

# **EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY**

## **A Tapestry of Faith Program for Youth**

### **High School**



**BY KAREN HARRIS**

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This program and additional resources are available on the UUA.org web site at [www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith](http://www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith).

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## THE PROGRAM

*The poem is a little myth of man's capacity of making life meaningful. And in the end, the poem is not a thing we see—it is, rather, a light by which we may see—and what we see is life.*  
— Robert Penn Warren

Unitarian Universalism has always embraced poetry as a call to worship.

Poetry can be an accessible and profound tool in our spiritual practice as we journey toward becoming more conscious as human beings and as Unitarian Universalists. This program utilizes poems that are concerned with elements of the spiritual life: acute observation, conscious and continuous inquiry, the unveiling of reality, hope and hopelessness, the afterlife, and the tenderness of the human condition.

Poetry, Czeslaw Milosz asserts, "enables us to look at a thing and identify with it, strengthening in that way its being" (*Book of Luminous Things*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1996). In this program, that "being" is our being—as individuals, as members of a UU community, as members of the human race, as members of the planet and universe.

As with any curriculum, there is a set of assumptions and beliefs that inform and inspire this one. All of the following are born of the author's experience.

### **Poetry is a uniting and a connecting force.**

Poetry—even very sad poetry—is a good remedy for loneliness, because it reminds us that our experience, no matter how extraordinary, in some way mirrors another's. In this way, we are not solitary beings. The poems featured in this program are from all over the world and represent different cultures, cosmologies, genders, races, and times in history. Yet striking similarities are evident in the poems' emotional terrain. In recognizing this, we recognize our own compassion for others and ourselves. Even discovering that others have some of the same questions as we do can be extraordinarily powerful and comforting.

Poetry asks the best questions. So do teenagers. Most of the things that we can say about poetry, we can also say about teenagers—a fact that makes the idea of doing this program with teens so exciting. Both poetry and teens ask the great, big questions: How do we live? What do we love? What deserves our faith? Who are we, and where do we fit in this universe? How do we keep our hope alive? Both poetry and teenagers are tireless seekers—of sense, justice, meaning, reason,

hope, and sometimes just the plain old company of a good laugh.

### **Reading poems aloud is powerful. Discovering poems together is powerful.**

Poetry read aloud is immediate, communitarian, and powerful. Robert Pinsky, poet and two-term national Poet Laureate, says it best:

... poetry is a vocal, which is to say a bodily, art. The medium of poetry is a human body: the column of air inside the chest, shaped into signifying sounds in the larynx and the mouth....

Moreover, there is a special intimacy to poetry because, in this idea of the art, the medium is not an expert's body, as when one goes to the ballet: in poetry, the medium is the audience's body...

From *The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide*, by Robert Pinsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999)

### **Reading poetry is like finding our way home. As with all important journeys, it is helpful to have a compassionate and qualified guide (you) who has a map (this program).**

Both poetry and workshops can teach us about ourselves, but we need a good guide with a good plan. While poetry is not a trove of secrets locked in a chest to be accessed by a select few, neither is it a blank slate onto which we may project any and all interpretations. As a guide, it is important to read the map, to know the general way but be open to detours, and to keep your group from getting lost on their way. Know the poems. Know yourself. And as much as possible, know your participants.

## GOALS

This program will:

- Lead participants to discover the ways poetry illuminates the human experience.
- Help youth recognize commonalities in our spiritual journey.
- Demonstrate the use of poetry writing as a spiritual practice.
- Provide multigenerational opportunities that will increase youth's sense of belonging to the congregation and the wider UU world.

## LEADERS

You do not need to be a poetry expert to facilitate these workshops effectively. You simply need an open mind

and a sense of adventure. If, like many of us, you have at some point in your schooling felt daunted by poetry textbooks that feature poems followed by an "answer" section (or by the teaching of poetry "drill and kill" style), we hope you feel liberated by the approach we take here. These workshops envision poems not as entities to "decode" or master, but as a way in—to us, to truth, to others. These poems will be our partners in exploration, not our opponents.

They say that the best way to learn something is to teach it. While facilitating or leading are more apt words for what you will do as you guide participants through these workshops, you will certainly learn. Best of all, once you find a poem that speaks to you, that really sheds light on an essential truth as you have come to know it—that poem becomes a teacher, guide, and friend for life—something to which you can return for inspiration and solace again and again.

We recommend a team of two or more co-leaders. While one facilitates an activity, the second leader can focus on participants who need assistance. Your congregation might have guidelines that stipulate the number of adults needed to facilitate a program.

## PARTICIPANTS

*Exploring Our Values through Poetry* is designed for use with high-school-aged youth. You may find it useful to think about the developmental norms for this age group. Not all youth arrive at each developmental stage at the same time, but knowing what to expect overall from fourteen- to eighteen-year-olds can be quite helpful, especially to first-time leaders.

In her book [\*Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook\*](#) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/Nurturing-Children-and-Youth-P16945.aspx](http://www.uuabookstore.org/Nurturing-Children-and-Youth-P16945.aspx)) (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd discusses developmental characteristics of older youth:

- practices increased cognitive skills
- expresses growing interest in abstract values and moral principles
- engages in moral relativism
- becomes less egocentric and more interested in the larger society
- struggles with gender and sexual identities
- continues to develop ethnic or racial identity
- needs to belong and have a sense of self worth
- demonstrates empathy

- conceptualizes religion as an outside authority that can be questioned
- questions faith, sometimes leading to deeper ownership of personal faith or disillusionment
- deepens or attenuates religious or spiritual identity
- explores sexuality
- navigates greater risks relating to alcohol, drug use, and unsafe sexual activity
- sustains the personal fable that "it couldn't happen to me"
- considers friendships and peers important, with some shifting of alliances

Though this program is written for youth, adults might find it interesting also. Consider offering the program for a mixed group of youth and adults. If using this option, look for leaders who are experienced in working with both groups. During the workshops, you will want to monitor the group to make sure both youth and adults are given the space to contribute and that any personal sharing is appropriate for all ages involved. Safety issues will need to be addressed. Your congregation's religious educator can help with guidelines, as can advice from *The Safe Congregation Handbook*, edited by Pat Hoerdoerfer and Fredric Muir (Boston: UUA Publications, 2005).

## INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

By adapting activities or using alternate activities, you can help ensure that every workshop is inclusive of participants with a range of physical and cognitive abilities and learning styles, food allergies, and other sensitivities or limitations. Below, you will find general guidance on adapting the activities along with some resources for implementing inclusion. Within the workshops, some activities suggest specific adaptations under the heading "Including All Participants."

As you plan your Poetry workshops, be aware of activities that might pose difficulties for youth who are differently-abled. All spaces, indoor and outdoor, need to be accessible to anyone who might be in the group. Check the width of doorways and aisles, the height of tables, and the terrain of outdoor landscapes.

Since many of the activities in this program involve reading and writing, pay particular attention to youth who might have learning disabilities. Be prepared to adjust times allocated for writing activities if some participants consistently need more time. Always seek volunteers to

read so no one is forced to read who might not be comfortable doing so.

Find out about participants' medical conditions and their allergies, particularly to food. Adolescence is a time when bodies are busy growing. Consequently, youth will welcome food when it is available. Offering a snack at every workshop is a good idea, but make sure all youth can eat whatever is served.

Each workshop mixes active and quiet, expressive and listening, and whole-group and individual activities, along with alternate activities that you can substitute for core activities if you feel they better suit a group. As you begin to recognize different learning styles among the participants, let this information guide your selection of activities for each workshop.

