

Harvest the Power: Developing Lay Leadership

Second Edition



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Renee Ruchotzke, “A Theology for Leaders,” UUA LeaderLab blog post published March 1, 2019

Beth Zemsky, MA, ED, LICSW, “Types of Power” handout

Orlanda Brugnola, “As we move through life,” published as part of the dedication of *Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry*, edited by Mitra Rahnema (Skinner House Books, 2017)

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INTRODUCTION

This new edition of Harvest the Power, like the 2009 original, asserts that leadership in a congregational setting can and should be a deeply spiritual experience. The program was created not only to strengthen the skills of those who have accepted the responsibility of leadership in our congregations, but also to offer intentional faith development as a way to help form integrated leaders who model healthy personal and leadership practices.

This 2020 edition reflects new understandings gained from faithful practice of congregational leadership in a multigenerational, multicultural, diverse, and inclusive faith community. Informed by the work of Juana Bordas, published in *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age*, this program guides leaders to cultivate a “we” culture in our congregations, with relationships and covenant at the center, rather than an “I” culture of autonomous individuals. It asks participants to examine the perspectives and gifts, strengths and challenges they each bring to the leadership team. It invites them to form a covenanted team together that is stronger than its parts and effective in staying in relationship with those in the faith community and in the larger community that surrounds them. The workshops consider stresses and opportunities presented by this time in Unitarian Universalism, offering frameworks and strategies to help

leaders engage with congregational conflict as a way to grow in capacity to respond faithfully and live out the congregation’s mission and values in the world.

This edition comes at a time of rapid change in our world and in our faith. A commitment to congregational life competes with many other priorities for time on people’s calendars. People struggle to manage the day-to-day demands of family life, work life, and interests, hobbies, and volunteer work. In the midst of today’s changes, it is truly remarkable that so many people come forward and agree, with varying amounts of enthusiasm, to accept leadership positions in our congregations. What a gift it is that they give to their faith community—a gift of their time, their love, and their talent! That gift deserves the best that the congregation can give in return—an experience of leadership that is both challenging and rewarding, that is an opportunity for spiritual growth as well as skill development. The Harvest the Power program is a tool to help congregations support and strengthen their leaders in a way that honors the gifts that each brings.

GOALS

This program will:

- Affirm the spiritual and emotional gifts and the skills that each person brings to a leadership position

- Encourage congregations and participants to view holding a leadership position as an opportunity to enrich and deepen the leader's faith
- Deepen participants' understanding of covenant and the practice of keeping covenant within the leadership team and in the congregation
- Guide leaders to center relationships as a faithful practice, thinking of the congregation as a "we" rather than a collection of individuals
- Lead participants to develop an understanding of the importance of personal spiritual practice and integrity to healthy leadership
- Guide participants to consider which voices and perspectives were marginalized in the past and need to be part of congregational or leadership decision-making
- Introduce *systems thinking*, and provide some practice with exploring congregational issues through a systems lens
- Encourage participants to consider that conflict can indicate questions needing attention in the larger congregational system and invite them to respond accordingly
- Deepen and enrich the experience of congregational leaders and, by extension, the ability of congregations to live out their

missions and values, both in congregational life and in the wider world

- Invite leaders to become aware of their own role in the congregation and to develop a leadership approach and skills to guide a community toward a faithful response to conflict.

FACILITATORS

A team of two or more adults who have experience as congregational leaders should facilitate the Harvest the Power workshops. Work with a partner to plan the workshops together and share the facilitation responsibilities.

Be intentional about bringing different perspectives and different experiences to your facilitation team; for example, you might consider having people of different genders, including non-binary, different racial identities, or different age cohorts working together.

Workshop facilitators may be laypersons or religious professionals. Facilitators will be most effective if they have the following strengths:

- Experience in congregational leadership as a member of the governing board, a committee chair, a leader in the young adult group, or in some other leadership capacity
- The time and willingness to prepare thoroughly for each workshop and to take appropriate action in the event of unexpected cancellations

- Experience in facilitating a group process
- The ability to create a supportive group environment
- A willingness to listen deeply and to let “answers” emerge from the group process
- Integrity, and the ability to maintain strong boundaries, especially in the midst of challenging conversations
- Respect for the congregation and its mission
- A commitment to Unitarian Universalist Principles and to the faith development components of this curriculum
- Respect for individuals, regardless of age, race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, and the willingness to modify workshop plans to support the full inclusion of all participants
- Willingness to support healthy group process by reinforcing ground rules politely and confidently.

Facilitators must be capable of creating and nurturing a supportive, respectful community within the workshops; following congregational safety guidelines and policies; and modeling respect for the congregation, its mission, and its lay and professional leadership throughout the course of the workshop.

PARTICIPANTS

Harvest the Power is designed for adults of all ages and stages, young adults through elders, who currently hold or are considering accepting a congregational leadership position. Participants in this program might include current or potential governing board members, committee members, task force members, or small group leaders.

Workshops can accommodate any number of participants. Six participants is an ideal minimum. With more than 12 participants, consider adding a third facilitator to your team.

INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

People of all ages have a range of abilities, disabilities, and sensitivities. Be sure to ask individual participants to identify any particular disability or sensitivity-related accommodations they will need.

Participants also bring a wide range of learning styles and information-processing preferences. Individual workshops are designed with this in mind and allow for a number of different kinds of activities. In addition, you will find in each workshop alternate activities that may better suit your group’s stylistic preferences.

To support the inclusion of all participants, review [Accessibility Guidelines for Adult Workshop Presenters](#) before leading these workshops. Implement what you must

to make your space welcoming and accessible, to the extent possible.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Each two-hour Harvest the Power workshop uses the structure outlined below.

Quote

A quote introduces each workshop. You might discuss the quote with your co-leader as part of your session prep. Each workshop's opening quote also appears in the Taking It Home handout.

Introduction

The Introduction provides a short summary of the workshop's content, along with guidance for leaders about implementing the workshop.

Goals

The Goals are general outcomes toward which the workshop is geared. As you plan a workshop, apply your knowledge of your group, the time and space you have available, and your own strengths and interests as co-leaders to determine the most important and achievable goals for the workshop and the activities that will best serve those goals.

Learning Objectives

The Learning Objectives describe specific participant outcomes that the workshop activities are designed to facilitate. It may be helpful to think of learning objectives as the building blocks with which the Harvest the

Power program's larger "big picture" goals are achieved.

Workshop-At-a-Glance

The "Workshop-at-a-Glance" table lists the workshop activities in order of their suggested sequence and provides an estimated time for completing each activity.

Workshop-at-a-Glance is not a road map that you must follow. Rather, use it as a menu for planning the workshop. You will decide which elements to use and how to combine them to best suit your group, your meeting space, and the amount of time you have.

Keep in mind that many variables inform the actual completion time for an activity. Whole-group discussions will take longer in a large group than in a small group. Remember to consider the time you will need to relocate participants to another area of your meeting room.

Spiritual Preparation

Each workshop provides suggestions that you may use to prepare for leading the Harvest the Power program, to grow spiritually, and to grow as a leader. Because part of growing as a leader is learning to pay attention to the accessibility needs of those in your workshop, pay attention to [Accessibility Guidelines for Adult Workshop Presenters](#) as you prepare to facilitate each workshop.

Workshop Plan

The workshop plan presents the main elements of each workshop:

Opening: Each workshop begins with a short opening ritual: welcoming words, chalice lighting, and a reading. Shape your opening ritual to suit your group, any space limitations, and the culture and practices of your congregation.

Activities: The core workshop content is presented as sequential activities.

The variety of activities in each workshop aims to address participants' different learning styles. Presenting the activities in the sequence suggested will help you provide a coherent learning experience. In general, the sequence will balance listening with talking, and individual exploration with group exploration.

Select activities that you believe best suit the widest range of participants' interests and will work well for you and your group. Keep in mind the participants' learning journey and the benefits of a well-paced workshop that includes different kinds of activities. Each workshop includes one or more alternate activities that you may choose to substitute for a core activity. If you use alternate activities, take care to place them in a sequence that gives the workshop a balanced flow.

Closing: Each workshop concludes with a closing ritual that signals the end of your group's time together. During the closing, you will introduce the workshop's Taking It Home ideas, invite participants to share briefly, offer closing words, and extinguish the chalice. Like the opening, the closing of a workshop grounds the experience in ritual. Use the workshop plans as a

resource to shape a closing that fits your group and the culture and practices of your congregation.

The following are provided for each activity, including the Opening and Closing:

- **Materials:** This checklist outlines the supplies you will need for each activity.
- **Preparation:** If your group meets weekly, review this "to do" list for each activity at least a week ahead of a workshop. If your group meets less frequently than weekly, review the preparation items several weeks ahead. The list identifies all the advance work you need to do for the activity, such as writing a list of questions on newsprint or arranging supplies right before your participants arrive.
- **Description:** This section provides detailed directions for leading the activity with your group. Carefully read the activity descriptions during your planning process so that you understand each activity and its purpose. Later, when you are actually leading your group, use the description as a step-by-step guide.

Activities that include unusual physical circumstances or for which leaders would benefit from a reminder about inclusion have an **Including All Participants** section with specific accessibility guidance. In addition, please consult [Accessibility Guidelines](#)

[for Adult Workshop Presenters](#) for general guidelines to help you prepare to meet some common accessibility needs.

The Workshop Plan also offers:

- **Faith in Action:** These activities are designed to give participants an opportunity to put their UU faith into action by bringing their learning from the workshop into their work in the congregation—or the world beyond the congregation. You can customize this section to your congregation and group.
- **Leader Reflection and Planning:** This section provides questions to help you and your co-facilitator process the workshop after it is concluded and use your reflections to shape future workshops.
- **Taking It Home:** The Taking It Home handout for each workshop includes conversation topics, journaling assignments, and ideas for further exploration or to apply the workshop learning. The handouts are designed to help participants extend their experiences by sharing them with family and friends or by integrating them into their practice as leaders. You may customize to suit your congregation and group before distributing to participants. Each Taking It Home handout includes a **Find Out More** section with supplemental resources, such as books, videos, and websites, related to workshop topics.

- **Alternate Activities:** Each workshop features one or more alternate activities that you may substitute for core workshop activities. Sometimes the alternate activities are simpler to implement than the core activities. Materials checklists, preparation steps, and activity descriptions appear in the same format as they do in the core activities. You can also use the alternate activities to build longer workshops of up to three hours.
- **Resources:**
 - Stories** - Narratives, from the Sources of our Unitarian Universalist tradition, that illuminate and support workshop activities.
 - Handouts** - Materials to download and print for all participants to use in the workshop.
 - Leader Resources** - Materials for the leader’s use during the workshop.

WORKSHOPS

Workshop 1	Leadership Journey
Workshop 2	From “I” to “We”
Workshop 3	Are We Doing the Right Things?
Workshop 4	Caring for Ourselves and One Another
Workshop 5	Integrity
Workshop 6	Faith and Conflict

WORKSHOP 1: LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

Leadership is a series of behaviors rather than a role for heroes. — Margaret J. Wheatley, author, management consultant, and leadership expert

INTRODUCTION

This workshop serves as an introduction to the Harvest the Power program, presenting key concepts and inviting participants to share their own leadership stories. The workshop contains alternate activities for getting to know one another and for exploring individual notions of faith, but do not substitute these for Activity 4, Five Smooth Stones, or Activity 5, Power. These two activities, in the order written, are essential gateways to the workshops that follow.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Facilitate introductions and build rapport among the group
- Help participants develop their identities and skills as Unitarian Universalist leaders
- Offer theological grounding for faithful leadership, based on the work of the 20th-century Unitarian theologian James Luther Adams.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Begin making connections with one another

- Explore their experiences with becoming leaders and learning how to exercise leadership
- Explore their understanding of faith
- Become familiar with Five Smooth Stones, a metaphor drawn from the work of James Luther Adams.
- Investigate power and its role in faithful leadership.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Creating a Covenant	10
Activity 2: Sharing Our Leadership Stories	25
Activity 3: What Is My Faith?	25
Activity 4: Five Smooth Stones	25
Activity 5: Power	25
Faith in Action: Sharing Leadership Stories with the Congregation	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: What I Cherish (Icebreaker)	20
Alternate Activity 2: Notions of God	25

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Respond to the questions in Activity 2, Sharing Our Leadership Stories. Create your own What Is My Faith? artwork to help you reflect on your own identity as

a Unitarian Universalist leader. Share your reflections with your co-facilitator.

WORKSHOP PLAN

Opening (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Small worship table
- Chalice, candle, and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle

PREPARATION

- Set the chalice on the worship table.

DESCRIPTION

Gather the group in a circle. Ask a participant to light the chalice as you or another participant read the opening words, “We come to this time and this place,” Reading 436 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Invite participants to introduce themselves briefly, sharing their names and pronouns.

ACTIVITY 1: Creating a Covenant (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- For your own use, list the elements of covenant that you would like to suggest as the facilitator. You might include:
 - Speak from our own experiences and perspectives.

- Be willing to learn, with the spirit of “a beginner’s mind,” even when we may bring some expertise.
- Be responsible for our own participation and spiritual growth, with integrity and enthusiasm.
- Listen generously to the experiences and perspectives of others, creating a supportive space for each person to learn.
- Be mindful of “taking space and making space” to ensure that everyone has opportunities to speak and to listen.
- Respect the confidentiality of personal information and stories shared here.
- Gently hold one another accountable for creating a community of faithful practice.
- Work with others to use what we learn to help further the mission of the congregation or the covenantal UU community.
- Post blank newsprint where all participants can see it. Title it “Our Covenant with One Another.”

DESCRIPTION

Explain to participants that *covenants* are a foundational aspect of liberal congregations, and the practice of establishing a covenant is an essential act of leadership.

Invite participants to suggest guidelines for how they will be with one another during the program. Write all suggestions on newsprint. When the group has no more suggestions, add any items from the list you prepared.

Ask participants if they would have concerns about or difficulty agreeing to any items listed. Discuss those items, and decide as a group whether to keep or eliminate them from the group covenant.

On a new sheet of newsprint, rewrite the covenant title and the agreed-on items. Read the covenant aloud, and ask for verbal assent from each participant. Optional: Invite participants to each sign the covenant.

Save the written covenant to post during future workshops.

ACTIVITY 2: Sharing Our Leadership Stories (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Clock or timer
- Bell or chime

PREPARATION

- Title a sheet of newsprint “Early Leadership Experiences,” write the following questions on it, and post it where all participants can see it:
 - How did the experience feel at the time?
 - How did you learn and grow from the experience?
 - What were your hopes and fears in taking on that leadership role?
- Prepare (but do not post) another sheet of newsprint with the title “Becoming a Leader in a Congregation.” Write these questions:

- How did you first become a lay leader in a congregation?
- What role did you have, and how did you come to take on that role?
- How did your personal faith and beliefs affect your decision to be a leader?

DESCRIPTION

This activity invites participants to reflect on and share their own leadership journey. It has three parts, offering participants an opportunity to consider in turn their early leadership experiences, their congregational leadership experiences, and what they have learned about what it means to be a lay leader.

Some may be new leaders in the congregation, some may be longstanding congregational leaders, and some may be leaders in other aspects of their lives. Acknowledge that everyone is in a different place on their leadership journey. Say that participants in this workshop have in common that they have taken on (or are at least considering) a leadership role in your faith community.

Point out the sheet of newsprint you posted. Invite participants to consider the questions and to try to recall their early leadership experiences—childhood and adolescent experiences as well as adult ones.

After a minute, invite participants to turn to a partner and share their experiences and responses to the questions listed on the newsprint. Tell them that each partner will have three

minutes to share. Ring a bell or chime when it is time for the second partner to share. Facilitators may also choose to take part in this activity.

Post the second sheet of newsprint. Invite participants to use the questions provided to recall the circumstances of their first becoming a leader in this or a previous faith community. After a minute, invite participants to share with the same partner their experiences and their responses to the questions. Tell them that each partner will have three minutes to share. Ring a bell or chime when it is time for the second partner to share.

Reconvene the large group. Prompt a discussion by asking, "What have you learned about being a leader in the course of your experiences?"

Wrap up the activity by asking, "How was the experience of sharing leadership stories? Were there any surprises or revelations as you told your own story or heard someone else's?"

ACTIVITY 3: What Is My Faith? (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Art materials, such as 12- x 18-inch sheets of construction paper, a variety of colored and textured papers, illustrated magazines, scissors (including left-handed scissors), glue and glue sticks, and color markers and pencils

PREPARATION

- Set up a work area with the art materials. Mark sure that participants will have room to work and can easily share the materials.

DESCRIPTION

Share this quote from religious historian William Cantwell Smith:

Faith at its best has taken the form of a quiet confidence and joy which enable one to feel at home in the universe.

Invite participants to reflect on these words for a moment. Tell them that their task is to create a representation of what enables them to feel at home in the universe. Show them the work area and the art materials, and tell them they will have 12 minutes to use the materials to create a representation of their faith.

When time is up, invite participants to share their creations and describe their meaning with the group. Say that it is fine to opt out of sharing. (This is true for any workshop activity that involves sharing with the larger group.)

Ask participants to quietly consider two questions: "How will your faith ground you as you fulfill your leadership role? How will your decision-making grow from your faith?" Allow a few moments of silence for participants to reflect.

INCLUDING ALL PARTICIPANTS

If any participants are unable to draw or prefer not to, invite them to use words rather than pictures, or substitute Alternative Activity 2, Notions of God.

ACTIVITY 4: Five Smooth Stones (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Handout 1, Five Smooth Stones

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 1 for each participant.

DESCRIPTION

Distribute Handout 1. Share brief biographical information about [James Luther Adams](#) from the Unitarian Universalist Historical Society's online *Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography*.

James Luther Adams (November 12, 1901–July 26, 1994) was a Unitarian parish minister, social activist, journal editor, prolific author, and for more than 40 years a divinity school professor. Adams was the most influential theologian among 20th-century Unitarian Universalists and one of the finest 20th-century American liberal Christian theologians.

Invite participants to read the handout. Use these questions to prompt a discussion:

- Which of James Luther Adams' concepts resonates most deeply for you?
- What in the Five Smooth Stones reading do you find inspirational, meaningful, or otherwise helpful to you as a congregational leader?

ACTIVITY 5: Power (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Handout 2, Types of Power
- Pens and pencils
- Participants' copies of Handout 1, Five Smooth Stones, from Activity 4

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Write on newsprint, but do not post: "Power is the ability to achieve purpose," from a 1967 sermon by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

DESCRIPTION

Post a sheet of blank newsprint and invite participants to brainstorm words, phrases, concepts, and people they associate with "power." Record their responses. After five minutes, or when the newsprint is full, ask participants to look at the whole list and offer comments and observations. Overall, how can they characterize this list of what they associate with "power"? Post the quote from Dr. King, and read it aloud. Ask how many items on the brainstormed list can be included in this definition of power.

Note that this quote does not assign any value to the "purpose" one wishes to achieve. Invite participants to consider what "purpose" congregational leaders wish to achieve. Allow time for responses and discussion.

Distribute Handout 2 and writing implements. Invite participants to read the handout and to make note of which types of power congregational leaders can exercise. Encourage them to jot examples in the margins of the handout. Allow participants about 10

minutes to work alone. Then, invite them to form triads. Tell them they will have five minutes to discuss how congregational leaders can exercise power in ways that are in line with the values of our faith, using Handout 1 and Handout 2 as references.

After five minutes, reconvene the large group. Invite participants to share any insights or ideas they are mulling.

FAITH IN ACTION: Sharing Leadership Stories with the Congregation

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Talk with your minister, administrator, and other appropriate congregational leaders to explore ways participants' leadership stories might be shared with the congregation. If possible, develop specific options, complete with dates, to suggest to the group.
- Post blank newsprint.

DESCRIPTION

Engage participants to explore ways to share their leadership stories with the broader congregation. For example, the Harvest the Power group might invite committees or other groups to participate in the "Sharing Leadership Journeys" activity. Or, the group might create a series of newsletter articles or blog posts. Record their ideas on newsprint.

As a plan takes shape, decide who will take charge of necessary tasks and

plan logistics for sharing leadership stories in another group or setting. Document task assignments on newsprint.

CLOSING (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook

PREPARATION

- Optional: Customize the Taking It Home handout for your group before emailing or photocopying it.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants, or plan to email it.

DESCRIPTION

Distribute copies of Taking It Home or tell the group when you will email it.

Explain that you will close this workshop with a "gathering" song because, as a group, you have begun gathering yourselves for a leadership journey.

Sing Hymn 188, Come, Come, Whoever You Are, three times through. If someone in your group is skilled at leading rounds, you might sing this as a two- or four-part round, depending on the size of the group.

Invite each person to share, in a word or phrase, something from the workshop that stays with them.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Consider and discuss these questions with your co-facilitator:

- Looking at each activity in this workshop, what worked as well as

or better than you had anticipated?
What did not work as well as you had anticipated?

