



# Young Adult Service Journal 2011

...SERVE IN SPIRIT...

*"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive." ~ Howard Thurman*



## **Presidential Statement**

On journeys such as these, something very powerful is going on, something that deeply touches the human spirit. Now, your journey has begun. You hope for an experience that will transform your life and maybe change someone else's.

Having taken journeys myself to Guatemala, Mexico, the Philippines, and India, I know that these experiences are life changing. Nothing can change your perceptions and understanding of a place or situation more than actually visiting there and meeting the people.

In this age of rapid electronic communication, it's easy to overlook the benefits of face-to-face interaction. But you will find yourself richly rewarded for your presence on these trips. By actually visiting places, meeting people, sharing stories and being united by a common purpose, you will be able to put a human face on some of the most pressing social issues of our time.

I congratulate you for being willing to invest in different people and different cultures, for leaving what is familiar and comfortable. Change comes when we are willing to venture into the unknown. And when change begins to rearrange the ideas and beliefs that constitute our very faith, it makes us open to the holy.

May your travels be blessed.

The Rev. Peter Morales  
President, Unitarian Universalist Association

## **Opening Words**

Most of us work, but not all of us serve. Service is a calling, and like all callings it is suffused with a spiritual dimension. Whether that dimension be concern for others, devotion to a cause, passion for truth and justice, or love for our beautiful blue planet, it is something transcendent and beyond ourselves.

Unitarian Universalist young adults often model service to the rest of us. Examples range from local service projects to initiatives sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee to the remarkable experience that 14 young adults had as part of a 2007 Summer of Spirituality and Service. In each case, Unitarian Universalists in their 20's and 30's have taught us what it means to be "moved by the spirit."

Recognizing the importance of such experiences to our life-long faith journeys, the UUA is increasingly interested in finding ways to encourage and support them. They can, and hopefully will, become an established part of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. This Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Service Journal is meant to help you in understanding and drawing meaning from your own service experience. We hope that you will find it a helpful companion, and that, as you "serve in spirit," you will inspire others to follow.

John F. Smith III  
May 2011

## **Introduction to the Journal**

In the opening words, John expressed that young adults, as youth, have many times been the exemplars of service in our churches, the local community and the larger world. It is the mission of this project, funded by the UUA, to help this continue into young adulthood. We at the UUA want to nurture your growth as a human being, your connection to Unitarian Universalism and its principles, and your commitment to making the world a more peaceful and just place.

The purpose of this journal is to provide a framework for you to reflect on various ideas and concepts. It is divided into three sections revolving around your service trip: before, during, and after. Within each section, there are opportunities for you to reflect on and write about yourself, your spiritual life, and your life of service. These divisions may seem obvious to some, as they are clearly and inextricably linked to what makes you “you.” We hope that these questions will serve simply as “catalysts” that will lead you to deeper exploration of yourself, your connections to others, Unitarian Universalism, and the role of service in your life.

We welcome your thoughts and suggestions on this journal, as we truly want it to serve you in the best way possible. We also plan to set up a blog/online community so that everyone can share their experiences, as we see that as another tool to deepen our experiences and connections to one another. Much love...

Erik Mohn  
Young Adult Spirituality & Service Consultant  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
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# Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

**We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:**

Principle # 1

*The inherent worth and dignity of every person*

Principle # 2

*Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations*

Principle # 3

*Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations*

Principle # 4

*A free and responsible search for truth and meaning*

Principle # 5

*The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large*

Principle # 6

*The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all*

Principle # 7

*Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*

**(The following ideas, concepts and questions are designed to guide your reflection and help you along the journey of personal growth and transformation. Feel free to reflect on the following and express your responses/reactions in the way that feels most comfortable to you - i.e., writing, drawing, taking pictures, meditating, etc. This was made for you, so feel free to make it your own.)**

**Note: If you're engaging in service work that is in the United States, then certain questions (specifically about culture) may not apply to you.**

**Eye of Life**  
**By: Anonymous**

Let the harps of the earth's hemisphere harmonize in hope.  
Constellations of consciousness collaborate in curiosity.  
Diamonds of divinity sparkle and shimmer in the serenity of success.  
Dance along the stars of humanity shining within your soul.  
How I hope to heal humanity.  
Change with the console of courage.  
Dive deeper into divine definition.  
Soar across the seas of simplicity.  
Oh, how I hope to live...