Some activity descriptions mention specific concerns or suggest adaptations under the heading "Including All Participants." Feel free to devise your own adaptations to meet any special needs you perceive. As the leader, you will know best how to provide a fully inclusive learning experience for the group.

A helpful resource book is Sally Patton's [Welcoming Children with Special Needs](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/lfd/welcoming_children_specialneeds.pdf) (www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/lfd/welcoming\_children\_specialneeds.pdf).

## FAMILIES

Families are the primary influence on the faith development of their youth. As a program leader, you take on a special role: supporting families in your faith community to shape their youth's Unitarian Universalist faith development. By involving parents in the Poetry program, you help youth take the meaning of the work they do in the workshops into their daily lives.

Each workshop offers Taking It Home resources including conversation topics and other ways for youth and their families to extend the workshop at home; these may include a game, a family ritual, or links to informative and/or interactive websites. Adapt each workshop's Taking It Home section to reflect the activities the group will have engaged in and, if you like, to help youth and families prepare for workshops yet to come. If you have an e-mail address for each family, you may wish to provide Taking It Home as a group e-mail, either before or immediately after the workshop. Or you can print, photocopy, and distribute Taking It Home at the workshop's closing.

The Faith in Action activities for each workshop offer opportunities to engage parents/caregivers and other congregants. Find out who can enrich your long-term Faith in Action activities with their personal interests, professional networks, or simply their time.

The leader/parent relationship is very important and must be both welcoming and reassuring. When parents bring their youth to experience Unitarian Universalist religious education, they need to feel confidence not only in the safety and enjoyment you will provide, but also in your faith leadership. Strong partnerships can foster parents' commitment to becoming strong faith leaders in their own families. As a leader, you can support and inspire parents to bring intentionality and excitement to their role in their youth's faith development.

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE

All fifteen workshops in *Poetry* have the same structure. Between an opening and a closing ritual, participants engage in up to four activities. Most workshops revolve thematically around one or more central poems, which participants hear and explore in one of the activities. Each poem illustrates a particular aspect of the workshop's larger theme.

Every workshop offers a Faith in Action activity. While these activities are optional, Faith in Action is an important element of the overall *Tapestry of Faith* curriculum series. Some Faith in Action activities can be completed in one meeting; others are longer term and require the involvement of congregants or community members outside your group.

All workshops offer alternate activities. Depending on your time and interests, you may choose to replace one or more of the workshop's core activities with an alternate activity or add an alternate activity to your workshop. You may also find the alternate activities useful for gatherings outside of the program, such as family retreats, intergenerational dinners, or other events during which some interesting programming is needed.

As you design your program, decide whether the group needs extra meetings to incorporate additional activities or to complete a long-term Faith in Action project. Long-term Faith in Action projects usually require meetings outside your regular meeting time and/or at another location. Before you commit to an extended program, make sure you obtain the support of your congregational leadership and the youths' families.

### Quote

A quote introduces the subject of each workshop. You may decide to read the quote aloud to your group as an entry point into the workshop.

Co-leaders may like to discuss the quote as part of their preparation for a workshop. Exploring a quote together can help you each feel grounded in the ideas and activities you will present and can help a team of leaders

"get on the same page." The quote is also included in the Taking It Home section for families to consider.

## **Introduction**

The Introduction gives an overview of the workshop concepts and explains how you can use the activities to teach the concepts. The Introduction also describes the workshop's thematic connection with the other workshops in the program.

## **Goals**

The Goals section provides general workshop outcomes for the workshop. Reviewing the goals will help you connect the workshop's content and methodologies with the four strands of the *Tapestry of Faith* religious education programs: ethical, spiritual, Unitarian Universalist identity, and faith development. As you plan a workshop, apply your knowledge of the group of youth, the time and space you have available, and your own strengths and interests as a leader to determine the most important and achievable goals for the workshop and the activities that will serve them best.

## **Learning Objectives**

The Learning Objectives section describes specific participant outcomes that the workshop activities are designed to facilitate. They describe what a participant will learn, become, or be able to do as a result of the learning activities. It may be helpful to think of learning objectives as the building blocks with which the larger, "big-picture" goals of the *Poetry* program are achieved. If you deem particular learning objectives especially important, make sure you select the workshop activities that address the outcomes of those objectives.

## **Workshop-at-a-Glance**

The Workshop-at-a-Glance table lists the workshop activities in a suggested order and provides the estimated amount of time required to complete each activity within an overall sixty-minute timeframe. The table includes all of the core activities, from the Opening through the Closing. The table also shows the Faith in Action activity provided for the workshop; note that you will need additional time outside the basic sixty-minute workshop to complete the Faith in Action activity. (We will say more about this in a moment.)

Workshop-at-a-Glance is a guide for your planning. From the Workshop-at-a-Glance table and the alternate activities, choose which elements to use and how to combine these to best suit the group, the meeting space, and the amount of time you have.

Keep in mind that many variables inform the actual completion time for an activity. For example, whole-group discussions will take longer in a large group than

in a small group. Similarly, while six teams can plan their skits as quickly as two teams can, your group will need more time to watch all six skits than to watch two. Remember to consider the time you will need to relocate participants to another area of your meeting room and the time you will need if you wish to include cleanup in an art activity.

The time estimates for Faith in Action activities include only the work the group will do when you meet. Leader planning and preparation are not included. For most Faith in Action activities, you will need to make special arrangements for participants, their families, other congregants, and sometimes members of the wider community to undertake activities outside the group's regular meeting time.

## **Spiritual Preparation**

Each workshop provides a spiritual exercise that teachers may use to prepare themselves for leading the workshop. Taking five or ten minutes to center yourself within the workshop's purpose and content will support and free you to be present with the participants and focus on providing the best possible learning experience. The exercise will guide you to call forth your own life experiences, beliefs, and spirituality and relate these to the workshop you are about to lead. Take advantage of these exercises as a way to grow spiritually as a leader.

## **Workshop Plan**

The workshop plan presents every element of the workshop in detail and in the sequence established in the Workshop-at-a-Glance table. Additionally, the workshop plan presents alternate activities, a Taking It Home section with extension activities for families, and a Resources section. The Resources section includes all the poems, handouts, and other materials you need to lead all of the workshop activities. The Resources section also suggests additional sources that will help you, the leader, further explore the workshop topics.

If you are reading this program online, you can move as you wish among a workshop's elements: Opening, Closing, Faith in Action, Activity 4, Resources, and so on. Each element occupies its own web page. You can click on "Print this Page" at any time. However, if you click on "Download Entire Program" or "Download Workshop" you'll have a user-friendly document on your computer that you can customize as you wish, using your own word processing program. Once you decide which activities you will use, format and print only the materials you need.

Opening: Each workshop begins with an opening ritual. As with many UU programs, an opening ritual can be a

profound way to settle and gather the group and signal the intention to come together authentically and meaningfully.

An opening ritual is provided for you in each workshop. However, your group might wish to design a new Opening or to use one that is traditional for your congregation. Take the liberty you need to shape an opening ritual that suits the group, works within space limitations, and reflects the culture and practices of your congregation.

If your Opening or Closing involves lighting a chalice and your congregation cannot have open flames, or if you are concerned about safety, consider using an LED/battery-operated flaming chalice or a symbolic chalice. If your group plans to do a check-in as part of these workshops, build in an appropriate amount of additional time.

**Activities:** As many as four activities form the core content of each workshop. The variety of activities presented within each workshop addresses different learning styles you may find among participants.

