



ASSOCIATION SUNDAY 2010
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS AND THE FUTURE
OF OUR FAITH
~ ORGANIZING AND WORSHIP RESOURCES ~

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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in Association Sunday 2010. As we come together in this annual service to affirm our common bonds and purposes, we have something special to celebrate this year—the 50th anniversary of our Association of Congregations! The theme of Association Sunday 2010 is *Celebrating 50 Years and the Future of Our Faith*. These organizing and worship resources center around that theme to help you organize your Association Sunday service.

Our fiftieth anniversary is an opportunity to express our gratitude for the religion we have been given and to deepen our faith in its transforming power. The consolidation of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America is a success. We have developed the gifts of both traditions and brought them into a balance of head and heart, social action and spirituality, individual freedom and community responsibility. We are coming together this year to honor the past and to grow our faith into the future.

As part of that transformation, we are “going green”! In our efforts to be more environmentally friendly as well as good stewards of your donations, we will not be mailing hard copies of resources and donation envelopes this year. We trust you will develop an inspirational service and contribute to our growth efforts. Please send materials you produce to us at associationsunday@uua.org or join the dialogue and post on the Association Sunday Facebook page.

Thank you for organizing this worship service and special collection. Bless you for helping transform and grow our faith in this our fiftieth year. Best wishes on your Association Sunday Service.

Yours in the Faith,

Stephan Papa
Special Assistant to the President for Growth Funding

Association Sunday

Checklist for Organizing Your Service

- Put up the Association Sunday Posters.
- Consider doing a pulpit exchange with neighboring congregations.
- Organize the service to include lay participation.
- Publicize the service and special collection in your newsletter and on your website.
- In your newsletter, ask those who will be unable to attend to mail in their contributions.
- Provide the <http://www.uua.org/giving> link in your electronic newsletter.
- Contact members of the congregation about making lead gifts.
- Consider making a lead gift yourself, perhaps by donating one wedding fee or \$500 (\$10 for every year).
- Put information about Association Sunday funds in your order of service (publicity materials are available online).
- As we trust people will be inspired by it, schedule the offering for after the sermon.
- At the service, announce your gift, and ask that each member consider a gift of \$20 or more. Remind them that this Sunday's collection is a special opportunity to connect and combine our resources for the future of our faith.
- Indicate that all checks should be made out to the UUA.
- Have a check made out for all cash collected.
- Send us sermons, pictures and other materials you used for sharing with others.

**For further information email us at AssociationSunday@uua.org,
or call Katrina Bergmann at 617-948-4662.**



Celebrate the fourth-annual

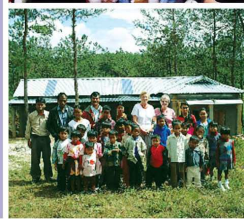
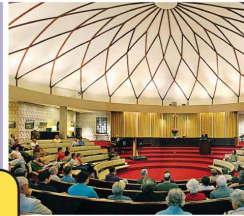
Association Sunday

with Unitarian Universalists across the country!

Most congregations will join together on October 3, 2010.

Our service will be held on

We are better together! As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of Unitarian Universalism, we seek to continue our tradition of opening our doors to newcomers, sharing our values with the world, and building a shared ministry. Join us in Celebrating 50 Years and the Future of Our Faith!



Visit www.uua.org/associationsunday or call (617) 948-4662 for more information

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need Association Sundays?

Unitarian Universalist congregations are self-governing entities whose connections to one another sometimes seem tenuous. We need Association Sundays to strengthen the bonds of common purpose among congregations. Even more importantly, we need to combine our resources in order to make Unitarian Universalism a stronger voice of liberal religious values in the world.

We need to bring our congregations together to pursue our mission of affirming the "inherent worth and dignity of every person". These Association Sundays will strengthen our connection, and combine our resources, enabling us to have more of an influence on our country. Now Is the Time for our congregations to grow stronger and more effective because our religious values are needed to help heal the wounded world.

What are Association Sundays?

Association Sundays are a request by the UUA for all congregations to recognize and support, both spiritually and materially, the national work of the Association. We envision a day – an “Association Sunday” - during which thousands of UUs across the nation are simultaneously celebrating our shared commitment to Unitarian Universalism.

Like *Ministry Sunday* in 1995, (which was a request to support the financial needs of ministers and seminary students) and *Mind the Gap Sunday* in 2002 (which was focused on supporting Youth and Young Adult Ministries), each Association Sunday will include a worship service based on a particular theme and congregations will be asked to host a special collection to support the Association of Congregations.

How is Association Sunday different from other UUA fundraising efforts?

Association Sunday is different from The Annual Program Fund (APF) and Friends of the UUA; those programs help to pay for the operating budget of the UUA. Special projects require additional funding and that's the purpose of Association Sunday.

[Read more](#) about the relationship between Association Sunday and the Annual Program Fund.

When is Association Sunday, and what will its funds support?

The theme of Association Sunday 2010, scheduled for October 3, is *Celebrating 50 Years and the Future of Our Faith*. Proceeds will go to ensuring that our faith thrives for generations to come by supporting the *Leap of Faith* action plan developed by the UUA's spring 2010 strategic review; funds will also help us celebrate our 50th anniversary.

How will the money be raised?

We ask that each member and minister contribute individually as part of a special collection during services on Association Sunday. We suggest a recommended donation of \$20 per member. Some may even wish to inspire generosity in their congregation by making a large lead or matching gift and announcing it prior to their service.

If you or a member of your congregation wishes to make a leadership contribution, matching gift, stock gift or bequest to benefit Association Sundays, please contact us.

How can my congregation register for Association Sunday?

Each congregation has a different way of managing special services and collections, so it is important that you check with your minister and board before taking any steps to register. Once you have followed the guidelines set out by your congregation, please:

1. Have your minister or board president register with the Stewardship and Development Office by sending an email to AssociationSunday@uua.org or registering online at www.uua.org/associationsunday;
2. Schedule Sunday, October 3, 2010 or another date for your "Association Sunday" service;
3. Send us a picture of your congregation. We'd like to use it in our display at General Assembly and online;
4. Spread the word about Association Sunday among members of your congregation.

Newsletter articles, pulpit announcements, and emails are all good ways to share your enthusiasm for this project. More information and resources can be found online at www.uua.org/associationsunday

Inserts for the Order of Service

Welcome to Association Sunday 2010!

*As part of the service today affirming our common bonds and purposes as Unitarian Universalists, we are taking a special collection.
We ask you to make a tax deductible gift of \$20 or more.*

What will be funded?

The theme of the fourth annual Association Sunday is *Celebrating 50 Years and the Future of Our Faith!*

Proceeds from this service will go to ensuring that our religion thrives for generations to come by supporting the *Leap of Faith* growth action plan, which will establish mentoring relationships among congregations; funds will also support the celebration of this significant anniversary.

Thank you for “Growing Our Faith” in one another and our way in religion. We are better together!

“We can be the religion for our time. We can only do this together...as an Association.”–

Rev. Peter Morales, President of the UUA

Checks should be made out to the UUA with Association Sunday 2010 and your congregation’s name on the memo line; they may be put in the offering today or mailed to the Unitarian Universalist Association, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108; donations may also be made online at http://uua.kintera.org/assoc_sunday.



Leap of Faith Growth Initiative

In May 2010 Rev. Peter Morales and several ministers of congregations with admirable records of numerical growth met to consider how best to encourage and support numerical growth in our congregations. Out of this consultation emerged the **Leap of Faith Initiative**. This pilot project will develop mentoring relationships between congregations. An outside evaluator will help monitor this experiment for effectiveness as we move forward to involve more congregations in the future. Core aspects of this program are:

- We affirm that there is wisdom within our congregations. All of them have the capacity to change, grow, and deepen in their missions and ministries. Leap of Faith will create congregation to congregation Learning Communities to share this embedded wisdom.
- These congregational partnerships will include mutual mentoring and experiential learning as they share what has worked for them in developing vital ministries.
- Each aspiring congregation will determine the areas of learning and experience that will take them “over the threshold” to sustained numerical growth. These may include new technical skills, adaptive approaches and culture changes.
- Congregational teams will gather at a Launch Conference in New Orleans, October 23-24 in which they will develop their congregational narratives and begin to build their Learning Community with their mentoring congregation.
- As Learning Communities, participating congregations will share what they are learning for the greater health and well being of Unitarian Universalism. Aspiring congregations have committed to share their learning with other congregations through websites, social media, blogging, webinars and workshops this year and in the future.
- This first year, Congregational Life Staff members nominated congregations that are poised on the threshold of numerical growth; nine aspiring congregations have been selected to participate and will be matched with mentoring congregations.
- The Steering Team is working with a professional outside evaluator in a rigorous assessment process, which will roll forward the most helpful aspects of this project in subsequent years with additional congregations.

As part of the “Celebration of 50 Years and the Future of Our Faith” we urge your generous contributions to the “Leap of Faith Growth Initiative.” Outside evaluation and learning will provide a model for strengthening our connections and empowering increasing numbers of congregations to “Grow Our Faith.”

Video

President Peter Morales talking about Association Sunday at

<http://www.uua.org/giving/associationsunday/index.shtml>

**Customizable Poster and Banner Ad for your website and
electronic newsletter at**

<http://www.uua.org/giving/associationsunday/16307.shtml>

Talking Points for Presentation on Association Sunday 2010

- Today we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Unitarian Universalism by joining with congregations all over the country and the world for Association Sunday.
- Since the merger in 1961 that created the Unitarian Universalist Association, we have journeyed together to help strengthen Unitarian Universalism, to open the doors to newcomers, to share our values with the world, to support our congregations and to build a shared ministry.
- Fifty years later, we must not only ensure that Unitarian Universalism survives to the 100th anniversary, but also that it thrives for generations to come.
- We want congregations that are spiritually deep places where strong and enduring relationships can flourish, and that are engaged in their communities as sources of moral vision and effective action. We want our religious homes to be truly multigenerational and reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the wider world. Also, we want professional religious leaders who are visionary, spiritual, innovative, and diverse.
- Ours is a message that can appeal to everyone, regardless of background. We need to improve our ability to share it with others.
- As President Peter Morales has said, “*We can be the religion of our time. We can only do this together...as an Association.*”
- As a congregation, our goal is to contribute an average of \$20 per member.
- Proceeds from this service will go to ensuring that our faith thrives for generations to come by supporting the *Leap of Faith* growth action plan developed by the UUA’s spring 2010 strategic review; funds will also help us celebrate our 50th anniversary.