- What issues came up for you, personally, in trying any activity yourself? What came up in the process of facilitating?
- What would you change if you were to lead this workshop again? How would you do it differently?
- What did you learn about yourself as an individual while facilitating this workshop? What did you learn about yourself as a leader?
- Look ahead to the next workshop in this program. What materials do you need to request or gather? What other preparation is needed?

TAKING IT HOME

Leadership is a series of behaviors rather than a role for heroes. — Margaret J. Wheatley, author, management consultant, and leadership expert

Share with loved ones what you have discovered about your own spiritual journey, and show them your “What Is My Faith?” creation. How are your ideas and understandings about faith similar to or different from those of your family members or friends?

Find Out More

Learn more about [James Luther Adams](#) from the Unitarian Universalist Historical Society’s online *Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography* or by reading *The Essential James Luther Adams* by George Kimmich Beach (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1998).

Explore leadership’s grounding in theology by reading *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004) or *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), both by Parker J. Palmer.

Explore the website of writer and leadership consultant [Margaret J. Wheatley](#).

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: What I Cherish (20 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Be prepared to model this activity for participants.
- On a sheet of newsprint, write your name, how long you have been part of this congregation, and a brief description of a place, person, or item that you cherish. Post the newsprint where all can see it.
- If the group is larger than 10, you may wish to form smaller groups for this activity. If you are presenting this workshop as part of a retreat, this activity can be a good icebreaker.

DESCRIPTION

This activity provides an opportunity for participants to share, at whatever level they are comfortable, a bit of their identity by telling others about something they cherish.

Indicate the newsprint. Give participants a minute to prepare to

introduce themselves to the group, using your example on newsprint as a guide.

Facilitators should go first to model the process. Have participants introduce themselves and share their stories, either going around the circle or asking for volunteers.

Once everyone has shared, ask, “How will sharing these stories with one another help us work together as a faithful leadership team?”

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: Notions of God (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- 4 x 6 index cards, one for each participant
- Pencils or pens
- Clock or timer
- Bell or chime

DESCRIPTION

This non-drawing-oriented activity is a good alternative to Activity 4, What Is My Faith?

Invite participants to consider how they have formed images of God, positive or negative, over time. Say:

Perhaps you recall teachings from childhood or chance conversations with others. Perhaps your experiences include a rejection—or an embrace—of the idea of God. Perhaps you recall spiritual and theological questions you had as a youth or a young adult. Perhaps you remember when your notion of the existence and nature of God

somehow did not make sense anymore. Perhaps you lost your comfort with the word “God” and began using other terms, such as “the divine,” “the ultimate mystery,” or “a force greater than humans.” Perhaps you have experienced moments of spiritual crisis or a crisis of meaning.

Hand out index cards and writing implements, and ask people to divide the cards into four quadrants. Say, “Title the quadrants Age 5, Age 15, Age 25, and Today. Describe or draw your notion of God—or whatever term you choose—at each age.” Allow several minutes for participants to fill their index cards.

Invite participants to form groups of four and share the ways that their notions of God have developed over time. Tell them they will have 15 minutes for this sharing. Ring a bell or chime every three or four minutes to remind participants to switch speakers if they haven’t done so.

After 15 minutes, reconvene the group. Ask participants to quietly consider two questions: “How will your faith, as you understand it today, ground you as you fulfill your leadership role? How will the strength or wisdom of your decision-making grow from your faith?” Allow a few moments of silence for participants to reflect.

HANDOUT 1: Five Smooth Stones

This text originally appeared as a March 1, 2019, blog post by Renee Ruchotzke titled “A Theology for Leaders.” It was inspired by James Luther Adams’ essay “Guiding Principles for a Free Faith” in [On Becoming Human Religiously](#): Selected Essays in Religion and Society, edited by Max Stackhouse (Beacon Press, 1976, pp. 12–20).

It was not Adams, but one of his editors, who lifted up the metaphor of five smooth stones, drawn from the biblical David and Goliath story, to name the five liberal religious principles Adams discussed.

Unitarian Universalists often look to the [Seven Principles](#) as a guide for ethical discernment, but there is another source that should inform our decisions, especially for leaders in our congregations: The Five Smooth Stones of Liberalism as imagined by Unitarian theologian and ethicist [James Luther Adams](#) (1901–1994). The five stones refer to those scooped from the river by young David as he went to fight the giant Goliath in the Hebrew Scriptures. The metaphor for today’s religious liberals is: What “stones” will help us take down today’s giants of racism, patriarchy, environmental destruction, and other ills of the 21st century?

ONE: Revelation Is Not Sealed

Healthy leaders are lifelong learners. They are curious about the world, they question their assumptions, and they are nimble when responding. Instead of saying, “This is true,” they say, “This is my best thinking with what I know now.” The best place to learn, the place with the most potential for Creative Interchange, is in the interaction between different cultures, experiences, and worldviews. Whether in nature (think of estuaries or coral reefs) or in community, it’s at the edge—where differences overlap and engage—that there is more potential for transformation.

TWO: Use the Ethic of Mutuality to Guide Relationships

In a real sense all life is inter-related. All . . . are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the inter-related structure of reality. — Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail

Most faith traditions have a version of the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” But that statement has the subject (you) at the center, and the other as a separate object. True mutuality is the meeting and interaction of subjects creating a shared sense of meaning and agreeing on a future that benefits all.

This ethic is especially helpful when trying to understand cultural (mis)appropriation. Is the sharing of culture consensual? Is anyone exploiting anyone else's culture for reputational or financial gain? Is the culture being extracted out of the context that dishonors or ignores its deeper meaning?

It is also helpful during times of disagreement or conflict. Is there time and space for everyone to share their story or opinion and for the others to listen deeply? Is there a way forward that all can agree to?

THREE: The Beloved Community Is a Just Community

Our faith communities are laboratories where we practice creating Beloved Community, where our values of mutuality, interconnection, and love are made real. We do this through our covenants, calling one another to our highest aspirations with accountability to living out our promises.

FOUR: The Beloved Community Creates Justice in the World

We are also called to organize and work with other communities to do the hard work of dismantling systems and structures that support patriarchy, racism, other oppressions, extraction, exploitation, colonization, dehumanization, pollution, climate change, etc.

FIVE: We Are the Ones Who Can Bend the Arc of the Universe

The hope that can sustain us for the long haul is grounded in the belief that there is an arc to the moral universe that bends toward justice, but it needs our participation. It's this belief that can make a way out of no way. It's this belief that can give us a shared purpose and reason to embrace our interconnection and shared destiny of Beloved Community.

HANDOUT 2: Types of Power

Adapted by Beth Zemsky, MA, ED, LICSW, from “The Bases of Social Power” by J. R. P. French and B. Raven (1959), in D. Cartwright (Ed.), Studies in Social Power (pp. 150–167). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan. Retrieved from <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.uuma.org/resource/collection/09E8DC6B-0E32-4E67-AC19-AE44B1F93EF1/TypesofPowerOrgs.pdf>

Referent power: *The desire for a feeling of oneness and acceptance in a valued relationship.* Referent power is based on identification with, attraction to, or respect for the leader. Group members gain a sense of intrinsic personal satisfaction from identification with a referent leader. This kind of power relationship is dependent on the inclination to work harder for someone who is liked or admired. To gain and maintain a leader’s approval and acceptance, a follower is likely to do what the leader asks, develop a similar attitude, and even imitate the leader’s behavior. Leaders who are charming and trustworthy tend to possess and use referent power more often than those who are less personable. By showing genuine concern and demonstrating a general level of respect for others, referent power tends to increase early in the relationship between leader and follower. However, if the charisma of a leader is never

connected to genuine integrity and strength of character, referent power is easily lost.

In organizations, referent power is most easily seen in the charismatic leader who excels in making others feel comfortable in their presence. Staff typically express their excitement about work in terms of their attraction to their leader’s personal characteristics and charisma. They commit to their work because of the leader’s likability, and they base their self-esteem and sense of accomplishment on their leader’s approval. Charismatic leaders who lack the integrity and depth of character to match their charm and charisma often leave organizations within a few years, and frequently leave a path of destruction in their wake. Their insecurities eventually manifest themselves in the form of erratic decision-making and defensiveness that can alienate the leader from their staff and their colleagues. If left unchecked or used as an exclusive source of influence, referent power’s benefits quickly decrease and destructively give way to its liabilities.

Expert power: *The extent of specialized skills or knowledge that followers attribute to a leader.* Expert power derives from group members’ assumptions that the leader possesses superior skills, knowledge, and abilities. This expertise enables leaders to perform tasks and provides them with a better understanding of the world around them. However, expertise is only a source of power if others are

dependent on the leader for the skill, knowledge, or ability the leader possesses. The more important a problem is to the follower, and the more the leader is perceived to be an expert in that area, the greater power the expert leader will have. Like referent power, expert power may come more easily in the short term, yet prove troublesome in the long term. Initially, the leader's perceived expertise is typically strong, but a leader must balance expertise with wisdom and not exaggerate the extent of their expertise. As time progresses, followers learn more, and a leader's expertise may be questioned and challenged; the power of expertise can diminish.

While expertise can be maintained through continual formal study and training, research suggests that a convincing way to demonstrate expertise is to solve problems important to followers and to provide sound advice on a consistent basis. When a leader has a lot of expert power and is trusted by followers as a reliable resource for wisdom and information, the leader can have tremendous influence over the long term.

Leaders are generally granted expert power in fields in which they have reputable experience and education. While the educational field, and the ability to understand and effectively communicate educational content, is an obvious example, the ability to communicate experience and wisdom about interpersonal problem-solving

and life skills is also an area in which a leader may influence others.

Positional power: *The authority granted to someone stemming from a position in a group or organization.* This type of power stems from an authority's right to require and demand compliance. It is dependent on the official position held by the person exercising it.

Positional power may be derived from prevailing cultural values that assign power to some individuals (e.g., respect for one's elders), from social structures that grant position power to some people (e.g., British royalty), or through one's position in a hierarchy. Positional power may also be granted to someone consciously or unconsciously based on their social identity (e.g. White, male, heterosexual, Christian, etc.). The amount of positional power a leader might have is likely related to the leader's scope of authority. For example, managers typically have more authority than staff members, and a staff member typically has more authority than community members. Yet, it is not uncommon for a leader to make requests of someone who may technically fall outside their scope of authority and for that person to willingly comply.

A leader's scope of authority is usually defined in the work environment by documents such as organizational charts, contracts, and job descriptions. However, ambiguity about the scope of a leader's authority is common. If managers, staff members, and the

community define the boundaries of positional power differently, then conflict is likely to develop. This conflict can interfere with the accomplishments of an organizational or educational purpose.

Positional power can easily lead to tension because of its close association with the position and not the person; the position itself may grant power to uncooperative and difficult people. However, over time, positional power becomes less useful if it is not practiced in a manner consistent with agreed-on norms of behavior and in an environment where communication is clear. While the position of leader holds respect and authority, the personal nature of some positions do not allow a leader to wield a great deal of power. Leaders generally have the authority to ask much of their staff, but they must do so in a way perceived to be fair and respectful, which often involves the use of referent and expert power. So, while the position itself grants the leader some positional power, exercising positional power exclusively is not likely to be useful over time.

Reward power: *The ability to reward.* Reward power is based on the belief that a leader controls important resources and rewards that the follower wants. Reward power depends not only on a leader's actual control over rewards, but also on the follower's perceived value of those rewards. Reward power has been shown to be most effective when followers see a direct connection between performance

and reward. Leaders most commonly use reward power with a promise to give staff something in exchange for carrying out an assigned task, such as a grade, a special privilege, or a form of recognition. Precisely how this is carried out can significantly affect the outcome. When leaders offer the right rewards—that is, rewards that are valued, fair, and in line with what they can deliver—reward power is effective. Being true to one's word and using rewards in a non-manipulative fashion are also essential.

The overuse of reward power by a leader may drive followers to view the relationship in purely transactional terms (e.g., "I will do X because you will give me Y"). Rather than use rewards in an impersonal way, leaders can most effectively use rewards to recognize accomplishments within the context of referent power.

Coercive power: *The ability to punish if expectations are not met.* Coercive power is the capacity to dispense punishments to those who do not comply with requests or demands. People exercise coercive power through reliance on physical strength, verbal facility, or the ability to grant or withhold emotional support or tangible resources from others. Coercive power provides a leader with the means to physically harm, bully, humiliate, or deny love, affection, or resources to others. Coercive power in the workplace includes the ability (implied or real) to fire, demote, or transfer others to undesirable positions.

Coercive power can be useful for deterring detrimental behavior and at times when compliance is absolutely necessary, such as in a crisis situation. However, in most situations, coercive power should be used predominantly as a last resort, as it has significant negative side effects. Coercive methods have been linked to a number of dysfunctional group processes, including dislike, anger, resentment, rejection, conflict, and decreases in motivation, and self-esteem.

WORKSHOP 2: FROM “I” TO “WE”

Wisdom is not a fixed quality. It circulates among us. — Sister Souljah, contemporary author, activist, hip-hop recording artist, and film producer

INTRODUCTION

This workshop focuses on the relationships that are the center of our congregations, beginning with a deeper exploration of covenant. It asks participants to examine their congregational culture to discover which voices and perspectives are at the center of congregational life, which are on the margins, and why that matters. In this workshop, participants are introduced to the work of Juana Bordas, author of *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership in a Multicultural Age*, as they consider the responsibility of leaders to cultivate a “we” culture, with relationships and covenant at the center, rather than an “I” culture of autonomous individuals. Finally, participants consider the experiences of people in the congregation with marginalized identities, including those in your leadership group, using the question, “How does our congregation limit the expression and full inclusion of those with marginalized identities in order to make those at the center more comfortable?”

If you have time or are doing this workshop as part of a leadership

retreat, consider including Alternate Activity 2, News You Can UUse!

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Explore the practice of covenant and its centrality in our religious tradition
- Introduce the work of Juana Bordas and give participants the opportunity to explore what is meant by “we” culture
- Invite participants to explore their own experiences of mattering and marginality
- Ask participants to consider the responsibility of leaders to put relationship at the center of congregational life
- Ask participants to reflect on the responsibility of congregational leaders to center the perspectives and voices of those who are often on the margins.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the qualities of covenant, and explore its role in congregational life and in the practices of leadership
- Share experiences of mattering and marginality
- Apply a “we” culture lens to congregational life, and identify

practices that might strengthen “we” culture

- Reflect on the responsibility of leadership to center voices and perspectives who are often on the margins of congregational culture, and identify and name work that needs to be done in that regard.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	10
Activity 1: What Is Covenant?	25
Activity 2: Mattering and Marginality	25
Activity 3: From “I” to “We”	30
Activity 4: The Margin, the Center	25
Faith in Action: Seeking Voices from the Margins	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: News You Can UUse!	40

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Journal about your own experiences of mattering and marginality, or share them with your co-leader. Reflect on how you were called to offer your wisdom, skills, and creativity as a workshop facilitator for Harvest the Power. Was that an experience of mattering?

Thoughtfully consider the voices of those who are often marginalized in

Unitarian Universalism. Read some or all of the essays and responses in the book [Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry](#) and/or read [responses to a UU World article](#) that did harm to transgender Unitarian Universalists by centering the perspective of a cisgender person.

Prepare to be aware, as you lead this workshop, that even as the group discusses marginalization, some participants are members of historically marginalized groups and/or experience marginalization within the congregation. How will you hold space for the complexity of individuals and of the group, in a way that will support the marginalized members? Prepare yourself to take care to not assume a discussion is about “others” who are not present.

WORKSHOP PLAN

OPENING (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Small worship table
- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle

PREPARATION

- Set the chalice on the worship table.

DESCRIPTION

Gather the group in a circle. Invite each person in turn to say their name and pronouns, and, if they wish, to share anything that has come up for them as they thought more deeply about their own leadership story or their “What Is My Faith?” creation. Ask a participant to

light the chalice as you or another participant read these opening words by Victoria Safford:

We are bound by covenant, each to each and each to all, by what theologian Rebecca Parker calls “freely chosen and life-sustaining interdependence.” The central question for us is not, “What do we believe?” but more, “What do we believe in? To what larger love, to what people, principles, values, and dreams shall we be committed? To whom, to what, are we accountable?”

Repeat the second part of the quote, starting with “The central question for us...” Invite participants to reflect for a few moments on these questions.

ACTIVITY 1: What Is Covenant? (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Group covenant from Workshop 1
- Handout 1, Congregational Covenants

PREPARATION

- Obtain a copy of your congregation’s covenant (if you have one). Add the text to Handout 1, Congregational Covenants.
- Copy Handout 1 for all participants.
- Post the covenant the group generated in Workshop 1, Activity 1.
- Write this definition of “covenant” on newsprint and post:

Covenant is a way of articulating shared values that:

- clarifies what the congregation values most highly
- defines the promises we make together
- defines how members will act with one another
- Write on newsprint, but do not post:
 - Thinking back, what events or people were part of that turning point?
 - What challenges presented themselves?
 - What gifts and skills emerged from the congregation’s leaders and members that helped navigate that time?
 - When did the leaders realize that the event in question was a turning point? When did the congregation realize it?
 - Did the congregation’s leaders affirm a “we” culture? If so, how did that affirmation make a difference?

DESCRIPTION

Call participants’ attention to the newsprint sheet with the covenant they made with one another in Workshop 1.

Ask:

- How is this covenant an expression of our intention to engage in this program, not just as individuals, but as a group responsible to and supported by one another?
- What does our covenant say about the questions raised in the opening reading: “What do we believe in? To

what larger love, to what people, principles, values, and dreams shall we be committed? To whom, to what, are we accountable?"

Distribute Handout 1, Congregational Covenants. Invite participants to read aloud together either your congregation's covenant or one of the commonly used covenants on the handout. Invite participants to choose a conversation partner to consider the following questions:

- What are the ways that members of our congregation have obligations to one another?
- How does our covenant center people, principles, values, and dreams rather than beliefs?

Allow 10 minutes for this conversation.

Reconvene the group. Indicate the definition of "covenant" you have posted. Engage the group in discussion, using these questions:

- How does our Harvest the Power covenant meet these criteria? Is there anything we should add to it?
- How does our congregation's covenant meet these criteria?
- Who is stated as the "we" or "us" in our congregational covenant? Whose inclusion in the covenant is implied?
- Who might not feel included in our congregation's "we" or "us"?

ACTIVITY 2: Mattering and Marginality (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Paper and pens or pencils
- Clock or timer
- Bell or chime

PREPARATION

- Ensure that participants have appropriate surfaces for writing.

DESCRIPTION

This activity is adapted from an exercise developed by Dr. L. Lee Knefelkamp, described in "Integrating Jewish Issues into the Teaching of Psychology" by Evelyn Torton Beck, Julie L. Goldberg, and L. Lee Knefelkamp, Chapter 17 in *Teaching Gender and Multicultural Awareness* (edited by Phyllis Bronstein and Kathryn Quina, Washington, DC: APA Press, 2003).

Distribute paper and writing implements. Invite participants to journal their responses to the prompts as you read them aloud. Allow the time suggested for writing after each prompt:

- Consider a time in your life when your presence, your skills, and your ideas *really mattered*. What were the circumstances? How did you know that your contributions mattered? How did you respond to the situation in that moment? How did you respond, going forward? *(Allow four minutes for journaling. Ring a bell or chime at the end of*

four minutes.)

- Consider a time in your life when you felt marginalized—a time when you believed that your presence, your ideas, your skills, and your opinions were not all that important. What were the circumstances? What gave you the impression that your contributions were not really valued? How did you respond to the situation in that moment? How did you respond, going forward? (*Allow four minutes for journaling. Ring a bell or chime at the end of four minutes.*)
- As you contrast the two situations, what strikes you? What was your level of engagement, energy, creativity, and imagination in each case? What conclusions can you draw from the two different experiences? (*Allow three minutes for journaling. Ring a bell or chime at the end of three minutes.*)

Invite participants to turn to another person and share as much of their experiences and conclusions as they are comfortable sharing. Tell participants that they will each have two minutes. After two minutes, ring a bell or chime to remind pairs to switch speakers.

Reconvene the group. Ask:

- What conclusions can you draw from the two different experiences?
- What role did power play in your experiences of mattering and marginality? What kind of power

was in play? (Remind participants of the Types of Power handout and discussion in Workshop 1.)

- How does this exercise offer insight into who might feel excluded from the “we” in our congregational covenant?

ACTIVITY 3: From “I” to “We” (30 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Handout 2, *I to We: From Individualism to Collective Identity*

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Decide which areas of your congregational culture you will ask each group of three to consider. Depending on your context, you might choose leadership meetings, worship, family ministry, social justice ministry, paths to membership, hospitality to visitors, or stewardship.

DESCRIPTION

Say:

Unitarian Universalist leaders are examining how individualism in our congregations mirrors some of the unhealthy practices of the dominant white U.S. culture. In her book Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership in a Multicultural Age, Juana Bordas explores leadership approaches in Latinx, Black, and Indigenous communities and invites those who

are not part of these communities to learn from them. She writes of “we” culture in these communities, contrasting it with the “I” culture that prevails in the U.S. today.