Most workshops feature at least one activity that involves reading a poem. Many of these workshops include a short insight about the poem to help you in your exploration. In addition, workshops that have poems also feature two levels of inquiry:

*Level One Questions*, "What Do We Have Here?": Ask these questions to ensure that the group has a basic understanding of the poem, its general theme, message, and possible "plot." If you suspect that your group grasps the basics, move directly to the Level Two Questions.

*Level Two Questions*, "What's the Big Idea?": Proceed to these questions as soon as it is clear that your group has a fundamental understanding of the poem.

Most workshops also include a writing exercise.

**Materials for Activity:** Provided for each activity, this checklist tells you the supplies you will need.

**Preparation for Activity:** Review the bulleted "to-do" list for each activity at least one week ahead of a workshop. The list provides all the advance work you need to do for the activity, from locating recordings of poetry to preparing your room for a meditation.

**Description of Activity:** This section provides detailed directions for implementing the activity. For many activities, the description includes a rationale that links the activity thematically to the rest of the workshop and to the entire program.

During your planning process, read the activity descriptions carefully so that you understand each activity and its purpose. Later, when you are leading the group, use the description as a step-by-step how-to manual.

**Including All Participants:** Adaptation to include all participants should always be part of your planning process. For certain activities, an Including All Participants section suggests specific modifications that will make the activity manageable and meaningful for youth with limitations of mobility, sight, hearing, or cognition.

**Faith in Action:** An important component of the program, Faith in Action activities give participants practice at being Unitarian Universalists in the world. When you lead a Faith in Action project, you create an opportunity for participants to experience the active expression of faith values.

By design, Faith in Action activities engage leaders, participants, their families, other congregants, and sometimes members of the wider community, often outside the group's regular meeting time and place. Faith in Action projects usually require special arrangements to be made in advance. Like the core and alternate activities, Faith in Action activities include a materials checklist, a list of preparations you must make ahead of time, and a detailed description of the activity.

Before your first Poetry workshop, decide which Faith in Action activities you will do over the course of the program. As you plan each workshop, make sure you allocate the time you will need to move Faith in Action project(s) forward. Workshops that present Faith in Action activities also provide, when possible, estimates of how much time the group will need to complete this particular stage of the project.

Plan well, and remain flexible. Be aware that inclement weather, the last-minute cancellation of a scheduled visitor, or other surprises may bump a planned Faith in Action activity to a later workshop.

**Note:** Faith in Action activities can also be used in ways that are independent of the Poetry program, such as for youth or multigenerational groups.

**Closing:** Each workshop includes a closing ritual. The Closing signals the end of the group's time together. As you plan each workshop, allow plenty of time for your Closing. Avoid rushing through it. Like the Opening, you have the freedom to use the closing ritual provided in the workshop or to design one that fits your congregation's culture and practices.

**Leader Reflection and Planning:** This section provides guidance, often in the form of questions, to help co-

leaders process the workshop after it is concluded and use their reflections to shape future workshops.

**Taking It Home:** Provided for each workshop, these resources are designed to help youth and their families extend the religious education experience. They may include games, conversation topics, ideas for incorporating Unitarian Universalist rituals into the home environment, and/or online sources for the workshop's themes. Download the Taking It Home section and adapt it to reflect the actual activities you have included in the workshop. You can print and photocopy the Taking It Home section for youth to bring home. You may also send it to all parents/caregivers as a group e-mail.

**Alternate Activities:** Most workshops feature one or more alternate activities. You can substitute these for core workshop activities or add them to the core activities. Sometimes the alternate activities are simpler than the core activities—useful if the group as a whole seems unready for the core activities or if the group includes youth with vast developmental differences. Materials checklists, preparation, and descriptions for alternate activities appear in the same format as they do in Openings, Closings, core activities, and Faith in Action activities.

**Resources:** In a workshop's Resources section you will find the poems, other handouts, and all other resources you will need to lead every element of the workshop.

Under the heading "Handouts," you will find material that needs to be printed and photocopied for participants to use in the workshop, including poems.

Under the heading "Leader Resources," you will find all the components you need to lead the workshop activities.

Under the heading "Find Out More," you will find book and video titles, website URLs, and other selected resources to further explore the workshop topics.

## **LEADER GUIDELINES**

Take a moment to think of the great teachers you have had. They probably shared some important characteristics. They gave and received respect; they had unbridled excitement about their subject (sometimes bordering on outright glee); they loved teaching; and they loved their students.

Now, think again of those same wonderful teachers. It is likely that they had very different ways about them: personalities, backgrounds, lifestyles, hairstyles, and, of course, teaching styles. Yet they were all effective; they all made their mark. How could this be?

The answer is simple: There are many, many ways to be an effective teacher.

Just as we all have different learning styles, we also have different teaching styles.

It bears repeating: there are many, many ways to be an effective teacher. And you must find your way, usually by taking risks and making mistakes alongside those with whom you are learning.

To help give you a jumpstart, here are some things that good teachers learn and know:

### **Work backwards.**

Before you start, ask yourself what you hope participants will get from this workshop. What would you like them to be thinking as they leave the workshop, and as they think back on it in the months and years to come? How do you want them to feel when they leave? What do you wish they would take with them, and keep with them?

### **Know your objective.**

This is similar to the "Work Backwards" credo, but it involves establishing goals that are more specific, and less general, in each workshop. Suggested Objectives/Goals are provided, but you may want to tweak them, or adjust them significantly, to serve your group. Keep in mind that each of these workshops is driven by its objective, so changing the objective might call for other changes in the design. Either way, it is important to be clear about the objective(s) of the workshop, because it is what drives the activities and makes meaning of the experience.

### **Take the pulse of the group early and often.**

Do everything you can to be sure participants are clear, engaged, and taking ownership of their work together. Check in with them explicitly with simple questions like:

- How is this workshop—and how are these workshops in general—going for you?
- Is everybody okay?
- Are we together on this?
- How is this pace (or this location, or this sequence) working for people?

Without being too intrusive (that is the tricky part), keep scanning participants in both their large and small groups, checking for "life signs"—body language, visual engagement, laughter, eye contact, and the like. Be sure to maintain focus and direction all the while. Be especially vigilant for anybody who seems excluded or lost. Here it is important to know the participants. Lastly, if something is clearly not working, don't be afraid to

change course and to take time out together to think about how to do so.

### **Embrace the pregnant pause.**

In the attitude of silence the soul finds  
the path in a clearer light... .  
— Mahatma Gandhi

We live in a culture that discourages us from sitting still or sitting in silence, so it is no surprise that pauses in conversation make many of us nervous. But if you are met with long pauses while facilitating a discussion, try to resist the natural impulse to fill them in. Let the silence hang in the air before rushing in with an answer, a follow-up question, or a redirection. Count to ten if you need to. Silence usually means people are thinking. Encourage silence, also, as a way to let the poems resonate.

### **Love your subject.**

While there are suggested poems that inspire each workshop, the bottom line is that you should choose those poems that you love to work with. Many poems in the anthology (in addition to the suggested ones) would serve several themes well.

### **Seek out the quiet ones.**

Remember that quiet people are no more lacking in profundity than frequent talkers are full of it. Try to draw out quieter members of the group by asking gentle questions in their direction, by using their names, and by keeping the environment welcoming to multiple points of view. Try not to be discouraged if some folks do not engage verbally for a few workshops, or at all. While traditional school and workshop settings tend to recognize and reward learners who are verbal and auditory, many people have a learning style that does not fit that model. With these learners, try hands-on, visual, musical, and kinetic activities. Try to remember and honor that learners, like teachers and group leaders, come in all sorts of styles.

### **Encourage ambivalence.**

One of the sure-fire ways to determine that someone is truly thinking and learning is to notice that they are willing to change their mind. "I don't know" is a great ally in the learning process. It is an invitation—to the learner, the learning community, and the group leader.