HYMNS IN SINGING THE LIVING TRADITION & SINGING THE JOURNEY

Singing the Living Tradition

- 113 Where is our holy church?
- 114 Forward through the Ages
- 121 We'll build a land
- 123 Spirit of Life
- 131 Love will guide us
- 143 Not in vain the distance beacons
- 145 As tranquil streams that meet and merge
- 170 We are a gentle, angry people
- 187 It Sounds Along the Ages
- 287 Faith of the Larger Liberty
- 295 Sing out praises for the journey
- 298 Wake, Now, My Senses
- 300 With Heart and Mind
- 312 Here on the path of every day
- 315 This old world
- 317 We are not our own
- 318 We would be one
- 323 Break not the circle
- 325 Love makes a bridge
- 346 Come, sing a song with me
- 347 Gather the spirit
- 358 Rank by Rank Again We Stand
- 360 Here we have gathered
- 374 Since what we choose is what we are
- 380 Rejoice in love we know and share
- 389 Gathered here in the mystery
- 414 As we leave this friendly place

Singing the Journey

- 1003 Where do we come from?
- 1012 When I Am Frightened
- 1014 Standing on the side of love
- 1017 Building a New Way
- 1018 Come and Go with Me
- 1020 Woyaya
- 1021 Lean on Me
- 1023 Building bridges
- 1028 The Fire of Commitment
- 1029 Love knocks and waits for us to hear
- 1037 We begin again in love
- 1074 Turn the World Around

OPENING WORDS/CALL TO WORSHIP

For more than fifty years, loving and reasonable, honest and open, brave and faithful people have come together from two changing Christian traditions, which have blessed us with freedom and a faith worth growing.

For fifty years, we have come together as Unitarian Universalists not agreeing exactly on what that meant or knowing precisely what that entailed, but believing in one another.

For more than fifty years, we will be around to help others who realize that Unitarian Universalism is the only way they can be religious and that it brings out the best in them.

So may we, for more than fifty years, celebrate and grow our faith in our way of religion.

Stephan Papa

From our past, we are called –
 as individuals, a congregation, a movement.
Into our future, we are called –
 imagining what might be from our vision of what should be.
Right here in this moment, we are called –
 an *this* particular people in *this* particular place.

Will we hear the call? *Do* we hear the call? Let us hear the call.

Our worship begins.

Erik Walker Wikstrom
Director of Worship and Music Resources for the
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

Fifty years ago two religious denominations merged to create the Unitarian Universalist Association, our faith home. This morning we merge – our various life stories, hopes, and dreams creating one congregation. Who knows what the future will bring? Let's see what the future will bring. .

Erik Walker Wikstrom
Director of Worship and Music Resources for the
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

New day: I greet you as myself;
For what befalls, become me.
May I become all, that I may become nothing.

May I become nothing, that I may become all.
Keep me in holy time,
That I may ever give thanks for your flow. Amen

The Congregation of Abraxas, from the Matins service © 1977

Because of those who came before, we are; in spite of their failings, we believe; because of, and in spite of the horizons of their vision, we, too, dream. Let us [join together] remembering to praise, to live in the moment, to love mightily, to bow to the mystery.

Barbara Pescan (adapted)

This house is for the ingathering of nature and human nature. It is a house of friendships, a haven in trouble, an open room for the encouragement of our struggle. It is a house of freedom, guarding the dignity and worth of every person. It offers a platform for the free voice, for declaring, both in times of security and danger, the full and undivided conflict of opinion. . . . It is a house of prophecy, outrunning times past and times present in visions of growth and progress. This house is a cradle for our dreams, the workshop of our common endeavor.

Kenneth L. Patton (adapted)

CHALICE LIGHTING

As two candles lit one flame fifty year ago, the chalice held two traditions with their histories, hopes, and dreams.

Our kindred fellowships have come together; united, we are stronger. With gifts from each tradition, we have developed our faith for today: an empowering, justice seeking and spiritually grounded faith, which blesses us and calls us to live with courage and love.

May this fire kindle within us, as it did for those who lit it fifty years ago, strength and hope, clarity and commitment, gratitude and faith in the future.

Stephan Papa

The flame meets the candle and two become one. Each had a life of its own; together they are magical. 50 years ago Unitarianism and Universalism came together and become one; each had a life of its own; together they are something original and new. As we light our chalice, may we celebrate this union and commit ourselves to the unfolding of its potential.

Erik Walker Wikstrom
Worship and Music Resources Director for the
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

UU Heritage Chalice Lighting

Our Unitarian heritage bids us light our chalice
In the name of freedom,
In the light of reason,
In actions of tolerance.
We gather in community to celebrate a heritage of freedom, reason, and tolerance.

Our Universalist heritage bids us light our chalice
In the name of faith,
In the light of hope,
In actions of love.
We gather in community to celebrate a heritage of faith, hope, and love.

Let us bring this Unitarian Universalist heritage into our world and our lives today.

Elizabeth M. Strong (www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/authors/5057.shtml)

Source: Original

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We come to this time and this place: to rediscover the wondrous gift of free religious community; to renew our faith in the holiness, goodness, and beauty of life; to reaffirm the way of the open mind and full heart; to rekindle the flame of memory and hope; and to reclaim the vision of an earth made fair, with all her people one.

David C. Pohl

PRAYERS/MEDITATIONS

We join together now in a time of meditation

We join together now in a time of meditation or prayer, spoken at first and then for a time in the peace that silence brings.

As we enter into silence we remember the many connections that sustain and uplift us through this religious community. We remember those who preceded us, whose contributions built a free faith, who built this home for its practice.

We remember those around us, whose continuing care in thought and deed is an ongoing blessing in our lives, keeping the dream of free religion alive in our time.

We remember those who will follow us, the children presently in our care and those not yet come to light, who will inherit the work of our hands and hearts.

In the silence now, we sit surrounded by these many connections, visible and invisible, that remind us every day that we are not alone.

(Silent meditation)

Peace be with us, and with all under the sun.

Wayne B. Arnason (www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/authors/4554.shtml)

Source: 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection

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Ought

I cannot love
because I ought to.
I cannot hope
because I ought to.
I cannot believe
because I ought to.
or because I want to
or am taught to
or because
it is reasonable
or desirable
or possible

for someone else.

I can only love
and hope
and believe
sometimes or often,
not quite or almost,
seldom or never really
and I need you
in between.

Here

Here may no one be altogether a stranger,
no honesty of thought ignored,
no depth of feeling dismissed,
no life belittled, and no life shut out.

May whatever clarity of mind and heart we bring
be humbly treasured,
brought to bear toward word and person.

May fellowship be treasured
most of all
and paths to its sustaining and renewing
sought and found.

May growth of mind and spirit be our purpose;
such understanding as shall lead us
to new ways in which to blend our lives.

From *In the Beginning* a Meditation Manual by J. Donald Johnston, Copyright 1970,
revised 1981: Division of Communications and Publications Unitarian Universalist
Association 25 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02108

The Spirit of the ages speaks through our prayer – of multitudes who have sought *light* in
moments of darkness, who have lifted up their souls out of the agony of blinding
experiences and have found that peace that passes all understanding.

The blessings of peace we seek for all [humankind]. Peace for the tortured and homeless
peoples, peace for the war-wracked millions – and the blessed light that nations may walk
together in cooperation and understanding.

May light and understanding descend upon us here, that each individual soul may be
blessed in its attempts to follow the higher way. May the influences of this hour shed
their benediction upon us and give us peace. Amen.

Alfred S. Cole, *Unitarian Fellowship Hymn and Service Book* © 1949 Beacon Press.

A Meditation on Growth

Take a moment to relax. Close your eyes if it is comfortable. (And if it's not comfortable for you, close your eyes.) Breathe in. And out. Slowly, in and out. And try to let yourself be filled with all those others who sit here with you this morning; all the other people – known to you and unknown – who this morning make up our congregation. [Pause] And now, as you continue to breathe, allow yourself to bring into your consciousness, or into your heart, all those who have ever sat here; all those who have ever been a part of our congregation throughout our entire ___ history. [Pause] Keep breathing. And expand the circle of your consciousness to include all of those who are now sitting in UU congregations all over the country . . . [short pause] and all those who ever have . . . [short pause]. Bring into yourself all of the Unitarian Universalists, and before us the Unitarians and Universalists, who have ever been – hold them lovingly. [Pause] And now let your mind, your heart, expand to open up to all those who need what we have here yet who have not yet found out about us, who have not yet opened our doors. [Pause] See the world as it would be with a growing, vibrant, dynamic, lively Unitarian Universalism, living up to its potential, doing all the good it could. [Pause.] Keep breathing. In and out. Slowly. [Pause] “May it be so.”

Erik Walker Wikstrom
Worship and Music Resources Director for the
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

STORIES FOR ALL AGES

Making Promises, Making Covenants

Do you remember your first day of school? I remember mine. Your parents and grandparents probably remember their first days, too. Probably everyone remembers, no matter how long ago it was.

Going to a new place and starting something new can be exciting... and sometimes a little scary. We have a lot of questions:

"Where do I sit?"

"What time do we eat?"

"Where is the bathroom?"

"Am I allowed to climb the trees?"

"Does the teacher expect me to do homework?"

And, of course, "When can we go outside to play?"

At school, the teacher shows us where things are and explains how things work. She tells us the rules. Once we know what we are expected to do and what we are allowed to do, it's not so scary anymore.

Sometimes, though, there is no teacher. On the playground, it's just kids. Sometimes we make up our own game, and we decide how it ought to be played. Sometimes we make the rules.

On the jungle gym, we can decide that the red bars are fire and you can't touch them when you climb. When we play tag, we can decide that the person who is It has to count to ten before they start chasing everybody else. It can be a lot of fun to make up the rules to your very own game. You get to make it just the way you like it.

That is, if the other kids agree. But, what if you think the red bars on the jungle gym are fire and can't be touched, but another kid says that the red bars are fine and you can touch them however you want?

There are a lot of different ways to play a game. And if you don't want to play all by yourself (and you can't play tag by yourself), then everybody has to agree on what the rules are while you are playing. Maybe you can keep all the rules. Or maybe you can change some.

Some how, some way, after discussing and changing and arguing and compromising, everybody agrees on what the rules should be. Maybe you don't like one of the other kids' rules all that much, and maybe someone else doesn't like your rules all that much, but you both agree to them anyway because you got some rules you liked and so did the other person. Then, finally, everyone promises to each other to follow the rules, with no cheating, and we can play the game.

When we agree to follow the rules we make together, we are covenanting with each other. A covenant is a promise to each other about what we are going to do, and how we are going to behave. We need a covenant to have fun playing a game.

Covenants are not only for the playground. They can be made by people in families and by students and teachers in schools. They can be made in religions too. Our Unitarian Universalist religion has a covenant.

Our UU Covenant was made about 50 years ago, when your parents and grandparents were young. Back then, there weren't any Unitarian Universalists. There were Unitarians and there were Universalists. Two different religions, with different names, different buildings, different songs... different rules.

The Unitarians and the Universalists had been talking to each other for a very long time. Even though they had different rules for how they did things, they realized they agreed on many important ideas, many principles of life. Just like the kids on the playground, they had different rules, but they wanted to play the same game.

In 1960, they decided to play together. They knew they had to figure out new rules that all the Unitarians and all the Universalists would agree to follow.

It took them almost a year. After discussing and changing and arguing and compromising for months and months, the Unitarians and the Universalists from hundreds of different congregations agreed on six Principles — six rules — that they all could agree to follow. It's true that one person might not have liked another person's ideas for rules all that much and maybe that person didn't like the first person's rules all that much. But they agreed to follow them anyway, because they knew they both got a lot of the rules they wanted. And they got to play together.

They compromised.

And then they covenanted.

They decided to "play the same game."

Twenty-five years later, in 1985, they added one more Principle, to make it seven. You may already have heard of the seven Principles. These are the rules that Unitarian Universalists agree to follow:

1. Each person is important.
2. Be kind in all you do.

3. We're free to learn together.
4. We search for what is true.
5. All people need a voice.
6. Build a fair and peaceful world.
7. We care for Earth's lifeboat.

