....	1
Goals	17
Materials Needed	17
Suggested Break activities	18
List of Handouts.....	18
Session 1	
Welcome and Introduction (2 hours)	19
Warm Up	
Welcome and Introduction	
Introduction to the worship module	
Fun activity	
Worship service	
Session 2	
Remembering, Defining, and Developing Worship (3 hours)	21
Recollections of worship experiences	
Goals and definitions	
Theories and orders of worship	
Session 3	
Setting & Resources; Finding Your Strengths (2½ hours)	27
Gathering, focusing, or worship	
Introductions	
Worship setting	
Worship calendar	
Resources	
Session 4	
Worship by Age; Prayer;	
Welcoming Children With Special Needs Into Worship (2 hours)	30
Gathering, focusing, or worship	
Fitting worship to specific ages	
Form teams to prepare services	
Prayer	
Welcoming children with special needs into our worship	
Parking lot check	
Session 5	
Creating Worship Services (2½ hours)	37
Gathering, focusing, or worship	
Teams create worship services	

Session 6
Evaluations of Services and Module (3 hours).....38
 Presentation and evaluation of worship services
 Written and verbal evaluation of module
 Closing ceremony

THE RENAISSANCE PROGRAM CORE MATERIAL

The Renaissance Program Overview

The Renaissance Program is a major component of Unitarian Universalist religious education leadership development and the Religious Education Credentialing Program of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Each 15-hour module provides basic education in a specific area for religious educators in local congregations and resources for continuing development. Modules focus on religious education for all ages, although some may be more geared to a specific age group (example: Ministry With Youth). The modules may be taken in any order:

- Administration of Religious Education Programs
- Curriculum Planning in the Local Congregation
- Developing a Philosophy of Religious Education
- Ministry With Youth
- Teacher Development
- Unitarian Universalist Identity
- Unitarian Universalist History
- Worship for All Ages
- Multicultural Religious Education

Participation. Modules can accommodate between 12 and 20 participants. The target audience for Renaissance Program modules includes Directors of Religious Education, Religious Education Committee Chairpersons, ministers who are responsible for overseeing Religious Education programs, and theological students preparing for Unitarian Universalist ministry. Participation in the entire module is required for credit to be received. Each module is an unfolding process. Group dynamics and learning are enhanced when everyone is present for all sessions. The head leader does have discretion to allow credit, whether through asking for makeup “homework” to be done, or by other means, but only when a minimal amount of the time has been missed and the part that has been missed is amenable to alternate arrangements.

Modules are usually offered on weekends, 2-3 day session, or as part of weeklong conferences. Each setting has different characteristics. Weekend modules are intense with a definite momentum; weeklong modules allow more time between sessions, but scheduling must consider other conference activities. Neither is better or worse than the other, but the settings are different.

Recognition. When a participant has completed five modules, or a minimum of 75 hours of Renaissance training, the Renaissance Program Office will send a Letter of Recognition of the time that has been given in continuing education.

The Renaissance Program Office maintains a record of participant attendance at a module based on the returned module evaluation forms. It is important that each participant complete and return an evaluation.

Scholarships. It is strongly recommended that congregations give financial sponsorship to a religious educator who is attending on their behalf. Some scholarship help is available from the Unitarian Universalist Association through the Beatley and Earle endowment funds, whose interest is annually available in modest amounts for religious education grants to individuals. This and other options are available through the UUA Religious Education Credentialing Office in the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group. Some District Religious Education Committees have funds available for Renaissance Program scholarships. Summer conferences may offer financial assistance.

Resource: For more information on Renaissance Program modules, including the Planning Guide and Request Form, see the web page at <http://www25.uua.org/re/landscp/renaissance.html>

Renaissance Leadership

The Rev. Norma Veridan

People come to the Renaissance Program for reasons and with a variety of experiences in religious education in general and worship in particular. It is important for leaders to recognize that no one module and no two leaders can meet all the needs and interests of all participants. It is also important for the leaders to keep in mind the limitations of the module and the clearly stated module goals—and to restate the goals as necessary.

Module leaders need to be familiar enough with the material to know if and when a topic will be covered. It is also appropriate to be flexible when both leaders are agreed and open to changing the order or to involving people who have contributions to make, always keeping the goals for the entire group as the measure. It may be helpful to talk about resources with some individuals outside of group time in order to answer their needs that are not covered in this module

This suggests that the leaders need to get to know one another and to be aware of each other's strengths and skills, using resources such as the Myers-Briggs or other such leadership/learning styles inventories. It is important to be intentional about shared leadership, to plan what you will do, demonstrate it, and describe it for the group. Plan carefully to cover other styles of learning and leading if the co-leaders have only a narrow range of styles between them.

Each Renaissance module experience will be different because of the wealth of experience that both participants and leaders bring to it and the richness of who they are. Each experience will be enriched by the careful and thoughtful preparation of the leaders.

Leader Preparation

- Module leaders should be thoroughly familiar with everything in the Leaders' Guide and in the Reader.
- Leaders should be prepared to lead an opening worship service (an example is included, but something personal may be just as good), a closing ceremony, and various worshipful openings to each day's work.
- Leaders should be sensitive to the needs of the group for breaks and should make sure that there are plenty of opportunities for movement—even brief movement, like getting paper and markers for a team task.
 - ❑ A good stretch or two minutes of yoga can be a welcome antidote to an overdose of sitting. Physical stretching is also a good complement to the mental stretching the module requires. There may be some participants, however, who are physically or psychologically uncomfortable about body action, so it should be encouraged but not pushed.
 - ❑ A non-threatening cooperative game can have all the benefits mentioned above and also be fun.
- Scheduling of working sessions can usually be adjusted somewhat according to the wishes of the participants, special opportunities offered by the location, and the weather. Certain conference schedules pose problems for fitting in the whole 15 hours and will need special arrangements.
- Leaders should take their own favorite resources: books, readings, songs, tapes, tablecloths, chalices, worship props (whatever that might be, from fossils to feathers). They should also try to find out ahead of time what resources the host location has or can get, in any of the categories mentioned, as well as arts and crafts supplies and sources of music.

- The instructions for conducting the module often contain suggested ways of expressing the ideas. These are not meant to “put words into your mouth” but are simply one possible way it could be said. We do not recommend readings these sections verbatim. A “conversation” coming off the printed page can never sound real. Please feel free to use the suggested words or phrases to whatever extent is comfortable for you.

Getting Ready Before the Conference

Read the Materials

Go through the module and the materials in the Reader. Take notes on anything you want to check out with your co-leader or the conference host.

Prior Planning

Renaissance Program modules are offered in a variety of settings and either as part of a weeklong program or as a weekend retreat. Be clear from the beginning with the sponsoring group how this module will fit into their plans and what your time and space needs will be. Providing the sponsoring/hosting group with your schedule ahead of time will allow them to work closely with you to coordinate meals and other plans. If, for any reason, you will be unable to send a letter to participants, ask the volunteer registrar for the module to include items you wish the participants to bring with them in the confirmation letter that he or she is sending out. Please provide such a list of items to the registrar or your contact person as early as you can.

Preliminary Correspondence: It is important that each participant receive a letter before the module from the leaders (see sample, following), saying, “We are looking forward to seeing you.” The letter also gives you an opportunity to request anything you want the participants to do, to prepare, or to bring with them—including things to share. If you get your information to the conference registrar in time, it can go out in the mailing with the Readers. The participants should bring at least the following basic items: Three-ring notebook (to hold notes as well as handouts); paper; pens/pencils; and the Reader they got in advance. There should also be a confirmation letter from the registrar of the module, acknowledging registration and giving details of time, place, overnight accommodations, costs, etc. This letter should also remind registrants that they will need to participate in the full 15 hours and complete the official evaluation form if they would like to receive credit.

The Reader: It is not realistic to assume that the participants will all have read their readers before the module. In general, Leaders’ Guides do not assume prior reading, though in their letter the leaders may encourage participants to read as much as possible and may wish to specify sections of the reader which are particularly important to read beforehand. The guide includes references to the reader for (1) items participants will look at or use during working sessions of the module, (2) items they should read or re-read afterward, now that the participants understand why these readings are recommended.

Sample Welcome Letter From Leaders to Participants

To all the participants in the upcoming Renaissance Program module _____, beginning on - _____ at _____ in the _____.

Greetings!