Ask for examples of “I” culture—meaning, individualism—in our congregation, and take three or four quick responses. Distribute Handout 2, and ask participants to read the descriptions of “we” culture. Invite brief observations and comments.

Note that both the congregational covenant and the Harvest the Power covenant call us away from a focus on “I” and toward a more relational “we” culture. Invite the group to explore what congregational practices would support and strengthen a “we” culture. Form groups of three participants and give each group newsprint and markers. Assign each group an area of congregational culture to consider. Ask them to think about how your congregation currently centers people and relationships in that area of congregational life. What practices might be initiated or strengthened to build relationships between people? What practices might invite those with marginalized identities to bring their whole selves to this faith community? Tell groups that they will have 15 minutes to work.

Ask each group to post their newsprint and share their suggestions with the whole group.

Ask the group to discuss the following questions. Invite a participant to take

some notes on this discussion for later use.

- What suggestions and observations from this exercise might we want to consider more thoroughly at a future business meeting or retreat?
- How might we incorporate this exercise into our conversations and discussions with the leaders and volunteers of various committees and groups in our congregation?

ACTIVITY 4: The Margin, the Center (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Handout 3, The Margin, the Center
- Participants’ copies of Handout 2, *I to We: From Individualism to Collective Identity*

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 3 for all participants.

DESCRIPTION

Invite participants to remember the experiences they shared, earlier in the workshop, of mattering and of being marginalized. Ask: “What do your experiences suggest about the importance of leaders attending to both the culture of their meetings and the culture of their congregation?”

Introduce Handout 3 by explaining that in March 2019, *UU World* published a story that caused significant harm to transgender Unitarian Universalists. Say that the handout is an excerpt from CB Beal’s response, which, although

written in response to a particular situation, makes a larger point about inclusion. Do not allow any conversation about the specific situation, in order to keep the focus on this larger point about inclusion. Distribute the handout, and invite participants to read it.

Lead a discussion on Handout 2 and Handout 3, using these questions to help guide the discussion:

- What is Beal saying? What is their call to Unitarian Universalists?
- What are the connections between Beal's post and Juana Bordas's list of the characteristics of "we" culture?
- How does this writing deepen, or challenge, our understanding of covenant in Unitarian Universalism?
- In what ways does our congregation limit the expression and full inclusion of those with marginalized identities in order to make those at the center more comfortable?
- How might we better center the perspectives of those in our leadership group and those in the larger congregation who hold marginalized identities? How do we live out the covenantal commitment that "all of us means ALL of us?"

As needed, steer participants away from the particulars of the *UU World* article and toward Beal's broader points about what inclusion means. To re-focus the conversation or to provide a

conclusion, you may wish to repeat this quote from Handout 3:

When we UU's speak of inclusion but we only mean that people are welcome among us when their identities do not cause us confusion or discomfort, we are not speaking of inclusion. Inclusion without allowing people to be present in their natural state is like simply pouring more milk into rice pudding. It creates a larger mushier dish, which, while still palatable and maybe even delicious for some, is not, in fact, a whole meal. It is not equity. It is not justice.

FAITH IN ACTION: Seeking Voices from the Margins

DESCRIPTION

Ask yourself what groups, constituencies, or individuals in your congregation might consider themselves to be "on the margins." Compare your reflections with those of other congregational leaders. Together, consider the voices that may be missing or muted as your congregation makes decisions about direction. What creativity and innovation might you be missing? What might be some ways to engage those who are currently on the margins to bring their gifts to the congregation?

CLOSING (5 minutes)

PREPARATION

- Optional: Customize the Taking It Home handout for your group before emailing or photocopying it.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants, or plan to email it.

DESCRIPTION

Distribute copies of Taking It Home or tell the group when you will email it.

Thank participants for their willingness to share from the heart in this workshop and to offer one another the gift of deep listening. Close with these words from Orlanda Brugnola:

*As we move through life
we find ourselves
always wise and newly foolish
we ask that our mistakes be small
ones
and not hurtful ones
We ask that as we gain experience
we do not forget our innocence
for they are both part of the whole.*

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Consider and discuss these questions with your co-facilitator:

- Looking at each activity in this workshop, what worked as well as or better than you had anticipated? What did not work as well as you had anticipated?
- What issues came up for you, personally, in trying any activity yourself? What came up in the process of facilitating?

- What would you change if you were to lead this workshop again? How would you do it differently?
- What did you learn about yourself as an individual while facilitating this workshop? What did you learn about yourself as a leader?

Look ahead to the next workshop in this program. What materials do we need to request or gather? What other preparation is needed?

TAKING IT HOME

Wisdom is not a fixed quality. It circulates among us. — Sister Souljah, contemporary author, activist, hip-hop recording artist, and film producer

Invite family members or friends to explore their own experiences of mattering and marginality, setting aside time to share those experiences with one another and to reflect on how systems of power and privilege were woven into those experiences. Read stories and posts that include voices and perspectives of people whose experiences are not centered in our congregational culture, starting with the resources listed in “Find Out More.” You might also explore the EquUal Access website to find out how to center the perspectives of those with disabilities.

Find Out More

You may wish to add resources that informed this workshop to your congregation’s leadership library:

- *Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry*, edited by Mitra Rahnema (Skinner House Books, 2017)
- *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership in a Multicultural Age* by Juana Bordas (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2007)

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: News You Can UUse (40 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Card stock
- Newsprint and markers
- Writing paper and pens or pencils

PREPARATION

- If you'd like to have small groups work in separate rooms, arrange to use as many rooms as you think you'll need.
- Make up to five table tents by folding pieces of card stock in half. Label each with one of these headings: SPIRITUAL/ FAITH DEVELOPMENT, WORSHIP, SOCIAL JUSTICE, MUSIC, and FACILITY. Or, use other headings that are more appropriate for your congregation.
- Set up five tables, large enough for participants to spread out and collaborate. Equip each table with one or two sheets of newsprint, writing paper, markers, and pens or pencils.

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, small groups write brief pieces describing the doings of their 10-years-in-the-future congregation, one that actively cultivates a “we” culture and puts relationship at the center of its religious and spiritual practice.

Tell participants that they are going to travel 10 years into the future of their congregation. Imagine that the congregation actively cultivates a “we” culture and considers attention to relationship a primary religious and spiritual practice. Show them the tent signs for various aspects of congregational life. Invite them to choose the one that most interests or suits them. They will work in small groups to write either a congregational newsletter article or one or more social media posts that announce and explain the activities of the congregation, as if today were 10 years in the future. Tell small groups that they have 20 minutes for this part of the activity, and ask them to move with their tent sign to the tables or rooms you have prepared.

After 20 minutes, reconvene the entire group. Invite groups to share their writings.

Ask participants to consider how, as leaders, they might move the congregation toward the culture they have imagined. You might suggest that by imagining the future, they have begun the journey.

HANDOUT 1: CONGREGATIONAL COVENANTS

Questions to consider:

- What are the ways that members of our congregation have obligations to one another?
- How does our covenant center people, principles, values, and dreams rather than beliefs?

OUR CONGREGATION'S COVENANT

[Leader: Add the text of your congregation's covenant of right relations to this handout before copying it for the group.]

COVENANTS COMMONLY USED IN UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATIONS

Love is the doctrine of this church,
The quest of truth is its sacrament,
And service is its prayer.
To dwell together in peace,
To seek knowledge in freedom,
To serve human need,
To the end that all souls shall grow into
harmony with the Divine—
Thus do we covenant with each other
and with God.
— Arranged by L. Griswold Williams

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service is its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.

— James Vila Blake

In the freedom of truth,
And the spirit of Jesus,
We unite for the worship of God
And the service of all.
— Charles Gordon Ames

HANDOUT 2: I TO WE: FROM INDIVIDUALISM TO COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Excerpted from *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership in a Multicultural Age* by Juana Bordas (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2007, pp. 45–46).

Characteristics of We Cultures

We cultures have a strong sense of belonging and sticking together.

We cultures share everything.

We cultures work together so everyone benefits.

We cultures center on people.

We cultures are collective and relish togetherness.

We cultures are impeccably inclusive.

We cultures put benefiting the whole before the individual.

In **We** cultures, the “I” exists only in relationship to others, not as a separate entity.

HANDOUT 3: THE MARGIN, THE CENTER

Excerpted from "[Centering the Marginalized: Symphony and Triptich](#)," a post on *Medium* by CB Beal, written in response to a Spring 2019 *UU World* article.*

I. The Margin, The Center

...

I used to refer to myself as a "masculine of center, tomboyfarmgrrl, butch, queer, woman-ish type person." That was quite a litany of words needed to describe my internal understanding of my gender. I now find that "non-binary" or "genderqueer" is much tidier, and accurate. We have developed a level of understanding and nuance in our language that means we don't have to work so hard to name approximations of identity; we can hold some common language.

It's ok for cisgender people to be confused, to learn as they go . . . we all did, we all do. What's problematic is when cisgender people speak to cisgender people about trans people when **we're right over here**.

I've been a UU religious professional for nearly 20 years, both within congregations and as a consultant. I teach consent and sexuality education, preemptive radical inclusion, and other workshops supporting justice and

equity. One of my more popular workshop experiences is Mind Your T's and Q's: Supporting Transgender/Non-Binary People.

During those 20 years, as part of preparation for a conversation about a hire in a congregation, I was told, "Don't be too butch." The thinking went like this: If I was going to be a lesbian/queer person working with children in a Sunday school, I should downplay my masculinity.

I didn't have to put on a feminine dress, they promised, but really, the button-up shirts and ties should probably go. It was also recommended that I use the name Cindy and avoid my preferred nickname, CB, because "Cindy is more professional." Given my social location as a queer masculine of center person, I was encouraged to maximize "professionalism." I was encouraged to let my more feminine partner choose my clothes and dress me. Since I don't understand women's clothing, when I took this advice I adorned my body for someone else. When I was wearing my own clothes, when I dressed so that I felt the most myself, voices around me suggested I made them uncomfortable. And so it followed that I should myself be less comfortable in order to attend to the comfort of people who do not have to live in my body.

Expecting some people to modify themselves for others' comfort is a poor starting point for engagement with a faith tradition, and it's further complexified when it is our calling, and/or our source of income.

When we UU's speak of inclusion but we only mean that people are welcome among us when their identities do not cause us confusion or discomfort, we are not speaking of inclusion. Inclusion without allowing people to be present in their natural state is like simply pouring more milk into rice pudding. It creates a larger mushier dish, which, while still palatable and maybe even delicious for some, is not, in fact, a whole meal. It is not equity. It is not justice.

When we speak of inclusion but we mean that white people will write about the lives of black people, that cisgender people will write about the lives of transgender people, that heterosexual people will write about the lives of queer people, that able-bodied people will write about the lives and experiences of people who are disabled by our society, we are doing the opposite of inclusion. It is this which causes me the most harm.

...

III.

...

In the practice of preemptive radical inclusion, which is how I frame this work, it is our responsibility as leaders to continually understand that who "We" are is made up of multitudes. Our responsibility is to work harder than we would otherwise to ensure that our privilege has not prevented us from perceiving the very thing we are attempting to unveil. Our responsibility is to learn about the ways our privilege hides reality from us and fools us into believing we have accurate insight. Our responsibility is to practice humility and curiosity. Our responsibility is to bear witness to others of us who are marginalized and oppressed, to center them, to hold up their lives and experiences. To shhhhhhhhhhhh (not talk, just listen) much more often than we are used to.

* The *UU World* story, "After L, G and B," focused on the comfort, discomfort, and learning process of cisgender people, rather than providing transgender Unitarian Universalists a space to speak and write of their own experiences. The article, the magazine editor's apology, and links to several responses from transgender Unitarian Universalists can be found on the [UU World](#) website.

WORKSHOP 3: ARE WE DOING THE RIGHT THINGS?

The prophetic liberal church is the church where persons think and work together to interpret the signs of the times in the light of their faith.
— James Luther Adams, 20th-century Unitarian theologian

INTRODUCTION

This workshop introduces the idea of turning points—times when events or circumstances lead one’s life in a new direction. After identifying personal turning points, participants consider conditions that can lead a congregation to and through a turning point.

Participants examine both their own congregation’s recent history and a story about a turning point in another congregation, identifying gifts and skills brought by individual leaders and by the leadership team. Turning their attention to their own team, they identify and celebrate the gifts and skills that they collectively bring to face whatever challenges and possible turning points lie ahead.

Participants learn about the difference between *management* and *leadership*, as defined by congregational consultant Gil Rendle, and use a fishbowl role-playing activity to discover the difference between asking, “Are we doing things right?” and “Are we doing [the] right things?”

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Lift up examples of turning points, and invite participants to recall their own turning points
- Explore ways that congregations can experience turning points
- Provide an opportunity to name the gifts and skills that the participants’ leadership team can bring to help navigate turning points
- Introduce and explore the difference between management and leadership.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify their own turning points and moments of grace
- Explore turning points in their own congregation and another congregation
- Identify the gifts and skills present in their own leadership team
- Practice applying what they learn about the difference between management and leadership.
- Investigate power and its role in faithful leadership.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Turning Points	30
Activity 2: Practicing Reconciliation – A Reflection	25
Activity 3: What Gifts Do We Bring?	15

Activity 4: Leadership and Management	30
Activity 5: Adaptive Challenges	10
Faith in Action: Responding to Adaptive Challenges	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership and Management Alternate Scenario	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflect on the turning points in your own life. Share some of what you discover about yourself with your co-facilitator or with a trusted friend.

Examine each of the “player” instructions in the role play for Activity 4, and imagine yourself, in turn, as each of those people. Find in each of them the desire to do what is best for the congregation, remembering that each leader has an important contribution to make to the conversation.

WORKSHOP PLAN

OPENING (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Small worship table
- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Covenant created in Workshop 1
- Wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Set the chalice on the worship table.
- Post the covenant created in Workshop 1 where all participants can see it.

DESCRIPTION

Gather the group in a circle. Ask a participant to light the chalice as you or another participant read the opening words, “A Prayer for This Gathering” by Laila Ibrahim:

Dear God, Spirit of Connection and Creation,

Bless this community, gathered in hope and love for our world, for one another, and for ourselves.

We gather here longing to create a more connected and more just world.

Help us to speak the truth with respect.

Help us to listen with love.

Help us to be patient.

Help us to be forgiving.

Help us to know that here, as in all human endeavors, mistakes are inevitable and perfection is impossible.

And, oh yes, remind us not to take ourselves too seriously.

Amen.

Review the posted covenant.

ACTIVITY 1: Turning Points (30 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Story 1, A Path Diverted
- Optional: Story 2, Rise in Body or in

Spirit

- Clock or timer
- Bell or chime

PREPARATION

- Read both stories. Choose one for this activity. Decide whether you might ask a volunteer to read the story aloud, or plan to read it yourself. You may wish to provide a reader with a copy of the story ahead of time.
- Write on newsprint, but do not post:
 - Thinking back, what events or people were part of that turning point?
 - What challenges presented themselves?
 - What gifts and skills emerged from the congregation's leaders and members that helped navigate that time?
 - When did the leaders realize that the event in question was a turning point? When did the congregation realize it?
 - Did the congregation's leaders affirm a "we" culture? If so, how did that affirmation make a difference?

DESCRIPTION

Gather the group, and ask them to listen as a participant reads a story aloud.

After the reading, invite participants to recall a time in their lives when an action, event, or chance meeting sent their lives in a new and unexpected direction. Allow a minute for silent reflection.

Invite participants to share their stories with another person, explaining what happened and how their self-perception changed. Tell them that each person will have about three minutes to share. Encourage participants to practice deep listening, allowing the other person to tell their story without interruption. Ring a bell or chime when three minutes have passed and again when the second three minutes have passed. Reconvene the group. Invite participants to think of a word or phrase that captures the essence of their experience. Wait a minute for people to think of their word or phrase, then ask each person in turn to share it with the group.

Invite participants to consider if their congregation has had turning points in its recent history—moments that pointed to a whole new set of possibilities or a whole new direction. Post the questions you have written. Lead a discussion that invites reflection on those moments.

ACTIVITY 2: Practicing Reconciliation – A Reflection (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Story 3, Practicing Reconciliation – A Reflection
- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Newsprint with questions from Activity 1, posted where all participants can see

PREPARATION

- Decide whether you might ask a volunteer to read the story aloud, or plan to read it yourself. You may wish to provide a reader with a copy of the story ahead of time.
- Write on newsprint, and post it where all participants can see it: “Reconciliation as a Spiritual Discipline,” *UU World*, March/April 2004
www.uuworld.org/life/articles/14270.shtml

DESCRIPTION

Participants hear a first-person story by Paula Cole Jones, abridged from her article “Reconciliation as a Spiritual Practice” in the March/April 2004 issue of *UU World*.

Invite listeners, as they listen to the story, to reflect on the questions they just discussed about their own congregation’s recent history, and to consider how Jones and other members of the All Souls leadership team might answer those same questions about this story.

Read the story aloud or have a volunteer read it.

Discuss the posted questions, focusing this time on Jones’s story.

As you conclude your discussion, point out the posted title of Jones’s piece, the edition of *UU World*, and the URL, where they can read the entire article.

ACTIVITY 3: What Gifts Do We Bring? (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Lined and unlined paper
- Pens, pencils, and color pencils

PREPARATION

- Set out the supplies.
- Ensure that participants have appropriate surfaces for writing or drawing.

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants consider the gifts and skills contributed by members of their leadership team.

Distribute paper and writing or drawing implements, and invite participants to name some of the skills and gifts their leadership team brings that can help navigate turning points. If needed, prompt participants by suggesting curiosity, tenacity, budgeting skills, and communication skills. Encourage them to do something creative if they wish, such as creating a drawing, a poem, or the ingredients for a recipe. Allow 10 minutes for participants to write, draw, or otherwise create.

Ask each person in turn to share their representation of their team’s gifts and skills. Take a moment to celebrate all that people bring to the challenges that are before you!

ACTIVITY 4: Leadership and Management (30 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Leader Resource 1, Accessibilities Audit Scenario
- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Prepare Leader Resource 1 according to the instructions (cut the individual role play directions apart).
- Arrange seating in a “fishbowl”: a tight circle of six chairs (or six chairs around a small table), with seating around the outside of the circle for the other participants.
- Write the following questions on newsprint, and post it where all participants can see it:
 - When is the group asking management questions?
 - When are they asking leadership questions?
 - How might this scenario become a turning point for the congregation?

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, six participants role-play members of a congregation’s governing board faced with a significant issue. Each role-player is assigned a specific perspective or agenda to bring to the discussion.

Say:

Alban Institute consultant Gil Rendle describes management as “something that makes the organization operate smoothly.” He says that management tries to answer the question, “Are we doing things right?” If this is your primary question, then what you are doing is trying to “satisfy” a congregation. Rendle notes that a completely satisfied congregation is difficult to lead because they don’t want to try

anything new or do anything differently.

Rendle says that *leadership*, in contrast, asks the question, “Are we doing the right things?” Asking this question creates a necessary unsettledness in congregations because it makes congregants look more deeply into what they are doing.

Both leadership and management are necessary, but leaders need to focus on *leading*, and not seeking simple harmony or satisfaction.

Convey the idea that congregations, like individuals, are sometimes faced with the unexpected when events or issues seem to call for moving in a new direction. Often, congregations face issues that present both management and leadership challenges. When leaders have the courage to ask not only “Are we doing things right?” but also “Are we doing the right things?,” the results can mean a turning point for the congregation and its work in the world.

Tell participants that they will do a fishbowl role play. Six volunteers will role-play members of a congregation’s governing board, faced with a significant issue. Those not in the role play will pay close attention to the governing board’s discussion.

Ask for six volunteers to be the congregation’s governing board. Give them each a slip of paper from Leader Resource 1 that they will bring to a discussion of the issue. Point out the

posted questions, and ask the remaining participants to keep them in mind as they observe the role play.

Introduce the scenario:

Your congregation is planning to do some major work to repair the foundation of the building and to upgrade the space. You've had a successful capital campaign and have raised nearly enough money—but not quite enough. Now you have heard from local government officials that you will not be granted a building permit until you have addressed some major accessibility issues in your building.

Allow discussion for 10 minutes or until the role play seems to reach a natural stopping point. Invite those on the outside of the fishbowl to respond to the posted questions. Record their responses on another sheet of newsprint. After those on the outside of the fishbowl have spoken, ask the role players to reflect on their experience. Add their observations to the newsprint list of responses.

ACTIVITY 5: Adaptive Challenges (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Write this definition on a sheet of newsprint, and post it where all participants can see:

An “adaptive challenge” is one that requires developing the organizational,

cultural, and spiritual capacity to meet problems successfully, according to our values and purposes. It often requires clarification and integration of competing values.