Today we will make a covenant with each other, here in Wonderful Welcome. We will work out rules for the times when we are together. We may have to make some compromises, in order to get most of the rules we want.

When we promise to each other to follow the rules we make, we are covenanting with each other. Just like the kids on the playground playing tag. Just like the Unitarians and Universalists did 50 years ago.

By Janeen K. Grohsmeyer.

<http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/wonderfulwelcome/session2/sessionplan/stories/118157.shtml>

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STORY: Sleepless in Syracuse

As the actual accomplishment of consolidation neared, feelings ran high. Though a preliminary vote clearly indicated that merger was the option preferred by most Universalists and Unitarians, there were still those who questioned its advisability. Would consolidation dissipate resources better used to strengthen congregations? Would merging churches mean lessening the presence of liberal religion in many communities? What would each denomination be giving up of its own character, values, and traditions? These differences and doubts came to the boil at the 1959 assembly in Syracuse, New York. Some one thousand delegates gathered to vote on the Plan to Consolidate offered by the Joint Merger Commission. After a short time together, the Universalists and the Unitarians divided into separate sessions to consider the plan. The agreement was that as each group found something that required amendment, the proposed amendment would be sent to the other for their consideration. In the end, they had to agree to the same plan. Fifty-seven amendments were made and voted on in this back and forth manner. But the most contentious point, the only one that brought the assembly to a halt, was the wording of the Purposes and Objectives of the yet-to-be denomination. The wording the Commission first proposed read, "To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in their essence as love to God and love to man." This wording was adopted overwhelmingly by the Universalist delegation, which then waited for their Unitarian counterparts to do likewise.

But in the Unitarian assembly the reaction was intense. Some wanted the clause struck as coming too close to a creed, but, at the other end of the spectrum, there were those offended that no mention was made of the religion of Jesus or the Judeo-Christian heritage. A new version was proposed – "To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by Jesus and the other great teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, and

prophetically expressed in the Judeo-Christian tradition as love to God and love to man.” This set off a debate on the very nature of Unitarianism. It was a debate that had been carried on since the nineteenth century. Did Unitarianism stand firmly in the tradition of Christian churches, or did it offer a new universal form of religion for all people? Ultimately, the statement proved too narrow to be accepted.

Another version was offered, removing the reference to Jesus, but retaining the phrase “our Judeo-Christian heritage” – “To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in our Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to man.” This, too, was unacceptable to the Unitarians who felt that it placed the religion firmly in the stream of Protestant Christianity. The vote to reconsider the new wording failed by seven votes of the six hundred delegates present.

As the meetings ran late into the night with no agreement at hand, it looked like the assembly and the merger were at deadlock. Still, most of the six hundred delegates stayed in their seats. Donald Harrington, minister of the Community Church of New York later wrote these words about that night in Syracuse:

I felt very discouraged and went to bed. About one o'clock, somebody pounded on my door. It was Percival Brundage saying, "Don, can't we do something about this?" and he showed me some wording that he and some others had continued to work on. I said I agreed but that since we had already lost the vote to reconsider I didn't know what could be done. At about three o'clock, there was another knock on my door. It was one of the leading Unitarian Christians and he said, "Don, we've got better wording. Are you still with us?" And he explained that he had persuaded the Universalists to reconsider, which meant that the rules permitted the Unitarians to vote again, as well.

The new proposal passed, only one word having been changed. “Our” became “the” and the Unitarian Universalist Association was created “to cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in **the** Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to man.”

From a workshop on the Unitarian and Universalist consolidation that is part of Living in the Stream: Stories from Unitarian and Universalist History a sixteen-workshop adult program written by Rev. Alison Cornish and Rev. Jackie Clement that will be published this fall as part of Tapestry of Faith.

NOTES

The Donald Harrington quote is from Warren Ross, *The Premise and the Promise*.

ACTIVITY 2: Youth Lead the Way (25 minutes)

MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY

- Leader Resource 1, Youth Lead the Way
- Copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook, for each participant
- Leader Resource 2, Liberal Religious Youth Photo 1953

- Optional: Computer and digital projector
- Optional: Keyboard or piano

PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

- Become familiar with Leader Resource 1, Youth Lead the Way and prepare a copy from which to present.
- Prepare to project Leader Resource 2, Liberal Religious Youth Photo 1953 or print a copy to pass around.
- Optional: Invite a musician (or a musical participant) to lead and/or accompany the hymn.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Read or present the contents of Leader Resource 1, Youth Lead the Way. Display or pass around Leader Resource 2, Liberal Religious Youth Photo 1953, explaining that 1953 is the date of the consolidation of the Unitarian and Universalist youth movements.

Invite participants to share any stories they may have of growing up in church youth groups, whether Unitarian, Universalist, Unitarian Universalist, or another faith tradition. Use the following questions to guide the conversation:

- What kind of mission work did your youth group engage in?
- What did your faith community youth group provide for you that was lacking in other youth social or educational groups?
- What would you hope Unitarian Universalist youth groups uniquely offer today?

Allow ten minutes for this discussion.

Explain to participants that Hymn 318, *We Would Be One*, was originally written as a youth anthem. Anthony Wright, first executive director of the consolidated Liberal Religious Youth, wrote the words in 1952 as the American Unitarian Youth and the Universalist Youth Fellowship were in the process of consolidation. A few words were changed when the song was included in the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*. Two changes were made for more inclusive language: “to show mankind a new community” was changed to “to show to all a new community,” and “strive to make men free” was altered to “strive to make us free.” The one other point of textual change from the youth hymn was the alteration of “our hymn of youth” to “our hymn of love.”

Invite participants to join in singing Hymn 318, *We Would Be One*.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: Youth Lead the Way

TEXT

Although the consolidation of Unitarians and Universalists would not be sealed until 1961, earlier consolidations led the way. A few individual churches merged and some ministers held dual fellowship, but, in an organizational sense, it was the youth who led the field.

The nineteenth century saw the rise of a number of voluntary associations within both Unitarian and Universalist churches. Women’s associations, Sunday Schools, altar guilds,

men's clubs and youth organizations were among them. Following the creation of similar groups for young people in other denominations, the Western Unitarian Conference, under the leadership of Jenkin Lloyd Jones, organized Unity Clubs in the late nineteenth century. These groups were largely literary and philosophical in nature, though it must be noted that the youth they served were not the high school aged youth we think of today, but people in their twenties and thirties. In the east, Universalist churches organized young people's Christian Endeavor Societies, oriented toward religion and social service. These societies, in turn, spurred the rise in the eastern Unitarian churches of young people's guilds with similar religious ends.

In 1889, individual Universalist Christian Endeavor Societies organized into a single entity known as the Young People's Christian Union (YPCU). In 1896, the Unitarians followed suit, combining various groups into the Young People's Religious Union (YPRU). From that time on, the YPCU and YPRU met jointly in "Uni-Uni" rallies, in addition to meeting for their individual conferences.

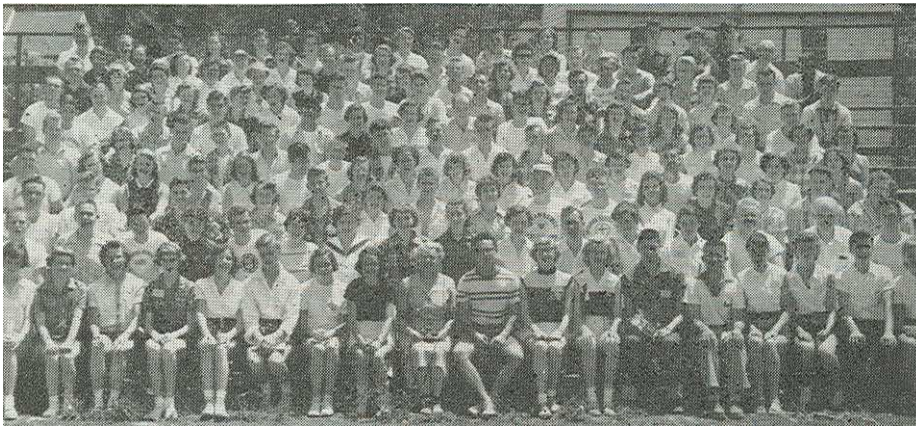
The YPCU's greatest focus was on missionary work, both domestic and international. In 1893, they hired Quillen Shinn as the national organizer for missionary work, and a year later began the "Two Cents a Week Plan" which asked every YPCU member to donate one dollar annually (or two cents per week) to missionary work. The "Two Cents a Week Plan" was extraordinarily successful, lasting until 1927 (though with several name changes) and raising tens of thousands of dollars to spread the word of Universalism. The Unitarian YPRU was more modest in its goals. Centered largely in New England, its fundraising was done through semi-annual bazaars held in Boston, Massachusetts.

Over time, partly because the military draft for two world wars took young people away from home, the age of members began to drop. In 1894, YPCU started the first high school age organization, the Junior Union, which after one year boasted forty chapters nationally. But, with major reorganizations in the early 1940s, both organizations deliberately lowered their age requirements. In 1941, YPCU reorganized as the Universalist Youth Fellowship (UYF) serving young people ages 13 to 25. The following year, YPRU became American Unitarian Youth (AUY), with members ages 15 to 25. The youth organizations of both denominations followed similar paths. Both experienced times of growth and times of challenge brought on by world wars, the Great Depression and resultant financial woes, and tensions over generational, denominational and social issues. From the beginning the two organizations had shared close relations, meeting jointly, printing joint publications, and taking on service projects such as the 1930s Peace Caravans to respond to escalation in the international arms race. By the 1950s, they were ready to make their partnership formal. When it appeared that their parent denominational bodies would merge into the Council of Liberal Churches, the youth organizations began the work of consolidation. The 1950 annual meetings of both groups selected representatives to a joint committee formed to explore the possibility of consolidation and what would need to happen to make it possible and desirable to consolidate. After three years of joint investigation and discussion the two youth organizations merged in 1953, becoming the Liberal Religious Youth.

END RESOURCE

LEADER RESOURCE 2: Liberal Religious Youth Photo 1953

TEXT



END RESOURCE

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ACTIVITY 1: From Why? to Why Not?

MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY

- Copy of Story 1, From Why? to Why Not?
- Play-Doh or other colored clay in two primary colors (red and yellow, or yellow and blue, or red and blue)
- Two bowls, one for each color clay

PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

- Become familiar with Story 1, “From Why? to Why Not?” and prepare a copy from which to present.
- Divide the modeling clay into small pieces, one of each color for each participant, and place the pieces in the bowls.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Read or present Story 1, “From Why? to Why Not?” which tells of the consolidation of our historical faith traditions, Unitarianism and Universalism. After presenting the story, invite participants to reflect for a few moments on the changes that each tradition had to make in order to join together to form a new denomination. What were the losses? What were the gains? Allow fifteen minutes for the story and reflection.

Distribute the pieces of clay, with each participant selecting one piece of each color.

Explain that one of the colors represents Unitarianism, and the other color, Universalism.

Invite participants, using both colors, to create a representation of Unitarian Universalism at the time of consolidation. Suggest that the colors might be kept completely separate, or somewhat blended, or completely blended. The representation may be completely expressive and abstract, or representational and recognizable. After ten minutes, invite participants to share their creations with one another in groups of three.