We are looking forward to meeting you soon and to forming some sincere bonds of friendship and commitment, as we share our hopes and experiences in the field of _____.

Our Unitarian Universalist congregations today are in great need of religious leaders who are skilled in the area of _____ to help them reach their goals. This tells us that as a religious professional who achieves competence and skill in _____, you will play a crucial role in the future of our movement..

If you are a brand-new at _____, we hope to take you gently by the hand and guide your steps toward confidence and joy in contributing to your congregation in this important expression of our religious faith.

If you are already an experienced leader in the area of _____, you know that there are no limits to our needs for growth in this area. You probably have much to share, and you are probably looking forward to the handouts that our generous colleagues bring to share at these gatherings. Perhaps you would be willing to make 15 to 20 copies of two of your most effective _____ to share, or one or two copies of _____ to place on our sharing table.

We hope you will make time to finish the Reader you received in the mail. It will make a difference in the quality of your experience during the module. It is particularly important that you cover _____. In addition, before you begin the module, you may find it useful to consider how _____ is handled at your current congregation so that you may _____. Finally, be sure to bring your copy of the Reader with you and a three-ring binder, writing implements, and paper for notes.

We plan to schedule our time to so that you will have time both to digest content and to make friendly connections with the people attending your module. Experience shows that these relationships will be important to you.

Looking forward to making memories together,
Names (Leaders of the module)

Comfortable Leadership

(Excerpted and considerably modified, with permission, from *Parents as Resident Theologians*, by Roberta and Christopher Nelson)

- Be clear to the participants about how the leadership will be shared. They need to know your relationship to each other as leaders.
- Make sure materials and supplies will be available when needed.
- Plan to arrive before the participants. Not being there at the time the group is forming raises anxiety as to time and place, as well as anxiety for the leaders' well-being.
- Let the participants know, early, what space is available to them at the module site, where toilets and telephones are, what the policy is about smoking.
- Help the group get to know one another and develop trust and rapport. They will be able to learn more readily and to feel more confident in a group of friends than among strangers.
- Watch for side conversations that can be disruptive to the group. Invite those involved to state their comments to the rest of the group and proceed accordingly. This is a basic requisite for building trust and rapport.
- Strive to keep an individual or a small group from dominating a conversation. What's really going on? Is someone afraid of where the discussion may go? Are there individuals who feel threatened and who see no other way to keep control? Uncovering a hidden agenda can be a key to a new understanding.
- Help the group to keep focused. A side topic may be added to the agenda at a later time if it is of general interest and relevance.
- Encourage people to share ideas and experiences. This is not a demand but an invitation. A nonparticipating member can sometimes passively control the group as others become suspicious of that person's silence.
- Listen to the group and encourage clarification. Try to hear the questions behind the ones you posed. Pay attention to new ideas.
- Carefully monitor your own participation. In the early sessions, encouraging others' participation is usually far more fruitful than being the one everyone turns to for the "expert" view or answers to tough questions. As the participants build assurance and develop greater respect for themselves, the leaders can often share more freely from their own personal experience.
- Trust your own combined judgment rather than being enslaved to the Leaders' Guide. You may need to make some changes to bring out the best the module has to offer.
- Relax and enjoy the group.

Renaissance Display Box Materials

Be sure that the Display Box from the Renaissance Program Office has been arranged for and that the on-site coordinator inventories the materials when it arrives. Be sure that tables will be available on-site for these items and any materials that you and your co-leaders decide to bring from your own resources. Communicate in advance with the on-site coordinator to have any suitable local resources available as well. All items should be well-labeled and inventoried to ensure that everyone ends up with his or her own materials at the end of the conference.

Suggestions

- Begin and end each session or significant block of time with an opening and closing activity, such as a reading, song, game, story, responsive reading, etc. Enlist participants in leading these activities by inviting them to sign up on the volunteer sheets. Also recruit volunteers to lead movement activities, such as stretches, games, yoga, etc., whenever the group needs a quick energizer. Involving participants greatly increases the variety of ideas shared and recognizes the experience and leadership present in the group.
- Each time the group re-gathers, take about five minutes for a check-in on questions left over from previous sessions. If these cannot be addressed at the time, put them on the Parking Lot (see below), to be addressed at another specified time. Giving participants regular opportunities to express their questions or concerns helps bring the leaders and the participants together.

Parking Lot: Pass around 3x5 cards, and ask participants to write down two or three expectations they have of this module. It's helpful if they sign the cards so that if you get an expectation that is off base, you can deal with it individually and in person. Let participants know that you will place these items on the Parking Lot poster created to keep topics or issues that need to be discussed until each of them is handled. Leaders will check Parking Lot at the end of each module session, removing items as they get dealt with.

Getting Ready On-Site

Plan to arrive early so that you can become familiar with and set up the space in which you will be working and allocate leadership roles for particular segments.

Workshop Area Organization

- Set up the curriculum and resources display.
- Post the workshop schedule on newsprint.
- Post volunteer sign-up sheets (notebook paper) for openings, closings, and energizers.
- Post newsprint sheet for “Parking Lot” (see below).
- Prepare the leaders’ table with all necessary materials and supplies.
- Set up a circle of chairs for the group.
- Make sample “baggage claim” checks (directions later in this document).
- Make sample nametags. Write the following (unless you prefer to describe the *five-part nametag* described in a later section of this document) on a sheet of newsprint: Make your nametag with your full name, but writing your first name in LARGE letters that can be seen from across the room.

Leaders’ Guide Walk-Through

- Having read the Leaders’ Guide, decide on the division of leadership responsibilities.
- Be prepared to make adjustments to schedule if necessary.
- Envision the movements of participants and their use of the space. Are any adjustments needed? Is there any information to be shared at the beginning of the workshop?
- Be ready to identify and recruit storytellers, song leaders, movement and games people, and readers to sign up for each session’s opening, closing, and breaks.
- Identify the space to be used by breakout groups if you will have any. (Separate rooms or spaces are ideal.)
- Be relaxed and ready to welcome participants as they arrive.

Posters and Charts

Prepare signs, lists, instructions, etc.—anything that will highlight individual activities and make things easier for you and the participants—before the conference begins.

You will probably think of other things you want to post, but reduced-size posters are included in this notebook; you can have these enlarged at most any copy shop.

Conference Schedule: Prepare and post a copy of the schedule for the conference, showing work periods (including breaks), times for meals, free time, and if appropriate, departure time for home hospitality.

Volunteer Sign-up Sheet: To help recruit people to lead singing, play a musical instrument, read for worship, or whatever, make a sign-up chart and give participants an opportunity to volunteer during the registration and browsing time or between sessions.

Information Chart: Prepare and post a sheet on which participants can enter information that it would be useful for you to know, and for them to compare, such as:

Name
Home phone
Birthday
Home church
Church phone
Minister
District
Your role

Hours/week you are supposed to work
Hours/week you *do* work
Salary, if any
Do you have a clear idea of what is expected of you?
Do you have a contract?
Do you have a mutually agreed-upon job description?

Participants' Displays

1. Set up a table for materials the participants have brought to share. Participants are responsible for marking materials that are only for display and for indicating which are take-home items. (See suggested poster, p. 11.)
2. Set up a table on which to display the books listed in the Bibliography or included in the Renaissance Display Box.
3. If there is space, set up a table for supplies you want to have available for both you and the participants: tape, markers, scissors, glue, etc.
4. Decide on a place where you will be able to arrange handouts, posters, and other materials to which you'll need access during sessions so that it is conveniently accessible to you, but obviously *not* part of the display.
5. (Optional) If this is a District conference, arrange for someone to bring the District's RE Loan Library. They will need space to display that, and you can avoid confusion and maintain your planned use of space if you designate a suitable area for that purpose in advance

SAMPLE CHARTS AND POSTERS

Volunteer Sign-up:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Help Wanted!</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Persons to Lead Singing</i></p> <p>Qualifications: Ability to sing on pitch Tolerance for those of us who can't</p> <p><i>Sign here to apply:</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Information Exchange Chart

This useful chart gives people a place to trade ideas and information. Ask people to cross off their requests for help when they have been met, either by the workshop or consultation with another participant. (One of the goals of every Renaissance Program module is to establish and/or maintain support networking among colleagues.)