DESCRIPTION

Introduce the concept of *adaptive challenge* to the group. Point out the posted newsprint, and read the definition to the group. Tell them that this definition comes from the work of Ron Heifetz, director of the Leadership Education Project at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Read the definition a second time, this time underlining the words *developing*, *capacity*, *meet problems*, and *values*.

Invite participants to suggest some adaptive challenges faced by our society. Ask, “What are some events or issues that could lead to a turning point in how we proceed as a society?”

After they have considered some of society's adaptive challenges, invite them to name some adaptive challenges facing their congregation. Ask: “What are some challenges that will require our congregation to develop some new organizational, cultural, or spiritual capacities? What events or issues could lead to a turning point in how we proceed as a congregation?”

FAITH IN ACTION: Responding to Adaptive Challenges

DESCRIPTION

Explore the UUA's descriptions of

[Breakthrough Congregations](#). The UUA Breakthrough Congregations program “inspires and supports spiritual vitality in Unitarian Universalist communities by showcasing new models of vitality and successful approaches to leading change.” As you explore, consider:

- What were the challenges facing this congregation?
- What questions did they ask?
- What adaptive challenges are they addressing?
- What were some of their turning points?

Ask yourself how your congregation is (or might be) finding new and better ways to meet the needs of people who are currently underserved or not served at all in our religious communities. What questions are you asking? What adaptive challenges do you face? What would it take to move your congregation toward a turning point?

CLOSING (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- A penny for each participant

PREPARATION

- Optional: Customize the Taking It Home handout for your group before emailing or photocopying it.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants, or plan to email it.

DESCRIPTION

This activity was developed for children, but it works well for adults too.

Distribute copies of Taking It Home or tell the group when you will email it.

Say:

How many of you have thrown a coin into a fountain and made a wish? Some of us may have a superstitious idea that if we keep our wish a secret, it will magically come true. When I throw coins into a fountain, I usually don't remember what I wished for, and so I don't know if those wishes ever come true.

Today, I want to give you an idea for a new way to make wishes. I'm going to give you each a penny. Hold your penny in your hand, and wish something not for yourself, but for this congregation.

Now I invite each of you to give that penny to someone else and share your wish aloud.

(Pause.)

You just gave another person your hopes and dreams for the congregation, and you just received someone else's hopes and dreams. They have given you an invitation to help them with their wish, and you have invited them to help you. Pass your pennies around again.

(Pause.)

Imagine doing it again. And again. So many wishes and hopes and dreams passing through so many hands. May you all be ready to help one another fulfill those wishes. I hope you will also tell others outside this room what your wish is so they can help you fulfill it.

Keep your penny, and when you look at it, think of the hopes and dreams that we all have for this congregation, and pledge to help one another make your wishes come true.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Consider and discuss these questions with your co-facilitator:

- Looking at each activity in this workshop, what worked as well as or better than you had anticipated? What did not work as well as you had anticipated?
- What issues came up for you, personally, in trying any activity yourself? What came up in the process of facilitating?
- What would you change if you were to lead this workshop again? How would you do it differently?
- What did you learn about yourself as an individual while facilitating this workshop? What did you learn about yourself as a leader?
- Look ahead to the next workshop in this program. What materials do we need to request or gather? What other preparation is needed?

TAKING IT HOME

The prophetic liberal church is the church where persons think and work together to interpret the signs of the times in the light of their faith.

— James Luther Adams, 20th-century Unitarian theologian

Share your turning-point reflections with others in your congregation. This is a great opportunity for cross-generational conversations among congregational leaders. For example, an elder might speak with a high-schooler who is a leader within the youth group, or a newer congregational leader can interview a former church president of a different generation.

Consider with others how leaders might work to ensure that the congregation asks both “Are we doing the right things?” and “Are we doing things right?” Entrust a volunteer or two from your group to write a social media post or a short reflection to explain turning points. Create a forum for others to respond with their own turning-point stories.

Find Out More

Explore these web pages:

- [Breakthrough Congregations](#) on the UUA website
- [The Emotional Dynamics of Change](#) by Gilbert Rendle

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: Leadership and Management Alternate Scenario (30 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Leader Resource 2, Safe Congregation Scenario

□ Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Prepare Leader Resource 2 according to the instructions (cut the individual role-play directions apart).
- Arrange seating in a “fishbowl”: a tight circle of six chairs (or six chairs around a small table), with seating around the outside of the circle for the remaining participants.
- Write the following questions on newsprint, and post it where all participants can see it:
 - When is the group asking management questions?
 - When are they asking leadership questions?
 - How might this scenario become a turning point for the congregation?

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, six participants role-play members of a congregational governing board facing a significant issue. Each is assigned a specific perspective or agenda to bring to the discussion.

Tell participants that they will now do a fishbowl role play. Six volunteers will role-play members of a congregation’s governing board, faced with a significant issue. Those not in the role play will pay close attention to the governing board’s discussion.

Ask for six volunteers to be the congregation’s governing board. Give them each a slip of paper from Leader Resource 2 that they will bring to a

discussion of the issue. Point out the posted questions, and ask the remaining participants to keep them in mind as they observe the role play.

Introduce the scenario:

Your congregation’s insurance company has informed you that you will no longer be able to purchase liability coverage unless you have a policy in place to address the prevention of sexual abuse and misconduct, including the use of criminal background checks for volunteers and staff.

Allow discussion for 10 minutes or until the role play seems to reach a natural stopping point. Invite those on the outside of the fishbowl to respond to the posted questions. Record their responses on another sheet of newsprint. After those on the outside of the fishbowl have spoken, ask the role players to reflect on their experience. Add their observations to the newsprint list of responses.

STORY 1: A Path Diverted

Excerpted from “A Path Diverted” by Gregory S. Pelley, in Wrestling with Adulthood: Unitarian Universalist Men Talk About Growing Up, edited by Ken Beldon (Skinner House Books, 2008, pp. 77–86). Used with permission.

One morning last fall, I picked up [my daughter] Grace from preschool. She was now two and a half years old. When we arrived home, I was rushing to get into the house to do whatever it was I thought I had to get done at that moment. When I got to the back door, I turned to see her squatting on the sidewalk, blankie in one hand, poking a stick at something on the ground. Frustrated, I barked at her to get inside *now*. She stood and let the stick drop, still staring at whatever she had been prodding. I impatiently held the door and growled, “Come *on*, Grace! We *need* to get inside!” She took a half-step toward me and cocked her head to one side, her eyes never leaving that spot on the ground.

Suddenly it hit me. *This* is the clash between being an adult and being a child. At that moment, for Grace, nothing could be more important than what had caught her attention. It was time to wonder, to explore. I sighed, sad that I had given up the ability to be deeply interested in something crawling across the sidewalk on a warm afternoon. I let the door shut, walked the few steps to Grace’s side, and quietly asked, “What do you see?” She

picked up the stick and pointed. It took a moment for me to quiet down enough for my eyes to see.

An ant was dragging a crumb of bread that looked to be four times its size. The ant pulled and pushed and climbed on top of the crumb, then underneath it. The scene was excruciating, and fascinating. I sat down, and Grace slipped into my lap. She never said a word, keeping the stick in one hand and her blanket clutched in the other, thumb in her mouth. It took several minutes for the ant to move that crumb the last six inches to the edge of the sidewalk, before slipping down into the leaves and out of sight. Grace stood, dropped the stick, and walked up the stairs to the door. I didn’t know what to do, what to say. At the top of the stairs, she turned to me and said, “Come *on*, Daddy.”

STORY 2: Rise in Body or in Spirit

Excerpted from “Rise in Body or in Spirit” by the Reverend William Sinkford, in Landscapes of Aging and Spirituality, edited by Kathleen Montgomery (Skinner House Books, 2015, pp. 33–46). Used with permission.

I took a fall exiting a small commuter plane in South Carolina. The bruising was extensive, but I soldiered on. In the next weeks and months, my walking became more and more compromised, and the pain got worse, not better.

I underwent surgery to alleviate the pain. But my walking and my balance never returned. The final diagnosis was neuropathy. Though that term has a fancy medical definition, what it means to me is that the nerves to my feet and lower legs don't work right.

At General Assembly, the large annual gathering of Unitarian Universalists, I began using a scooter to get around. I simply couldn't walk fast enough to get from location to location within the time frames of the conference. The scooter was easy enough to justify while I was still working through diagnosis and treatment options, easy to justify as I was recovering from the surgery. Now, it is just what I need to do.

Accepting my new physical reality has been a test, and it is still a work in progress. I don't use a scooter at home or at work. I don't use or a cane, or anything. Part of the reason is my fear

that using an assist of any kind would encourage my congregation to begin taking care of me, which would compromise my ability to care for and minister to them. That is a real concern. But pride is also involved. And pride can be dangerous.

I also know, or at least believe, that once I begin using more assistive devices, I'll never return to life without them. So I refuse to use them.

The rational part of me, which continues to function well (at least as far as I can tell), knows that my congregation sees me walk awkwardly. I have never fallen in public, but they know.

Worse, using a visible assist would make me feel that the end is near, or at least nearing, even if that wasn't the case. The invincible younger man inside me, who never had to think about physical limitations, who could rely on his body to do what he asked it to do, who never had to think about limitations or compromises, resents these limitations and, when I allow him to, rails against them.

I live with a sense of betrayal. The body I relied on for so many years is letting me down. I am still mad about it. Furious, actually. How is it possible to be so angry at my own body, at myself?

My mind seems uncompromised by aging, at least so far. But there are qualifications even to that statement. My memory is not as sharp as it once was. I need to make more notes, lest I

forget things. That doesn't feel like much of a compromise.

Yet my spirit seems to deepen by the day.

The spirit is willing, but the body? A quip from the used car business comes to mind: "It's not the mileage but the wear and tear on the chassis that matters."

I am blessed to be doing a ministry I love. I now serve as the minister at First Unitarian, Portland, Oregon, and four years in, parish ministry is proving to be just as satisfying as I imagined it would. I loved my time at the UUA. I gave everything I had to that work. But now I am finally living out the call to ministry I heard and answered twenty-five years ago.

What takes a toll is the having to pay attention, almost all the time: needing to plan where I can stand, calculating how far I can walk. How close can I park to that meeting? How many steps will I have to climb? How long will I have to stand?

My colleagues at the church increasingly understand that I have limitations. They are both gracious and generous in making accommodations without making a big production of it. No one asks me to march in protests. I just show up at the speakers' platform at the end of the march. We've modified our child dedication ritual so that I don't hold the children. I need to place a hand on someone's shoulder to stand and sing the hymns.

At a recent installation where I preached, I decided to take the invitation to "rise in body or spirit" seriously and remained seated. It felt like a watershed moment. Could I give myself permission to acknowledge my limitations so publicly? I found out, of course, that the world continued spinning on its axis while I remained seated to sing. It was not a big deal to anyone other than me.

It felt like another step in acceptance of who I am now. A healthy decision, no doubt. The problem is that more such decisions will surely be required, and each one presents the same spiritual test. Each one presents yet another opportunity to accept a new, more limited body. Each one calls up again the sense of betrayal, the anger, and the disappointment.

What is hardest to accept is not any one sign of the reality of my physical limitations, but the knowledge that dealing with them will be part of my life for the rest of my life.

STORY 3: Practicing Reconciliation – A Reflection

Excerpted from “[Reconciliation as a Spiritual Practice](#)” by Paula Cole Jones, in the March/April 2004 issue of UU World.

Practicing reconciliation is my personal spiritual discipline. Practicing reconciliation means I commit to being in right relationship with people in my life and, when I’m not, caring enough to face unresolved issues and improve the relationship.

I have carried reconciliation with me while working in All Souls Church in Washington, where I am a lifelong member, and increasingly in the Unitarian Universalist Association at large. From this experience I have learned that reconciliation is a competency we can bring to four levels of conflict—in our own souls, between individuals like my sister and me, within groups like my congregation, and between groups such as people of color like me and the dominant white culture. Reconciliation helps us to get into right relationship.

I learned the importance of personal and group reconciliation at church on a sticky weekend in July 1997. Seventy members of All Souls in Washington, D.C., gathered to discuss reconciliation at the church. Our racially diverse congregation was staggering after a divisive crisis that ended a ministry.

The meeting began a painstaking process of rebuilding our community and deciding how to move forward.

One of the many changes that came out of the reconciliation work at church was “A Dialogue on Race and Ethnicity” (ADORE). People came together to share personal stories about how race had shaped their life experiences, and it was clear that we had tapped into something deep in the community. We kept the door open for anyone who wanted to participate: Everyone has a story about race and ethnicity. Telling the stories brought a new dimension of our lives to the church community and brought us closer together. Six years later, ADORE continues to meet, and welcomes new participants.

Several months after the first ADORE meeting, our assistant minister handed me a flyer and said, “You might be interested in this.” It was an announcement for “Creating a Jubilee World,” a UUA-sponsored weekend workshop about antiracism hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis, Maryland. About eighty people from congregations in the area attended. I was deeply impressed.

The leaders provided a structure for this large group of people to address one of the most difficult issues in our lives; they took the conversation much deeper than I had expected. My mother and another member of our congregation attended with me, and we agreed that such a workshop would be good for our congregation. But as we

learned when the workshop came to All Souls, some people found this deeper involvement a challenge. We were fortunate to have members of the church board, search committee, ADORE, and other leaders participate in the even more challenging “Jubilee Two” workshop before the search committee reviewed applications for a new senior minister. After five years of reconciliation work, with ministerial participation and lay leadership, antiracism has been embraced widely in the congregation.

My experience at All Souls in 1997 inspired my decision to make reconciliation my spiritual practice. That experience also deepened my involvement in my church and began my growing involvement in my district and ultimately in the UUA. The more involved I got, the more challenging the work became—but the more risks I took, the more I grew. The more I listened and the more I communicated, the stronger trust became. The more humility I summoned, the more I learned.

People tend to be reluctant to go deep into matters of race because we fear discomfort, conflict, and loss, and we fear appearing uninformed and unprepared. Summoning the depth of honesty needed to confront these fears—and thus to confront racism and bring reconciliation to groups that have been divided—is a spiritual challenge. It troubles the spirit because it disrupts our sense of things being all right. But

thinking things are all right when they’re not makes it difficult to see why or how we need to change.

The work of building a just community means individually and collectively working to be in right relationship with people from historically marginalized groups and holding ourselves accountable for changing the things that create injustice. A discipline of reconciliation helps us as we work to undo racism and oppression by empowering us to get on the path over and over again, respecting and appreciating that we have traveled different paths and we come to this point from different experiences.

The unfinished business of race has challenged me spiritually. At the end of 2002, reflecting on a year of engagement with UUA antiracism efforts, I wrote in my journal: “I am no longer willing to have my personal energy and spirit absorbed by the ‘Great Inertia’ around antiracism.” I considered leaving the church. I spoke with my mother about visiting other churches. She was loving and supportive—and encouraged me to not give up.

Then I left for a ten-day trip on UUA business that I figured would make my decision to stay or leave. My first meeting, in Boston, included a serendipitous encounter with a colleague on a midnight walk in the snow to the corner store; he told me about some ministers who were ready to enter the conversation about

antiracism. The trip led to Chicago and back to Boston for a meeting with the leaders of the UUA's youth organization, who committed to incorporate antiracism into their long-range planning. My moment of decision came on the airplane to Chicago, tears welling up in my eyes as I read the Skinner House book *Soul Work*, and saw that the conversation to undo racism is authentic among ministers in the UUA. By the end of the trip, I had reconciled my own misgivings, and I had grown.

It's like what they say about marriage: We marry a fantasy, and the bubble has to burst before the real relationship begins. It took forty years for my UU bubble to burst my fantasy that it was the ideal community. It was a pretty long honeymoon. I committed to begin again.

At its high points, my work with the church has given me spiritual sustenance and a loving community. It's been more than five years since I learned the valuable lesson that led to developing a practice of reconciliation. Yes, it is spiritual work, and it takes discipline. For five years this practice has enabled me to challenge and be challenged in our congregation, which is now a vibrant, rapidly growing community with a vision for racial and social justice, and it has enriched my personal life.

LEADER RESOURCE 1:

Accessibilities Audit

Scenario

Cut to create six different “roles” for the fishbowl role play. Give each of the six volunteer role-players a different slip.

Player One: Chair of the Board. You are overwhelmed by this latest news and very worried. There just doesn't seem to be any more money to be had from the congregation, and the accessibility upgrades will be costly. You're afraid that this will torpedo the whole project.

Player Two: You are angry with the local government for imposing this on the congregation. You believe they have no right to do so. Your attitude is that the local government should support the building repairs and upgrades the congregation is undertaking, rather than undermine them.

Player Three: You have arthritis in your hands and in your knees, and you sometimes find the front steps and the door handles difficult to negotiate. You are quiet about this difficulty and are not sure that you are ready to share your experience with this group.

Player Four: You believe in your heart that making the congregation more accessible to those with mobility impairments is the right thing to do, and you are convinced that a way can be found to do it. You are often seen as the “impractical” one in the group.

Player Five: You wonder if the accessibility upgrades make good financial sense. From your point of view, the planned upgrades will benefit many people, and the accessibility upgrades will benefit only a few.

Player Six: You have been the representative to the building task force, and you are *exhausted*. You have done all that you can do to get this project ready to the point where construction and renovation can begin—and now this!! You are discouraged and feel unappreciated.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: Safe Congregation Scenario

Cut to create six different “roles” for the fishbowl role play. Give each of the six volunteer role-players a different slip.

Player One: Chair of the Board. You believe that having liability coverage is crucial to the well-being of the congregation and that you have a fiduciary responsibility to see to it that there is a safe congregation policy.

Player Two: You are concerned about finances, especially about any possible costs of criminal background checks. You are also concerned because a large donor has stated that they view background checks as an invasion of privacy.

Player Three: You are concerned about the implementation of any safe congregation policy. Who will be responsible? How will they get training? Do our current staff members have the time and bandwidth to take this on?

Player Four: You have been reading the latest news about child sexual abuse among volunteers and professionals who are entrusted with the well-being of children. From your point of view, a safe congregation policy cannot come soon enough.

Player Five: You keep thinking about the first UU Principle, the inherent worth and dignity of every person. How does this Principle apply when it comes to protecting children? What about our volunteers? Do background checks violate their worth and dignity?

Player Six: You have been with this congregation for a long time, and you trust everyone here. Requiring background checks and other policies seems to be unnecessary. You wonder if there really is any need for liability insurance—and you resent the insurance company for pushing the congregation around.

WORKSHOP 4: CARING FOR OURSELVES AND ONE ANOTHER

Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward. — Kurt Vonnegut, 20th-century American novelist

INTRODUCTION

This workshop helps participants consider how they care for themselves as leaders and how they encourage and model self-care for other members of the congregation.

Participants reflect on the causes of personal stress and burnout and on their own responses to stress. They name ways they can take care of their own spirits and practice asking for what they need from a leadership group to help them participate with a full heart.

Some activities may evoke emotional responses. Be sure participants understand that this workshop focuses on stress and its impact, and that they are free to “pass” or excuse themselves from an activity at any time.

Optional: Review the UUA pamphlet [Spirituality of Service](#), available at inSpirit: UU Book and Gift Shop. Purchase copies for workshop participants, your leadership team, or the congregation’s pamphlet rack.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Help participants honestly examine their own spiritual well-being
- Explore the role of leaders in creating a spiritually healthy congregational culture that encourages its volunteers’ spiritual and emotional health
- Help participants recognize what energizes them and what depletes them and help build empathy for others’ possibly different experiences.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Name responsibilities and accountabilities they hold as people and as leaders
- Reflect on their sense of spiritual well-being
- Recognize differences among people regarding what energizes them and what depletes them
- Practice asking the group for specific support that will make it easier for them to stay spiritually and emotionally healthy while leading
- Consider their role in preventing their own burnout and in modeling healthy behavior for the congregation
- Learn strategies to build and maintain a congregational culture

that encourages its volunteers' spiritual and emotional health.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Heads Up!	10
Activity 2: Bodies of Water Guided Meditation	15
Activity 3: Working and Coping Styles	15
Activity 4: What I Need	20
Activity 5: Confessions of a Prodigal Volunteer	25
Activity 6: Keeping Priorities Straight in Congregations	25
Faith in Action: Keeping Priorities Straight	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Juggling Act	10
Alternative Activity 2: Burnout – A Misnomer	20

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

If you have a personal spiritual practice, engage in it before facilitating this workshop. Consider your spiritual practices, your own level of self-care, and your potential for fatigue and burnout by answering the following questions honestly:

- In what ways do I currently take good care of myself?

- In what ways could I take better care of myself?
- Am I excited about leading this workshop? (If not, why?)
- Do I currently feel joy or satisfaction regarding my service to the congregation?
- Does my work at the congregation feel like a chore or an obligation?
- What is currently causing me stress?
- What is currently giving me joy?

Writing your answers will help you see any differences in your feelings before and after the workshop.