### **Do not be afraid to model.**

As adult leaders and advisors working with smart, creative, and capable youth, we might feel hesitant about doing too much leading. While that is probably a good impulse overall, there are times when it is necessary to give examples and model for the group. This might involve things like walking through a given

activity, providing an interior monologue that walks through the making sense of a poem, role-playing respectful discussion and sharing, or even (gulp) showing that it is okay to take a risk and fall flat on your face. When facilitating discussions, it is the leader's job to let them unfold while pointing out common threads as well as seeming contradictions. And, if at any point the afore-mentioned "pregnant pause" seems so big that it is about to give birth or is accompanied by blank stares, it is okay to provide examples and suggestions to jump-start the group. Just remember to get off center stage as soon as things get rolling!

### **Share the floor, and make sure others do too.**

Boisterous discussion is great. Disagreement and discomfort can be our allies. Passionate engagement makes for lively and effective workshops. The trick is to encourage invigorating discussion while insisting that everyone (not just the naturally outgoing) be heard. It is a leader's responsibility to reign in participants who are veering too much into "huh?"-land, or are getting too hotheaded. It is also important to nip "cross-talk"—prolonged dialogue between two individuals—in the bud.

### **Sequence and pacing: Setting up for the "A-ha!" moment.**

These workshops have been sequenced intentionally, with one workshop building out of and flowing into another. A well-planned sequence of workshops encourages participants to reflect on past experiences and ways of thinking, to make connections, and to build inquiry upon inquiry, insight upon insight.

Even though the sequence of these workshops and the activities within them have been planned carefully, you are probably the best one to decide which order makes the best sense for you, your setting, your context, and your group. Read all of the workshops through a couple of times before you decide which order will be the most seamless and will generate the most "A-ha!" moments from your group. Consider such factors as how well participants know each other and you, how much time you have to devote to each workshop, which workshop(s) you love best, and which workshop(s) makes sense to do first, last, or not at all.

Pacing is a little easier, but just as important as sequencing. In a nutshell: Take breaks, and be flexible enough to stay longer on an activity or to cut it short. Read faces and body language. Enlist an on-the-ball volunteer with a watch to be timekeeper for discussions and activities.

### **Be an exhibitionist: Show off your group's work!**

The best way to make the process of writing authentic is to get it out there—by publishing it, performing it,

collecting it, and presenting it. This is what "real" writers do; make presentation at least available to the group. Workshops 11-13 guide the development of plans for a Poetry Slam and/or a choral reading. Present these plans to your group early on for buy-in. Anticipating a culminating experience to showcase their work together can infuse the group with a deep sense of purpose and the electrical charge that comes with sharing what we are proud of.

**Consider these other ideas, or devise your own strategies for going public:**

- Dedicate a workshop meeting (or two) to performing and/or publishing poetry. Better yet, take over an entire Sunday service for performing poems and related creations.
- Design a ceremony using the group's poems—a coming of age, a memorial, a protest, a welcoming... .

**For publishing opportunities, consider these:**

- Create a whole-group anthology (again, either inter- or intra-group) that documents the group's work together.
- Create individual anthologies as part of your group's work together. They may include all of their works, some of them, or a collection of their favorites penned by themselves, their colleagues, and other poets.
- Make your own books for your anthologies. Invite a local artist to work with participants to design their own one-of-a-kind books. Use leaves, twigs, beautiful paper, found objects, and/or collage-and-copy.
- Publish a unique "zine" that represents poems and other creations from the workshops.
- Take over an area—a wall, a bulletin board, or a door—in your church and designate it as the poetry board. Rotate poems and lyrics monthly, or arrange them thematically; assemble poems that relate to specific Sunday service themes.
- Submit poems to local papers, national magazines, and the like.

The possibilities are endless!

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Two special elements of the program need additional explanation: the Poetry Slam and the choral reading.

### **How to set up a poetry slam**

*What is it?* A poetry slam is a performance in which poets read their work and are judged. In the Poetry Slam featured in Workshops 12-15, the competitive element is removed so participants can simply enjoy the experience and not worry about winning.

*Why do it?* Performing their work will encourage youth to pay attention to how their poems are understood and received. Performing a Poetry Slam that the entire congregation can attend creates a multigenerational experience. It provides an opportunity for youth to demonstrate what the *Poetry* program is about.

*... and how:* Read through Workshops 12-15 before starting the program and decide if you will include the poetry slam or be ready to present the option to youth at your first meeting. The details will vary from congregation to congregation. Workshops 12-15 outline the steps you need to take. If you feel your group needs more time to rehearse, change the order of the workshops. A polished performance is nice, but more important yet is that the experience is fun and affirming for the youth.

### **How to set up and conduct a choral reading**

*What is it?* A choral reading is a fusion of more than one piece of writing (usually poems) into a new, unified, whole performed as an out-loud reading. The readers/performers use choral devices like repetition, overlap, and volume variation.

*Why do it?* Choral reading helps participants know the poems intimately, and know the other participants well too! In being thoughtful and intentional about selecting the words, phrases, and lines from the works to be fused, youth are forced to think deeply about the meaning and strengths of each piece and what they have to say to each other.

*... and how:* After reading and discussing a body of work (a set of poems, in this case), break the group into smaller groups of between five and ten people. Ask them to construct and practice a choral reading that incorporates elements from all of the given works (four is a good number of poems to draw from). Have the small groups use works that are familiar to everyone in the group. Instruct the groups to select words, lines, and moments from each poem, then decide when, where, and how to weave these elements into an out-loud performance.

In addition, have the groups decide what each participant will read and when and how to present the choral reading, such as standing, sitting in a circle, pacing, speaking, whispering, shouting, or singing.

When rehearsal time is over, groups may perform their readings for each other. Workshops 11-14 include a

Faith in Action option for preparing a choral reading to present during the Poetry Slam. Participants may also choose to present a choral reading during a worship service or other congregational gathering.

## BEFORE YOU START

As soon as your program has been scheduled, prepare a calendar of the dates for each workshop. The more co-leaders and parent volunteers you include in the program, the more useful a calendar will be. Post the calendar in your shared meeting space and duplicate it for each adult participant.

Use the calendar as a to-do list. For workshops having activities that need assistance from others in the congregation or community, write reminders to contact these people well in advance and to confirm their engagement closer to the workshop date. Use your calendar to note when you will download, customize, and distribute the Taking It Home resources provided for each workshop. If the group will go off-site for a Faith in Action activity, mark on the calendar the dates when you need to create, distribute, and collect permission forms.

If someone on your leadership team has the expertise to create a shared electronic calendar, take advantage! Designate one person to keep the calendar up to date. If the group will have different leaders for different workshops, make sure to assign responsibilities, as needed, for distributing permission forms, requests for volunteers, and other advance communications to parents. Note these tasks and who will execute them on the calendar.

After you finish your calendar, read this guide through a couple of times. Envision your group, setting, and time constraints and prioritize accordingly. Highlight whatever sounds great. Make notes in the margins about modifications and additions you would like to make. Talk about the guide with your co-leader(s).

Reserve a good, private spot that is large enough for the group to spread its wings and scatter in different directions when private writing space is desired, but with an area small enough to be conducive to intimate and audible discussion. Refer to this spot in some consistent way. In the workshops, it is called the "meeting room." For those times when participants disperse for an activity, devise a method—such as sounding a bell or singing a song—for calling them back to the meeting room.

If your meeting room has a dry erase board, you might use it instead of newsprint when notes are not needed for future workshops.