I need help with...	Name:	I can help with...	Name:

Items to Share Poster

If you can provide only one table for the materials people bring, this poster can help to prevent any confusion about their intentions in bringing it:

This table is for things you brought to share.

Please put your name on items you want to display
only and take back home.

Put prices on copies that are for sale.
Leave giveaways unmarked.

Mixer Activities If Needed

LEADER: Invite people to help you with any preparations still in process. Try to be free by the scheduled arrival time. Along with the on-site coordinator, welcome folks and introduce them to each other. Show them where to put coats and luggage and where to register. Encourage them to browse through the displays. Sometimes, when arrivals are unavoidably strung out, it's wise to introduce some sort of mixer activity. Here are some suggestions.

Coat of Arms

Participants are asked to draw a shield, divide it into four parts, and draw pictures or designs in the quarters representing four aspects of their life story, role, or whatever the leaders choose to assign. This can be done simply or elaborately, depending upon the supplies you furnish and the time. Ask people to show their shield to other individuals and talk about what the symbols signify.

Visual Representation of how they came to this leadership position

On a piece of paper, have the participants draw a visual representation of the journey they took to arrive at this leadership position. Have them include educational experiences, jobs, and volunteer roles that lead them to where they are today. This may be all "job" related or may include part of the faith journey that brought them to Unitarian Universalism. Ask people to share these journeys as they introduce themselves to each other.

Five-Part Nametag

On a large nametag (5x8 card, for instance), participants are asked to center their name and then write in the corners four items you suggest (such as their home congregation, their childhood faith communities, a person they admire, or how they got started in RE leadership) and then compare the name tags with others.

Questionnaire

A prepared form that requires participants to find people who are wearing specific colors, have lived certain places, etc., and to ask them to sign an allocated space on the form.

Orientation Game

This gives you, as leaders, a sense of the make-up of the group. The fun is in reeling off the items fast enough to keep people hurrying to keep up with you. Of course, the leaders participate too! Before you begin, ask if anyone has difficulty hopping up and down [change the response to raising hands, if appropriate].

“Stand up (or raise your hand) **if:**

...your title is DRE

“You may sit [or put your (hand) down.”

...your title is RE Coordinator

...you are the RE Committee Chair

...you belong to a church

...it’s called First Church

...you come from a Fellowship

...other, e.g., Society, etc.

...you work with a minister

...an administrator

...a church secretary

...a sexton/janitor

...*you* have a secretary

...you are from ____ District

...this is your first module

...this is your fifth module

...you’ve been in your role for five years or more

...you’re in your first year

...you have a birthday this month

...you’re tired of these questions!

Getting Started

Welcome

Leaders should welcome the participants and thank them for the dedication to our Unitarian Universalist religious education programs that brought them here to work with us in this learning and growing community.

Logistical Details of the Weekend

Introduce the host/registrar. Ask her/him to share with the group any information about bathrooms, home hospitality, meals, owed registration fees, do's and don'ts at the church, and other logistical concerns.

Allow the group time to ask any questions that concern them. Make sure to give the host/registrar and cook a lot of appreciation and attention during the conference and thanks at the end.

Housekeeping Time

Consider beginning each session of a module with Housekeeping Time, an opportunity for leaders, on-site coordinators and/or participants to make announcements about physical arrangements, requests for schedule shifts, suggestions for a smoother *modus operandi*, or whatever. Announcing in advance that this will be part of the overall plan reassures people that they will be heard if they have a concern and minimizes the time spent on details in the long run. If you choose to adopt this approach, remember to write a reminder about housekeeping time at the beginning of each session in your schedule to take care of it.

Introductions and "Baggage Check"

LEADERS:

- Introduce yourselves and explain why you are enthusiastic about leading this module.
- Pass out one brown paper lunch sack and two 3x5 cards to each participant, one to serve as a "claim check" and one to hold a description of their "baggage"
- Ask participants to take the first card, color it however they like, and then fold the card over and tear it in half. This will be their "claim check."
- Ask participants to take the second card and write on it any "baggage" they would like to leave behind in order to be totally present at the module. This may be related to the program left behind ("Someone else is running the program while I'm here, and I want to let go and trust that they can handle it") or to personal issues ("My daughter is sick, and I'm worried about her"). Leaders do this as well.
- LEADER: Say aloud your name, congregation, what you do in your congregation, why you are here, and what "baggage" you want to check (reading it from your 3x5 card). Remember that by going first, you set the tone and example for length of time and depth of disclosure. Staple half of the "claim check" to the bag, keep the second half of the claim check until the end of the module, when you will want to use it to reclaim your "baggage."
- Then pass the stapler to the participant next to you, and ask him or her to please state his/her name, congregation, what he/she does in the congregation, why he/she is here, and what "baggage" he/she wants to check. Continue until everyone has participated.

The "baggage" bags should be placed somewhere inside the group that is not in a highly visible place, i.e., under the resource table, on the piano behind the group, etc.

NOTE: It's important to be aware of needs of the group and to keep up momentum. It may also be helpful for one of the leaders to take notes during check-ins.

Bond-Building

NOTE: Often the first session of the module is held in the evening. If this is the case, you may find participants arriving late due to travel after a workday. This activity gives latecomers an opportunity to join in the group before important work begins. It is always a fun way for participants to get to know one another.

“Spill the Basket” or “I Like People Who...”

Chairs are placed in a circle, with one fewer chairs than participants. One person stands in the middle and says, “Hi, my name is _____.” Everyone responds by saying “Hi _____!” Then the person in the middle says “I like people who ---- (choose something you want to know about others in the group, e.g., “run a successful ‘Coming of Age’ program”).”

Everyone who identifies with that item gets up and runs to a different chair. Participants may not take the chair directly to their right or left.

Then the person left in the middle without a chair says, “Hi, my name is _____.” The other participants say, “Hi _____.” The person in the middle says, “I like people who _____.” And so on.

(This is also a good way to learn things about the participants, i.e. if this is someone’s fifth module, which can be celebrated at the end of the module.)

Covenanting

“Covenant for Our Time Together,” by the Rev. Helen Zidowecki

(A powerful trust-building activity, this also sets a wonderful tone for the conference. Have copies ready so that participants can each read a section aloud, and all can join in the unison ending.)

The covenant provides guidelines for a safe learning environment. To that end, let us covenant together.

CONFIDENTIALITY: We need safety with the group. We need to know that what we say in the group discussions and with each other will be held in confidence.

RESPECT: We need to feel that we can share our deep concerns, mistakes, and fears as well as our joys and triumphs. It is important to be able to speak without anyone in the group making judgments and/or criticizing what was said or done. We need this acceptance.

PRIVACY: It is important that we be able to “pass” and not speak within the group. When we choose to pass, no explanation is asked for or needs to be given. A simple statement of “I pass” or “I am not ready to speak” is sufficient. There are times that some understanding or truth or feeling is not ready to be spoken aloud.

BOUNDARIES help to create safety and freedom for us to work successfully. Attention to time boundaries includes an agreement among us to start on time and remain present until the agreed upon ending time, and to let one of the leaders know if you have to leave for any reason.

We also acknowledge and honor our differing needs, ways of relating, and ways of learning.

UNISON: To this end we covenant with one another for our time together. Blessed Be.

OVERVIEW FOR MODULE LEADERS

WORSHIP FOR ALL AGES

The Reader for this module is an extensive collection of materials relating to worship. We highly recommend that leaders and participants read through the entire Reader before attending the module.

Goals

To expand and deepen the understanding of worship experiences

- by sharing memories of personal experiences of worship
- by differentiating between personal and communal worship
- by becoming acquainted with theories of communal worship
- by considering differences in responses to worship experiences among children, youth, adults, and intergenerational groups

To develop competence and confidence in leading worship

- by considering the nature and needs of children, youth, and adults at worship, drawing upon insights from recent studies of human and faith development
- by considering the conditions that encourage worship in a communal setting
- —the role of silence, meditation, and prayer
- —the aesthetic dimension, including music and dance
- —finding the balance between spontaneity and ritual
- by suggesting guidelines for planning worship within a church or fellowship
- by providing examples of stories, songs, readings, and other resources
- by offering opportunities to design worship experiences
- by experiencing worship and celebration throughout this workshop

To make participants feel inspired to make worship a significant part of the religious education experience

Materials

Provided by the host church: newsprint and easel, markers for easel and drawing, masking tape, 3x5 cards, 4x6 cards, chalice/ matches/ chalice table, chimes, drawing paper

Provided by leaders: schedule for the module; sign-up sheets for worship and break volunteers, a “Parking Lot” poster where leaders and participants can write topics or issues to be discussed after each module session, words of any songs not found in the UU hymnal (*Singing the Living Tradition*); worship resources.