WORKSHOP PLAN

OPENING (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Small worship table
- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Covenant created in Workshop 1, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Set the chalice on the worship table.
- Post the covenant.
- Choose either the song or the reading for your opening:
 - “Here We Have Gathered,” Hymn 360 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, is a good choice if your group likes to sing.

- “We Need One Another,” Reading 468 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, is a responsive reading. Plan to have half the participants read the plain text and the other half read the italicized text.

DESCRIPTION

Gather the group in a circle. Ask a participant to light the chalice as you and the group engage in the opening words, either singing “Here We Have Gathered” or responsively reading “We Need One Another.”

Tell participants that today’s workshop focuses on spiritual well-being and that some activities may induce a mild level of stress. Let them know that they can always “pass” or excuse themselves if they are uncomfortable. Reassure them that the purpose of the workshop is to build participants’ awareness of how they react to and reduce stress and to explore how they, as leaders, can set a congregational tone that invites others to care for themselves in body and spirit.

Review the posted covenant.

ACTIVITY 1: Heads Up! (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Four or five bean bags, small stuffed animals, or other soft objects for throwing

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants toss a bean bag or other soft object to one another

while naming tasks and people that demand their time and attention on a daily or weekly basis.

Explain that you will name one task or person from congregational life, home life, or work life that you must attend to. You will then toss a beanbag to a random participant. That person will also name something or someone that calls on their time and attention, and then immediately toss the beanbag to another random person—and so on.

Point out that people of different cultures, genders, and ages may face very different expectations with regard to the responsibilities they take on, including for the care of others. Say that the object of this activity is to generate a list and ask that participants not comment on what anyone else shares.

Have the group form a circle. Start the game, and encourage participants to go as quickly as possible.

Once a rhythm is established, add a second tossed object, then a third and a fourth, in turn. Adding tossed objects will require participants to watch in several directions for the next ball and think quickly of tasks or people to name. Continue the game for about five minutes or until everyone has had a chance to speak a few times.

Ask participants how they felt as they played the game:

- Did the game feel stressful? Silly? Some participants may have felt

mild stress due to the speed of the game, the need to think under pressure, the number of objects, and the increased difficulty of thinking of things to name. Some participants may have responded with laughter and giddiness.

- Was it easier or harder to identify demands on your time and attention as the game proceeded? Why?

Say, “Every one of us carries multiple responsibilities and must pay attention to things coming at us from many different directions.” Invite the group to reflect for a moment on this experience.

Tell participants that it is important for them as leaders to develop ways to care for themselves in both body and spirit, because (1) their well-being is essential to their continuing the work, and (2) their approach to self-care sets a tone for others in the congregation. Part of self-care includes telling the truth to ourselves and others about the responsibilities we hold and carry and about the sources of support available to us.

INCLUDING ALL PARTICIPANTS

If any participants cannot catch or throw an object around the room, have participants call out the name of the next person who must answer. For example, “I help my parents with their bills. Bill, you’re next.” Encourage everyone to be random in calling on the next person, so participants cannot anticipate their next turn.

ACTIVITY 2: Bodies of Water Guided Meditation (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Leader Resource 1, Bodies of Water Guided Meditation
- Clock or timer
- Bell or chime

DESCRIPTION

Begin by reminding participants that they have agreed to respect the confidentiality of personal information and stories shared here.

Invite participants to settle into a comfortable space for meditation. Tell them that you will now read a guided meditation to encourage awareness of the state of their spiritual and emotional selves, both currently and at other times in their lives. The goal is to help them connect more intentionally with the things that feed their energy, strength, and enthusiasm and enable them to cope with their myriad responsibilities and tasks.

Read aloud the guided meditation in Leader Resource 1.

Invite participants to consider the ways in which the various bodies of water reflect their own experiences as human beings and as leaders. After about a minute, ask the group to consider these questions:

- What discoveries did you make about yourself and your own journey?

- Did you identify some circumstances that energize you?
- Did you identify some things that deplete you?

Invite participants to spend 10 minutes sharing their reflections with a partner. Ring a bell or chime after five minutes to remind pairs to switch speakers if they haven't yet done so.

ACTIVITY 3: Working and Coping Styles (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Paper and pens or pencils for all participants

PREPARATION

- Ensure that participants have appropriate surfaces for writing.

DESCRIPTION

Distribute paper and pens or pencils. Read aloud this scenario:

The board of your congregation has just asked you to be part of a new seven-person committee to work on an issue of great importance to the congregation. You have agreed to serve. The charge to the committee is unclear to you, and the board has not chosen a leader, instead telling you to choose a chair from among the group. The night of the first meeting, all seven of you assemble in a room at the appointed time. What would you do under these circumstances?

Tell participants that they have three minutes to reflect on the first two or

three things they would do at this hypothetical committee meeting. Prompt them by asking, "Might you sit back and listen first? immediately volunteer to chair the committee? dash out of the room for supplies? start a brainstorming session? something else?"

After three minutes, invite participants to move into groups of three and share their ideas.

After participants have spent 10 minutes sharing in triads, invite general comments from the group about the experience. You may prompt discussion with these questions:

- In what ways did you and your conversation partners respond similarly to this situation?
- In what ways did your responses differ?
- To what do you attribute your different approaches?
- Where is self care in this scenario? Where should or could it appear?
- What are you noticing about the patterns and tendencies that are part of your personal leadership style?

ACTIVITY 4: What I Need (20 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Optional: Paper and pens or pencils for all participants

PREPARATION

- Post blank newsprint.

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants focus on their particular role as a congregational leader and name parts of that role that they find stressful, energizing, or both. If they belong to a leadership group that is working together, this activity provides an opportunity for participants to ask for specific supports to reduce some of the stress they experience in their leadership roles.

Draw a vertical line to divide the newsprint in half. At the top of one column, write “Energizes/feeds me.” At the top of the other, write “Stresses/depletes me.” Allow about eight minutes for participants to name one way in which the leadership work energizes or feeds them and one way in which it stresses or depletes them. Record their responses. Acknowledge that since we respond differently to situations, people might list the same item in two different columns.

After each person has named two items, ask for any items that belong somewhere between the two. Then ask if there are important items that have not yet been mentioned.

If the participants currently work together as leaders (e.g., as members of a governing board), allow time for them to consider ways to increase the “energizing/feeding” experiences and decrease the “stressing/depleting” experiences. Guide them to identify

specific ways that the group might accommodate individual members’ stated needs.

If the participants do not currently work together in a congregational setting, distribute paper and pens or pencils and invite them to write down a few things that make it more rewarding and less stressful for them to hold a leadership role. Invite participants to share their list with a partner. Suggest that they practice framing their list as requests for the specific supports they need in order to thrive physically, emotionally, and spiritually in their leadership role.

Spend the last few minutes discussing (in pairs or as a group) ways that leadership team members might be able to meet one another’s needs for support.

ACTIVITY 5: Confessions of a Prodigal Volunteer (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Story, Confessions of a Prodigal Volunteer

PREPARATION

- Pre-arrange with one or more participants to read the story and provide them with a copy of the story in advance.

DESCRIPTION

Invite participants to listen to the volunteer(s) read the story.

Engage the group in conversation with

these questions:

- What aspects of the author's story resonated for you?
- What does the story suggest that leaders can do to support a culture that reduces burnout?

Remind the group that part of their covenant is to respect the confidentiality of personal information and stories shared here.

ACTIVITY 6: Keeping Priorities Straight in Congregations (25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Handout 1, Health Versus the Push to Accomplish Things
- 9- x 12-inch construction paper and markers and/or colored pencils for all participants
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 1 for all participants.
- Pre-arrange with a participant to read the story and provide them with a copy of the story in advance.
- Select an "art area" where participants will have room to draw and can easily share materials. Set out the art supplies.
- Optional: Post blank newsprint.

DESCRIPTION

Introduce this activity:

As congregational leaders, we must be aware that we are role models. Our actions and behavior can add to or decrease the stress of others in the congregation. How we handle situations that arise sets the tone for how others respond.

Distribute Handout 1, and ask the participant you chose to read it aloud. Invite two or three minutes of comment.

Point out that the handout suggests there is such a thing as keeping priorities straight. Invite participants to say what they think that might mean, or look like.

Ask participants to indicate whether they think it might mean "getting things done quickly and correctly,"

Now ask whether keeping priorities straight might be more of a moving target. Suggest that an effective, nimble process for collaborative, ongoing decision-making could be one way to "keep priorities straight."

Say:

If our congregation has a culture that prioritizes "getting things done quickly and correctly," we may be losing opportunities to build relationships within the leadership group. Although it may take extra time, listening, and negotiation to make space for each person's gifts and strengths, the more connected the leadership team can stay to one another and to people in the congregation, the better and more

supported will be their decisions.

Ask:

- What would a congregation need to do to keep its priorities straight?
- What would that look like in this congregation?

Invite participants to move to the art area you have set up. Ask them to create a drawing of a congregation that you believe has its priorities straight. Tell participants that the drawing can be abstract or representational; stick figures and symbols are welcome. Tell them that they will have 10 minutes to create their drawings.

Reconvene the group, and invite each person to share their drawing.

You may want to record their ideas on a sheet of newsprint the leadership group can revisit during a retreat, a goal-setting meeting, or the suggested Faith in Action activity for this workshop.

FAITH IN ACTION: Keeping Priorities Straight

MATERIALS

- Handout 1, Health Versus the Push to Accomplish Things

PREPARATION

- Arrange to attend a meeting of a committee or other leadership group to share the work done in this workshop.
- Create a list of the ideas the group

shared as they presented their drawings in Activity 6.

DESCRIPTION

Invite committees or other leadership groups in the congregation to read Handout 1 together and consider its implications for the work they do. Offer to attend a group meeting and share the Harvest the Power group's suggestions as to what it means and how it looks to keep the congregation's priorities straight. Invite the committee or leadership group to add to the Harvest the Power group's list or create their own.

CLOSING (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: Copies of the UUA pamphlet [Spirituality of Service](#), one for each participant

PREPARATION

- Optional: Customize the Taking It Home handout for your group before emailing or photocopying it.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants, or plan to email it.

DESCRIPTION

Distribute copies of Taking It Home or tell the group when you will email it. Invite participants to share two minutes of silence to honor the important work the group has done together.

Read aloud "Wild Geese" by Mary

Oliver, Reading 490 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Optional: Give Spirituality of Service pamphlets to participants, and invite them to use the pamphlet as a springboard for journaling or for conversation with friends and family members.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Consider and discuss these questions with your co-facilitator:

- Looking at each activity in this workshop, what worked as well as or better than you had anticipated? What did not work as well as you had anticipated?
- What issues came up for you personally in trying any activity yourself? What came up in the process of facilitating?
- What would you change if you were to lead this workshop again? How would you do it differently?
- What did you learn about yourself as an individual while facilitating this workshop? What did you learn about yourself as a leader?
- Look ahead to the next workshop in this program. What materials do we need to request or gather? What other preparation is needed?

TAKING IT HOME

Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and

exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward. — Kurt Vonnegut, 20th-century American novelist

You may wish to journal, pray, or meditate on these questions:

- In what ways am I currently taking good care of myself?
- In what ways could I take better care of myself?
- Where do I currently feel joy or satisfaction in my congregational work?
- In what ways does my congregational involvement feel like a chore or an obligation?
- Are there changes I need to make in my life or in the way in which I interact with the congregation?

Invite family members and friends to reflect with you on these questions.

Find Out More

You may wish to add resources that informed this workshop to your congregation's leadership library:

- Lynne M. Baab, *Beating Burnout in Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1989)
- Margaret Benefiel, *Soul at Work: Spiritual Leadership in Organizations* (New York: Seabury, 2005)
- Ric Masten, *Ric Masten Speaking* (Watsonville, CA: Paper Mache Press, 1990)

- Mary Oliver, *Dreamwork* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986)
- Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999)
- Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2011)

Here are some additional resources to explore online:

- [“Understanding the radical history of self-care is essential to practicing it successfully”](#) by Sadie Trombetta, posted in Hello Giggles, January 2, 2018
- [“3 Things You Should Know About Intersectionality and Self-Care”](#) by Rex Leonowicz, posted in Shine
- [“Self-care isn't enough. We need community care to survive”](#) by Heather Dockray, posted in Mashable, May 24, 2019
- [“25 Cheat Sheets for Taking Care of Yourself Like a Damn Adult”](#) by Anna Borges, posted in Mashables, March 30, 2017
- [“8 Ways You Can Practice Self-Care In the Face of Daily Racism”](#) by Roberta K. Timothy, posted in Huffpost.ca, May 8, 2018

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: Juggling Act (10 Minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Items to juggle safely, such as bean bags or small soft balls

PREPARATION

- If you or your co-facilitator are not able to juggle, recruit a juggler to help you with this activity.
- Write the following questions on newsprint, and post where all participants can see it:
 - When you keep all the balls in the air, how do you feel physically? Mentally?
 - When you drop important balls, how do you feel physically? Mentally?
 - Are all these balls yours to juggle, or are you juggling someone else's balls?

DESCRIPTION

This activity is a physical demonstration of having to balance many demands at the same time.

While juggling (or while your guest juggles), tell participants that congregational leaders are like jugglers trying to keep all the balls in the air. Embellish the analogy to congregational life as much as possible. Invite participants to assign specific task responsibilities to each item you have in the air.

Perform (or encourage the guest to perform) whatever juggling

tricks you have. Have fun!

While juggling, or after you have finished, indicate the three questions on newsprint. Ask participants to keep these questions in mind as they go about their work as leaders.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: Burnout – A Misnomer (20 Minutes)

MATERIALS

- Handout 2, Burnout – a Misnomer

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Pre-arrange with a participant to read the poem aloud and provide them with a copy ahead of time.

DESCRIPTION

Invite participants to listen to a reading of the poem in Handout 2.

Use these questions to prompt a group discussion:

- What images or words resonated for you?
- Are there times in your life when you have felt burned out?
- What do you think of Masten’s prescription: “Find another source of power, and if the cord doesn’t reach, move the set”? Does that image suggest any ways that congregational leaders could support a culture that reduces burnout?

STORY: Confessions of a Prodigal Volunteer

By Elizabeth Weber, in UU World, Fall 2007.

As is true for so many Unitarian Universalists, my first encounter with the concept of inherent worth and dignity offered an exhilarating contrast to my childhood faith, which taught me I was born unworthy of God's love. I abandoned Roman Catholicism upon leaving home for college, feeling guilty yet giddy with relief. Twenty-five years later, as I resigned my job to join my partner Ken in his retirement, I joined the UU fellowship located a magnetic half-mile from our home. Embarking on retirement and my new religion with equal parts enthusiasm and naiveté, I soon realized I still needed to work—to stimulate my intellect, to cultivate connections, to find purpose.

Put another way, I needed something to do.

Unitarian Universalism obligingly filled the void, and myriad volunteer opportunities soon drew this introvert from her shell. By my fifth year I'd put my whole self in, racking up a resume of leadership roles and committee posts within, then beyond, the walls of my congregation. The work was novel, varied, rewarding. It changed me in ways I liked. It offered me much more than "something to do."

Unitarian Universalism cultivated in me

a more expansive view of my place in the world. It encouraged me to relinquish the illusion of safety for new ventures. I credit it with giving me the courage, last spring, to act on Ken's and my long-deferred desire to move 2,000 miles closer to his grown children and grandchildren. We had played major roles in leading our congregation through a multiyear planning process, capital campaign, and building addition. Finally, it was finished, imbuing our relocation decision with a satisfying sense of completion.

In my case, however, this milestone was muddled by a sense of depletion. Following the building project, my service to my congregation and community had grown tedious, increasingly burdensome. Instead of enlivening me, it made me cranky. Decisions I disagreed with grew harder to accept. I was doing less than I once had but enjoying it far less than before. I'd eased up, but apparently too late.

I knew I'd erred in gravitating toward roles that, although worthwhile, didn't feed my spirit. I'd come to care too much about the work, for a mishmash of reasons—ego, certainly, and strong convictions based on a by-now prodigious institutional memory. A sense of earned power—that occupational hazard of intense volunteer commitment—also tethered me. And if I set the work down, I feared it might lie there a good long while (horrors!) before others picked it up.

Meanwhile, believing it was my

responsibility to reinvest the social capital I'd amassed as a lay leader, I recruited others relentlessly—to help with the canvass, to serve on committee x or y. Even then, I couldn't rest. For how hypocritical it would be to enlist others, only to dust off my hands and resign from the finance committee!

Where I'd once lauded UUism as the antithesis of my childhood religion, I now saw parallels in my reactions to the two. My new faith had exhorted me to do good works, as Catholicism had. But drawn into ever more volunteer roles at church and beyond, my sense of mission was subsumed by minutiae as dutiful old habits of mind held sway. I pondered budget numbers as if they were mysteries of the Rosary. Committee meetings now seemed as mandatory as Mass once had. (Afterward, I typed minutes like a dutiful penance.) I was burying my talents and expending my energy not in true ministry but in what a friend called "administrivia."

A year before we moved, my survival instinct belatedly kicked in, with mixed results. Weary and protective of my fragmented free time, I avoided the very groups and gatherings that might have nourished my spirit and balanced my involvement. Abandoning my "volunteer obligations" (although I wryly noted the paradox therein) remained unthinkable—until the stronger magnetic pull of family half a continent away served to end my self-imposed servitude.

My farewells to my fellowship were genuinely fond and sad. But when at last I took my whole self out to race the moving van cross-country, I realized I felt much as I had upon leaving Catholicism behind decades earlier. It shocked me to think I'd let my commitment to Unitarian Universalism devolve into a rerun of that old defection.

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Once settled again, I began rebuilding my life, balancing Marge Piercy's summons to be of use with Mary Oliver's reassurance that I do not have to be good—at least not all the time.

Reflecting on my decade as a UU, I recalled that in my early days, I'd seen certain members work hard, then disappear. I hadn't understood why they left. In my newfound zeal, I had been certain I would never burn out.

After our move I saw that hubris for what it was. Declaring myself an Emily Dickinson-style Nobody, I let my unstructured days wash over me: no budgets, no meetings, no minutes to type—just hours to recharge and reflect. Slowly, from silence, clarity emerged: I was ready to put down roots again. I listened a little longer, but I knew just where to plant them.

I was fortunate that circumstances conspired to save me from myself. Unlike many "church ladies" (or people) who unwittingly over-involve themselves, my perspective was restored by an abrupt and absolute

physical relocation. It granted me the spiritual detachment I needed to recall precisely why I embraced this religion ten years ago—and to understand how I got lost along the way.

I brought some lifelong, self-abnegating behaviors to my new faith, I see now. But unlike my old faith, Unitarian Universalism never made me feel unworthy. If anything, it swamped me with a sense of my value and potential.

At my new fellowship, I began by confiding to my new minister my need to go slowly. On Sundays, I hearkened to sermons that emphasized the importance of finding one's own true calling, beyond any organization's internal needs. When asked to help with sundry small tasks, I hesitated, then said yes, and found I enjoyed renewing old proficiencies while meeting new friends. Later, when offered a larger role, I responded simply but sincerely, "Not yet." (Watching a talented, more energetic member quickly fill that spot, I felt grateful to her—and humbled by all I had learned.)

I'm savoring the sweetness of a fresh start and the prospect of growing into a spiritual community. Best of all, I've learned that while I'm not indispensable to any congregation, Unitarian Universalism will always be indispensable to me.

HANDOUT 1: Health Versus the Push to Accomplish Things

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We expect our congregations to be places of health and healing, an oasis in the midst of the demands and stresses of daily life. Yet some people experience great pain in their congregations, pain that robs them of the comfort their faith could give them. Burnout is one kind of pain that goes against the very promise of congregational life.

All systems that rely on the labor of individuals, if left to themselves, will encourage burnout. The workplace, nonprofit organizations, and congregations all have a tendency to push workers toward burnout. That is because these systems have goals and leaders dedicated to meeting these goals. The people working within the system very easily become the means to an end, and that end is the accomplishment of goals.

In a congregation, the goals are often lofty and energizing: rich and celebratory worship services, stimulating adult education, outreach to people who are poor and in need, care

and concern for children and youth. The congregation has to keep a strong focus on its goals in order for the congregation as a whole to be healthy. Meeting those goals requires labor. The congregational system needs to get people working and keep them at it.

Hard work is necessary to make the congregation a place of refuge and rest. This is a tension, an irony that always exists in congregations. The need for hard work pushes congregation members toward diligent service, and that kind of service can take away the sense of rest and refuge that people need. The congregation that has the goal of bringing life and health to its members may also push people toward burnout because workers are needed.

The congregation as a system will tend to call people into service for the sake of duty, which unfortunately moves so easily into workaholism. It takes effort on the part of leaders to keep priorities straight. Congregational leaders need to expend significant energy with deliberate intention in order to affirm the call to serve God with joy, from the heart, so that burnout will be less frequent.