Decide if you will serve snacks and treats. If you plan to serve snacks, decide who will provide them. Also decide

if snacks will be available throughout the sixty-minute workshop or only served at the end.

Decide on the opening and closing rituals for the first workshop. Thereafter, the group may want to weigh in on what rituals they would like to use. See Workshop 2 for suggestions. Bring the necessary materials (a chalice, a candle, chanting tape, and the like.).

Make nametags for participants and leaders before the first workshop. Keep extra materials handy for making additional nametags for newcomers or guests.

Last — but not least — read over all the poems in the workshops. Familiarize yourself with them. If you have poems that you love, fit the theme, and are appropriate for youth, talk to your co-leader and congregational religious educator about using them as a replacement or in addition to the poems included in the program.

And, finally, enjoy the experiences you will share with this unique group of individuals.

It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end.

— Ursula K. LeGuin

## PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

There are seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalism draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

## **FACILITATOR FEEDBACK FORM**

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

Faith Development Office  
Ministries and Faith Development  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
24 Farnsworth Street  
Boston, MA 02210-1409  
religiouseducation@uua.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation:

Number of Participants:

Age range:

Did you work with (a) co-facilitator(s)?

Your name:

***Overall, what was your experience with this program?***

***What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?***

***In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?***

***Did you enrich the program with any resources that you would recommend to others?***

***What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?***

***What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?***

## **PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM**

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

Faith Development Office  
Ministries and Faith Development  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
24 Farnsworth Street  
Boston, MA 02210-1409  
religiouseducation@uua.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation or group:

Your name:

***Overall, what was your experience with this program?***

***What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?***

***In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?***

***What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?***

***What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?***

# WORKSHOP 1: LISTENING AND SPEAKING WITH POETRY: AN INTRODUCTION

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Breathe-in experience,  
breathe-out poetry.*  
— Muriel Rukeyser

The primary activities of this first workshop provide the orientation and vocabulary that will engage and support participants as they move into the program curriculum and deeper into poetry. Activity 2, The Poet's Tools, contains a substantial amount of information that provides the basis for future discussions of poems. Your presentation of the material needs to engage participants, and you should not belabor the information itself. Participants do not need to learn the poetic devices that you will discuss; they simply need to understand the material. Post the poet's tools, which you will list on newsprint during the activity, for future reference throughout the program.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Introduce the idea of using poetry to explore major questions in our lives
- Engage participants in various ways of approaching, using, making, and learning from poetry
- Optional: Invite participants to create a covenant

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Analyze the tools of poetry and practice discerning the use of those tools in poems they read
- Use these tools to write poetry
- Reflect upon the nature of poetry
- Begin the process of reviewing their personal relationship to poetry

- Experiment with the differences between prose and poetry
- Optional: Lay the expectations for a covenantal relationship
- Optional: Engage with a difficult life issue in a creative way

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: What Is a Poem?	10
Activity 2: The Poet's Tools	15
Activity 3: Building a Poem	25
Faith in Action: Creative Engagement with Tough Issues	15
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Five Questions	10
Alternate Activity 2: Covenant Building	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

During today's introductory workshop, participants will share their feelings about poetry. Chances are you enjoy poetry and that is one reason why you volunteered to lead this program. However, it is possible that not all participants enjoy poetry. How will you feel if some youth bring negative preconceptions about poetry into the workshop? Do you have a personal story you can share about a positive experience with poetry? The group you are leading will have a much better experience if you share with them your enthusiasm and love of poetry. People of all ages prefer teachers who love what they teach.

# WORKSHOP PLAN

## OPENING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

### Preparation for Activity

- During Workshop 2, Alternate Activity 2, Designing an Opening, the group will have the opportunity to create a unique workshop opening. If your group has a traditional workshop opening, feel free to use that instead of the words provided here.

### Description of Activity

Gather around the chalice. While a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "poetry" in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "poetry." When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying, May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

To introduce today's workshop, say,  
Welcome to a different way of interacting with poetry! You do not need to be a poetry expert to gain something from these workshops; you simply need an open mind and a sense of adventure.

Regardless of what your experience with poetry has been until now, the intent of this program is to liberate us from preconceptions, help us become more curious about poems and how they are made, and help us engage with poetry on our own and as a group. We will read and discuss many poems, but our primary purpose is not to simply analyze or decode them. Instead we will explore the ideas and language of the poems. We will try some activities individually and together and use poetry to be open to ourselves, our personal truths, and to one another. Because our discussions will center on our personal thoughts about poems, there are no

right or wrong answers. At the end of the program, we will have an opportunity to present a Poetry Slam during which we will showcase our work and the work of others.

### Including All Participants

In order to create space for less assertive participants to speak, allow several seconds of silence to pass before closing the chalice lighting.

## ACTIVITY 1: WHAT IS A POEM? (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, Introduction to Poetry
- Newsprint and markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, "[Introduction to Poetry](#)," (included in this document) one copy for each participant.
- Write *Is It a Poem?* at the top of a sheet of newsprint. Prepare two columns, one with a + (plus) sign at the head and one with a - (minus) sign at the head, for responses.

### Description of Activity

Participants share their experiences with poetry and imagine how this program will be different.

Ask the youth to share their ideas and feelings about poetry. This opening discussion is the threshold of both today's workshop and the entire program; make it welcoming. Invite participants to share their prior experience, prior knowledge, and preconceptions about poetry. Honor all responses and listen for a sense of where this group is beginning its journey with poetry. This short exercise will engage participants in the work and learning to come and prepare you to lead this particular group.

If needed, use these questions to prompt discussion:

- What poems are familiar to you? Do you have any favorites? If so, what are they?
- Can you recite a poem? If so, why do you remember the words of this particular one?
- Have you tried to write a poem? How did that go?
- What is your definition of a poem?

If you like, share these definitions of a poem, from the American Heritage Dictionary (from Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004) : 1. A verbal composition designed to convey experiences, ideas, or emotions in a vivid and imaginative way, characterized by the use of language chosen for its sound and suggestive power and by the use of literary techniques such as meter, metaphor, and rhyme. 2. A composition in verse rather than in prose.

Do not expect to arrive at a definitive definition, and certainly do not expect a consensus! Direct participants to keep the above questions and issues in mind today as they move deeper into poetry.

Have two volunteers read aloud Handout 1, "Introduction to Poetry." Allow about thirty seconds between the readings. Ask participants, "Does your prior experience with poetry relate to what Billy Collins expresses about discussing poetry?" Allow time for youth to answer, and then ask, "Why do you think he titled the poem "Introduction to Poetry"?"

After discussing these questions, inform participants that during the workshops you will try not to "beat poems with a hose." However, you will facilitate discussions about what each poem means, and it might be useful to have a common vocabulary to use in these discussions. You will introduce some vocabulary words in the next activity.

### Including All Participants

Photocopies of poems should always be in an easy-to-read font and font size. Be prepared to help struggling readers with difficult words.

## ACTIVITY 2: THE POET'S TOOLS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Singing the Living Tradition, one per participant
- Newsprint and markers
- Optional: Dry erase board and markers

### Preparation for Activity

- On newsprint or a dry erase board, write these two questions:
  - What do we have here?
  - What is the big idea?
- Write the terms below on a page of newsprint. You will want to keep this newsprint posted for

the duration of the program, so write neatly and consider laminating the sheet.

- Figurative Language
- Form, Line, Stanza
- Sound, Rhythm, Repetition
- Tone and Form

### Description of Activity

In this activity, you will present participants with a common vocabulary to use in poetry discussions.