Provided by the Renaissance Program Office: Leaders’ Guide, readers, module display box, handouts, evaluation forms.

Suggested for participants to bring: Reader, hymnal, musical instruments, games, and activities to share. Leaders may want to include these items in their letter of welcome to participants.

Suggestions for Break Activities

Being mindful of ages, abilities, and energy levels breaks need to be flexible and permissive in scope.

A good source for energy breaks – including theory/theology of why we should use energy breaks – may be found in Starhawk’s book *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery*. (Harper Collins, 1987), page 190 and chapter seven treats this and related issues.

Starhawk talks about “Changing energy.” Her theology of energy is that groups have an energy, one that should be grounded in mother earth, an energy that can be shaped by (all) members of the group. Thus some energy breaks that she suggests are things like drumming, humor, group naps, and chanting; or if group energy is too high, doing a grounding meditation. Note that many of her suggestions are suitable for persons of differing physical abilities.

Handouts

:

- For Session 2:
 - Definitions of worship
 - Worship Theory Chart
- For Session 3:
 - “Finding My Strengths” (chart)
- * For Session 4:
 - “Descriptions of Disabilities”

SESSION 1

Welcome and Introduction (2 hours)

Warm Up (20 minutes)

Nametags: As participants arrive, each one should make a nametag. If you use 4x6 cards and attach them with loops of masking tape, participants will have enough space to put their names in the middle and other information in the corners (to encourage conversation and getting acquainted), such as:

- where you come from (now)
- the job you do in your congregation
- the number of years you've been a Unitarian Universalist
- the rest of this sentence: "the best part of a worship service is..."

Ask participants to include their nametag information in conversation and ask to use these nametags the next day.

Song: "Enter, Rejoice, and Come In!" from *Singing the Living Tradition*, or one or more of the songs that will be used in the first worship service. Leader introduces song: "As we begin our time together, we have entered here hoping to learn new knowledge and develop new friendships. We rejoiced when we finally arrived and found our space and rooms, and in some instances, met old friends. We will now spend time in a process of participation in the work of the module. So, welcome, Enter, Rejoice and Come In."

Welcome and Introductions (30 minutes)

LEADERS: welcome participants to the workshop and start the introductions activity (which should be the first of several that will help people really get to know each other)

Activity: Form dyads and ask participants to introduce themselves to one another, using the information on their nametags. Then introduce each other to the rest of the group. After this simple round of introductions, people will become more actively involved, having learned some relevant information about each other.

Ask the following questions, and suggest that people stand or raise their hands if the answer is YES:

- Have you been to this town/city/island/ . . . before?
- Have you been part of more than one UU congregation?
- Do you plan worship experiences for your church or fellowship?
- Frequently? Occasionally?
- For children only (or primarily)? For youth?
- For intergenerational groups?
- For adults only (or primarily)?

Introduction to the Module (70 minutes)

Overview of The Renaissance Program (See Leaders' Guide, pp. 1-2) (10 minutes)

Ask participants to share experiences if they have taken other Renaissance modules.

Overview of this Module (See Reader, pp. 4-5) (10 minutes)

Parking Lot (10 minutes)

LEADERS: Ask participants, and write their responses to the module goals on posted sheets of newsprint: *What I want to know/What I am anxious about*

What I brought to share

Explain that these sheets will be posted where other items can be added at any time and that there will be a specific time near the end of the module to check to see if all concerns have been covered. (You may want to do this in small groups so that people can start talking with each other.) Then discuss the content of the module, letting participants know immediately that many of their concerns were anticipated and will definitely be dealt with.

Schedule (10 minutes)

LEADERS: Invite participants to express their wishes about the details of the scheduling. They could minimize breaks and finish a little early, choose more short breaks or fewer longer ones. They will have other opportunities to affect the details of the agenda. It will be demanding, but "together we can all find the best way to fit it all in."

Activity (10 minutes)

If there is time in the first session, consider having an unwinding (after the hassle of getting there) and getting-better-acquainted activity. One good thing to share is the size of each one's worship group. Leaders can use this time in whatever way seems best.

Worship Service (5 minutes prep and 15 minutes for the service)

Close this opening session with a 10- to 15-minute worship service. Build the chalice table and create a setting for the module (see pp.39-40).

SESSION 2

Remembering, Defining, and Developing Worship (3 hours)

Recollections of Worship Experiences (One Hour)

Song (or other gathering, focusing, or worshipful activity). **(5 minutes)**

LEADERS: Choose a song that would likely be used in a worship service for children or an intergenerational group.

Re-introductions (15 minutes)

Especially important if this is the first session in the morning. Ask each person to very briefly explain the symbols or words in one corner of their nametags (from when they first arrived). Then go around the circle again for the second corner, etc. For example, ask: “Why did you put what you did as the best part of the worship service for you?” Or, what is the most fulfilling part of your work in RE that nurtures your spirit/faith?

Guided Recollections (10 minutes)

LEADERS: Read the following very slowly and gently, pausing significantly after every comma and period:

I invite you now to make yourself comfortable. . . and to think back upon your own life and recall moments that you would identify as worshipful or spiritual experiences. I will guide your remembering for a minute or so and then give you a few minutes of silence so that you can move at your own pace and let your memories come into focus. Right now, the words *worship* and *spiritual* mean what you feel they mean. We honor your definition.

Now, let images of those memories play in your mind’s eye as if they were scenes in a movie. Begin with your earliest memories. Don’t struggle to remember, simply let significant images come to mind, focusing especially on times that you would now describe as worship experiences. Call to mind a significant experience from early childhood, from later childhood, from adolescence, or from your adult years. Allow various images to surface. Choose one to focus on.

Where are you? Remember the time of day, the sound and smell of the place. Who else is present, what is happening? Think about yourself there—your age, what you wore, how you felt, whether you told anyone about the experience.

(Allow two or three minutes of silence.)

Representation of Recollections (10 minutes)

Hand out sheets of paper, and provide markers or other easy drawing materials. Ask participants to express their experience either by drawing a picture, a symbol, or an abstract representation, or by writing a poem, prose reflection, or meditation that represents what they recalled. Reassure participants that this exercise simply allows them to express and share their memories directly, so they are not restricted to just talking *about* them.

Group Discussion of Recollections (15 minutes)

- Ask participants to gather into groups of three or four and to share their drawings or writings and share their reflections with each other. Allow about 15 minutes for this discussion.
- Ask participants to each choose one word that conveys the quality or feeling of their chosen worship experience, and write that word on their paper along with the picture or symbol.
- Then ask everyone to re-gather in one large circle and ask any who wish to do so to share what is on their paper with the larger group. Rather than going around the circle, let the bolder ones speak first, which may encourage the less bold ones.

Display (5 minutes)

- Participants then tape or tack their papers, signed, on a section of wall or bulletin board (or lay them on the floor if there is no usable wall space.)
- Invite all to take a few minutes to walk around viewing each other's pictures, symbols, or other representations.

Break (15 minutes)

Voting Questions (10 minutes)

Re-gather everyone in the large circle, and ask questions about their experiences of worship. Depending on the group's energy level, "yes" answers could be indicated by raised hands or by standing up. Sample questions:

- How many described an experience in which you were alone?
- How many were in the company of others?
- How many experiences were in nature?
- How many experiences happened in a congregational setting?
- How many experiences happened during or following a life crisis?
- How many of you experience spontaneous worshipful moments?
- How many of you expect to have a worship experience at a church or fellowship service?
- How many of you seek out opportunities for worship experiences?

Leaders then summarize the responses and encourage a short period of discussion.

Summation (you may choose to eliminate this exercise) **(5 minutes)**

Give each person a card or preferably a long strip of colored paper, and ask each to complete the sentence: “To me, worship is. . .”

Leader collects completed cards or strips, shuffles them, and distributes them randomly to the group. Each definition is then read aloud around the circle. Display definitions on walls if possible.