HANDOUT 2: Burnout – A Misnomer

By Ric Masten (1929–2008), a Unitarian Universalist poet, folk singer and minister. In Ric Masten Speaking (Watsonville, CA: Paper Mache Press, 1990). Used with permission.

burnout
you've seen the results
in the shop on the shelf
row after row of grey empty faces
with nothing happening in the glassy
eyes
except
a little surface reflection
burnout
you know the symptoms
a history of dependable service
then suddenly for no reason things go
dark
and you're a dead piece of furniture
waiting
to be removed from the living room
burnout
the psychological repairman said
and shrugged and shook his head
having checked everything
except the cord

which of course
was disconnected
in a word "unplugged"
and to think
i nearly went to the dump myself
because someone less than a poet
trying to describe a condition
came up with a misleading term
clearly
a case of burnout demands a second
opinion
and this is mine
find an outlet
and if the cord doesn't reach
move the set

LEADER RESOURCE 1: Bodies Of Water Guided Meditation

INSTRUCTIONS

Read the meditation in a slow, calm manner, pausing between sentences for a second or two. Pause for about 10 seconds where longer pauses are indicated in the text.

TEXT

Please sit in a comfortable meditation position. Close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so, and focus on your own breathing. Take three deep breaths, breathing in and out, in and out, in and out.

Picture in your mind your favorite body of water. It may be as large as the ocean, or as small as a brook. *(longer pause)* Notice the way in which the water moves, the way it holds its own space, the way it impacts that which surrounds it. Notice how the water feels. Is it cool? Or warm? Is it icy? Is it refreshing? Notice how it tastes. Notice the color of the water—and its smell. Be aware of what is carried by the water—small bits of plant or animal, particles of soil or sand, fish and other aquatic creatures, some too small to be seen by human eyes. *(longer pause)*

Become one with the water, carrying what it carries, taking its form. *(longer pause)* In your mind's eye, trace the water back to its source, back through the rivers and streams and lakes and waterfalls—back to its source somewhere in the mountains.

Experience yourself as a stream beginning with rain and melted snow somewhere high above sea level.

As you begin your journey, you are but a tiny stream, bubbling with new possibilities, exploring and shaping your own path through crevices in the rock or channels left by glaciers that receded long ago. Feel your energy. Feel your power and strength as you shape your own path through the mountains. Feel the changing nature of your being as you grow with spring melts, contract with summer drought, and freeze in the depths of winter. *(longer pause)* You are full of joy, enthusiasm, and the energy that can literally move mountains.

Now trace your path downstream a bit to a place where you become a freshwater lake, with water spilling in through the lake's inlet and leaving at its outlet. You are constantly renewed by a fresh supply of water, and sending your own living waters forth, carrying a rich mixture of life and life-giving soil. *(longer pause)* You feel full, but not overfull, strong and deep, full of motion, and yet somehow stable in your lakebed.

Trace your path downstream to the mighty river, broad and moving, carrying not only life, but also commerce. You are in a hurry, in constant motion, moving things relentlessly and powerfully downstream. You remain mostly in your riverbed, but not always. Sometimes, the water coming in from melted snow

or heavy rains leaves you with not enough space for its volume. You spill over the banks, for blocks, or acres, or miles, covering everything in your path with water, bringing destruction and at the same time bringing soil and nutrients that will enrich the earth when the waters recede and you return to your riverbed. *(longer pause)* You feel powerful, even mighty. You are responsible for much, and you receive from everywhere. And sometimes it gets to be just too much, and things spill over.

Now trace your path to the small stagnant pool left behind by the receding waters. There is no inlet or outlet for this pool. You are self-contained. Your warm waters and rich broth support life well, and your ecosystem is isolated from other bodies of water. There is calm here, but there is decay and stagnation as well. *(longer pause)*

And now trace your path to the mighty ocean, constantly in motion, answering to the forces of the moon, and wind, and weather, moving in warm and cold currents interconnected with one another. You are the place where life arose on Earth, the cradle for billions of species. *(longer pause)* Storms rock you, but only in isolated places. You are too big, too broad, and too deep for one hurricane, one snowstorm, one tsunami to affect more than a small part of who and what you are. You are always in motion, ever restless, always changing, part of the essential nature of

the earth itself. Feel your endless motion as your waves rise and fall and churn.

As you breathe, reflect on the ways in which your life resembles the different bodies of water. With which images do you most closely identify?

(Pause for about a minute.)

When you are ready, please return slowly to your own body, to your chair, to this room. And when you have returned, open your eyes.

WORKSHOP 5: INTEGRITY

*The universe sings no less
Because time and space
Wear us thin.*

*The music calls us
To recognize our limitations,
To recognize that
The song is best
sung with others.
— Manish K. Mishra-Marzetti*

INTRODUCTION

This workshop invites participants into challenging territory. The activities explore the stresses that are part of the fabric of the life of our congregational community. Participants name and embrace that which sustains and grounds them, and learn how this self-knowledge can help them lead from a place of creativity and imagination, rather than reactivity. The workshop offers models to help individuals and leadership teams support and reinforce the integrity of those entrusted with leadership positions in our congregations.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Demonstrate that a leader's personal grounding and spiritual well-being are crucial to their ability to lead
- Help participants understand their own responses to challenge, crisis, and opportunity

- Explore some ineffective responses to the stressors that challenge congregations, and consider how insights from *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit* point to antidotes
- Foster laughter, meditation, reflection, and artistic expression to help participants connect more fully with their spiritual and emotional selves.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Use the story of Fannie Barrier Williams as a springboard to reflect on the supports that sustain them in moments of crisis, change, challenge, and opportunity
- Reflect on the idea that who a leader *is* matters as much as what they *do*
- Explore the stresses that permeate our society, our families, and our congregations
- Become aware of leadership practices that act as barriers to creativity and imagination
- Laugh, meditate, create, share, and be renewed as spiritual beings and as leaders.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Fannie Barrier Williams	15

Activity 2: Navigating Moments of Crisis	10
Activity 3: The Who of Leadership	10
Activity 4: What Sustains You?	20
Activity 5: Stress in the System	15
Activity 6: Barriers	30
Faith in Action: Leadership's Spiritual Dimension	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Button Pushing	10
Alternate Activity 2: Worship with Serenity Prayer	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take time to reflect on how and where you find grounding and sustenance in times of crisis and challenge. Read Handout 1, The “Who” of Leadership, and journal or reflect on how you nurture your own spirit.

Read Handout 2, Gridlocked Systems, and consider the ways that you have become gridlocked by chronic stress in your family life or congregational life. How much have you viewed leadership as a solo experience? Explore the antidotes to the stresses that come from “I” culture, suggested by quotes from *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit*. Visualize yourself as a person with integrity, a well-differentiated person who is able to move away from “I” toward “we,”

staying in touch with other leaders and with the congregation. How will you move toward that vision?

WORKSHOP PLAN

Opening (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Small worship table
- Chalice, candle, and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle

PREPARATION

- Set the chalice on the worship table.

DESCRIPTION

Gather the group in a circle. Ask a participant to light the chalice as you or another participant read these opening words from Theresa Soto, published in *Spilling the Light: Meditations on Hope and Resilience* (Skinner House Books, 2019):

*To be free, you must embrace
the breadth of your own existence
without apology, even if they try to take
it from you. You must know, not that
you
can do whatever you want; you are not
a kudzu vine, eating entire hillsides for
the purpose of feeding your own lush
life. You
must know instead, that inside you are
entire*

Universes—milky blue, magenta, and gold—

expanding. But to actually be free, you must

know and you must fight for the entire

Universes inside of everyone else.

Being free is not a license, but

A promise.

Tell participants that this workshop invites them to reflect on their spiritual and emotional lives and the qualities they bring to their leadership roles.

Activity 1: Fannie Barrier Williams (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Story, Fannie Barrier Williams
- Participants' copies of Handout 2, Types of Power, from Workshop 1
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with the story.
- Pre-arrange for a participant to read the story; provide them with a copy ahead of time.
- Optional: Write the five types of power (referent power, expert power, positional power, reward power, and coercive power) from Handout 2 on a sheet of newsprint, and post where all participants can see.

DESCRIPTION

Invite participants to listen as the participant you chose reads the story aloud to the group. Ask the group, as they listen, to consider the ways that Fannie Barrier Williams modeled leadership with integrity.

Engage participants in a discussion with these questions:

- How did Fannie Barrier Williams show leadership? What kinds of power did she exhibit in her leadership? Invite participants to refer to their copies of Handout 2, Types of Power, from Workshop 1.
- How would you describe the personal qualities that Williams brought to her leadership? How did her leadership reflect a “we” orientation?
- How did Williams develop and use the skills and connections she needed to lead effectively?
- What spiritual and emotional support might she have drawn on to withstand enormous pressure and maintain her integrity?

Conclude the discussion by noting that this story is suitable for all ages and is a good one to share with young people in your home or congregation.

ACTIVITY 2: Navigating Moments of Crisis (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Paper and pens or pencils for all participants
- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Clock or timer
- Bell or chime

PREPARATION

- Ensure that each participant has a comfortable space for writing.
- Write these questions on newsprint, and post it where all participants can see it:
 - What were the circumstances?
 - What choices did you have to make?
 - What skills or information did you seek to help you?
 - What spiritual and emotional resources did you need?
 - Did you feel prepared spiritually and emotionally for the challenge?
 - How could you have been better prepared?
 - What did you learn? How did this experience change you?
 - How did or does your experience contribute to your perception of yourself as a leader?

DESCRIPTION

Invite participants to recall a moment of crisis in their own lives, a moment when they had some choices to make. It might be a work, family, or health crisis, or a crisis that emerged out of a commitment or goal they were pursuing. Allow a full minute of silence

for participants to bring a moment of crisis to mind.

Indicate the questions you posted on newsprint. Distribute paper and writing implements and tell participants that they will have ten minutes to write or silently meditate in response to the questions. Say that they will not be asked to share their reflections with one another but, rather, are invited to find some personal grounding to bring into activities that follow in this workshop.

Read the questions aloud. Give participants time to write.

Ring a bell or chime after 10 minutes. Invite participants to finish writing or reflecting and to return their attention to the group. Ask for brief feedback about the experience of considering their own spiritual and emotional resources.

ACTIVITY 3: The Who of Leadership (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Handout 1, The “Who” of Leadership

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 1, The “Who” of Leadership, for all participants.
- Pre-arrange with four participants to read aloud the four paragraphs of the handout. You may wish to provide them each with a copy ahead of time.

DESCRIPTION

Distribute Handout 1. Ask the four participants to each read aloud a

paragraph. Then, invite participants to spend five minutes with a partner sharing responses to the handout, using these questions:

- What new insights did you gain?
- What in the piece rings true for you?

After five minutes, reconvene the group. Ask participants if they are familiar with the work of Margaret Benefiel. In her book *Soul at Work*, she defines spirituality broadly as “the human spirit, fully engaged.” She goes on to state, “Spirituality includes the intellectual, emotional, and relational depth of human character, as well as the continuing capability and yearning for personal development and evolution.” Point out that the capacity for full engagement is important, especially in a moment of crisis.

Invite participants to name some spiritual practices that can strengthen and deepen us and help us to engage more fully in all that life offers. If participants need prompting, you can suggest prayer, worship, small-group ministry, meditation, service, time in the natural world, singing or making music, and journaling.

ACTIVITY 4: What Sustains You? (20 minutes)

MATERIALS

- A variety of color and fancy papers, markers, and glue and/or glue sticks

- Scissors (including left-handed scissors) for all participants
- Cardboard box, large basket, or other large container
- An attractive piece of cloth large enough to cover the container

PREPARATION

- Set up a work area so that participants will each have room to work and can easily share the art materials.
- In a central place, such as your chalice-lighting area, set a large box, basket, or other container, and cover it with the cloth.

DESCRIPTION

Ask participants to consider what sustains them in times of crisis. What spiritual practices or disciplines do they find helpful? What keeps them grounded and centered when they face challenges?

Invite participants to use papers, glue, and markers to create symbols—words, pictures, abstract creations, or a combination—representing the things that sustain them and help keep their spirits fully engaged. For example, they might create a leaf to represent walking in the woods and/or a small book to represent journaling. Tell them that they can create a single symbol or as many as they like.

After 15 minutes, reconvene the group. Invite participants to name their sustaining spiritual practices as they place their creations in the container,

one person at a time.

ACTIVITY 5: Stresses in the System (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape
- Timer or clock
- Optional: Small wrapped candies and a basket, bowl, or candy dish

PREPARATION

- Draw the outline of a large soup pot on a sheet of newsprint, and post it where all participants can see.

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants identify issues—both internal and external to the congregation—that cause stress for those who are part of the congregation and for leaders.

Tell participants that you are going to make a “soup” together that will be a metaphor for some of the changes and challenges that members of our congregation experience, day to day.

Point out that each person in the room will have different “ingredients” to contribute. Invite participants to take care when using the words “we” and “us;” ask them to be specific and name who they mean when they say “we” (e.g., white Unitarian Universalists are experiencing...; Unitarian Universalists who are Millennials are experiencing...; parents and caregivers are experiencing...). Ask participants not to speak for generations, genders, or other cohorts to which they do not

belong. Acknowledge that people who aren’t in the room might have additional suggestions if they were present.

Ask your co-facilitator or a volunteer to scribe while participants name all the changes that they and other members of the congregation have had to adjust to in the last few years. These may be technological or societal, or they may relate to personal life transitions. Invite people to name all the things they are concerned about, whether related to home, the congregation, safety, world affairs, or any other realm of life. Have the scribe write each item inside the soup pot. If you wish, invite participants to symbolically add candies to the bowl as they contribute ideas. Approach this part of the activity playfully to ensure that it does not raise anxiety. Encourage light-heartedness and laughter. Acknowledge any serious items that people share, but do not let them overwhelm the process.

If there is a lull, encourage people to name more changes. You might offer a small candy for each answer as a way to encourage people to keep going, while your scribe tries to capture them all in the pot (with increasing difficulty!). It is not necessary that each word be legible from a distance. The important point is the sheer number of changes and challenges written in the “soup.” Continue this part of the exercise, leaving at least five minutes to conclude the activity.

After you have created your stress-filled “soup,” invite the group to silently take

in the creation. Invite them to consider stresses in the soup as challenges to be met as a faith community seeking to honor its mission, rather than problems to be avoided. After a pause, invite people to share one-word reactions to the soup that you have created.

If no one has mentioned difficulties that some in the congregation may face based on an identity they hold that is marginalized in the congregation, community, or larger society, lift that up now. Then say, using these or similar words:

When, as leaders, we orient ourselves to “WE” instead of “I,” we have a new responsibility to understand who is in the “we” with us.” For example, could our “soup” include stress that is happening for people who hold a marginalized racial or gender identity? Some may feel stress as they encounter congregational practices or traditions, cherished by some, that reflect ways of knowing, seeing, and being in the world that make it impossible for them to bring their full selves. The important spiritual work leaders do in orienting themselves to “WE” and transforming practices that exclude adds to the soup.

Conclude by saying:

This soup is the context in which our congregation’s leaders must lead. It is up to our faith community and to us as leaders to hold us all—as we share this soup together.

ACTIVITY 6: Barriers (30 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Handout 2, Gridlocked Systems
- Pens or pencils
- Clock or timer

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.

DESCRIPTION

The concepts presented in this activity may be new to participants. Present the concepts, guide participants’ initial responses, and encourage participants to take time to mull over these ideas, both in and outside the context of the workshop.

Distribute Handout 2 and writing implements. Invite participants to read the handout silently and to note responses or questions in the margins as they read. Allow a few minutes.

Tell the group that they will work with the handout, one section at a time. Explain that these concepts are complex and may require time to digest. Mention that concepts in the handout may run counter to assumptions and practices that participants have engaged in as leaders. Invite participants to notice whether feelings come up such as confusion, defensiveness, or anxiety. Assure the group that *many* leaders find these ideas challenging.

Read aloud the first section of the handout and the second section, titled

“Data.” Invite participants to move into triads and to share their responses to the questions at the end of “Data.” Allow five minutes for this discussion.

Reconvene the group. Spend three minutes sharing highlights and reflections from the small-group discussions.

Read aloud the section titled “Empathy.” Invite participants to move into different triads and to share their responses to that section. Allow five minutes for this discussion.

Reconvene the group. Spend three minutes sharing highlights and reflections from the small-group discussions.

Read aloud the final section, titled “Self.” Invite participants to move into yet another triad and to share their responses to that section. Allow five minutes for this discussion.

Reconvene the group. Spend three minutes sharing highlights and reflections from the small-group discussions.

Conclude this activity by asking, “What thoughts and questions will you take away for further reflection?”

FAITH IN ACTION: Leadership’s Spiritual Dimension

DESCRIPTION

Consider ways to nurture your spiritual well-being. What practices help you feel

centered and whole, even when you’re under stress? Consider setting aside time in your daily and/or weekly schedule for practices that sustain you. What times and what practices do you, or could you, choose? How can you encourage others to do the same?

Add to or deepen the spiritual dimension of leadership and other meetings in your congregation. Chalice lightings, readings, prayers, songs, and meditations can enrich your time together and lead to leadership with creativity, imagination, clarity, and integrity.

CLOSING (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Table or stand for chalice and worship materials, and a cloth to cover the table
- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Four candles and a lighter; or, four natural objects such as pinecones, stones, or shells, and a container to hold them
- Bell or chime

PREPARATION

- Prepare a visually appealing worship table. Arrange four unlit candles, or display the empty container with the four natural objects arranged near it.
- Optional: Customize the Taking It Home handout for your group before emailing or photocopying it.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants, or plan to email it.

DESCRIPTION

This worship time offers a model for leaders to acknowledge the stresses and challenges in the congregation while lifting up what supports and deepens the congregation's vision and mission. It is a technique to help congregational leaders intentionally hold space for creative ideas and emerging leadership.

Distribute copies of Taking It Home.

Say:

I invite you to enter into a time of silence, and bring into your hearts and minds all those in the congregation and in our families who are facing challenges—the death of a loved one, difficulties with a child or an elderly parent, physical and mental health concerns, racial or gender-based marginalization or violence, sadness, job loss, financial difficulty.

Pause for a moment, and then ring the bell. While lighting one candle or putting one of the natural objects into the container, say:

We hold in our hearts and minds and prayers all those in the congregation who are facing a difficult time. In this moment, you are invited to speak the names of those we hold in thought and prayer.

Wait an appropriate interval while people speak. Then say:

I invite you to hold in your hearts

and minds all those who have offered their gifts of love and service to the congregation. Enter into silence for a time and call to mind those who bring their creativity, their dedication, their labor, their financial support, and their passion to support the congregation and its mission and work in the world. Call to mind those who are newly emerging as leaders, both adults and youth, and feel your heart fill with gratitude for the gifts they bring.

After a minute, ring the bell. While lighting a second candle or putting the second object into the container, say:

We hold in our hearts gratitude for the many ways in which people bring their gifts to serve the mission of this congregation.

Now say:

I invite you to hold in your hearts and minds the challenges faced by this congregation. Enter into silence for a time, and call to mind, one at a time, all the myriad issues facing the leadership at this time. In the silence of your heart, embrace the challenges, knowing that these are signs of a living institution.

After a minute, ring the bell. While lighting a third candle or putting the third object into the container, say:

In the silence, we number our challenges with humility, rejoicing in the opportunity to take our own turn in guiding this community in living

the values of our liberal faith.

Now say:

I invite you to embrace your role as leader, understanding that you and your spiritual well-being are crucial to the well-being of the congregation. In the silence, I invite you to honor your own spirit and your own service to your faith community.

After a minute, ring the bell. While lighting a fourth candle or putting the fourth object into the container, say:

We honor ourselves and one another as leaders in this faith community, and we embrace our need to care for our own spirits that we may serve with integrity and with love. So may it be.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Consider and discuss these questions with your co-facilitator:

- Looking at each activity in this workshop, what worked as well as or better than you had anticipated? What did not work as well as you had anticipated?
- What issues came up for you, personally, in trying any activity yourself? What came up in the process of facilitating?
- What would you change if you were to lead this workshop again? How would you do it differently?

- What did you learn about yourself as an individual while facilitating this workshop? What did you learn about yourself as a leader?
- Look ahead to the next workshop in this program. What materials do we need to request or gather? What other preparation is needed?

TAKING IT HOME

*The universe sings no less
Because time and space
Wear us thin.*

*The music calls us
To recognize our limitations,
To recognize that
The song is best
sung with others.*

— Manish K. Mishra-Marzetti

Reread the handouts at home. Reflect on your own responses to the situations that arise in your life and in your work. When are you responding with integrity, out of a clear and healthy sense of self? When are you reactive, responding to the chronic anxiety that surrounds us? What practices will help you nurture your spiritual well-being?

Find Out More

You may wish to add resources that informed this workshop to your congregation's leadership library:

- Margaret Benefiel, *Soul at Work: Spiritual Leadership in Organizations* (New York: Seabury Books, 2005)

- Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Beacon Press, 2018)
- Jeffrey D. Jones, [*The "What" and the "Who" of Leadership*](#) (Alban Institute, 2008)

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: Button Pushing (10 minutes)

DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this activity is to raise participants' awareness of their own stressors and to consider how they react and respond to stress.