## Part 1: BEFORE YOUR TRIP

**GOAL:** to help you: 1) reflect on who you are presently; 2) prepare for your trip mentally; and 3) clarify your purpose.

*“Defining myself, as opposed to being defined by others, is one of the most difficult challenges I face.” ~ Carol Moseley-Braun*

*“To the question of your life you are the answer, and to the problems of your life you are the solution.” ~ Joe Cordare*

### A. Who are **YOU**?

- What are your unique personal qualities?
- To what/whom do you feel most connected?
- What is important to you? What are you passionate about? How do these passions express themselves in your life?
- What/whom do you love? How do you express this love?
- Are you happy? What does that mean? What makes you happy?
- Are you peaceful? Are you content with your life? What does that mean?
- Who are/have been inspirational people in your life? How?
- What have been some defining experiences in your life? Explain.
- Any inspirational songs, phrases, books, poems?
- What are your dreams? What are your short term and long term goals?
- What challenges you? What fears do you have? How do you address these challenges and fears?
- What does leading a “meaningful life” mean to you?

*“Let your heart guide you. It whispers, so listen carefully.” ~ Littlefoot’s Mother*

### B. How would you describe your spiritual life?

- How do you explain the “mysteries of life?”
- Do you believe in God or some “higher power?” How do you express this belief?
- Describe important experiences in your spiritual life. Describe a moment when you have had a “spiritual experience.”
- What is Unitarian Universalism to you? Write about your journey in Unitarian Universalism.
  - Were you raised a UU?
  - Describe your early experiences.
  - Important “light bulb” moments?
  - How do the UU principles fit into your life?
  - How do you search for truth and meaning in your life?
  - Do you consider yourself a UU now? How did you come to this decision?

*“Live for something. Do good, and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storm of time can never destroy. Write your name in kindness, love, and mercy, on the hearts of thousands you come in contact with year by year; you will never be forgotten. No, your name, your deeds, will be as legible on the hearts you leave behind as the stars on the brow of evening. Good deeds will shine as the stars of heaven.” ~ Anonymous*

C. How have you contributed to making the world a better place?

- What does “service” mean to you?
- What past experiences have you had with service?
- Who/ what inspires you to serve?
- Focus on your upcoming trip:
  - a. Why did you choose this particular opportunity? Type of work? People? Place?
  - b. What do you know about the people and the place? History? Cultural traditions? Values? Daily and family lives? Spiritual lives? Needs? Environment?
  - c. Your goals and dreams for the experience?
  - d. Your fears or worries about the experience?
  - e. What do your friends, family, and faith community think about your upcoming adventure?
  - f. Any predictions for how this trip will change you?

**Spiritual Exercise:** Every night, for one week, write down all the happenings of the day for which you are grateful. Read all of the entries at the end of the week. Reflect on and explore the content.

**To See As God Sees**  
**By: Meister Eckhart**

It is your destiny to see as God sees,  
To know as God knows,  
To feel as God feels.

How is this possible? How?  
Because divine love cannot defy its very self.  
Divine love will be eternally true to its own being,  
And, its being is giving all it can,  
At the perfect moment.

And, the greatest gift  
God can give is Her own experience.

Every object, every creature, ever man, woman, and child  
Has a soul and it is the destiny of all,

To see as God sees, to know as God knows, to feel as God feels, to love as  
God loves, to be as God is.