Goals and Definitions (55 minutes plus 5 minute break if needed)

What Are We Trying to Accomplish? (Review of Reader, pp. 6-21) **(30 minutes)**

Ask participants to brainstorm three separate lists: Why do you worship? How do you worship? What are the challenges of creating meaningful worship?

Break into self-selected groups to ask these same questions for children, youth, and intergenerational worship. Make a separate list for each group of the 3 questions.

Re-gather the group, and make composite lists by having a spokesperson from each small group contribute one idea at a time, going around to each group. Discuss the lists.

Defining Worship (15 minutes)

LEADERS: Say something like, “So far you have been invited to recollect feelings of worship, out of your own experience and within your own definitions. You have been part of the congregation in a worship service. And you have thought about what we are trying to accomplish when we worship. No one has yet defined worship for you. But, obviously, we do need a shared understanding of what we are talking about. It is time now for us to consider some definitions.”

Look at the pages of worship definitions (Reader, p. 18) and the handout, “Definitions of Worship.” Give everyone time to review them. Then ask:

- Was there a significant discrepancy between any of these and the definition you had used for your memory exercise?
- What do you like best in these definitions?
- Do they, all together, seem to present diverse, similar, or complementary views?
- Have any of them helped you understand any of the feelings you had in the recollection/representation exercise?

LEADERS: This is the time to point out the distinction between personal and communal worship. The definition we would use for the individual's "peak experiences" will be very different from the definition of the planned, intentional process taking place in a congregation. Which definitions seem to apply to which occasions?

Also point out that this module is primarily concerned with communal worship, but that there will be some time later to discuss worship within families, in small groups, and in unusual settings. Some of the materials in the Reader will also relate to these other types of worship.

What Can We Use to Accomplish Our Worship Goals? (10 minutes)

Allow about 10 minutes for this task. Ask people to go back into their small groups and to brainstorm lists of what we can use to accomplish our goals. Ask them to think about the set of possible goals for a worship service that were generated in the earlier activity, then:

- Post the lists generated during the earlier activity (Why do you worship? How do you worship? What are the challenges of creating meaningful worship?) where all can see.
NOTE: Leaders should refer to the "Worship Checklist" from the Reader (p.27) so that they can drop hints here and there to ensure that items from each general category are appearing on the lists.
- Ask that each small group decide who was, in effect, the facilitator during the previous task, and let someone else play that role this time.
- Using the same procedure as before, gather the group again, and make a list showing the worship checklist for each worship setting: children, youth, intergenerational. These lists will be used again, so write legibly, leave enough room for category letters (see below), and handle with care. Post the following list where everyone can see it:
Setting
Order
Music, movement
Faith, Family
Topic
- Review the handout "Worship Checklist" (Reader, p. 27), which explains the items on the posted list. Point out that this will be used more than once during the module. Quickly, but with group participation, mark each item with one or more of the key letters on the three lists of "How we can meet the challenges of why and how children, youth, or intergenerational services can be met."

Explain that the next session will go on from their lists and ideas to the concepts of professionals who have given serious consideration to the theory, psychology, and practice of worship.

Theories and Orders of Worship (One Hour)

LEADERS: This is the part of the module that demands the most from the leaders in terms of talking and presenting material. You will need to study the selections in the Reader and the suggested presentations below and then decide on the method of presentation that will be most comfortable and most effective. The suggestions below are not meant to be read to module participants but to give you ideas for doing it your way.

Suggestion to offer to participants: (15 minutes)

In developing an understanding of the concepts and considerations involved in planning worship, we need to spend more time, with more individual concentration, than is possible in our present setting. Before our ----- session at -----we urge everyone to find enough of that time and concentration to read, in your Reader, the selections from Gillis (pp.7-8), Vogt (pp. 8-13), Gilbert (pp. 14 -15), Goodwin (pp. 16-17), and Fisher and McKeel (pp. 18-20), as well “ The Ordering Process” (p. 21) and the introductory section by Marshman (pp. 23-25). In our fourth session you will start creating worship services for the age group you choose. For now, we will not assume any prior thought on this topic except what has taken place during this module.

Perhaps the simplest analysis of worship is in the selection from Fisher and McKeel (pp. 18-20). They divide a worship service into three parts: “the raising of our sensitivity,” “reflection,” and “celebration.” (Note that this sequence is in a sense psychological—what happens mentally and emotionally to the worshippers.)

Many UU worship services are planned around a theme and may or may not have an order or specific elements that are traditional, usual, or expected by the worshippers. The psychology of such services will depend on many factors.

Another basic approach to worship planning is the liturgical one. The word *liturgy* comes from a Greek word meaning “the people’s work.” The premise here is that there is a certain sequence that the worshipper must follow, certain “work” that must be done, in order to achieve the desired result. This psychological exercise is understood in significantly different ways by different people, as we shall see. Fred Gillis’s article in the Reader (pp. 7-8) and Von Ogden Vogt’s (9 & 10) do nice jobs of explaining liturgy.

The Ordering Process (45 Minutes)

Ask participants to take “The Ordering Process” chart from their Readers (p. 21). Divide the group into five teams by counting off. Assign one of the columns of the chart to each of the teams. Explain the origins of each of the columns.

- Ask that each team spend about 10 minutes studying and discussing their particular outline so that they can then present it to the rest of the group as “the best, the most helpful, our favorite way of thinking about and planning an order of worship.” Each team will need a spokesperson, who should be, if possible, someone who has not yet taken a major role.
- Each group’s spokesperson presents the group’s case: “We feel that the theory according to _____ is the best because _____”
- The whole group can then freely discuss the different outlines without having to uphold their team’s outline. LEADERS: Say, “Remember that this section, based on the chart, involved only the liturgical components of worship. Be sure to read the Reader selections for an appreciation of other components. Each kind of worship, or any combination, can be done well or poorly. Each can involve people or exclude them.”
- LEADERS: Say, “Let’s look at the checklist again. This session has certainly dealt with **Ord**, and with our actions and interactions among members of a **Fai**th **Fam**ily. And it has included, implicitly, the use of **Musi**c and **Mov**ement. In other sessions of this module we will concentrate on the worship **Set**ting and on **Topi**c **Th**emes.”

SESSION 3

Setting and Resources Finding Your Strengths (2½ hours)

Gathering Song or Other Focusing or Worshipful Activity

Introductions (again) (10 minutes)

Ask each person to tell something they remember about a worship service they led. They can choose where the service took place. It can be a good or a not-so-good experience.

The Worship Setting and Atmosphere (50 minutes) (Refer to Reader, P. 26, “Creating That Special Place.”)

Refer to the list the group created (“What are the challenges of worship with children, youth, intergenerational and adults” [Session 2, “What Can We Do To Accomplish Our Goals?”]) and concentrate on the items marked with S for Setting. Ask participants to stand if in their congregation:

1. Children worship only with adults
2. Children worship in space that is for no other purpose than their worship
3. Children worship in space that is visibly used for other purposes

Divide the group into teams according to the above distinctions. There will probably be very few or perhaps none in group 1. If there are fewer than three, they should join the other groups. No team should have more than about five members, so there will probably be several group 3s and perhaps more than one group 2.

Each team should list on newsprint two groups of items:

1. Things that contribute positively to a setting like ours for children’s or youth worship.
2. Things that detract or present problems for children’s or youth worship in a setting like ours.

In each category, groups should think of all of our senses, and the positive group should try not to spend time on the more obvious ideas and try to include ideas that no one has yet tried.

Gather everyone into a circle, and ask a spokesperson from each group to tell what is in the group’s list, collecting items from one type of worship situation at a time. We suggest asking first for the negatives and then for the positives (omitting any duplications.)

Break (10 minutes)

Finding Our Strengths (10 minutes)

LEADERS: Use these words or your own: “By now we have considered most of the categories and many of the specific items on our Worship Checklist (Reader, p. 27). We are ready to think about how we can implement these grand goals and detailed objectives in our own congregations. We might wish we could turn to some imagined superhero or heroine who would have all the knowledge, skills, creativity, and resources that we are not sure we have ourselves. But it is we, with a lot of help from our friends, who can and will lead worship. So let’s discover our personal strengths.”

Refer to the handout “Finding my Strengths.” Ask that each person fill it in, as honestly as possible. Within each team, participants should discuss their strengths, trying to encourage the less experienced members especially and talking about specific cases of stretching oneself beyond one’s usual (self-imposed?) limits. Is there someone who has discovered that he/she can lead a song? Is there someone who has dealt with anxiety and managed to tell a story in intergenerational worship? How do we, as specific individuals, develop strengths?