If there is sufficient time, interest, and materials at the end of the workshop, you might invite participants to return to this activity, but instead of a representation of Unitarian Universalism at the time of consolidation, create a representation of Unitarian Universalism today.

INCLUDING ALL PARTICIPANTS

Encourage participants who do not consider themselves to be artistic by reminding them that they need not have specific skills or aspirations to create a piece.

STORY 1: From Why? to Why Not?

TEXT

At the final, emotional worship service that celebrated the vote to create the Unitarian Universalist Association in Boston in 1960, the Rev. Donald Harrington described the consolidation of the two faiths, Unitarianism and Universalism, as “partly a new birth, partly a commencement, partly a kind of marriage.” Looking back over the long journey that culminated in that historic moment, one can see threads of all three rites of passage in the more than 100 years it took to complete the process.

Prior to the formal courting of one denomination by the other, ministers, members and churches from both faiths had, according to Russell Miller, “innumerable instances of friendship, collaboration, and harmony as well as antagonism, separateness, and discord.” The differences and similarities were both legion, leading Thomas Starr King to quip that “the only reason that the Unitarians and the Universalists haven’t already joined was that they were too closely related to be married.” Indeed, the two traditions had similar, although not identical theological stances. There were much larger differences between the two in church organization, educational background of clergy, and the socio-economic status of their respective memberships. These differences proved far more difficult to overcome than the theological ones.

In the late 1840s, Henry Bellows, a prominent Unitarian minister in New York City, visited a number of Universalist churches in New York State. He found the Unitarians and Universalists in many places “drawing towards each other.” He believed that the eventual union of the two denominations was inevitable. In 1865, Bellows was instrumental in helping to establish the National Council of Unitarian Churches, which, as one of its first pieces of business, passed a resolution “looking to union with the Universalists.” It was nearly thirty years later that the overture was echoed by the Universalist General Convention who, twice in the 1890s, introduced (but tabled) motions calling for greater cooperation between the Unitarians and the Universalists. But some congregations had already gotten the idea and did not wait for the denominations’ blessing. In 1878, the first “local” merger took place in Mukwonago, Wisconsin, where Unitarian and Universalist congregations formally joined forces for the first time. Resolutions continued to be written and passed by both denominational bodies, but there was little real action until 1931, when a Joint Commission was created to “consider possibilities” of joining together. By this time, both traditions were considering what it

was they might have in common not only with one another, but with other liberal Protestant churches. In the 1930s, a broad group of liberal Christians attempted to forge closer ties through the Free Church Fellowship, but motivation and energy soon waned. The 1950s proved to be the charmed decade for the on-again, off-again process. In 1953, the Council of Liberal Churches was created, and this time, substantive joint work was accomplished in the spheres of education, publications and public relations. In the same year, the American Unitarian Youth and the Universalist Youth Fellowship joined forces to create Liberal Religious Youth. In 1955, the Joint Interim Committee recommended that the Unitarians and the Universalists determine a step-by-step process for “union.” And in 1956, the Joint Merger Commission was established to guide the process itself. That process was arduous, comprehensive, and inclusive. In 1959, the Commission’s final report presented the “state of health” of both the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America; a plan for consolidation; and a full accounting of advantages and disadvantages of joining together, once and for all. Though the formal reports communicated the facts to the concerned voters, there was much “side conversation” that reflected long-standing prejudices and fears on both sides. For the Unitarians, there was a concern that the Universalists were simply too different from them to forge a successful relationship. On the other side, the fear was that the more centralized and high-profile Unitarians would subsume the Universalists. This summed up much that had been stated over the course of the previous century; nonetheless, the time seemed right to take the next step.

In 1959, the final and necessary negotiations were worked out in Syracuse, New York. Over the next year, a plebiscite of congregations was called. 95% of Unitarian and Universalist congregations participated. 88% of Unitarians said “yes,” as did 79% of Universalists, and in 1960, the separate but side-by-side annual meetings of the AUA and the UCA voted “yes” to consolidation. A special worship service was held at Boston’s Symphony Hall with the pulpits previously used by William Ellery Channing and Hosea Ballou.

A marriage? Perhaps, but one that has had much in the way of differences to negotiate. A birth? Yes, but with plenty of pre-history brought along into the newness of the moment. A graduation? Maybe, but aren’t graduations always at least as much a beginning as an ending?

From a workshop on the Unitarian and Universalist consolidation that is part of Living in the Stream: Stories from Unitarian and Universalist History a sixteen-workshop adult program written by Rev. Alison Cornish and Rev. Jackie Clement that will be published this fall as part of Tapestry of Faith.

FAITH IN ACTION: Exploring Your Congregation’s History

PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

- Identify sources of historical information about your congregation. Your congregational historian or archivist, parish minister, religious educator, or long time members may be able to help.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Invite participants to search for the Unitarian, Universalist or Unitarian Universalist origins of their congregation. All Unitarian Universalist congregations, regardless of their age, have a history. One aspect of that history is the original theological and institutional identity of the faith community—Unitarian, Universalist or Unitarian Universalist. This initial identity may be well-known and celebrated, obscured by many years and layers of changes, or lost in the fogs of time. Even if the founding religion and story appears to be well-known, there is likely some story about the congregation's affiliation that is less well understood. Here are some places to start looking for clues to your congregation's history:

- Published and unpublished congregational histories, sermons, newsletters and pamphlets in your archives
- Historic photographs of your buildings, including signs, symbols and decorations
- Oral histories (you might even want to interview a long-time member for their recollections)
- Biographies of ministers and lay leaders
- Published histories of Unitarianism, Universalism, and the Fellowship Movement.

After you complete your reconnaissance, come together to discuss these questions:

- What of your origins can you still discern in your congregation's culture, surroundings and identity?
- How have your congregation's "roots" impacted your contemporary congregational culture?
- Is there a particular "story" your congregation has about its response to consolidation? Did you find congregants who remember the events of 1960 and 1961?

Offer your discoveries to the congregation through a newsletter column, a page on the website, a pulpit editorial, or even a dramatic skit at a special event.

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READINGS

The *Christian Inquirer* devoted an article in 1857 to relations between Universalists and Unitarians.... The author deplored the ‘mutual distrust and recrimination’ that seemed to exist between the two... After all, the two groups were both ‘branches of the one tree of Liberal Christianity.’ Universalism was ‘more the child of the heart.’ The first appeared among scholars, learned men, and ‘the aristocratic classes of society,’ while Universalism was ‘the offspring of the people at large, and was deeply rooted in the democratic elements of the community....’ But regardless of their differences—or possibly because of them—they complemented rather than competed with each other. Both had a mission ‘to uphold a new and better Church, the Church of the New World....’ In short, ‘head and heart ought to work together...

Russell E. Miller in *The Larger Hope, The First Century of the Universalist Church in America, 1770-1870*, p.811

Nathan Gunnison, pastor of the Universalist church in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1864, sensed the new mood that seemed to be overtaking both Universalists and Unitarians. ‘I trust the day is not far distant when the Unitarians and the Universalists will be but branches of one Liberal Church, working together in harmony and good fellowship.’

Russell E. Miller in *The Larger Hope, The First Century of the Universalist Church in America, 1770-1870*, p.812

The world in 1934 was still recoiling from depression.... On religious structures in the United States, economic instability and philosophical anxieties had made their impact. The religious body was in ill health.

Unitarians were not exempt. Unitarian churches were in sharp decline, and some people even feared that Unitarianism might die as an institution. Dr. Louis Cornish, president of the American Unitarian Association, painted a dismal picture of the situation:

“Churches are being consolidated; churches are being closed. One Protestant denomination reports 500 unemployed ministers in New England alone. There is no need of amplifying these statements. There is need to remember that the present day conditions affect every cooperative endeavor, including the work of the American Unitarian Association. It has been impossible for this Association to do all we would wish it to do.”

Out of a sense of concern for the future of Unitarianism...felt...by an earlier generation, there came a call for reassessment and a new beginning.

Conrad Wright, *A Stream of Light*, p. 125

When the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America completed their merger in 1961, a new denomination was born, the Unitarian Universalist Association. Although there was much continuity between the old organizations and the new one in the merger, there was also a definite departure from the unique identities that both the Unitarians and the Universalists had developed in America since the eighteenth century. The fact of this merger...indicates the shared values of the two groups. The history of Unitarianism and Universalism in America reveals the distinctiveness of the two movements. If they shared many liberal values, they also found different ways to express and embody those values and different groups to whom their liberal message appealed. The different sources of the stream of liberal religion should be kept in mind, for in that diversity there is a richness that needs to be remembered.

David Robinson in *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, Greenwood Press, 1985, p.3

[Our] common history is starting to be seen as a sign of common identity. ...the act of seeing can be a bond of identity because divergent perspectives do merge on a common object of vision.

David Robinson in *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, Greenwood Press, 1985, p.8

For Eliot [Frederick May] the liberal church must first be going somewhere. But it must also remember where it has been.

David Robinson in *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, Greenwood Press, 1985, p.166

In the late 1850s...Henry W. Bellows spoke positively of an eventual Unitarian and Universalist merger, noting that social rather than theological differences seemed to be the major obstacles to union of that time. When his project for Unitarian awakening, the National Conference, had its first meeting in 1865, there was discussion of union with Universalists..... Such gestures grounded future discussion of merger in history; they made the possibility of union less a new idea than part of a long-unfinished portion of the liberal agenda.

David Robinson in *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, Greenwood Press, 1985, p.169-170

Liberal religion is not an institution; it is a movement in history, a set of values, and a way of life. More important than the merger of two denominations is the quickening of the principles for which they exist.We believe in change and growth. We must be honest enough to detect our weaknesses, and brave enough to assert and develop our strengths. If we have faith in the future, we must be convinced that our great heritage is insignificant in comparison with the role of liberal religion for tomorrow. Without vision we would perish, and that role would be realized by others in our stead. But with vision, and a commensurate commitment, our own efforts may prove worthy of the promise of yesterday.

Dana McLean Greeley in *The Free Church in a Changing World*, UUA, 1963

Commission on Appraisal Report. [*The Unitarian Universalist Merger 1961-1975*](#),

(Boston: UUA, 1975) to be found at

http://www.uua.org/documents/coa/75_unitarianuniversalistmerger.pdf

Was the combining of the Universalist Church of America and the American Unitarian Association a success? Has it met the expectations of those who for many decades dreamed of it and of those many others who worked with so much hope and enthusiasm to bring it to fruition?

The predictions that we would soon double our membership have...not been realized, at least not yet. Neither...have the high hopes typified by Donald Harrington's sermon celebrating the launch of the Unitarian Universalist Association at Boston's Symphony Hall, when he proclaimed that ours was to be "a new world faith."

Does that mean the skeptics were right?

The answers form not so much a consensus as a mosaic of dominant themes. Here are three that stand out....

The main motive for consolidation—to join two religious traditions that had so much in common into a single religious family—has worked better than expected. No one nowadays asks, "Are you a Unitarian or a Universalist?" Instead there is a sense of common identity, and the denomination that took shape is far more than the sum of its original components. Says Gordon McKeeman, "When I visited congregations as a candidate for the UUA presidency, I was amazed at how homogenous we are. You can go from one end of this continent to the other and Unitarian Universalists are immediately recognizable. The real benefit of merger was theological and spiritual enrichment."