Ask participants to think about these questions:

- As a congregational leader, what "pushes your buttons"?
- What do you do when your buttons get pushed?

After participants have reflected for a minute or so, invite them to move around the room and to share brief answers to each question with others, one person at a time.

After five minutes, or when the activity slows down, call the group back together. Ask participants if they saw similarities between their own and others' buttons or responses, and if anything surprised them. Allow some discussion.

Ask the group to consider what it is that makes their buttons "pushable." Ask,

"How are your 'buttons' related to experiences you have had? How are they related to power you hold—or don't hold—in a given situation?" Invite those who wish to share their thoughts to do so.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: Worship with Serenity Prayer (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Table or stand for chalice and worship materials, and a cloth to cover it
- Small candles, enough for all participants, and a sand-filled container, OR a bowl of water and small stones, enough for all participants

PREPARATION

- Prepare an attractive worship table in the center of the circle, including a lit chalice and the sand-filled container and candles or the bowl of water and stones.
- Write the words to the Serenity Prayer on newsprint, and post it where all participants can see it: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

DESCRIPTION

This worship time offers a model for leadership groups to acknowledge the anxieties and the challenges in the congregation while lifting up that which supports and deepens the

congregation's vision and mission. It is a technique to help congregational leaders intentionally hold space for creative ideas and emerging leadership.

Say:

I invite you to enter into a time of silence and to bring into your hearts and minds all those in the congregation and in our families who are facing challenges.

Pause for 30 seconds. Then say:

I invite you to hold in your hearts and minds all those who have offered their gifts of love and service to the congregation. Enter into silence for a time and call to mind those who are newly emerging as leaders, both adults and youth, and feel your heart fill with gratitude at the gifts they bring.

Pause for 30 seconds. Say:

I invite you to hold in your hearts and minds the challenges faced by this congregation. Enter into silence for a time, and call to mind, one at a time, the myriad issues currently facing the leadership. In the silence of your heart, embrace the challenges, knowing that these are signs of a living institution.

Pause for one minute. Then say:

I invite you to embrace your role as leader, understanding that you and your spiritual well-being are crucial to the well-being of the

congregation. In the silence, I invite you to honor your own spirit and your own service to your faith community. In the moments that follow, I invite each of you to light a candle [or put a rock into the water] in silence, symbolizing your own spirit, fully engaged and ready to face the challenges of leadership.

After everyone has lit a candle or placed a stone, invite participants to follow your lead and repeat together a prayer that will be familiar to some, often attributed to theologian Reinhold Niebuhr:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

INCLUDING ALL PARTICIPANTS

If any participants have mobility impairments that make it difficult for them to move to the worship table, distribute stones before beginning this activity. When the time comes, pass the bowl so that all can put their stones in the water.

STORY: Fannie Barrier Williams (1855–1944)

By Gail Forsyth-Vail with Jamaine Cripe. Sources include “Fannie Barrier Williams” by June Edwards, in Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism, edited by Mark Morrison-Reid (Skinner House, 2011); “A Northern Negro’s Autobiography” by Fannie Barrier Williams, The Independent, Vol. 57, July 14, 1904; and [Fannie Barrier Williams \(1855–1944\)](#), contributed by Candace Staten to BlackPast.org, March 31, 2014.

What can religion further do to advance the condition of the colored people? More religion and less church. . . . Less theology and more of human brotherhood (*sic*), less declamation and more common sense and love for truth. — *Fannie Barrier Williams, 1893*

Fannie Barrier was furious. She was embarrassed and hurt and disgusted. She had discovered that no matter how talented, educated, and polite she was, her race made her a second-class citizen. In Washington, D.C., where she was a teacher, she had decided to take a painting class. But she discovered that her art instructor had erected screens to separate her from the white students in the class. Thinking that things would be better in the North, she enrolled in a music school in Boston. The principal there told her that she

had to leave the school because some white students were threatening to quit if they had to go to school with a Black person.

Fannie Barrier had a lot of gifts. She was a talented painter and pianist, a good student, and a good friend. She had grown up in Brockport, New York, a mostly white town outside of Rochester, during and after the Civil War, where she felt accepted as a social equal. It was only when she set out to do something “large or out of the ordinary” in her life that she smacked right up against a system that said she was of less value than white people. But it was also when she bumped up against this system that she found her greatest gifts and then used them to help people whose lives were more difficult than her own.

Fannie Barrier met and married Samuel Williams, a young lawyer. They moved to Chicago, where they lived on the South Side, a predominantly Black part of town. She made friends with many people, Black and white, who were interested in the arts, music, and discussions about all sorts of interesting things. She also worked hard to help those in her community, especially the Black women who, because of prejudice, were unable to find jobs to help support their families.

Because she had so many white friends, she decided to try to persuade some of them to offer jobs to skilled Black women. She soon discovered that just because a white person was

kind to *her* as an individual did not mean that they would give Black women a chance to prove themselves as workers. One manager, when Williams asked him to hire Black women, went on and on about how his parents raised him to believe that slavery was wrong. But when she pressed him to offer Black women jobs, he said no, it would be too disruptive to his business. When she reminded him that his Christian faith called him to do better, he disagreed.

During her years in Chicago, Fannie Barrier Williams met and became friendly with Jenkin Lloyd Jones, minister of the Unitarian Church of All Souls. She joined the church and was active in the establishment of the Abraham Lincoln Centre, As the City of Chicago prepared to host the 1893 World's Fair, Williams' minister organized a World's Parliament of Religions. This would be a gathering where people from all over the world could learn about one another's religions. Fannie Barrier Williams discovered that there were no women of color on the planning team, and she pushed hard to fix that. Eventually she was invited not only to be part of the organizing team, but also to speak at the gathering. In her moving speech, "Religious Duty to the Negro," she demanded that churches do a better job of practicing what they preached when it came to justice for Black people. Because of this powerful speech, Fannie Barrier Williams became famous. Soon, she was invited

to deliver her message everywhere. She became a paid speaker, sometimes pairing her speeches with a piano concert.

Fannie Barrier Williams, whose gifts and talents were many and who was herself financially comfortable, never forgot the Black women whose paths were even more difficult than hers. All her life, she fought the racism that kept Black people from the jobs and education they needed to survive so they could offer their own talents to the world. We honor her memory and her place among our UU ancestors.

HANDOUT 1: The “Who” of Leadership

Excerpted from a blog post, “The ‘What’ and the ‘Who’ of Leadership,” by Jeffrey D. Jones, Alban Weekly (No. 231, December 29, 2008). Jones adapted this piece from his book, Heart, Mind, and Strength: Theory and Practice for Congregational Leadership (The Alban Institute, Inc., 2008).

The “who” aspect of leadership is based on the reality that not everything a leader needs can be learned from books or reduced to a step-by-step plan that can be universally applied; rather it must come from an internal sense of the situation and what the leader brings to it.

The “who” is often revealed under pressure. Your “who” is revealed in what comes out of your mouth when you need to respond instantly, without the benefit even of personal reflection. It also becomes evident in the long haul, perhaps when there’s nothing dramatic going on at all—how you handle day-to-day interactions with members of the congregation, how the way you live your life outside the congregation reflects that which you value and believe as a member of a religious community.

The “who” of leadership has many dimensions. Our spiritual lives affect both our self-understanding and our relationships. The depth and strength of our faith and the way that faith is

nurtured through spiritual disciplines shapes who we are and how we relate to others in profound ways. Without that depth, our “who” is something less that it can be.

Another dimension of the “who” of leadership is our own self-knowledge. Years of therapy aren’t essential, but a good understanding of what makes us tick is. What issues tend to threaten us? What strengths can we rely on, what preconceived notions can get us into trouble? How has our past experience shaped the way we relate to people? What are the needs, the hopes, and the fears that drive us? All of this (and much more) influences our ability to lead. To lead effectively, we need to be aware of these personal traits and the way they shape our leading. Given sufficient time, almost all of those traits will become apparent to those we lead, so we had best be honest with ourselves right from the beginning.

HANDOUT 2: Gridlocked Systems

Adapted from A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix by Edwin H. Friedman (New York: Seabury Books, 2007), and Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age by Juana Bordas (2012, Berrett-Koehler Publishers).

In his book *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, Edwin H. Friedman writes that chronic anxiety “influences our thoughts and our leaders toward safety and certainty rather than boldness and adventure” (p. 37). He suggests that we are “imaginatively stuck” and that leaders have developed barriers that prevent new and creative thinking. He names “imagination limiting” notions that keep today’s leaders gridlocked. He identifies three sticking points for effective leadership: data collection, empathy, and lack of self-differentiation:

- *Data*: The notion that when enough “data” are collected, a decision will become clear.
- *Empathy*: The notion that leaders must be sure that every individual in the community is happy with a decision as presented.
- *Self*: The notion that self-differentiation and self-care are “selfish.”

While Friedman’s work explores leadership barriers that lead to gridlock

in white-dominant-culture organizations, in *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age*, Juana Bordas explores leadership styles in communities of color. Considering these insights together can strengthen the ability of all Unitarian Universalist lay leaders to lead with creativity, humility, and integrity.

DATA

Friedman writes of the current obsession with gathering data and with finding the right technique to move the institution forward. He speaks of a “quick fix” mind-set that focuses on problems rather than strengths, and demands certainty and easy answers rather than creativity and adaptation:

What I am driving at is this: As long as leaders—parents, healers, managers—base their confidence on how much data they have acquired, they are doomed to feeling inadequate, forever. . . . The data deluge can only be harnessed to the extent that leaders realize that not all information is worth gathering [and]... develop criteria for discerning what information is important to leadership. (p. 104)

. . .

Ultimately, the capacity of leaders to distinguish what information is important depends less on the development of new techniques for sorting data than on a leader’s ability to avoid being driven by the regressive anxiety that is often the source of the unregulated data proliferation to begin with. (p. 105)

In *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit*, Bordas lifts up the collaborative nature of leadership in communities of color:

Whether I or We is central to a society contours the shape of its leadership. A We identity promotes a collective and people-centered leadership that espouses the well-being of the people as a whole . . . (p. 79)

. . . Collaborative leadership transforms the I orientation of hierarchical leadership to a group-centered or We orientation. Instead of supplying all the answers, the collaborative leader creates an environment that promotes teamwork and learning together. (p. 80)

Consider these questions:

- How might the collaborative approach that Bordas describes serve as an antidote to the “data deluge” problem Friedman identifies?
- Might your leadership team consider addressing any current issues by turning away from data collection and instead toward creating an environment of teamwork with the people you serve?

EMPATHY

A second imagination-limiting notion is a focus on empathy rather than responsibility, and weakness rather than strength. Friedman writes of the tendency of chronically anxious organizations to work to lessen the pain of some needy or immature members and to organize themselves around their needs, rather than nurture the

creativity of the healthier, more mature members of the organization.

Bordas writes:

The American belief that only democratic voting can ensure equal participation runs contrary to many indigenous forms and traditional cultures in which building consensus, integrating people’s needs, and strengthening the collective is the goal. In democratic systems, voting signifies that the majority rules. In some instances 49 percent of the group might not agree with the other 51 percent, and rarely is there unanimity. In collectivist cultures, in which relationships are lifelong and ongoing, this would weaken the community fabric. . . . Building consensus and integrating everyone’s opinions takes time and a great deal of patience and dialogue! Encouraging everyone’s participation may seem cumbersome. However, it is a surefire way to garner the collective wisdom and to secure the commitment of all involved. (p. 180)

Consider these questions.

- As a member of the leadership team, how do you take care not to silence the voices of those often on the margins (including members of the leadership team) in the name of moving forward?
- How can your leadership team distinguish between individuals or voices blocking the congregation from staying true to your mission and those that are, in their

disagreement or protest or complaints, keeping the leadership true to that mission? How do you, as a team, need one another in this discernment?

SELF

Friedman writes about the importance of the leader's capacity for self-differentiation, that is, one's ability to remain grounded in one's own sense of purpose and identity and to avoid being swept into the anxiety of the organization's system. He writes:

The key . . . is the leader's own self-differentiation, by which I mean [their] capacity to be a non-anxious presence, a challenging presence, a well-defined presence, and a paradoxical presence. Differentiation is not about being coercive, manipulative, reactive, pursuing or invasive, but being rooted in the leader's own sense of self rather than focused on that of [their] followers. It is in no way autocratic, narcissistic, or selfish, even though it may be perceived that way by those who are not taking responsibility for their own being. Self-differentiation is not "selfish." Furthermore, the power inherent in a leader's presence does not reside in physical or economic strength but in the nature of [their] own being, so that even when leaders are entitled to great power by dint of their office, it is ultimately the nature of their presence that is the source of their real strength. Leaders function as immune systems of the institutions they lead—not because they ward off enemies, but because they supply the ingredients for

the system's integrity. (pp. 230–231)

Read this quote from *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit*:

Leaders in communities of color receive their legitimacy from the people they serve. They garner this respect by exhibiting a high level of morality, including being generous, honest, and humble, and by serving. As they model these behaviors, they lift up the morality of their followers and community as well. With limited resources, leaders must be adept at mobilizing people to address critical issues, including an examination of the social structures that limit equal participation. (p. 71)

Consider these questions about your leadership group:

- What qualities are most important for leaders to exhibit?
- How does your leadership team pay attention to the spiritual and character development of its members, both as individuals and as a team?

WORKSHOP 6: FAITH AND CONFLICT

...Meaningful change is hard, especially as it relates to identity and power. It raises essential questions about whose voices are heard, who is asked to take risks, how we negotiate our relationships, and what our priorities are as a community. False divisions like “political correctness” versus “inclusive speech,” or the question of whether to focus critiques inward in our communities versus outward toward the world, distract from the core calling of our faith to move toward equity and compassion in every way. — September 2019 letter to congregations from leaders of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Allies for Racial Equity, Association of Unitarian Universalist Administrators, Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries, Diverse & Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries, Liberal Religious Educators Association, Transgender Religious Professional Unitarian Universalists Together, and Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

INTRODUCTION

In this workshop, participants practice looking at the structures, committees, and formal and informal groups of the congregation as an inter-related, interconnected system. They will identify relational and emotional

patterns within the congregation as they examine congregational changes and challenges. They consider how leaders can build the system’s health and resilience by focusing on strengthening and supporting relationships within the leadership team and with the congregation. A leadership team that nurtures authentic relationships and stays in touch with the people they lead can more effectively help the congregational system respond to conflict, challenge, and change.

Participants reflect on how leaders might move a congregation from the habit of engaging in proxy fights where a seemingly intractable conflict really is a stand-in for a larger issue. They learn to recognize how a “fake fight” can reinforce the status quo and prevent conversations about deeper issues. Instead, participants are invited to embrace the practice of leaning into conflict as a pathway to spiritual deepening and transformational change. As they conclude the Harvest the Power program, participants set forth to lead a congregation or community to meet dilemmas, disagreements, and conflicts with faithful curiosity and attention to relationship, so that the congregation might grow as covenanted community living its mission in the world.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Introduce the concept of *systems*

thinking

- Explore the roles of relationships and connections in strengthening a faith community
- Offer an opportunity for leaders to consider real-world dilemmas and conflicts facing their faith community and to apply their learning to chart a way forward
- Invite leaders to become aware of their own role in the congregation and to develop an approach and leadership skills to guide a community toward a faithful response to conflict.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Be introduced to the idea that paying attention to relationships and to the congregation's mission will steer a congregation away from proxy fights that damage congregational life
- Use a scenario to learn about some systems that are in play in a congregation and to gain an understanding of systems thinking
- Learn about and reflect on Margaret Wheatley's Leadership Lessons for the Real World
- Develop a deeper understanding of themselves as leaders and their role in the community
- Use all they have learned in Harvest the Power to examine dilemmas and conflicts in their own faith

community and to plan a way forward.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story, Tapping Out of "Fake Fights"	15
Activity 2: Congregations as Systems	40
Activity 3: Leadership Lessons for the Real World	15
Activity 4: Faith and Conflict	40
Faith in Action: Through a Systems Lens	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Alternate Systems Thinking Scenarios	45

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Consider a challenge facing your congregation right now. Read Activity 2, and use this process to identify some of the emotional and relational systems at play in your congregation. With your co-facilitator, talk with your parish minister or congregational president about your observations.

Ask yourself: How are you attending to relationships and connections in your role as the workshop facilitator? In meditation or prayer, express compassion and a wish for spiritual and emotional health for yourself and for all the participants in this workshop.

WORKSHOP PLAN

OPENING (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Small worship table
- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Covenant created in Workshop 1 and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Set up the chalice on the worship table.
- Post the covenant created in Workshop 1.

DESCRIPTION

Light the chalice, and share this reading from *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne maree brown:

Many of us have been socialized to understand that constant growth, violent competition, and critical mass are the ways to create change. But emergence shows us that adaptation and evolution depend more on critical, deep, and authentic connection, a thread that can be tugged for support and resilience. The quality of connection between the nodes in the patterns.

Dare I say love.

And we know how to connect—we long for it.

ACTIVITY 1: Tapping Out of “Fake Fights” (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Story, Tapping Out of “Fake Fights”

PREPARATION

- Arrange for a participant to read Tapping Out of “Fake Fights” aloud; you might provide them with a copy of this reading in advance.

DESCRIPTION

Have the participant you chose read the story to the group. Then, point out examples of fake, or proxy, fights that Ladd names: disagreements about by-laws at the annual meeting, or paint colors, or whether and how to speak out on public issues. Ask participants to identify any fake fights that have roiled their own congregation. What conflict was the fake fight a proxy for?

Next, ask them to name instances of conflicts that led to better, more faithful decisions about the congregation and its mission. Allow a couple of minutes for reflection.

Ask participants to consider how unintended or broken relationships contribute to fake fights. Ask how attention to relationships could support conflict that generates healthy change.

Repeat the closing part of the story:

The real fight beckons—the real conversation about our history, our identity, our relevance, our resistance. The world does not need

another place for like-minded liberal-leaning people to hang out together and fight about who's in charge. The world does not need a place where you or I or any of us is going to get what we want.

What the world needs is a movement like ours to step more fully into our higher calling; to serve as an instrument for encounters with one another, with the holy, and with the world, so that we might love more fully, and speak more truly, and serve with greater efficacy.

Invite participants to begin thinking about how we might develop the capacity to do just that.

ACTIVITY 2: Congregations as Systems (40 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Handout 1, Heavenly Unitarian Universalist Congregation
- Optional: Handout 3, Alternate Systems Thinking Scenarios
- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Review this activity and Handout 1. Also, review Alternate Activity 1, Alternate Systems Thinking Scenarios; its accompanying handout presents two scenarios less complex than the Heavenly Unitarian Universalist Congregation scenario, both involving stresses that come from outside rather than inside the congregation. You may

wish to use the alternate activity if the group is, in fact, engaged in a challenge resembling the Heavenly Unitarian Universalist scenario or if unpacking two simple scenarios would work better for your group than exploring a single, more complex one.

- Make copies of Handout 1 (or, Handout 3, if you are using Alternate Activity 1 and not this activity).
- Post a sheet of newsprint.
- Prepare, but do not post, a sheet of newsprint with these reflection prompts (Note: The Alternate Activity offers different prompts.):
 - How is this congregation affected by the music director's resignation?
 - What emotions might come to the fore for the congregation as they work through this change?
 - What long-standing patterns of behavior in this group may have been revealed by the music director's resignation?
- Prepare, but do not post, a second sheet of newsprint with these reflection prompts:
 - What relationships in this congregational system need tending?
 - How might this scenario play out if the leaders commit to being guided by covenant, their Unitarian Universalist faith, and the congregation's mission?

DESCRIPTION

Share with participants the scenario in Handout 1.

Share this definition of *systems thinking*, adapted from multiple sources including the book, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* by Peter Steinke and the website, Learning for Sustainability:

Systems thinking posits that a complex system—for example, a congregation—cannot be fully understood from only one perspective. Systems thinking focuses on how the parts of a system interrelate and mutually influence one another. Systems thinking can help us understand the patterns of thought and action that hold the system together.

Tell the group that you are going to create a drawing of “the system” at Heavenly. Draw a stick figure of the music director in the center of the newsprint, labeled “Music Director.” Ask participants to name individuals or groups affected *in any way* by the music director’s work. As each individual or group is named, draw them as stick figures on the newsprint, and label each one. If they have not done so already, prompt the group to add groups or individuals in the congregation who don’t have a direct connection to the music director but still might have feelings about her departure (e.g., new members who were planning to join the choir once they felt a bit more acclimated). Add these folks to the picture as well.

Draw solid lines to connect the music director to groups or individuals who have a direct relationship with the director. Use dotted lines to indicate indirect relationships. Draw wavy lines between the director and those who might have feelings about her departure. If you need to combine the type of line for some groups or individuals (such as dotted and wavy), do so.