## **Part 2: DURING YOUR TRIP (JOURNAL EVERY DAY)**

**GOAL:** *to capture the experience.*

*“Wherever there is a human being, I see God-given rights inherent in that being, whatever may be the sex or complexion.” ~ William Lloyd Garrison*

*“Look at each day as a chance to invest life into life; a chance to share your experience and deposit it into someone else’s conscience. Each day is a chance to work miracles in the lives of others.” ~ Jim Rohn*

- Write in as much detail as possible using all of your senses for observation.
- Capture the moment: describe events that touched you, surprised you, confused you, inspired you, made you laugh or cry, frightened you.
- What are you learning about the people, the culture, daily lives, traditions, spiritual lives, work life, and the environment? What questions keep popping up in your mind? How can you find the answers?
- Moment of clarity- an event that transformed you.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Start a conversation with a complete stranger. Try to learn as much as you can about them and then thank them for speaking with you. Write down your experience in as much detail as possible; pay close attention to their body language, facial expressions, and emotions.

**We Give Thanks This Day**  
**By: O. Eugene Pickett**  
*(Readings for Common Worship)*

For the expanding grandeur of Creation, worlds known and unknown,  
galaxies beyond galaxies, filling us with awe and challenging our  
imaginations:

We Give Thanks This Day.

For this fragile planet earth, its times and tides, its sunsets and seasons:

We Give Thanks This Day.

For the joy of human life, its wonders and surprises, its hopes and  
achievements:

We Give Thanks This Day.

For our community, our common past and future hope, our oneness  
transcending all separation, our capacity to work for peace and justice in the  
midst of hostility and oppression:

We Give Thanks This Day.

For high hopes and noble causes, for faith without fanaticism, for  
understanding of views not shared:

We Give Thanks This Day.

For all who have labored and suffered for a fairer world, who have lived so  
that others might live in dignity and freedom:

For human liberty and sacred rites; for opportunities to change and grow, to  
affirm and choose:

We give thanks this day. We pray that we may not live by our fears but by  
our hopes, not by our words but by our deeds.

## Part 3: AFTER YOUR TRIP

**GOAL:** *to help you process your experience and incorporate what you've learned into your life.*

*"To improve is to change. To be perfect is to change often." ~ Winston Churchill*

A. How are **YOU** different? (*Before you begin, read the journal entries you wrote during the trip. As you read, do your best to relive the experiences you wrote down.*)

- Identify 3 ways you sense that you have changed. Explore, Reflect, Describe.
- How do you feel about the people, culture and place you visited and served? Connections? Similarities? Differences?
- How is your sense of humanity different? Do you have any new insights into human nature?
- How did your actual experience differ from your expectations? Did you fulfill your goals? Live your dreams? Explore.
- How do you feel about the ways you managed various challenges? What have these challenges taught you?
- What have you learned that can enrich your life and relationships?
- Are you able to communicate effectively with your friends, families and others in your life about your experience? If not, why not?

*"If in the last few years you haven't discarded a major opinion or acquired a new one, check your pulse. You may be dead." ~ Frank Gelett Burgess*

B. What are your **spiritual understandings** now? Any changes? New thoughts?

- Describe an experience where you feel that you put your personal beliefs, values and faith into action.
- Describe an experience where you felt your personal beliefs, values, faith were challenged. How did you handle this? What did you learn from it?
- How have your values or beliefs changed?
- How has your understanding of and relationship to humanity changed?
- How has your connection to Unitarian Universalism changed?
- Take a look at each of the UU principles. How might you live each one a little differently?

*"Nothing we can do can change the past, but everything we do changes the future." ~ Ashleigh Brilliant*

A. How will you continue **to serve to** help make some part of the world a better place?

- How did you feel about the work you did? How did the people respond to your presence? Do you feel that you made a significant difference?

- How will you continue to serve? How will you work toward making some part of your world a better place? What does “better” mean to you? What do you need to do to make this happen?

**Spiritual Exercise:** Write a “Thank You” letter to an individual in your life for whom you have never truly expressed your gratitude. Tell them what they mean to you and why you are thankful to have them in your life.

### **Personal Promise**

*“I will not die an unlived life. I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire. I choose to inhabit my days, to allow my living to open me, to make me less afraid, more accessible, to loosen my heart until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise. I choose to risk my significance, to live so that which came to me as seed goes to the next as blossom, and that which came to me as blossom, goes on as fruit.” ~ Dawna Markova*

**Add your own questions and topics for reflection. Express your answers in any way that feels right to you.**