The Worship Calendar (30 minutes)

LEADERS: Use these words or your own: “Now that each of you is completely confident of your abilities to plan and lead a worship service, we are ready to schedule a whole year of worship. In your Reader (p. 71) is a “Year at a Glance” calendar for a Church School year, and a sample calendar (pp. 69-70). How will you decide on a topic or theme for each week? Fortunately, if you consider the year as a whole, you will see that such planning is actually not difficult.”

Using five teams from the worship theory exercise, give each team a big sheet of paper and one of the following categories of worship topics (it will still work if every topic isn’t addressed):

- Holidays and Holy Days
- Seasons of the Earth, Seasons of the Soul
- Worthy People, Past and Present
- Themes and Values
- A Congregation’s Own Events, Gatherings, Farewells
- Social Justice/Action
- Unitarian Universalism

Explain each category briefly. Seasons of the Soul could include passages in growth and through life, times that try us and times to rejoice. Themes and Values could be anything from our UUA Principles to the Bible, prayer, or friendship. (Participants will probably think of these themselves.) Point out that there could be a series on one broad theme.

Ask that teams write its lists legibly so that they can be posted for reference. Someone from each team reads the list to the whole group, and it is then put up where all can see. Discuss the lists and make any suggested additions.

Using the copy of “Year at a Glance” from the Reader, each person should take about 10 minutes to fill in his or her own congregation’s traditional fixed dates and to make any notes from the posted lists—notes that will help with future planning of worship topics.

Leaders should point out that there are two copies of this calendar in the Reader (pp. 71-72), in case participants would like to use or copy one later that has not been written on.

Resources for Worship (40 minutes)

Now leaders should move to the display table, sharing what they know about the value of the books, pamphlets, REACH collections, etc. This is also the time for participants to share what they have brought. Guide the discussion so that no one indulges in lengthy stories of wonderful or terrible experiences in leading worship. The group should be gathered in a circle, with the resources in the middle where everyone can see them. Sources should be clear: The UUA, your own church/fellowship library, your office files, your local public library. If something is out of print, can it be copied, or borrowed from a UUA District Library? If something is for sale, from whom and for how much?

Don’t forget the Reader, which participants may not have fully explored. Remind them that, with all its treasures, it is only the beginning of their “Worship for All Ages” notebook, to which they can continue to add materials. Pages 66-68 and 73-87 of the Reader are filled with suggestions.

People are resources too. Let everyone know that a list of the participants in this module will be given to them. Ask them to think of specific people they can turn to in their home congregations (they have already thought about this in filling out their “Finding my Strengths” chart).

NOTE: Some congregations ask that their Directors of Religious Education lead worship *every* week. Leadership can be shared, however, and one’s humility or feelings of inadequacy are better shared with other interested adults than exposed in unsatisfying worship experiences with children. You can lead by empowering others to lead or to co-lead. Your congregation will have many adults who have something personally valuable to contribute. Would a veteran like to talk with the children on Veterans Day? Could an artist share feelings about creativity? Does a tree lover want to inspire others about trees?

Don’t let leading worship become an onerous task. Keep the joy by engaging others.

SESSION 4

Worship by Age Prayer

Welcoming Children With Special Needs Into Worship (2 hours)

Song or Other Gathering, Focusing, or Worshipful Activity

Fitting Worship to Each Age (40 minutes)

LEADERS: For this activity, you may want to recall that the Reader contains specific sections on four different age groups (pp. 28-54).

Using sheets of newsprint or a chalkboard for recording the list, elicit from the group, for one age group at a time, a list of characteristics of that age as members of that age category relate to the worship experience. This will include such things as attention span, ability to comprehend abstract concepts, topics of interest and concern, favorite types of music, ways of participating, ways of sitting or not sitting, etc. The Worship Checklist from the Reader (p. 27) might be useful in guiding this discussion.

1. Once the lists have been made and discussed, give them to small groups to refer to while making lists of “components (or elements) of worship suitable for this age.” The groups should move through this exercise quickly, to allow time for presentation and discussion.
2. For intergenerational worship, use the brainstorming format again and create a list of “things that work well in intergenerational worship.” There is not a lot of time for this activity, but the resulting list will be of great value to the participants. They may want copies of the list, so perhaps someone will offer to take it home, type it up, and send copies out.
3. This may be a good time to mention that RE leaders are sometimes asked to lead worship in small groups or in unusual settings or to make suggestions for worship within families. Participants will be able to make the most of these golden opportunities with their new understanding of worship, their developing skills, and all the resources they now have or know about. Let them know they will find that Church of the Larger Fellowship materials, *UUism in the Home*, prayers and graces in the Reader, UUA Meditation Manuals, *We Light This Chalice* and *Rejoice in the Spirit* are particularly useful.

Forming Teams for Worship Services (20 minutes)

LEADERS: Take about 15 minutes to form teams so members will be able to start thinking about the services for which they will ultimately be responsible and on which they will be working in the next session. Leaders may decide either to assign participants arbitrarily to teams or to allow participants to choose their teams (as long as the resulting groups are fairly even in size) according to their age-group preference. One good method is for leaders to compose teams by any chance method, but then to allow the teams to choose the age group for which they will plan a service, provided that all ages are included. There should be three or four teams: preschool, elementary, intergenerational, and perhaps youth. If the group is too small for four teams, you might consider combining preschool and elementary into a category titled children.

Leaders, with or without group input, may decide whether to include a youth service. Some RE leaders may feel that since their society has no youth group or their youth group never worships or that youth worship is the responsibility of a youth leader, it would be a waste of time to work on such a service. There are several considerations that should be looked at before the leaders or participants choose to set youth worship aside as a topic. Though an RE leader may not have a youth group now that is not to say the situation, or the RE leader's position will never change. If there is a youth group that does not worship, an experienced or knowledgeable RE leader could encourage the youth group to consider worship—and make a wonderful contribution to his or her church by doing that. Finally, any youth group or group leader should be able to count on the RE leader for guidance in planning youth worship.

Each team may choose the theme or focus for its service, and the leaders may offer suggestions. It is important that leaders encourage participants not to take elements from services they may have created in the past. Let participants know that for this experience to be effective, they should strive to create something new as a group. Some member of a team may have a current need for a certain type of worship service. The team may use this opportunity to create such a service, if it is comfortably agreeable to all members to do so.

Services for children or youth should be 15 to 20 minutes. An intergenerational service could be 15 minutes at the beginning of regular Sunday worship. It also could be a full hour service, but in that case the team would present only about 15 minutes' worth of excerpts from the service, and explain the rest.

Using Prayer (25 minutes) (refer to Reader, pp. 91-99)

Leaders should introduce this topic by acknowledging that some UUs have difficulty with prayer, just as some have difficulty with God or Jesus. The use of, and understandings about, prayer have changed over the years and many Unitarian Universalists now think of meditation and prayer as tools for connecting with power and strength. The Reader for this module contains several different approaches to this topic, but they are all ultimately positive about the possibilities for the role of prayer in our lives. If we are to consider worship thoroughly, we cannot ignore prayer.

LEADERS: Use these words or your own: “We do not want to dictate any one view of prayer, but instead, to encourage open exploration of it. We will start by giving you a chance to express your current idea(s) of prayer.”

1. Teams for the worship services gather and have each person complete this sentence on a fresh sheet of paper: “To me, prayer is . . .” Participants should then share their ideas, feelings, and thoughts with other members of their teams. A spokesperson should then report to the total group the main ideas of the team, taking care to represent minority as well as majority views. The leaders should accept all the views reported and encourage maximum mutual understanding of different positions. Remember that those who have no trouble with prayer must be able to deal with people in their congregations who do. Some useful ways of thinking about prayer:
 - Taking a God’s-eye view of ourselves
 - Getting in touch with the wise part inside ourselves

Composing Prayers

Leaders should explain that the next exercise is for each team to compose a prayer, which could be used in a worship service for their particular age group. The participants are to assume that there will be an appropriate occasion for using it—the “congregation” will be quiet and receptive, and there will be time enough in the service for a period of reflective silence afterward (for internalizing the spoken ideas) if that is desired.