Invite the group to examine the drawing and consider other connections in the congregation that have nothing to do with the music director or the music program; for example, teachers might be connected directly to the religious educator. Draw and label those stick figures, and represent their connections with solid, dotted, or wavy lines, as appropriate.

Pause for a moment to let participants take in the drawing. Tell them that you are going to add complexity by identifying the emotions and long-standing patterns of behavior involved in these relationships. Post the first sheet of newsprint where all participants can see it. Ask participants to form four small groups, and assign groups as follows:

- Group 1: The straight lines, representing direct connections with the music director
- Group 2: The dotted lines, representing indirect connections with the music director
- Group 3: The wavy lines,

representing those who don't have a direct connection but still have feelings about the music director's departure

- Group 4: The solid, dotted, and wavy lines representing connections among groups or individuals in the congregation who have nothing to do with the music director

Tell groups that they will have 10 minutes to discuss the posted questions. Provide each small group with newsprint and a marker to list key points from their conversation.

After 10 minutes, invite each group, one at a time, to post their lists near the diagram and share the highlights of their discussion.

Explain that systems theory tells us that an organization, family, or congregation desires stability or balance and will find ways to keep things stable, whether or not those ways are entirely healthy. When something upsets the balance, it is human nature to want to return to what was perceived as stable and safe. The music director's resignation upset the congregation's balance and brought into play a variety of factors and issues that had been latent or dormant when the congregation was stable.

Post the second set of questions you prepared. Invite participants to move back into their small groups to consider the new set of questions. Tell them they have 10 minutes for this discussion.

After 10 minutes, reconvene the group. Invite small groups to share key

insights from their conversations.

Ask: "If you were a leader at Heavenly Unitarian Universalist Congregation, what would you need to do to help the congregation clearly face the conflicts uncovered by the music director's resignation and discover the opportunities that have opened?" Allow a few participants to respond.

INCLUDING ALL PARTICIPANTS

If any participants cannot see your drawing of Heavenly's system on newsprint, explain the drawing in detail as the large group works together to create it.

ACTIVITY 3: Leadership Lessons for the Real World (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Handout 2, Leadership Lessons for the Real World
- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Arrange for a participant to read the handout aloud. You might provide them with a copy of it ahead of time.
- Title a sheet of newsprint "Key Learnings from Margaret Wheatley summarized by adrienne maree brown." Write the following points and post where all participants can see:
 - Everything is about relationships—critical

connections

- Chaos is an essential process that we need to engage
- Sharing information is fundamental for organizational success
- Vision is an invisible field that binds us together, emerging from relationships, chaos, and information

DESCRIPTION

Say, “Margaret Wheatley is an author, speaker, teacher, community worker, and leadership consultant.”

Distribute Handout 1 and ask the participant you chose to read it aloud. Call attention to the summary of learnings from Wheatley that you posted. Invite participants to reflect on the reading and to share any insights and questions that arose for them.

Conclude the discussion by inviting participants to apply what they are learning to congregational dilemmas, conflicts, and challenges. This will provide a seamless transition to the next activity.

ACTIVITY 4: Faith and Conflict (40 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape for each small group of four to six
- Clock or timer

PREPARATION

- Decide whether each small group will choose the issue that most interests them or if all groups will examine the same issue.
- Prepare, but do not post, a sheet of newsprint with these questions:
 - What is a current conflict or dilemma in your congregation? Is it a “fake fight,” that is, a proxy conflict for something else?
 - Where is the system unbalanced or in chaos?
 - Is there a “we” in the way you frame the conflict or dilemma? Whom do you mean when you say “we”? Does that “we” exclude some and center others?
 - How is this conflict or dilemma related to your Unitarian Universalist faith? Your congregation’s mission?
 - Where are the voices calling for the congregation to honor its covenant and its mission? How are you amplifying those calls?
 - Are there ways in which the leadership team has used power or process to silence voices? What relationships do you, as leaders, need to tend to or repair?
 - Are you—as an individual and/or as a leader—connected to or in relationship with those who might be able to offer necessary information to address the conflict or dilemma?
 - What might be some next steps for the leadership and the

congregation to take?

DESCRIPTION

Have the group brainstorm conflicts or dilemmas facing their congregation(s) and select two or three to examine closely. Invite participants to form groups of four to six to examine an issue (either the issue that most interests them or a single issue, whichever you chose). Allow 10 minutes for this portion of the activity.

Then, post the questions you wrote on the newsprint. Invite the small groups to use the posted questions and their learnings from both this workshop and the entire Harvest the Power program to consider the dilemma or conflict and to note key points from their discussion on newsprint. Allow 15 minutes for this portion of the activity.

Ask small groups to post their ideas and share them with the whole group.

Engage the group in making plans to continue the conversations and seek ways to move forward on these issues.

FAITH IN ACTION: Through a Systems Lens

DESCRIPTION

Consider some of your congregation's social justice projects and programs, using a systems lens. How does your congregation engage with the community? What relationships, both within and outside the congregation, comprise your congregation's social justice system? What healthy or unhealthy patterns appear as your

congregation engages in carrying its faith into the world? Consider inviting interested congregants to examine the social justice work of the congregation to discern how to support healthy patterns and shift unhealthy ones.

CLOSING (5 minutes)

PREPARATION

- Optional: Customize the Taking It Home handout for your group before emailing or photocopying it.
- Copy Taking It Home for all participants, or plan to email it.

DESCRIPTION

Distribute copies of Taking It Home or tell the group when you will email it. Invite participants to reflect on their own leadership style by asking, "Are there things that you plan to approach differently as a result of this workshop?" Invite each person, as they are ready, to name one thing that they will approach differently as they continue their leadership journey.

Thank the group for their participation in Harvest the Power.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Consider and discuss these questions with your co-facilitator:

- Looking at each activity in this workshop, what worked as well as or better than you had anticipated? What did not work as well as you had anticipated?

- What issues came up for you, personally, in trying any activity yourself? What came up in the process of facilitating?
- What would you change if you were to lead this workshop again? How would you do it differently?
- What did you learn about yourself as an individual while facilitating this workshop? What did you learn about yourself as a leader?

TAKING IT HOME

...Meaningful change is hard, especially as it relates to identity and power. It raises essential questions about whose voices are heard, who is asked to take risks, how we negotiate our relationships, and what our priorities are as a community. False divisions like “political correctness” versus “inclusive speech,” or the question of whether to focus critiques inward in our communities versus outward toward the world, distract from the core calling of our faith to move toward equity and compassion in every way. — September 2019 letter to congregations from leaders of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Allies for Racial Equity, Association of Unitarian Universalist Administrators, Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries, Diverse & Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries, Liberal Religious Educators Association, Transgender

Religious Professional Unitarian Universalists Together, and Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

Make plans with other members of the congregation’s leadership team to follow up on ideas that emerged from examining the congregation’s challenges from a systems point of view.

Find Out More

Resources that informed this workshop may enhance your congregation’s leadership library:

- adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (AK Press, 2017)
- Nancy McDonald Ladd, [*After the Good News: Progressive Faith Beyond Optimism*](#) (Skinner House Books, 2019)
- Donella H. Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (Sustainability Institute, 2008)
- UUA Congregational Life Staff Group, [*The Congregational Handbook*](#) (Unitarian Universalist Association)
- [*Margaret J. Wheatley*](#) (website)

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: Alternate Systems Thinking Scenarios (45 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Handout 3, Alternate Systems Thinking Scenarios

□ Newsprint, markers, and wall-safe tape

PREPARATION

- Copy Handout 3 for all participants.
- Read Activity 2, Applying Systems Thinking, to become familiar with how to diagram a congregational issue or challenge from a systems perspective.
- Post a blank sheet of newsprint.
- Prepare, but do not post, a sheet of newsprint with these reflection prompts:
 - Who in the congregation is affected by the issue?
 - What emotions might come to the fore as the congregation works through this challenge?
 - What long-standing patterns of behavior in this congregation might be revealed by this challenge?
 - What relationships in this congregational system need tending?
 - How might this scenario play out if the leaders commit to being guided by covenant, their Unitarian Universalist faith, and the congregation's mission?

DESCRIPTION

The two scenarios in Handout 3 are less complex than the Heavenly Unitarian Universalist Congregation scenario presented in Activity 2, Handout 1, and the events that cause the system to react come from outside rather than inside the organization. Use these alternate scenarios if the group

you are working with is, in fact, engaged in a challenge resembling the Heavenly Unitarian Universalist scenario, or if unpacking two simpler scenarios would work better for your group than exploring the single, complex one. These scenarios will take less time to process, so you will likely have time for both of them. You might change the configuration of small groups for the second scenario.

Read aloud the first scenario to the group.

Tell the group that you are going to create a drawing of “the system” at the congregation. Draw and label stick figures of the capital campaign committee. Ask participants to name individuals or groups affected *in any way* by the capital campaign to repair and upgrade the congregation's building. As each individual or group is named, draw them as stick figures on the newsprint, and label each one. If they have not done so already, prompt the group to add groups or individuals in the congregation who don't have a direct connection to the project but still might have feelings about it. Add these folks to the picture as well.

Draw solid lines to connect the capital campaign committee to groups or individuals who have a direct relationship with that group (such as the building and grounds committee, the governing board, and the parish minister). Use dotted lines to indicate indirect relationships (such as those who have pledged to the campaign).

Draw wavy lines between the capital campaign committee and those who might have feelings about the project. If you need to combine the type of line for some groups or individuals (such as dotted and wavy), do so.

Invite the group to examine the drawing and consider other connections in the congregation that have nothing to do with the capital campaign project; for example, teachers might be connected directly to the religious educator, whose work will be impacted by the project. Draw and label those stick figures, and represent their connections with solid, dotted, or wavy lines, as appropriate.

Pause for a moment to let participants take in the drawing. Tell them that you are going to add complexity by identifying the emotions and long-standing patterns of behavior involved in these relationships. Post the first sheet of newsprint where all participants can see it. Ask participants to form four small groups, and assign groups as follows:

- Group 1: The straight lines, representing direct connections with the capital campaign committee
- Group 2: The dotted lines, representing indirect connections with the committee
- Group 3: The wavy lines, representing those who don't have a direct connection but still have feelings about the project
- Group 4: The solid, dotted, and wavy lines representing connections

among groups or individuals in the congregation who, on the surface, seem to have nothing to do with the project

Tell groups that they will have 10 minutes to discuss the posted questions. Provide each small group with newsprint and a marker to list key points from their conversation.

After 10 minutes, invite each group, one at a time, to post their lists near the diagram and share the highlights of their discussion.

Explain that systems theory tells us that an organization, family, or congregation desires stability or balance and will find ways to keep things stable, whether or not those ways are entirely healthy. When something upsets the balance, it is human nature to want to return to what was perceived as stable and safe. The letter from the local government officials upset the congregation's balance and brought into play a variety of factors and issues that had been latent or dormant when the congregation was stable.

Post the second set of questions you prepared. Invite participants to move back into their small groups to consider the new set of questions. Tell them they have 10 minutes for this discussion.

After 10 minutes, reconvene the group. Invite small groups to share key insights from their conversations.

Ask: "If you were a leader at this congregation, what would you need to do to help the congregation clearly face

the conflicts uncovered by the music director's resignation and discover the opportunities that have opened?" Allow a few participants to respond.

If time allows, repeat this process for the second scenario.

STORY: Tapping Out of “Fake Fights”

Excerpted from the sermon delivered by Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd at General Assembly 2016.

For as long as two or more have gathered in the name of the spirit, those two or more have fought some fake fights.

You remember, perhaps, the classic wedding reading from Corinthians, which says, *If I speak in the tongues of mortals or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal . . . if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*

That letter from the Apostle Paul to the early Christian community in Corinth has nothing whatsoever to do with weddings.

That’s a letter from an overextended pastor with occasionally dubious judgment to a congregation whose leaders are in a constant state of fierce and unremitting conflict. The early Christians in the Corinth congregation were literally shouting their prayers like clanging cymbals overtop of one another to try and prove who was better at praying. They were making faith into a contest, and whether he was Saintly or not, Paul was having none of it.

The collective wisdom of the ages reminds us that the stakes are high and

the ultimate prize we must reach out for in community is greater than the imagined divisions and trumped-up arguments that pull us apart.

Here’s a segue way you won’t see coming: you know in Wrestlemania, when professional wrestlers have those fake fights? Sometimes they really are at risk of getting hurt. And do you know what they do, before the muscle snaps or the bones break in that fake fight? They tap out. They bang the mat. When the fake fight gets close to having real consequences, they tap out.

I tell you what, I’m tapping out—right now—and I invite you to join me. I’m tapping out of every fake fight in our congregations and our movement about getting what I want or what you want or what we think we want, because the stakes are too high and we don’t have time for fake fights anymore.

A fake fight about the bylaws in the annual meeting is most often a carefully concealed real fight about the values that undergird our history coming into relationship with the values that may undergird our future. If we can get past duking it out over the paint color in the church bathroom, we may encounter a pastoral window into the inner life of one whose voice in the world seems increasingly powerless. And All Lives Matter—yes, that one, chief among the fake fights and cover conversations that distract from the work at hand—is not about the slogan. More often than not, it’s about our deep and abiding

resistance to actually taking on the systemic white supremacy that eats at the heart of us and of our culture.

I know, for a fact, that the real conversations are waiting. Just beneath the surface of the fake fight is the actual encounter: soul to soul and hand to hand, in which change is possible.

So let's have that conversation—the real one, the hard one, the one that requires us to keep showing up—and let's do it with edge and forgiveness, calling out and calling in, calling forth a new kind of community both in our congregations and in the world.

The real fight beckons—the real conversation about our history, our identity, our relevance, our resistance. The world does not need another place for like-minded liberal-leaning people to hang out together and fight about who's in charge. The world does not need a place where you or I or any of us is going to get what we want.

What the world needs is a movement like ours to step more fully into our higher calling; to serve as an instrument for encounters with one another, with the holy, and with the world, so that we might love more fully, and speak more truly, and serve with greater efficacy.

HANDOUT 1: HEAVENLY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Heavenly Unitarian Universalist Congregation has a lovely building in a suburban community. It is a congregation well-known for its music. They have a beloved music director who has been with the congregation for 20 years. She believes that ethereal music is best for congregational worship and favors the harp. The Heavenly Choir loves her as a director and cannot imagine singing with anything other than harp as accompaniment.

The Heavenly Music Committee meets only twice a year. Things are going so smoothly with the congregation's music program in the music director's hands, there is no need for more frequent meetings. The staff members, particularly the parish minister, love working with the music director; the music is reliably excellent, and the congregation seems happy with that aspect of worship.

However, there are rumblings from the younger people in the congregation that although ethereal music is lovely, they might like to hear something more earthly now and again. Parents have commented to the religious education director that it would be wonderful to have music that children can sing and enjoy from time to time. Still, this is not a big issue in the congregation. All is tranquil at Heavenly Unitarian

Universalist Congregation, until . . .

The Heavenly music director receives an offer to teach harp at a world-famous conservatory and decides to accept. It means that she and her partner will be moving out of the area, so she tenders her resignation as Heavenly's music director, effective at the end of the year. The Heavenly Music Committee and the Heavenly Choir make plans for a gala goodbye celebration. The Board decides to appoint a search committee for a new music director; in the interest of being inclusive, the Board appoints a parent, a young adult, and a jazz musician to the search committee, along with a member of the choir and a member of the Music Committee. The appointments raise eyebrows among those in the Heavenly Choir and those on the Heavenly Music Committee, who thought they would be the ones to find a new harpist to continue their successful ethereal music program in the congregation. They begin to murmur, wondering what the Board is thinking, and feeling somewhat underappreciated.

After a grand goodbye party, the search committee meets to begin its work in earnest. They find very quickly that committee members have entirely different ideas about the person who should be their next music director. Soon they are divided into two factions—lovers of ethereal music, and those desirous of something different—with both sides planning surveys to

prove that the majority of the congregation is on their side. The conflict spreads to the congregation at large. People choose sides. The Board is stunned by what is happening in their once tranquil congregation and wants to do whatever is necessary to restore harmony and balance. The minister and Board chair wisely seek help from their UUA Regional staff, who help them examine their problem by looking at Heavenly's issue from a systems point of view.

HANDOUT 2: Leadership Lessons for The Real World

[“Leadership Lessons for the Real World,”](#) Leader to Leader, Summer 2006. Copyright © 2006 by Margaret J. Wheatley. Fair use.

People often comment that the new leadership I propose couldn't possibly work in “the real world.” This “real world” demands efficiency and obedience and is managed by bureaucracy and governed by policies and laws. It is filled with people who do what they're told, who sit passively waiting for instructions, and it relies on standard operating procedures for every situation, even when chaos erupts and things are out of control.

This real world was invented by Western [European] thought. We believe that people, organizations, and the world are machines, and we can organize massive systems to run like clockwork in a steady-state world. The leader's job is to create stability and control, because without human intervention, there is no hope for order. It is assumed that most people are dull, not creative, that people need to be bossed around, that new skills only develop through training. People are motivated using fear and rewards; internal motivators such as compassion and generosity are discounted.

This is not the real world. The real real

world demands that we learn to cope with chaos, that we understand what motivates humans, that we adopt strategies and behaviors that lead to order, not more chaos.

Here is the real world described by new science. It is a world of interconnected networks, where slight disturbances in one part of the system create major impacts far from where they originate. In this highly sensitive system, the most minute actions can blow up into massive disruptions and chaos. But it is also a world that seeks order. When chaos erupts, it not only destroys the current structure, it also creates the conditions for new order to emerge. Change always involves a dark night when everything falls apart. Yet if this period of dissolution is used to create new meaning, then chaos ends and new order emerges.

This is a world that knows how to organize itself without command and control or charisma. Everywhere, life self-organizes as networks of relationships. When individuals discover a common interest or passion, they organize themselves and figure out how to make things happen. Self-organizing evokes creativity and leads to results, creating strong, adaptive systems. Surprising new strengths and capacities emerge.

In this world, the “basic building blocks” of life are relationships, not individuals. Nothing exists on its own or has a final, fixed identity. We are all “bundles of potential” (as one scientist described

quantum particles). Relationships evoke these potentials. We change as we meet different people or are in different circumstances.

In this historic moment, we live caught between the mechanical worldview that no longer works and a new paradigm that we fear to embrace. But this new paradigm comes with the promise that it can provide solutions to our most unsolvable challenges.

HANDOUT 3: Alternate Systems Thinking Scenarios

Note: These scenarios appeared in a different form in Workshop 3.

Accessibilities Audit Scenario

A congregation is planning to do some major work to repair the foundation of the building and to upgrade the space. After a successful capital campaign, they have raised nearly enough money—but not quite enough. Now they have heard from local government officials that they will not be granted a building permit until they have addressed some major accessibility issues in the building.

This project will be costly. The chair of the governing board believes that there is no more money to be had from the congregation. They convene a meeting of the governing board, which includes:

- A member who is angry with the local officials for imposing this on the congregation and who believes that they have no right to do so. This member's attitude is that the local government should support the building repairs and upgrades the congregation is undertaking, rather than undermine them.
- A member who has arthritis in their hands and her knees and sometimes finds the front steps and

the door handles difficult to negotiate. They have never told anyone about this difficulty and is not sure that they are ready to share her experience with this group.

- A member who believes in their heart that making the congregation more accessible to those with mobility impairments is the right thing to do, and is convinced that a way can be found to do it. They are often seen as the “impractical” one in the group.
- A member who wonders if the accessibility upgrades make financial sense. From this member's point of view, the planned upgrades will benefit many people, and the accessibility upgrades will benefit only a few.
- A member who has been the representative to the building task force and is *exhausted*. They have done all that she can do to get this project ready to the point where construction and renovation can begin, and she finds this news deeply discouraging. She is also feeling unappreciated.

Safe Congregation Scenario

A congregation's insurance company has informed them that the congregation will no longer be able to purchase liability coverage unless they have a policy in place to address the prevention of sexual abuse and misconduct. The prevention policy must include the use of criminal background checks for volunteers and staff. As the

governing board convenes to consider this challenge, members of the board are of several minds:

- The chair of the board believes that liability coverage is crucial to the well-being of the congregation and that the board has a fiduciary responsibility to see to it that a safe congregation policy is adopted.
- One board member is concerned about finances, especially about the potential cost of criminal background checks. This board member is also concerned because a large donor has stated that they view background checks as an invasion of privacy.
- Another member is concerned about the implementation of any safe congregation policy. Who will be responsible? How will they get training? Do the current staff members have enough time and bandwidth to take this on?
- One member has been reading the latest news about child sexual abuse among volunteers and professionals entrusted with the well-being of children, and believes that a safe congregation policy cannot come soon enough.
- One member keeps thinking about the first Unitarian Universalist Principle, the inherent worth and dignity of every person. How does this Principle apply when it comes to protecting children? What about our volunteers? Do background checks

violate their worth and dignity?

- A long-time member trusts everyone in the congregation. Required background checks and other policies seem unnecessary. This member wonders if liability insurance is really needed—and resents the insurance company for pushing the congregation around.