Consolidation was inevitable. "The Universalists would not have survived," says Leon Hopper, while "the money from various Universalist conventions sustained the UUA through some very difficult periods." Jack Mendelsohn puts it this way: "Merger was tremendously successful in terms of creating resources for strengthening congregations and supporting new congregations." Not realized, however, "was our hope that with combined resources we could do better in influencing public policy."

Universalism won. Though the Universalists were the weaker partner at the beginning, Universalism "won" in the long run— not in the sense of power, but because Unitarian Universalist values today are closer to historic Universalism than of Unitarianism.... Kay Montgomery [says], "It's been very healthy to have the Universalist tradition to refer to as people try to figure out how to live in this complex and secular age." David Pohl agrees. "Merger was an affair of the heart more than anything else and overall I think it worked. Especially in recent years, there has been a very conscious effort to recover the Universalist emphasis on a more egalitarian faith, one that emphasizes feeling as well as reason, one that attempts to be less 'classist,' less elitist....," as Ernest Cassara puts it, "...lost was snob appeal," though Charles Gaines feels that we also lost the Universalists' evangelism and populism.

One conclusion that seems beyond challenge is that the first...years of the UUA have seen great changes in what we believe and how we perceive ourselves—not a total transformation, of course, but an evolution that could not have been anticipated by either the supporters or opponents of consolidation.

Some feared, with the 1961 merger with the then larger Unitarians, that Universalism would die.... But Universalism did not die. Its teachings of love leavened the loaf of American Protestantism. Its institutions of education and service enlightened many persons and communities. Its churches and denominational agencies strengthened the new Unitarian Universalist Association.... Universalism lives in the hearts and minds not only of old-time members but also of Unitarians who with merger adopted its traditions, and of thousands who have joined since 1961. 'Unitarian Universalist' is too long a label and thus is often abbreviated 'UU' or simply 'Unitarian,' but its contemporary religious expressions are warmer, more inclusive, more hopeful....more Universalist than is readily recognized.

Christopher Gist Raible in *The Larger Hope, The First Century of the Universalist Church in America, 1770-1870* by Russell E. Miller, p.xv

At simultaneous meetings in Boston on May 23, 1960, the proposal was ratified by delegates to the A.U.A. by a vote of 725 to 143; and by delegates to a special General Assembly of the Universalist Church of America, the vote being 365 to 65. The legal steps to consolidate were completed in May, 1961, when the Unitarian Universalist Association was constituted.

The keynote for a new beginning was sounded by the Reverend Donald S. Harrington, at a service of worship in Symphony Hall, Boston, on May 23, 1960, after the final vote had been taken:

In the milestone moment [he declared], we are led by the significance of the event to take more than customary thought, to reach more urgently for perspective . . .

We stand tonight at such a milestone, one which is partly a birth, partly a commencement, partly a kind of marriage, and which involves also a degree of death, an end of things which have been precious to us and of institutions with which we have been lovingly familiar.

We have achieved a union which is the result of more than a hundred years of striving, and which now, at last, when the time is fully ripe, has come to completion. It is our tremendous potential, born of the world's response to our new relevance, caused by this new world's need for a religion which is dynamic instead of static, unitive instead of divisive, universalistic instead of particularistic, history-making rather than history-bound, that has made this Unitarian-Universalist merger necessary and inevitable.

Then, speaking of the tasks required of religion in the modern world, and the vision of a day yet to be, he concluded:

May we, Unitarians and Universalists and men and women of good will everywhere, strive with all our might to make our lives, our churches and fellowships, and our new Unitarian Universalist Association be the vehicle of this vision!

Conrad Wright, *A Stream of Light*, pp. 154-155.

Whether we shall match with accomplishment the greatness of our opportunity, whether we shall have the response adequate to the need, is largely up to us, not only as individuals, but as a *religious community*. If we fail, it will not be for lack of challenge but because we who were content to call ourselves religious liberals were not worthy to reap the harvest sowed by our religious forebears. We reaped and consumed, but did not sow; our iconoclasm was our gluttony. We were neither open to the call of our time nor the greatness of the faith we had been given.

Paul N. Carnes in *The Free Church in a Changing World*, UUA, 1963

I confess that I have conflicting thoughts about Unitarian Universalism. Sometimes I go to church feeling lonely and doubtful, but I dutifully take my place in the pew, maintain an outward decorum, sit and listen quietly. I participate in chitchat during the coffee hour. I am polite. But I am not genuine. I come away more troubled than when I arrived.

Writers more insightful than I have taken liberal religion to task for standing in the wings while others claim center stage – faiths that preach intolerance, strident voices in the media that foster rage and resentment, the incessant drumbeat of advertising that advocates mindless consumerism, television and movies that are disturbingly violent. Biblical scholar Walter Bruggeman says that liberal churches do not possess the potent language required to thwart the destructive effects of contemporary society. It makes me wish we had a heavy-duty, industrial strength God.

Michael Durall, *The Almost Church Revitalized*

I have met UUs who adopted minority children, served as foster parents, and founded orphanages. I've met UUs who have given extraordinary amounts of money to worthy causes, money they sometimes didn't have. I've met and worked with dedicated church members who devoted thousands of hours year after year in community gardens that grow vegetables for local food banks.

I've also known church people who have encountered debilitating illness and tragedy, and have endured it with a gracefulness beyond my own comprehension. I've known UUs who took financial risks by leading capital campaigns for their congregations for renovations and new construction because they foresaw a brighter future. I have met UUs who made sacrifices in their personal lives for the greater good.

This is what spiritual maturity looks like – the courage to act on our principles. This courage crosses all theological lines. I believe such courage is more likely to occur in a faith community than individuals acting on their own.

Michael Durall, *The Almost Church Revitalized*

A. Powell Davies was the senior minister of All Souls Church in Washington, D. C., after World War II. Davies, a powerful orator, was the founder of thirteen churches in the area. In a sermon he once preached:

Do you belong to a religion that says humankind is not divided— except by ignorance and prejudice and hate; the religion that sees humankind as naturally one and waiting to be spiritually united; the religion that proclaims an end to all exclusions—and declares a brotherhood and sisterhood unbounded! The religion that knows we shall never find the fullness of the wonder and the glory of life until we are ready to share it, that we shall never have hearts big enough for the love of God until we have made them big enough for the worldwide love of one another.

As you have listened to me, have you thought perchance that this is your religion? If so, do not congratulate yourself. Stop long enough to recollect the miseries of the world in which you live; the fearful cruelties, the enmities, the hate, the bitter prejudices, the need of such a world for such a faith. And if you can still say that this of which I have spoken is your faith, then ask yourself this question: What are you doing with it? ¹⁰

Davies raised this question in the 1950s and it is even more urgent today. What are we doing with our faith? Not nearly enough, lost UU churches serve educated, middle class, relatively affluent white people. Is this our only calling? I yearn for the day that our churches will boldly reclaim a heritage of faithfulness and service. We must do this to survive as a religious movement.

Michael Durall, *The Almost Church: Redefining Unitarian Universalism for a New Era*, p. 15

Over and over, we hear each other and officials of the Association proclaim the conviction that we have a moral obligation to grow, to spread our word because we possess a vital message, one that is of central importance to the world and to the crises in which the world is entangled. When, however, we are challenged to say what that message is, what our faith consists of, what defines us as a religious people, often we are driven to an embarrassed silence, or we smile smugly and confess that no one can speak for all Unitarian Universalists, or we stutter and stammer and mutter some half-digested truisms about the worth of every person or the importance of embracing each person's freedom to follow his or her own spiritual path. Those are not wrong affirmations but they provide an incredibly weak foundation for a religious movement and a wholly inadequate program for saving the world. They offer an unexamined piety rather than a solid faith. The unfinished task Universalists brought to consolidation--the effort to redefine the faith tradition in response to contemporary challenges--has been swept away by the fear that if we define ourselves too clearly, someone may be offended.

In his book *American Religious Traditions*, Richard Wentz suggests that religion "is the dialectic of the sacred and profane," the way in which the sacred and the mundane are held in "dynamic tension." He claims that religion "provides the ideas and actions that enable us to maintain the significance of the sacred in circumstances that deny it." This suggests that a movement that is unwilling or unable to define what it holds sacred has

surrendered both its claim to religious significance and its ability to respond to the larger world with a meaningful dialectic.

If we are to respond to the needs of the world from a liberal religious basis, it is critical that we be able to address and answer three central questions:

- What do we believe?
- Whom do we serve?
- To whom or what are we responsible?

If we are to serve our people, and the world in which we find ourselves, it is critical that we now take up the unfinished project that Universalism brought to the consolidation in 1961, that we have the courage to define ourselves in ways that offer a clear alternative both to the dangerous and divisive orthodoxies that seem to have captured so much of the religious venture, and to the refusal to embrace a clear identity, that threatens to sweep Liberal Religion into commodified, thumb-sucking irrelevance. It is time for Liberal Religion to declare clearly the faith we hold.

David Bumbaugh, **The Marketing of Liberal Religion** full article at http://meadville.edu/LL_JLR_v9n1_Bumbaugh_MarketingLiberalReligion.htm

The heart of a faith for the twenty-first century, I am convinced, is suggested by the seventh Principle.... Hidden in this apparently uncomplicated, uncontroversial, innocuous statement is a radical theological position. The seventh Principle calls us to reverence before the world, not some future world, but his miraculous world of our everyday experience. It challenges us to understand the world as reflexive and relational rather than hierarchical. It bespeaks a world in which neither god nor humanity is at the center; it which the center is the void, the ever fecund matrix out of which being emerges... It calls us to trust the process, the creative, evolving, renewing, redeeming process which brings us into being, which sustains us in being, and which transforms our being. It offers a vision of a world in which the holy, the sacred is incarnated in every moment, in every aspect of being, a world in which God is always fully present, and in which God is always fully at risk.

David Bumbaugh, "The Heart of a Faith for the Twenty-First Century," in *Unitarian Universalism: Selected Essays*, UUMA, 1994, pp.36-38.

Diversity, both cultural and religious, has been the watchword of the movement's recent past, and insofar as that indicates UUs' sincere desire to be truly open and welcoming of people of all sorts into the UU Fellowship, that emphasis is all to the good. And certainly the world today sorely needs communities of faith, indeed communities of all kinds, that are models of inclusion and pluralism where human differences do not divide. But diversity by itself, important as it is, is an insufficient institutional goal. More pressing is the question of what we are calling people into community for. If we are a community, what is the common unity that binds us together? And if we are a religious community, shouldn't we be able to articulate theologically and religiously what it is that unites us?

The Commission would agree with Ken Oliff that “the strength of the contemporary liberal church lies in its openness, its respect for difference, and in the value that the church places on the sanctity of individual conscience.” But we also agree with his observation that “where the church falls short is in its lack of clarity regarding an explicit theological vision, and an ensuing ambiguity regarding mission, purpose and commitment. “

Such ambiguity and a concomitant tentativeness in articulating what UUs are about religiously may be our greatest liability and the greatest obstacle to achieving our potential as an empowering and liberating faith for the twenty-first century.