Offer the group two reasons for reading a poem aloud twice:

- To hear the poem in more than one voice
- To help us fully absorb the poem

Ask participants to open the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition* and find reading 490, Mary Oliver's poem "Wild Geese." Invite two volunteers to read the poem aloud. Allow thirty seconds between readings.

Refer to the two questions you have written on the newsprint or dry erase board. Explain that when approaching a poem, it is helpful to ask two kinds of questions. The first kind (What do we have here?) helps us examine what is happening in the poem and identify which particular phrases or lines confuse or confound us. In the process, we become familiar with the poem and can make sure that everyone has a basic understanding of it. At this time, we also share our first impressions of and immediate feelings about the poem.

Lead a discussion about "Wild Geese" to explore the question, what do we have here? Use these prompts:

- How does the poem make you feel? (sad? hopeful? melancholy?) Why?
- What is the poem's story? (Alternatively, you could ask, what happens in the poem?)
- Which words or lines are unclear or confusing?

Next, move on to the second kind of question (What's the big idea?). Explain that a poem's big idea is its heart and soul: what the poem says about life, human nature, and the world. A poem's big idea is similar to the moral of a story. Use these questions to encourage discussion:

- In "Wild Geese," what do you think the poet—through her use of the three "Meanwhile" lines—intends to suggest about the nature of being a human?
- The poet uses words like "despair" and "lonely" and creates an image of someone walking on

his/her knees. Is this poem hopeful or hopeless? Both at once? Or somewhere in between?

- In "Wild Geese," what is the poet trying to convince us of? Are you convinced?

Point out that it is normal to end a conversation about a poem's meaning without a consensus. However, we can name and identify the tools an author uses to construct a poem. Direct participants to the four items you listed on newsprint. These are the "tools" you will discuss.

Focusing on one tool at a time, invite participants to volunteer what they already know about each one. (In the next discussion, focus only briefly on the tools that participants explain clearly now.)

Explain that a poet's work involves many choices. Poets have certain tools of language available to them, and they decide which to use to make a poem. We will look at some basic tools.

Read the descriptions one tool at a time, and refer to "Wild Geese" for examples of how Mary Oliver used or ignored that tool. Invite participants to contribute their own examples from the poem.

POETRY TOOL	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES IN "WILD GEESE"			
Figurative Language	Language used in a way that extends beyond the literal, or surface meaning. It usually uses the "not-thing" to describe the "thing." Figurative language often comes in the form of metaphor and/or imagery.	... the soft animal of your body... ... calls to you like wild geese...			
Form, Line, and Stanza	Some choices a poet can make about Form, Line, and Stanza: ? Where to break the lines and the stanzas ? How to organize them ? How long or short they will be ? How the form will reinforce or otherwise relate to the poem's content	The indentation of "love what it loves" on its own line. Why? The use of a dash as punctuation in third-to-last line. Why is it there? What is the relationship between long lines and shorter ones? What is the effect?			
Sound,	A poet may use	Repetition of the			
			Rhythm, and Repetition	alliteration (repeating consonant sounds) and assonance (repeating vowel sounds). She/He may also use repetition of individual words, lines, or whole stanzas, much like a song uses a chorus. Some choices a poet can make about Sound, Rhythm, and Repetition: ? The number of syllables the words will have; where to place stresses ? Where repetition will be used ? Where soft sounds and hard sounds will be effective; how various sounds will play off one another ? How sound will reinforce or otherwise relate to the poem's content A poet may use an open form or a form with a rigid structure such as a sonnet or a haiku. Some choices a poet can make about Form and Tone: ? How the form will serve the tone and the content ? Whether the language will be formal or informal ? How the tone and the form will work together	word "meanwhile" and the phrase "you do not." Why? What is the effect? "Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine." This is an odd sentence construction. What does the insertion of "yours" in the middle do to the sound of the line; to its rhythm; to its meaning?

Save the newsprint on which you have listed the poet's tools. Post it for future reference.

## ACTIVITY 3: BUILDING A POEM (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint and markers
- Current newspaper article or excerpt

### Preparation for Activity

- Find several short newspaper articles that have an emotional/human dimension. You will need one article for each small group of three to five youth.
- Decide how you will form small groups: participants can self-select, you can assign youth to groups, or you can choose another method of random selection, such as counting off.
- Make sure the list of poet's tools is posted where all groups can see it.

### Description of Activity

In this activity, participants manipulate supplied words to make poems.

Form small groups of three to five participants. Provide a sheet of newsprint and a marker for each group. Direct the groups to transform the article into a poem. To do this, group members decide how to lay out the words to achieve a poetic form. They may not change any words, yet they should strive for maximum emotional effect. Allow five minutes for groups to write their poem.

When everyone is finished, have one person from each group read the group's poem aloud. After each presentation, ask the group why they decided to break lines and stanzas where they did. When all the presentations are complete, ask the participants:

- What does the poetic version of the article give you that the newspaper version does not?
- Do you consider the new versions of the newspaper article "poems"? Why or why not?

Next, have the groups create another poem using the same newspaper article as their raw material. This time they do not have to use any words from the article. Their only directive is to write about the same subject, using the poetry tools you discussed earlier. Point out the list of tools that you have posted and encourage youth to refer to it as they work. Provide additional newsprint as needed.

Allow at least ten minutes for participants to write the poems. Then invite them to read their poems aloud. Ask them to identify which tools they used and to describe

how. Provide support during the discussion, referring to the list of tools as needed.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- *Singing the Living Tradition*, one for every other participant

### Preparation for Activity

- If hymnals are not always available, print the words below on newsprint and post in the meeting room.

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH TOUGH ISSUES (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Journals and pens or pencils

### Description of Activity

Participants will think of creative ways to engage with difficult issues in their lives.

The poem "Introduction to Poetry" urges readers to engage with poetry in a new way—a way that is liberating and playful, yet could lead us to a deeper understanding. What other aspects of your life could benefit from the use of a different lens? A difficult class in school? A stressful relationship? A talent you are working to develop?

Ask participants to spend a few moments in silence identifying one aspect of their life with which they wish to engage differently. Participants should focus on that aspect while you invite them to:

... hold [the issue] up to the light like a color slide

Have you been missing something concerning your relationship with this issue? (After reading each question, wait one minute before proceeding.)

*... drop a mouse into [the issue] and watch him probe his way out*

Can you envision an end to your conflict with this issue?

*... walk inside [the issue's] room and feel the walls for a light switch*

Can you pinpoint the most troublesome aspect of the issue?

*... waterski across the surface of [the issue] and wave to anyone else involved*

What can you do to increase the pleasure you receive from engaging with this issue? Is there anyone who can help?

Distribute journals or have participants get them out. Invite participants to make notes in their journals about insights they gained from this activity. When everyone has finished writing, inform youth that many people journal as a spiritual practice. We often consider depth of reflection as the main difference between a journal and a diary. Often a diary simply lists the day's activities, perhaps with notes about how the reader feels. A journal is more often used to record reflections on topics, especially those the writer might wish to return to later.

During this program, participants will use their journals in two ways: to write poems they can refer to later and for reflection. Point out that the Taking It Home piece youths will receive each week includes a reflection question. Participants' journals provide one place where they might reflect upon the question when they are outside of the workshop.

If you are storing journals in the meeting space, collect the journals. For privacy sake, keep them in a secure location. If participants are taking journals home, remind them to bring them next time you meet.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Use the experience of this first workshop to evaluate

- how well the given time for activities matched the time you actually used (this can vary greatly, depending on the size of your group);
- whether the discussions were fruitful and everyone participated;
- whether you and your co-leader felt adequately prepared.