Leaders should be prepared to suggest a topic or to let teams use their own ideas. If teams are large, it might be best to have each team compose more than one prayer so that more members can be directly involved. Teams may want to tell why a particular prayer has been created and what situation was imagined for its use. The amount of time available for this activity is minimal, so teams may have to settle for something less than great beauty of language. That’s fine. The concepts and their appropriateness to a particular age are the important things—along with the practice in groupthink and the blending of various feelings about prayer.

Leaders should post prayers around the room or lay them out on a table where they can be read during a break.

Welcoming Children with Special Needs into Our Worship (15 minutes)

LEADERS: Share the following with your participants:

*By welcoming children with special needs into our congregations,
we welcome the divine into our hearts.*

In your worship teams you will be incorporating these disabilities into the planning of the worship service. For many special needs children who have had negative experiences in school, it is essential that their church experience be different and more positive. A major element of difference between school and church is the element of worship—a time to share, to reflect, a place where it is safe to talk about differences and special needs and not feel ashamed. Children learning to honor each person’s differences and gifts and connecting with their own special individuality—this is the essence of the worship experience. This is especially important for children with special needs because all their lives they have known and have been taught that they are different. For many, this difference has been equated with a flaw. They have been taught that there is something wrong with them. People who live with the experiences these children have had have much to teach us and much to learn about themselves. The church should be a place that nurtures all souls.

The role of songs, stories, meditations, about differences and gifts is so important during worship. It is important to include special needs and differences in stories in order to convey that special needs are not about being “them” but that these needs are about “us,” and they are a natural part of living. We forget that many common illnesses like heart problems or asthma could lead to physical disabilities or learning disabilities that cause us to struggle in school. We forget that this possibility for living with special needs can include all of us. Too often we think of disabilities and special needs as problems that concern only the person in the wheel chair or someone who is blind or deaf from birth. But all of us have struggles and problems. Some differences are more visible than others and some may seem more life-challenging than others. For example, depression is a disability that all of us experience at some time in our lives, if only in a mild form. The idea in worship is to integrate special needs into our stories, prayers, songs, and meditations so that we view disability as part of life.

The Involve Newsletter

The Involve Newsletter is a product of a UU Funding Program grant to provide information and resources to Religious Educators concerning special needs children. I am including two issues of the newsletter at the end of the Reader starting on p.118—one on how to be welcoming to all children and youth and one how to make RE less like school. Both subjects I feel are pertinent to how we view children as part of our worshiping community.

As Brett Webb-Mitchell writes in his book, *Dancing with Disabilities*, people in our society who have disabilities are abused in many ways—institutionally, socially, and emotionally. I hope that we can avoid adding spiritual abuse to the list. If we start early with our children and youth and provide a place in church where they are safe and accepted, we may be giving them the only place where they can experience total acceptance. As a mother once said to me, “If I can’t bring my special needs son to church, where can I bring him?”

Disability Descriptions

A child in a wheel chair. (You have a spinal injury so that you have use of your arms with braces, but no use of your legs. Sometimes you involuntarily jerk forward. You like sports and reading poetry.) The last church I went to did not have any ramps so I had to be carried everywhere. It was humiliating. After they brought my chair upstairs, I could not move around much because there was furniture everywhere. The teacher was nice and the kids were curious, but I don’t mind that because I am different from them. But, they had this circle meditation and talk and all the kids and teacher sat on pillows on the floor and I sat in my chair and had to look down on everyone. People have a tendency to think I am stupid just because I am in a wheel chair so the teacher and kids talked to me as if I were three years old. Every time I jerked forward, everyone would stop and stare at me. I wish there was a way for me to feel more welcome. I hope my experience in the new church is better.

A child with Down Syndrome. (You have the visible physical attributes of a down syndrome child and so you know everyone looks at you funny if they do not know you. Sometimes you can’t follow what is going on, but if someone explains it to you, you feel more comfortable. You like caring for small children and singing.) The last church I went to did not think I belonged with other kids my age, so they gave me a special tutor who invented activities for me. I missed being with the other kids. I know I look different and some kids think I am dumb and fat and make fun of me, but still, I’d rather be around other kids. Sometimes I am clumsy and too loud and the teacher and kids get upset. That’s why they put me with my own special tutor. I hope in this new church that I get to be with kids.

A child who has ADHD. (You have always had a lot of energy and can’t stand to sit still. You like to talk about everything. You know adults think you are often disruptive and uncontrollable but you don’t understand why everyone gets so upset. Kids think you are odd and when things get out of hand, they think you are deliberately trying to be bad. You like to build things and climb trees.) It was awful at the last church. I got kicked out of the program three times. They kept doing these boring discussion groups so I invented stuff to do to keep me busy which is when I got into trouble. Some of the kids like doing things with me and then they also got into trouble. Then they couldn’t be friends with me anymore. I don’t understand why this happens and it makes me so angry. No one understands. I don’t think this new church will be any better. No one ever likes me.

A child with Asperger's Syndrome (high functioning). (You know you are different but you do not know why. You do not understand people, they are alien objects. It makes you so uncomfortable to be touched or for someone to try and make eye contact. You focus on one thing at a time but not for long. You like dinosaurs and know everything about when they lived, what they ate, what the different species are. You wish they still lived so you could have one as a pet.) Mommy and Daddy are making me go to another church. I would rather stay at home and build dinosaurs or read books about dinosaurs. I don't understand why the other kids aren't interested in dinosaurs like I am. The kids annoy me and I would much rather play by myself. At the last church, they wouldn't let me talk about dinosaurs and they wanted me to hold hands all the time. I like to do stuff, though. At this new church I hope I can bring my dinosaurs.

A child with a learning disability. (Sometimes you feel as if you must be from another planet because when you talk, people look at you funny. It's almost as if you are strange and not making any sense. You try so hard to understand but evidently you don't because you are always screwing up. You think you are creative and intelligent, but you have such difficulty reading the words and doing the math. But you can invent things in your head and you love to draw.) I hate school, everyone there thinks I am dumb except for my tutor. I have all these special classes so the kids know I am stupid. In the regular classes I get so anxious that I'm going to screw up, I almost always have a stomachache. The last church we went to wasn't much better than school. They kept having the kids read these stories and everyone knew that the reason I never volunteered to read is because I don't read very well. The discussions were interesting, but whenever they asked me for my opinion I would get so scared that I couldn't say anything. I always had an answer afterwards, but then it was too late. I know I have good ideas though, so, I hope I get to share what's inside of me at the new church.

Pick a Disability and Imagine What It Would Be Like (15 minutes)

Guided Visualization for the Worship Module

(Optional Activity if you have time)

LEADERS: Have each participant pick one of the disabilities from the accompanying list and become familiar with the description. Try to make sure that each disability is picked at least once. Explain to the participants that they are to imagine what it would be like to be a child with this disability who is around age 10.

Leaders say: Take a few minutes and imagine yourself as a ten-year-old who has the disability you have chosen. It is Sunday morning and you are going to your first worship service with the other children in your group. Are you able to get into the worship room easily? Is there someone with you who shows you where to sit, either in your wheel chair if you are in one, or with a teacher who can help you? Are you made to feel welcome and part of the group? How well do you understand what is going on? Is there someone who helps you with the ideas and rituals of the service? Is there someone there

to help you when you need to move around or ask a question? How does your worship leader react to your needs? How do the children react to your disability or how do the children react to your behavior that they may perceive as being strange? Can you easily participate in the worship experience, or is it too complicated and restricting of your needs? Are you confused? Do the children include you or ignore you? Do you feel as if everyone is staring at you or are they comfortable with your presence? Do you *feel* included? Did you *feel* as if you worshiped? At the end of the service do you *feel* as if you want to come back?

Now take a few minutes and imagine what would be the best, most ideal experience for you. How would the worship service look, how would the children act, how would the teacher act, what type of worship would you enjoy? Create the best possible worship experience for yourself.

Leaders: Have the participants share what they felt while attending their worship service as a child with a disability. Did you feel spiritually nourished? Talk about what it means to create a welcoming, spiritual experience for all children.

Parking Lot Check (5 minutes)

This is the time to go back over the lists made during the first session, in which participants noted things they wanted to know and things they were anxious about. Which concerns have been cleared up? What pertinent questions remain? Are there still some vague anxieties? It is to be hoped that by this time in the module there will be little left on the lists, but this is the time to find out. Perhaps there is something that can be discussed outside of module time. Perhaps there is some resource, human or otherwise, which can be pointed out. Perhaps other participants can help with reassurance or answers.