Engaging Our Theological Diversity, The Commission on Appraisal, 2005, pp. 137-138

What would our UU faith be like if our congregations truly became the safe and welcoming place we aspire to create? If we truly did honor and celebrate both our theological diversity and our sources of unity? If we were willing to commit to spiritual discipline as deeply as to spiritual freedom? “Whether we now have the seeds of a liberating faith is not really a question. Deluding ourselves into thinking that admiring the seeds will make them grow is the issue at hand, “ writes a contemporary UU prophet. What marvels might be possible if we took these seeds and planted and tended them? What wondrous blossoms might arise?

Engaging Our Theological Diversity, The Commission on Appraisal, 2005, p. 152

It took forty years for the children of Israel to make the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. I’m not sure that the Unitarian Universalist Association is anywhere near the Promised Land yet. We do, however, now talk about the premise upon which the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America consolidated forces in 1961 and are working hard on ‘fulfilling the promise’ of our liberal religious institutions....

We...know that it is important that we tell the story of our journey together---wanderings, murmurings, miracles, and all. After all, it is through mapping how far we have come and what mistakes we have made along the way that future leaders---and the people as a whole---can find direction.

...Unitarian Universalism is only now coming of age as a religious movement that is something new—more than the sum of the two faith traditions that joined forces to form it...

...many of our original founders are gone...the vision, the promise, has to be taken up by a new generation.

John Buehrens in *The Premise and the Promise* by Warren R. Ross, Skinner House, 2001, pp. ix-x

The single greatest issue that will determine our future as a religious movement is how visitors feel in our church. The single most important thing we can do for our movement, and the single most important gift we can give to those coming to us, is to make visitors feel like our congregation is their spiritual home.

The issue is not really one of outreach. It is not really a matter of institutional health. It is not a question of making a few cosmetic changes on Sunday morning. It is most certainly is not a question of growing for the sake of growing, because it is not about numbers. It's about people. When we focus on people and their real needs, the numbers will take care of themselves. The issue of religious hospitality is ultimately a moral and spiritual issue—and how we respond to this spiritual challenge will determine the future of each one of our congregations and the future of the Unitarian Universalist movement.

Peter Morales in *The Growing Church*, Thom Belote, editor, Skinner House, 2010, p. 54.

I believe that our faith, if brought into fuller being through the inclusion of spiritual practices, might offer the world a saving grace the like of which has never been offered....

Whatever the methods we apply [prayer, meditation etc.], a next step for Unitarian Universalism is to include in our Sunday gatherings an emphasis on practice. Just as a reasoned faith liberates minds, an embodied faith will liberate the souls entering our doors, souls hungry for what we have to offer.

...No one spiritual practice is ever going to work for all of us. But a shift in emphasis, a focus on spiritual practice, can enlarge the potential of our churches and transform individual lives. Unitarian Universalists and Unitarian Universalist institutions everywhere should be looking into their lives for those threads that pull them into deeper meaning with existence—with others and with the spirit that grounds our being.

...[We have to be] about two things: saving Unitarian Universalism and sharing its redemptive message with every spiritually hungry person who is in need of what we offer. When our religion finds its voice and people come flocking to our doors, what do we offer them?

We welcome the kinds of questions that hold a seeker's attention for a time, and spiritual practice is a way to offer people practical tools to find answers that work in their lives, answers that lead to healing, redemption, and liberation. We offer action and reflection, and spiritual practice adds to that engagement a richer path toward transformation for those who seek to live better lives, lives that matter, lives that are more clearly aimed toward healing and gratitude. This is a world of crushing speed and dehumanizing forces. I believe in the power of spiritual practice to be salve and antidote to those forces. I have come to rest my faith in practice. As a church, as a denomination, as individuals, I pray we will cultivate a similar commitment to practice, which we can then share with all who need it.

Bret Lortie in *Reverend X, How Generation X Ministers Are Shaping Unitarian Universalism*, Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press at All Souls, Tulsa, pp. 103, 104, 106-107.

We have survived our merger and continue to get our feet underneath us organizationally. It is time now to deepen our understandings and our commitments. It is time to move beyond the question mark as our guiding theological symbol. As we grow in our ability to speak openly and honestly about our experiences and our beliefs, we will grow in strength as individuals and as a movement. We will move beyond the embarrassment and discomfort that so many of us experience when we are called to speak about our faith to others. We will move beyond an apologetic description of our faith that tells people what we don't believe to a faith of strength and clarity that tells people what we do believe...

...It is time... [for] inviting members new and old to wrestle actively with questions of theology and spiritual practice as an expectation of their membership in our churches.

Jennifer Crow in *Reverend X, How Generation X Ministers Are Shaping Unitarian Universalism*, Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press at All Souls, Tulsa, pp. 68-69.

The Unitarian Universalist Association's Principles and Purposes Statement does not contain what is necessary to fashion a people with deep religious sensibilities or informed theological comprehension. Therefore, UUs need to develop ways to create a sense of unified identity in this pluralistic movement that binds UUs together while offering the building blocks for strong, sustaining, theologically and historically rooted congregations and individuals. In an effort to advance this important work...[here are] five steps.

First, Unitarian Universalist leaders need to do a much better job of clarifying for the movement and their congregations what the Principles Statement is and is not and how the statement can be used and misused.

Second, much greater clarity and discernment are needed about the Unitarian Universalist tradition's relationship to its many sources, along with a fundamental reclamation of the biblical and scriptural roots of UUism.

Third, UUs need to develop guidelines and a methodology for reading and understanding scripture(s) so that "picking and choosing" involves interpretation and exegesis that have integrity, consistency, coherence, historical accuracy, and moral profitability....

Fourth...UUs need to articulate clearer spiritual road maps for their congregations for the fashioning of religiously whole people and communities... a consistent and structured set of offerings through worship, ritual, education, and spiritual practices week after week...something analogous to a liturgical year or lectionary system...by whatever name, the system and process need to offer members an annual cycle of worship and programming that involves essential religious issues such as creation, brokenness, forgiveness, redemption, evil, faith, death, renewal, grace, and more.

Finally, UUs need a clear and binding covenant as a movement, and especially within individual congregations, that inspires true sacrifice and surrender and that includes powerful ways for people to enter the covenant.

A Unitarian Universalist movement with these principal qualities and a strong sense of purpose and identity can be a powerful and transforming force for love and justice in the 21st century.

Marlin Lavanhar in *Reverend X, How Generation X Ministers Are Shaping Unitarian Universalism*, Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press at All Souls, Tulsa, pp. 96-97.

...Young people who have spent all their growing-up years among us feel disconnected from our faith movement once they become adults. We can reach all of our members through an institutional commitment to multigenerational *ministry*: a ministry that lets people of all ages know that they matter. We must make Unitarian Universalist practices—worship, education, justice-making—available to Unitarian Universalists of all ages. Then our congregations will be places in which to spend a lifetime.

Michael James Tino in *Reverend X, How Generation X Ministers Are Shaping Unitarian Universalism*, Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press at All Souls, Tulsa, pp. 156-157.

Too often we gather simply to be a place where liberal folks can get together, an intentionally separate intellectual and political elite, united so as to set ourselves apart from the surrounding community rather than to be of service to it. Too often, we gather to be around people and ideas that we perceive to be “like us” rather than around people and ideas that challenge us to grow and change. Too often, we gather just for the sake of our own limited sense of community, and from my perspective, this just isn’t enough.

If we gather with the intention simply of creating community in the midst of isolation, community is likely all that we will find. If we gather to profess an intentionally exclusive partisan or liberal worldview, that worldview will be the end result of our efforts. But if we gather to worship and ask the humble question of how we might serve, we may find the depth that really transforms.

Nancy McDonald Ladd in *Reverend X, How Generation X Ministers Are Shaping Unitarian Universalism*, Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press at All Souls, Tulsa, pp. 16-17.

...post-merger Unitarian Universalism... [needs to] live into the challenge of our heretical forebears.

...it’s our turn to rebel. How does a new generation of Unitarian Universalist religious leaders rebel against the generations of iconoclasts who preceded them? I find that some of us are rebelling by reaching back into our ecclesiastical history to find traces of what it must have been like to be an overtly religious community of liberal faith.

...We respond to the skepticism about religion present in the previous decades by seeking out ways to be lovingly, proudly, and actively religious now.

...We are not alone in our search for a distinct and theologically grounded religious identity for our faith.

We are engaged in the work of *retraditioning*. To retradition a movement whose very rebellion has given it a voice is not a process that I or anyone else should take lightly, nor is it a replacement for the *detraditioning* that has become a substantial part of our identity. Rather, it is a part of the spiritual landscape of today's Unitarian Universalism, a landscape in which people of every generation find themselves surrounded on all sides by a fragmented society and come to church to have one single place in their lives where they know they're part of a story that is inclusive of and greater than themselves.

...They come...to be called out to a particular form of renewed discipleship.

Nancy McDonald Ladd in *Reverend X, How Generation X Ministers Are Shaping Unitarian Universalism*, Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press at All Souls, Tulsa, pp. 17, 18, 22-23.

We need to rely more heavily on the wisdom and inspired vision of our Unitarian and Universalist forebears who took to heart the love of God and the equality and lovable state of each person---that theology is the mission for our faith. What they so eloquently articulated is exceedingly relevant and sorely lacking in contemporary American life. We have the message and mandate we need to become what we ought to be: one of the great religious traditions of our nation...a movement that beckons to the best in all of us to work to better our world through acts of compassion and justice because we are clear that our faith calls for nothing less.

We need to stop demeaning and belittling our faith. What we need is not some new structure or concept—we need to invest ourselves fully in the tradition we have been bequeathed. We need to live our faith and share it in a way that conveys our belief that it uniquely has much to give. In the midst of a religious landscape full of traditions that lift up the value of some over others, our tradition stands for the equality of all. In a time when religion and belief are seen as synonymous with anti-intellectualism and dislike of differences, ours is a faith that believes ardently that differences in the human family are a gift and that thoughtfulness is a virtue. If we can't believe strongly and seriously enough in what we have offer to invite others in, then why would anyone else think our ranks are worth joining?

I am hopeful....[we are heeding] the call to have church be church again. No longer content to have congregations that are social clubs or that serve in the capacity of other nonprofit justice agencies...[the X] generation of clergy is always holding as central these questions: What makes us a church? And what difference does what we do make?

...Our congregations must once again hold as central to their identity the fact that they are a spiritual community first and foremost.

Spiritual substance comes first. What we believe and the implications of who that calls us to be in the world are integral and critical to our survival as a movement. We are a faith tradition that knocks on your door and knows precisely why. We are knocking because the world is in urgent need of our message, which says that all people matter.... That the well-being of our earth is intrinsically linked with our own future; that peoples in other parts of the globe cry out for peace and we must hear and heed their cry; that people in our towns and cities cry out for food and shelter and a way of life that values being over doing—a way that knows all souls are worthy of love... We stand in a long line of visionary thinkers and believers who call to us. What they dreamed be ours to do, indeed!

Shana Lynngood in *Reverend X, How Generation X Ministers Are Shaping Unitarian Universalism*, Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press at All Souls, Tulsa, pp. 56-57, 58, 59-60.