Workshop 2 gives the group the opportunity to design its own Opening and Closing. Decide if you wish to do that or if you will continue to use the ones you used in this

workshop. Review the plan for the next workshop and decide who is responsible for advance planning.

## TAKING IT HOME

Breathe-in experience,  
breathe-out poetry.  
— Muriel Rukeyser

### DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We discussed our previous experiences with poetry and feelings about it in general. We shared what we hope this experience will be like, read a poem, and composed a poem from a newspaper article. We examined terms and questions we will use in future workshops to "hold poems up to the light."

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

In what way(s) is poetry different from prose (like the newspaper article)?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- Look for books of poetry at home. Determine which family member owns which books. Ask how they obtained them. Do your family members have favorite poets?
- Speaking of favorites, do you have a favorite fiction author? Does that author also write poetry? If you are not sure, search the web for poems by your favorite author. Compare her/his poetry to her/his prose. Do you hear a distinct voice in each form of writing?
- Perhaps some of your family, friends, and congregation members are poets and you do not know it. For many people, writing poetry is a spiritual practice, much like journaling, and they may not publicly share their interest in the activity. Ask around and discover the hidden poets all around you. Tell them you are taking a poetry workshop. Perhaps poetry can become an interest you can share.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FIVE QUESTIONS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Journals and pens or pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Make sure the list of poet's tools is posted where all participants can see it.

## Description of Activity

Ask participants to write on their page, "A poem is... " and then close their eyes.

When all eyes are closed, read the following questions aloud:

- What is a poem?
- Who is a poet?
- Are the tools of poetry just for the poet to use?
- What if a reader does not know about those tools?
- How can the reader still appreciate the poem?

Have participants open their eyes and begin writing their thoughts about these questions. After five minutes, invite participants to share their responses with the group.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: COVENANT BUILDING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint and markers

### Description of Activity

Invite participants to create a group covenant to guide them in their work. Use the following discussion prompts as needed:

- What is a covenant?
- Has anyone in the group ever created a covenant? (If so, ask if those members of the group are interested in co-leading the covenant creating process with you now.)
- Think of a time when you were part of a group that worked well together. What qualities or characteristics of the group allowed that to happen?
- What guidelines will help group members be comfortable with and respectful of each other?

Work with participants to create the covenant. Allow time for participants to think and reflect. List responses on newsprint. Encourage positive wording. If participants do not suggest them, share the following guidelines based on those proposed in the UUA *Youth Advisor's Handbook*:

- Respect confidentiality; personal sharing stays in the room.
- Show concern for each other's welfare; when it's his/her turn, each person has the right to either pass or share.

- Be respectful; insults and sarcasm are not allowed.
- Make sure everyone is heard; no interrupting others.
- Be inclusive; help everyone feel like s/he are part of the group.
- Remain committed to others.

Review the covenant. Then ask, "What should happen if someone breaks the covenant?" Have participants use "I" statements to point out which guideline has been broken; for example, "I feel the remark was belittling," instead of "You made a belittling remark." Resolve the problem and review the solution in light of the covenant. Revise the covenant as needed and make sure the group agrees with the change. Explain that the covenant will be posted and that the group can revisit, add to, and revise it so it remains meaningful. Thank participants for creating the covenant as a group and for sharing the responsibility of upholding it.

# EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 1: HANDOUT 1: INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

Billy Collins, "Introduction to Poetry" from *The Apple That Astonished Paris*. Copyright 1988, 1996 by Billy Collins. Used by permission of the University of Arkansas Press, [www.uapress.com](http://www.uapress.com).

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means.

## FIND OUT MORE

The publisher McGraw-Hill has an Online Learning Center, which offers a [glossary of poetic terms](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html) (at [highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student\\_view0/poetic\\_glossary.html](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html)) that you might find useful.

[eNotes](http://www.enotes.com) (at [www.enotes.com](http://www.enotes.com)), an online educational resource, has a [study guide](http://www.enotes.com/wild-geese/) (at [www.enotes.com/wild-geese/](http://www.enotes.com/wild-geese/)) to "Wild Geese." The site also has biographical information on both [Mary Oliver](#) (at

[www.enotes.com/oqa-encyclopedia/oliver-mary](http://www.enotes.com/oqa-encyclopedia/oliver-mary)) and [Billy Collins](http://www.enotes.com/authors/billy-collins) (at [www.enotes.com/authors/billy-collins](http://www.enotes.com/authors/billy-collins)).

Here are two books that might be useful if you wish to explore additional methods of working with youth and poetry:

Lies, Betty Bonham. *The Poet's Pen: Writing Poetry with Middle and High School Students*. (Portsmouth, NH: Teacher Ideas Press, 1993).

Somers, Albert B. *Teaching Poetry in High School*. (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1999).

# WORKSHOP 2: SURPRISED BY BEAUTY

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The glory of youths is their strength,  
but the beauty of the aged is their grey hair.

Proverbs 20:29

Today's workshop focuses on our experience of beauty. Taking time to appreciate the beautiful is one way to renew the sense of awe and wonder that our spirits need. This workshop includes a guided meditation, an activity option that will be offered in several workshops. It also includes an alternate activity to help groups that wish to design a unique opening and/or closing ritual.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Examine notions of beauty: our own notions and the notions of others
- Train participants to use meditation to notice more fully, and more often, the beauty that surrounds us each day
- Explore using words to articulate beauty
- Consider connections between beauty and spirit
- Optional: Encourage youth to help publicize alternate views of beauty

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Reflect upon their own standards of beauty and have the opportunity to revise them
- Increase their awareness of the beauty around them through meditation

- Explore how poetry can elucidate our notions of beauty
- Optional: Share examples of beautiful behavior with others

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: In Search of Beauty, Part 1	15
Activity 2: True Beauty	10
Activity 3: Meditation on Beauty	15
Activity 4: In Search of Beauty, Part 2	10
Faith in Action: Beauty Is as Beauty Does	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: My Beautiful Poem	20
Alternate Activity 2: Designing an Opening and Closing	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Often the spiritual preparation includes questions for reflection. Reflecting upon our lives is important, but sometimes it is good not to overanalyze. In preparation for today's workshop, spend a few moments soaking up beauty. Spend time in a place where you will be surrounded by beauty. The place you choose can be a public garden, an art museum, or a playground. You can listen to music or visit your favorite restaurant. Indulge in beauty with all your senses, and just enjoy!

## WORKSHOP PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

#### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "beauty" in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "beauty." When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying, "May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings."

To introduce today's workshop, say,

Poetry is often linked with beauty: a poem may be about something beautiful, a poem may be beautiful in and of itself, or perhaps something is so beautiful it inspires poetry. Today we will cultivate our own awareness of beauty; we will pay attention to how poems speak to us about beauty and experience our own observations and thoughts on what is beautiful. Is there one single idea of beauty that everyone in the world might accept? How does experiencing beauty affect your spirit?

### ACTIVITY 1: IN SEARCH OF BEAUTY, PART 1 (15 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint or dry erase board and markers
- Pen or pencils and journal

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide where you will send participants to do this activity and for how long. An outdoor location provides opportunities to observe nature, people, and more; an indoor location may be more limited, yet rich with beauty in its own way.

#### Description of Activity

In this activity, participants search for beauty and report back to the group.

Give the following instructions to the group:

In a moment, you will go off on your own and explore your surroundings. Your mission is simply to look for beauty. Jot down everything you think qualifies as "beauty" in your journal. We will reconvene in five minutes.

Make yourself available to answer questions, but do not offer suggestions or in any way define what might be beautiful.