SESSION 5

Creating Worship Services (2½ hours)

Gathering, Focusing, or Worshipful Activity or Song

Teams will probably want to go directly to work, unless this session takes place on a different day than the previous one, in which case some brief “opening” would be appropriate.

Creating a Worship Service

Team Task: To create a children’s, a youth, or an intergenerational worship service. Teams can be reminded of the previous session’s specifications for these services.

Review of Resources

Leaders should give a quick survey of resources available to the teams (the resources will depend on the site of the module). Resources will include such things as tablecloths, construction paper and other craft supplies, as well as hymnals, people who can play an instrument, candles, etc. Collections of readings, songs, and stories will probably already have been mentioned in the earlier section on worship resources, but there may be others also available for use in this task. Remember the sections on Stories, Prayer, Music, and specific ages in the Reader.

Criteria for Evaluation

Leaders should refer participants again to the “Worship Checklist” (p. 27). These criteria, and any others the group wants to add, will be used to evaluate the services. After each service is presented to the total group, the team that presents the service will have the chance first to self-evaluate. Then the rest will share their evaluations, verbally.

Leaders should be available throughout the teams’ work time to help resolve difficulties, find resources, and answer questions. Sometimes there is only one logical place to present the services. In other locations there may be several likely rooms or outdoor settings. Teams should know which areas are available and the leaders should know which places have been chosen by which teams. Leaders should note who is on which team and what each team’s assignment is.

SESSION 6

Evaluations of Services and Module (3 hours)

Presentation of Worship Services

The order of presentation can be determined by drawing lots or by the requirements of specific locations. Each group will need time for:

Set-up (see “rearrangement time” below)

Presentation (15 to 20 minutes): Each presentation should be introduced by one of the leaders, giving the team’s assignment and naming the members of the team.

Self-evaluation (5 minutes): All members of the team should come forward and should describe the process by which their service was created. They should then give their own evaluation of it, along with any other comments they wish to make.

Group evaluation (5 to 10 minutes): The module leaders should initiate the group evaluation and facilitate the discussion, keeping it constructive and encouraging. Ask participants to begin all comments with what they appreciate about the service and to rephrase criticisms as suggestions for improvements.

NOTE: If the presentations are all in the same place, there will also have to be time for rearranging the worship area between groups. During this rearrangement time, the “congregation” should leave and then re-enter for the next service.

Written and Verbal Evaluations of the Module

LEADERS: Remind each participant that part of the agreement for taking the module is that participants will evaluate the module experience using the form provided (in the display box). Remind them also that anyone who wishes to receive credit for participation in the module needs to submit a completed evaluation to one of the leaders.

Leaders then invite a group evaluation of the module. Such a verbal sharing often provides significant additional evaluative suggestions, and it gives people a chance to be heard regarding their main impressions.

Closing Ceremony (15 minutes)

A brief closing ceremony planned and conducted by the leaders or by leaders and participants together is an appropriate way to bring the module to a close. It may include some of the songs learned and sung during the worship time, original poems, prayers or journal excerpts, or even dismantling the Chalice table. A sample closing ceremony is included with this Leader’s Guide in Session 6

Sample Opening Worship Service

*“Travelers are we, pilgrims in space and time—
seeking THE HOLY.*

Travelers are we, weary from trains and planes.

Travelers are we, who have made our way

through the miles and the hours

to converge at last in this place -

in this circle—at this moment,

drawn by a common purpose to this center.”

Song: “Here We Have Gathered” verses 1 and 3 from *Hymns for the Celebration of Life*

Chalice lighting reflections:

“As we light our flaming chalice

let us be aware of the significance of the container:

the cup that holds the flame -

the cup of tradition

the chalice of courage -

container of the faith

and the deeds

and the songs

and the prayers

and the struggles

of Unitarians and Universalists.

The chalice is our heritage.

Receive it with gratitude and pride.

As we light our flaming chalice,

let us take delight in the flame.

Let us warm ourselves in the

affection, the energy, the bright joy

of this beloved community.

The flame is our future.

Attend it with love!”

Ann B. Fields

Ceremony of Creating the Chalice Table

Song: Hymn 362 “Rise Up, O Flame”

Leaders offer the following by reading together or alternating:

You have been asked to bring something that has spiritual, worshipful, or sacred significance to you that can be placed on our Chalice table. Please come forward and place what you have brought on the table and tell us what you choose about it. You may choose to silently place the object on the table.

(In a spirit of meditation) As travelers who have chosen the same haven in which to seek refreshment and advice, we have come together, a circle of strangers, each with our own needs, our own anxieties, our own hopes, and our own experiences to share.

May the spiritual nourishment we find here strengthen our faith and give us confidence for the rest of our journey.

The treasures we will discover and exchange here are of the magic kind; they are guaranteed to multiply as we pass them on to others. May we cherish them.

For a few hours we will live and learn and celebrate together. May we create an atmosphere of affectionate concern for each other.

Thus our memories of this time and this place will become precious.

So may it be for us.

Song: Hymn 123, “Spirit of Life.”

Sample Closing Circle

Have a vigil light or candle to pass around. The brief closing should be a short recognition of feelings and a return bridge to the reality of home and church. Leaders can alternate the following text or can pass it out to participants and read it with them responsively.

“There is a time for everything under the sun: a time to learn and a time to share that knowledge; a time to stop for rest and refreshment and a time to pack our bags and travel on.

We came together in truth and in peace;
We came together in joy and in sharing;
We have spent our hours in knowing and in caring;
And now we come together in love.

It will be hard to say good-bye. Strangers have become friends. But each of us will be taking a small part of each other person with us. We have given ourselves generously to one another. Therefore each of us is a different person from the one who arrived here a short time ago.

In our memories we will carry treasures from our sojourn together. Can we bring to mind some of these shining bits that we will cherish?

Our sojourn is over; it is time to travel on, to find the road that leads us back to home, family, and church.

It is time to take the communal Chalice table apart. (Each person takes his or her sacred, spiritual object away from the table.) As you take your sacred object be aware of how it might have changed during its time as part of our sacred circle. Be aware of how you have been changed by this circle of colleagues. If you choose, you may speak of these things as you take your object from the table.

We pray each other these things for our journeys: safe travel, comfort of mind and heart, cheerful courage, and joy in sharing our own spiritual visions.

Song: Hymn 413, “Go Now in Peace,” or “Listen, Listen, Listen to My Heart’s Song.”

Suggested Schedule for Weekend Workshop

FRIDAY EVENING

Session I: Welcome and Introductions (2 hours)

Segment: Warm Up.....	20 minutes
Segment: Welcome and Introductions.....	30 minutes
Segment: Introduction to Module.....	70 minutes

SATURDAY MORNING

Session II: Remembering, Defining, and Developing Worship (3 hours)

Segment: Recollections of Worship Experiences.....	60 minutes
Segment: Goals and Definitions.....	60 minutes
Segment: Theories of Worship.....	60 minutes

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Session III: Setting and Resources and Finding Your Strengths (2 hours 30 minutes)

Segment: Introductions (again).....	10 minutes
Segment: The Worship Setting and Atmosphere.....	50 minutes
Segment: Break.....	10 minutes
Segment: Finding Our Strengths.....	10 minutes
Segment: The Worship Calendar.....	30 minutes
Segment: Resources for Worship.....	40 minutes

Session IV: Worship by Age, Prayer, Welcoming Children with Special Needs to into Worship (2 hours)

Segment: Fitting Worship for Each Age.....	40 minutes
Segment: Forming Teams for Worship Services.....	20 minutes
Segment: Using Prayer.....	25 minutes
Segment: Welcoming Children with Special Needs.....	15 minutes
Segment: Picking a Disability Guided Imagery.....	15 minutes
Segment: Parking Lot Check.....	5 minutes

SATURDAY EVENING

Session V: Creating Worship Services (2 hours 30 minutes)

Segment: Creating a Worship Service.....	90 minutes
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SUNDAY MORNING OR AFTERNOON

Session VI: Evaluations of Services and Module (3 hours)

Segment: Presentation of Worship Services.....	40 minutes each
Segment: Written and Verbal Evaluations of Module.....	15 minutes
Segment: Closing Worship.....	15 minutes