SERMONS

An Association Sunday Sermon Template

by Rev. Erik Walker Wikstrom

Worship and Music Resources Director *for the*

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

There's an irony here, perhaps. Does anyone else see it?

For some time now our Association has been engaged in an effort to overcome the assumption by many, when they first discover us, that we're some sort of new phenomena. "No way," we say. "We've been around for a long time." We point to our storied "heretical history" (as one video puts it), noting our Transcendentalist ancestors in the 19th century, and our presence in colonial America. We point even further back to our heritage in Europe – to David Ferenc and King John Sigismund and the Act of Religious Tolerance and Freedom of Conscience of 1563 in Transylvania, for instance. Some even go so far as to bring up Arius in the second century as the first Unitarian Christian (after, perhaps, Jesus himself, of course).

And, of course, Universalism also has a deep and rich history – many scholars believing it to be the most common interpretation of Christianity prior to the 6th century and pointing to, for instance, the Alexandrian school of the first century as a prime example. So we have spent considerable time and effort attempting to solidify our *bona fides* as a religious movement. We've been in the game for a while.

Yet here we are today, excitedly celebrating our 50th anniversary. Fiftieth. Five zero. In doing so we're saying that our Association is a mere five decades old which, in terms of the religions of the world, is less than the blink of an eye.

So which is it – ancient and venerable tradition, or adolescent newcomer?

Let's hold that question for a moment and look at this 50th anniversary. What we're celebrating is the merger in 1961 of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America into what we now call the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. Fifty-one years ago this association did not exist; there were two separate and distinct religious traditions. Fifty years ago the two became one.

It wasn't easy. Unitarians and Universalists of that era were not entirely simpatico with one another. It was said at the time that there were Universalists who were afraid that the Unitarians were going to swallow them up . . . and Unitarians who were afraid that they were going to get heartburn.

It had been a process. In fact, the first discussion of merger between the Unitarians and the Universalists had occurred in a Unitarian convention back in 1865, ninety-six years earlier. No one can accuse us of rushing into things.

[This would be a good place to put other historical notes about the time of the merger – you might use material found elsewhere in this packet or your own favorite story(ies) about what it took to bring us together and what that process was like.]

Yet here we were, come together as one Association of Congregations, the result of a merger of two denominations – each with a long, deep, and rich history; with stories of women and men whose courage and commitment and conviction helped give shape to who they were; with prophetic visions of a future that was yet to be. And in this coming together, something new was born, related to yet distinct from the traditions that gave it birth.

Modern Unitarian Universalism is not simply the continuation of its two predecessor movements pureed together – it is like red and blue coming together to create purple. What it was is still in there, but what it is is different.

In this it is not unlike other religious traditions that have developed over time. Christianity itself, for instance, developed from its roots as a sect of Judaism. Note that I did not say it “evolved,” because that would imply that it was an improvement in some way. Rather, the two traditions coexisted for some time, each tradition developing along its own path, until eventually they separated when their differences became greater than their similarities.

It might be interesting to look at Christianity around C.E. 50. Paul left Antioch and begins his Aegean Mission. His letters to these congregations are the earliest documents now contained in the New Testament. This was the time of his first visit to Corinth and he wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians. Two years later, in 52, Paul arrived in Ephesus and wrote a letter to the Galatians and his letter to the Corinthians.

Two years earlier, in the year 48 C.E., leaders of the Jesus movement gathered in Jerusalem for the so-called Council of Jerusalem to discuss the recent mission to the Gentiles. (This is described in chapter 15 of the Christian scripture called *The Book of Acts*.) This was a crucial time for this fledgling movement.

Until now their message had been shared most often with people more or less like each other – Jews who shared a religious and cultural context. Now it was attracting non-Jews and a crucial question was being raised – should these new converts have to first fulfill Jewish law (males be circumcised, for instance, and everyone follow dietary laws) before they could join the movement or should they be allowed to join just as they were? In essence, the question came down to this: as the movement grew, should the newcomers have to change to fit into the movement or should the movement have to change to welcome the newcomers?

Here we are at our 50th anniversary as an Association. We’ve come a long way. Women now make up over half of our ordained ministry, and we not only can say that we have

numerous “Welcoming Congregations” but that we’re largely a “Welcoming Movement.”
[If your congregation has gone through major changes in the time since merger, this would be a great place to highlight some.]

Yet we find ourselves at a crossroads not all that dissimilar to the early Christians at the Council of Jerusalem. Looking ahead we see a world that looks quite different than the one in which our Association has grown; quite different than the one in which most of us were born into. By 2050 European Americans will no longer be the majority of the U.S. population – we will be a multicultural nation in a way our rhetoric has only hinted at before.

How will we respond? Will we require all newcomers to our faith to adopt the “UU lifestyle” and mold themselves to fit into the “UU culture”? (And we might argue about some of the specifics but we all probably have a pretty good idea of what that means.) Or will we allow our movement to change, to grow, to morph as it adapts itself to these newcomers – holding on to the heart of what makes us who we are as a religious people yet allowing it to find ever new expressions in ever changing environments? This later approach worked out pretty well for Christianity.

And how about here, right here in *[This would be a good place to take a look at your own congregation – what challenges do you face in relation to growing into a multicultural future? What might be some of your “sacred cows” that might have to be let go of? What might be some of the things you’d need to open yourselves to if you were truly going to invite the newcomer into your midst?]*

Today is Association Sunday. Not only here, but across the country congregations are thinking about these things – remembering our past, considering our present, imagining our future. Our Universalist ancestor L. B. Fisher was once asked where the Universalists stood on some contentious point of theology. He famously replied, “We do not stand. We move!” We have the opportunity – as individuals, as a congregation, as an Association of congregations – to continue that movement.

What we do here, what they do in *[name a nearby congregation]*, what they do in *[name another congregation within the district but at some distance]*, what they do in *[name another congregation some distance away]*, what they do in *[name a congregation as far away as you can think of]* matters. It really does. Each of us, doing the work we do day in and day out, individually and collectively, creates the future of our movement. We decide.

May we do so with the wisdom of the ancient tradition that we are, and the spontaneous creativity of the adolescent that we also are.

[End as appropriate for your setting.]

“Celebrating 50 Years and the Future of Our Faith”

A sermon for Association Sunday 2010

by Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa

Special Assistant to the President for Growth Funding

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

As we gather to “Celebrate 50 Years and the Future of Our Faith,” we may wonder: Was it “a marriage made in Heaven?” The Unitarians and the Universalists met separately in Boston on May 23, 1960 to vote on joining their faiths and their futures. After the more than 90% affirmative vote they came together for worship. Also meeting that day for the first time were George and Priscilla Brooks; she came from a Universalist family; he came from a mixed one with his father having been Unitarian and his mother Universalist. His parents made their mixed marriage work. So, with talk of merger in the air and the positive vibrations Priscilla and George felt that day, they were soon engaged and were married in April of 1961. George became a Unitarian Universalist minister, and, Priscilla, with a career of her own, was a more than able partner. Like our Association, they met for the first time that day and they are about to celebrate 50 years together! Keeping a relationship going for so long in these modern times is quite an accomplishment. They did it and so did we!

We have much to celebrate in this 50th Anniversary. At that worship service following the vote to create the Association the Rev. Donald Harrington described the consolidation of the two faiths, as “partly a new birth, partly a commencement, partly a kind of marriage.”

Alison Cornish and Jackie Clement looking back on the merger write [in their curriculum *Living in the Stream: Stories from Unitarian Universalist History*], “A marriage? Perhaps, but one that has had much in the way of differences to negotiate. A birth? Yes, but with plenty of pre-history brought along into the newness of the moment. A graduation? Maybe, but aren’t graduations always at least as much a beginning as an ending?”

That vote 50 years ago was a beginning and an ending. After more than one hundred years of talking about getting together these two liberal religions finally did it! There were differences to negotiate in terms of style and class, practices and procedures, liturgies, as well as theologies and philosophies. This takes time, commitment to a vision, and love. In these fifty years, there have been changes in society that have challenged us, and changes in who we are. Like George and Priscilla Brooks we have made a successful marriage of it; we stayed together, and more importantly, we transformed our individual differences into strengths. As Warren Ross writes in the reading, we changed, we evolved. Let’s consider some of these changes.

The most obvious and significant one is the increase in the number of women in our professional ministry and in lay leadership. Here is a picture of the first UUA board of trustees meeting in the Rose Garden at the White House with President John F Kennedy. The UUA President and Moderator, everyone in the picture is male—and a European-

American. Here is a picture of our current board, which shows that some changes have occurred.

As a student at Meadville Theological in Chicago in the early 1970's, I remember Paul Vogel, who used to visit UU ministers all across the country raising funds for the school, scared us students saying, "Boys, it's lonely out there in the field." He meant the ministry was a lonely profession. He was speaking the truth, and he could get away with saying "Boys" then because there were hardly any women in the school at that time. Today, 72% of the people preparing for our ministry are female. It's a change and a good one. The UU women's movement provided the inception for developing our principles and purposes statement. Having more women in the ministry has led us to a less competitive (less one-up-man-ship) more collaborative ministry. They have been instrumental in the development the shared ministry. So it is not so lonely out there in the field any more; we have learned to share the ministry; the ministry is a responsibility and a privilege shared by all of us. That's a change!

Thanks to women ministers such as Shirley Rank and the "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" curriculum we affirm spirituality now more than we did at the time of merger. This return to religiosity is another big change in our movement. Serving the Unitarian Church in Fort Lauderdale in the late 70's, I remember a man signing the membership book saying happily, "I am so glad I found this place; it is exactly what I was looking for; there is nothing religious here at all!" I was thinking about disabusing him of that notion, telling him that I was "religious" and that we were in the "religion business," but I decided to educate him slowly. Who knows maybe I did or maybe his negativity and narrow understanding lead him to leave: anyway he did not stay around long. Because now it is clear, you can find religion in our congregations once again; we are in the "religion business."

You can be a theist, Buddhist, feminist, pagan, mystic, a Jew, a Christian, a social activist, as well as a rationalist, atheist, or agnostic, and a Unitarian Universalist. We have more theological diversity; we are more inclusive; but we still share the same values, principles, and purposes. The sources acknowledge our diversity and the principles give a unity to it as does our philosophy of religion. Many of our congregations that had crosses in their sanctuaries added symbols from other world religions; we became Universalists as we carried forward that tradition while we maintained the unity affirmed in the Unitarian side of our merged faith.

Another outward sign of this change to being religious, spiritual, once again is our flaming chalice symbol and ritual. For many at the time of merger, Christian liturgy was experienced as being sectarian, not inclusive; we needed to develop new liturgy and ritual of our own, and we did. No UUA hierarchy demanded we start services lighting a chalice but slowly and surely the practice has spread throughout the Association of Congregations.

Yes, we are once again clear that we are in the religion business. Another example is that we now have religious education curriculum that seek to instill a UU identity. In the 70s and 80s there was no curriculum to teach our children about UUism. Charles Lamb, an English Unitarian writer, said, "I am determined that my children shall grow up in their

father's religion, if they can discover what it is." Well, now they can discover what it is through the new "Tapestry of Faith" curriculum, which includes developing a UU identity as one of its learning objectives.

We have become more inclusive and integrated in other ways as well. Children have become more integrated into our churches including our services, social gatherings, and service projects. Affirming "the inherent worth and dignity of every person," the goodness of life, and the unity of the spiritual and the material, we developed the "About Your Sexuality" curriculum, which revised is now called "Our Whole Lives." Another positive change that has made us more inclusive came about through the Welcoming Congregation program. We include and empower more people; we encourage people to be honest as to what they believe and who they really are more than we did in 1961.

Some have suggested that our commitment to social justice has increased as we work to "Stand on the Side of Love" in our efforts for marriage equality, immigration reform, anti-racism, the environment, as well as women's rights, peace, developmental aid and service for those in need. We have included more people and integrated more parts of our faith. Spirituality and social action seemed to be separate and even opposed at times. Now, we once again are clear of their connection.

We have changed in these fifty years; we have become more inclusive, integrated, and more whole. I am a child of the merger like most of you here; I found the Unitarian Universalist church in Wausau, Wisconsin in 1967. The joining of these two ways in religion brought my life together for I had struggled, split between my head and my heart. American Unitarianism emphasized the head and Universalism the heart. Their coming together enabled me to find a religious home that honored both. I left the religion of my birth because I did not believe what they said I should. Unitarian Universalism helps me be whole. We have blended head and heart, spirituality and social action, worship and education. You can be both spiritual and rational in our congregations; you can be whole.

Yes, some things have changed but there are many things about us that are the same. A woman visiting a church I served shared with me the manuscript of a book she had written with the title "Church Shopping for Dummies." She visited 20 different religious communities several times and assessed each awarding points in 16 different categories including parking facilities, signage, greeting, the service music and sermon, spirit, and coffee hour. She shared her results with me because our Unitarian Universalist Church got the most points. She said, "It wasn't the most friendly. I would stand alone awkwardly at coffee hour, but just when I was about to give up and go, someone would come up and talk to me. And it quickly became the most interesting conversation I had all week!"

We are still interesting, caring, honest; we just need to be a little more outward focused, welcoming, offer religious hospitality, and we will grow into the multicultural future as President Morales has challenged us to do. It is true we have not grown in numbers, but we have grown in strength. They were worried that separately the Universalists and the Unitarians would go out of business. We have done more than hold our own in the face of declining numbers for other main line religious organizations.

We have not only kept the marriage together; we have as Warren Ross put it: we have evolved; we have grown more inclusive, integrated, whole; we have matured; our churches are coming together for greater strength. Now we are ready to take our faith into the future. We do not know exactly what it will be like but I trust we will be a productive part of it because I believe in Unitarian Universalism; it has made me a better and happier person. I think the merger of the Universalist Church of America and the American Unitarian Church was “a marriage made in heaven.” And heaven is calling us all the more urgently!

In that first joint worship service on May 23, 1960, Don Harrington said, “It is our tremendous potential, born of the world’s response to our new relevance, caused by this new world’s need for a religion which is dynamic instead of static, history-making rather than history-bound, that has made this Unitarian-Universalist merger necessary and inevitable.”

The world is still calling us. To be “history-making” we have to grow our faith in one another and the good we can do together for others. Please give generously to the special Association Sunday collection which will be used to fund the “Leap of Faith” church mentoring growth project.

As Dana McLean Greeley, the first president of the UUA, wrote: “Liberal religion is....a movement in history, a set of values, and a way of life. More important than the merger of two denominations is the quickening of the principles for which they exist.We believe in change and growth. We must be honest enough to detect our weaknesses, and brave enough to assert and develop our strengths. If we have faith in the future, we must be convinced that our great heritage is insignificant in comparison with the role of liberal religion for tomorrow. Without vision we would perish, and that role would be realized by others in our stead. But with vision, and a commensurate commitment, our own efforts may prove worthy of the promise of yesterday.”

We have the vision. President Morales has challenged us to grow our movement, create a new ministry for a new America, and raise our voices through public witness. Religion calls us to do more than survive; it calls us to serve. Unitarian Universalism is worthy to serve. May we serve its purpose: to create a more equitable, peaceful, spiritual, and reasonable world. Whether there will be 50 more years of Unitarian Universalism depends upon how much we love it. May we grow our faith in one another and the good we can do for others. Amen.

WORDS FOR THE OFFERING

If you are proud of this church

If you are proud of this church, become its advocate.

If you are concerned for its future, share its message.

If its values resonate deep within you, give it a measure of your devotion.

This church cannot survive without your faith, your confidence, your enthusiasm.

Its destiny, the larger hope, rests in your hands.

Michael A. Schuler (www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/authors/5102.shtml)
(www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/readings/categories/5941.shtml)

Source: 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection

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“Let religion be to us ideals that are true and right, yet ever beyond our finest achievement.

Let religion be to us security and serenity because of its truth and beauty, and because of the enduring worth and power of the loyalties which it develops in us.

Let religion be to us hope and purpose, discovering for us opportunities to express our best through daily tasks and associations, uniting us in fellowship with all that is admirable in human beings everywhere, and holding before our eyes the prospect of a nobler life for all [humankind], which each may in some measure help to realize.”

Let us now support our religion with our gifts and offerings.

Vincent B. Silliman (adapted), *Unitarian Fellowship Hymn and Service Book* © 1949 Beacon Press.

This morning, as we take our offering, please think not just about this congregation. Actually, that might be the first step – please think. Don’t just let your offering be given out of habit or on autopilot. Let it be a considered response. And then, don’t let it just be a response to this service this morning, or to the needs (both real and perceived) of this congregation. Think about the Association of which we are a part. After all, it is The Unitarian Universalist Association *of Congregations*, and ours is just one of them. Together we create this unique religious movement we so love.

Today is a birthday of sorts, or a wedding anniversary – the 50th anniversary of the merger that produced the UUA. And today we're thinking about our Association's past, and it's possible future. Your offering this morning will help our Association expand the possibilities of that future, so I ask you to be as generous as you can. Let us ensure that these past 50 years were just the beginning.

Erik Walker Wikstrom
Worship and Music Resources Director for the
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

In publishing the history of her congregation, Edith Towne wrote:

“This has been a history of [our congregation]. But it is incomplete for two reasons. First because our future is still before us and each day we write new history, pass new milestones, and add to the richness and distinctiveness of this Church. And second, because the real history is the history of the individual men and women and children who have found here their true religious home. Countless people have passed through our doors and discovered the beauty and pleasure of Unitarian Universalism. They have made the Church; they have given it life; they are the reason we are here today.”

With this awareness, and for this same reason, we take our morning's offering.

Edith Towne, *Universalism in Yarmouth, Maine 1834-1984*, (adapted)

CLOSING WORDS / BENEDECTIONS

At the service following the vote to consolidate in 1960, the delegates recited in unison these words:

“Let us together build the free and universal church of tomorrow.... We declare our allegiance to the new Unitarian Universalist Association, and pledge our lives, our fortunes and our faith to its high purposes and sure upbuilding.”

Warren Ross, *The Premise and the Promise* Skinner House, p. 24

Leave your journeying to build temples,
and adorn them with intimations of longer
journeys you cannot take, and images of
countries you may never enter.

In far-off times others will put their
carvings beside yours, and light candles
where long ago yours burned away.

In their celebrations there will be a
lingering of your questions and your
solicitations.

The rafters and the pillars will remember
your dreams, and your children will
discover the beauty of your ancient hands.

Kenneth L. Patton, *Ground of Being*

Stand by this faith. Work for it and sacrifice for it. There is nothing in all the world so important as to be loyal to this faith which has placed before us the loftiest ideals, which has comforted us in sorrow, strengthened us for noble duty and made the world beautiful. Do not demand immediate results but rejoice that we are worthy to be entrusted with this great message, that you are strong enough to work for a great true principle without counting the cost. Go on finding ever new applications of these truths and new enjoyments of their contemplation, always trusting in the one God which ever lives and loves.

Olympia Brown

In his book *Many Mansions*, the Protestant theologian Harvey Cox wrote about the conversion, in the late 1700s, of Boston's King's Chapel from Anglicanism to

Unitarianism, saying, “They teach us something important about the future of religion not by what they did but by the courage and initiative they showed in daring to do it. *We now have the chance to do the same thing,*” he wrote, “— not to wait and see what religious forms will emerge in the next century, but to use our imaginations to shape them.” As do we. As do we. Let us go forth and shape our future.

Erik Walker Wikstrom

May the spirit of wonder and adventure live on in us always, seeking in good faith and high courage the green fields beyond the desert, the dawn beyond the sea, the stars beyond the dark.

May we keep our capacity for faith and wonder, but may our judgment watch and question what we believe.

May we keep our love of life, our delight in friendship, our hunger for new knowledge, our hatred of a lie, our intolerance for what our hearts tell us is bad.

Above all, may we keep our wonder at great and noble things, like sunlight and thunder, the rain and the stars, the wind and the sea, the growth of trees and the return of harvests .

..

Jacob Trapp, (adapted), *Unitarian Fellowship Hymn and Service Book* © 1949 Beacon Press.

May light and understanding descend upon us here, that each individual soul may be blessed in its attempts to follow the higher way. May the influences of this hour shed their benediction upon us and give us peace. Amen.

Alfred S. Cole, (adapted), *Unitarian Fellowship Hymn and Service Book* © 1949 Beacon Press.

The blessing of truth be upon us,
The power of love direct and sustain us,
And the peace of this community
 Protect our going out
 And our coming in
From this time forth
 And forever more.
Amen

The Congregation of Abraxas, from the Eucharist service © 1978

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

Theodore Parker

Religion calls us to do more than survive; it calls us to serve.

May we find something worthy to serve.

Unitarian Universalism is worthy to serve.

May we serve its purpose: to create a more equitable, peaceful, and reasonable world.

Whether there will be 50 more years of Unitarian Universalism depends upon how much we love it, its means and its ends.

Have we been, will we be, generous, gracious, welcoming?

Whether there will be 50 more years of Unitarian Universalism is up to us.

May we grow our faith in one another and the good we can do for others.

Stephan Papa

Returning Association Sunday Donations to the UUA

After your service...

1. Collect all checks made out to the UUA.
2. Collect all loose cash donations and any checks made out to your congregation with the intent to support Association Sunday. Write a check to the UUA for that cash amount, with “Association Sunday 2010” in the memo line.
3. Mail the check(s) in one envelope, along with the *Gift Information Sheet* to

**Attn: Gift Processing
Stewardship and Development
Unitarian Universalist Association
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108**

If you have any questions, or any other scenarios arise which these suggestions don't address, feel free to contact us at associationsunday@uua.org or (617) 948-4662 and we'll do our best to offer an answer or solution.

Association Sunday

Gift Information Form

Today's Date: _____

We held our Association Sunday service on: _____

This packet contains _____ checks for a grand total of \$_____.

Congregation Name: _____

City or town: _____

State: _____

Is this the final distribution of donations*? _____

We were unable to either hold a special service or take a special collection for Association Sunday.

If questions arise, the contact person at this congregation is:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Please enclose gifts and this cover memo in an envelope and return to:

**Attn: Gift Processing
Stewardship and Development
Unitarian Universalist Association
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108**

Please renew our Association Sunday registration for future years. *(Please check this box if you prefer to be automatically listed as an Association Sunday participant in the future, without signing up each year.)*

*We will send a report on how much we received from your congregation after the first of the year.