When participants reconvene, prompt them with a simple question: "What beauty did you find?" List responses on the newsprint. Resist reacting to the responses, and avoid analyzing trends, at least until you have collected the responses. Keep the list of "beauty" posted in the room; you may want to refer to it later in this lesson.

Use the following prompts to discuss the nature of beauty:

- How have your ideas of beauty changed as you have grown up?
- What does beauty have to do with values or how we value different people, places, and things?
- What does Unitarian Universalism have to say about beauty?
- In addition to belonging to our Unitarian Universalist community of faith, what other groups do we belong to (teenagers, softball team, family, and the like)? What do those groups say about beauty?
- Who decides what beauty is? What voices outside ourselves tell us what beauty is? Is there a cultural consensus about beauty?

NOTE: This discussion can easily fill your lesson time. Set a time limit!

#### Including All Participants

If going outdoors is an option, make sure the area to which group members will go is accessible to all participants.

### ACTIVITY 2: TRUE BEAUTY (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- "Handout 1, "[The Prophet on Beauty](#) (included in this document) "

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, "The Prophet on Beauty", one for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Participants use a poem to reflect upon what we call "beauty".

Distribute Handout 1, "The Prophet on Beauty". Invite two or three volunteers to read the poem aloud. Allow thirty seconds of silence to pass between readings.

Lead a "What do we have here?" discussion, using these questions:

- This handout is a chapter from the book *The Prophet*, which is composed of twenty-six "poetic essays". Should we consider this a poem? Why or why not?
- What is the poem about?
- Why is beauty spoken of as "she"?
- How do the lines "All these things have you said of beauty. Yet in truth you spoke not of her but of needs unsatisfied", explain the preceding lines?

Use these questions to lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion:

- What does this poem have to say about true beauty? Do you agree or disagree?
- The poet says that beauty is "an image you see though you close your eyes and a song you hear though you shut your ears." Can you think of a time you encountered beauty that stayed with you long after you left its presence?
- The author also speaks of beauty being unveiled. When have you been surprised by unexpected beauty?

## ACTIVITY 3: MEDITATION ON BEAUTY (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Beauty Meditation](#) (included in this document)
- Journals and pens or pencils
- Optional: CD player and music

### Preparation for Activity

- Review Leader Resource 1, *Beauty Meditation*.

- Arrange the room for a comfortable meditation, making sure you have enough comfortable seating for all participants.
- If you plan to play soft music in the background, set up a CD player and music.

### Description of Activity

Participants meditate on beauty and then make notes about images that came to mind.

Lead the meditation exercise outlined in Leader Resource 1, *Beauty Meditation*. After the meditation, allow a few minutes for participants to note in their journals any images or thoughts that occurred to them during the meditation.

## ACTIVITY 4: IN SEARCH OF BEAUTY, PART 2 (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Pens or pencils and journals

### Description of Activity

Participants find out if their sensitivity to beauty was heightened by the meditation and/or discussion.

Tell the group they are going on another hunt for beauty. Say,

This time, take with you the calm and awareness from our meditation and the gentle reminders from the poem(s) we have talked about today. Retrace your steps to the places you visited before. Your mission is the same as before: to look for beauty. In your journal, make a list of what you find. Return in five minutes.

When participants reconvene, invite volunteers to say what they found this time. Lead a discussion, using these questions:

- What did you see that was new? (Add to the list you started in Activity 1.)
- How was your search affected by the meditation? By the poem and discussion?

Finally, help participants reflect more deeply on beauty, poetry, and faith. Ask:

- What, if anything, changed between your first and second hunt for beauty?
- Why did (or didn't) your observations change?
- How does Unitarian Universalism help us see beauty? Does worship play a role in

appreciating beauty? In what other ways does congregational life relate to beauty?

- What do we need to cultivate within ourselves in order to be continually "surprised by beauty"?

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- *Singing the Living Tradition*, one for each participant

### Preparation for Activity

- If hymnals are not always available, you might want to print the words below on newsprint and post them in the meeting room.

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: BEAUTY IS AS BEAUTY DOES

### Materials for Activity

- Pens or pencils and paper

### Description of Activity

Participants explore how art can be used not only to imitate life, but to hold up higher aspirations to people.

Invite participants to think about the common saying "beauty is as beauty does." What does it mean? Can participants think of someone who has acted in a beautiful way? The person can be someone famous or not. Perhaps participants read a news story about a pet saving a person's life. Perhaps they have an elderly neighbor who invites the neighborhood children to play in his/her yard.

Have participants write poems about the beautiful actions taken by such individuals. Instruct them to use a form of the word "beauty" in their poem or in a short introduction to the poem. By doing so, they will help spread an alternative idea about beauty by encouraging others to focus more on how we treat each other and less on how we look.

Consider submitting poems to [Potato Hill Poetry](http://www.potatohill.com/magazine.html) (at [www.potatohill.com/magazine.html](http://www.potatohill.com/magazine.html)), which publishes

children's poetry online; or to the [Louisville Review](http://www.spalding.edu/louisvillereview/submission.htm) (at [www.spalding.edu/louisvillereview/submission.htm](http://www.spalding.edu/louisvillereview/submission.htm)) Children's Corner; or to your local literary magazine; or to your district youth and adult committee newsletter.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Discuss with your co-leader which activities flowed well and which needed adjustments. Was the level of movement in this workshop received well by the group? Did participants come back to the meeting space when asked or did it take effort to gather everyone back together? You will want to keep these logistics in mind for future workshops.

Discuss the guided meditation, as guided meditations are offered as activities in several workshops. If it was successful, why was it? If not, what could you have done differently?

## TAKING IT HOME

The glory of youths is their strength,  
but the beauty of the aged is their grey hair.

Proverbs 20:29

### DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We searched for beauty in our surroundings and shared what we found. After discussing a poem by Gibran Khalil Gibran and participating in a guided meditation that was meant to increase our sensitivity to our surroundings, we searched for beauty again to see if our thoughts about beauty had changed.

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Through which of the five senses do you absorb the most beauty?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- Here is the chorus from the song, "Beautiful," by Christina Aguilera:

I am beautiful no matter what they say  
Words can't bring me down  
I am beautiful in every single way  
Yes, words can't bring me down  
So don't you bring me down today

(Full lyrics can be found at [Lyrics007](http://www.lyrics007.com/Christina%20Aguilera/Lyrics/Beautiful%20Lyrics.html) (at [www.lyrics007.com/Christina Aguilera Lyrics/Beautiful Lyrics.html](http://www.lyrics007.com/Christina Aguilera Lyrics/Beautiful Lyrics.html)) and other websites.)

Many of us have experienced hurtful words. Bullies use them, but sometimes we all say hurtful things, often without thinking about how our words affect someone's

self-image. Why not make a pact, with your family and friends, to help each other try not to use hurtful words about other people's appearances? Perhaps you can say a code word when someone says something hurtful. The code word will let the speaker know she/he has said something she/he might want to retract or soften. Some UU youth groups say "ouch" if someone says something hurtful, stereotypical, or inappropriate. If you prefer to be less obvious, try a code word like "pudding," a common but not too common word with a meaning that is understood only by those who made the pact.

- Why not try a feng shui makeover? Hairstylist Billy Yamaguchi wrote *Feng Shui Beauty* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2004), which explains how to use the Chinese principles of feng shui to determine your strongest elements and use this information to design a hairstyle and makeup palette to suit your nature. Author Chao-Hsiu Chen, in her book *Beauty Feng Shui* (Taos, New Mexico: Redwing Books, 2001), takes a different route. She explains the spiritual and physical meanings of body parts and provides exercises and meditations to help restore harmony. The daily activities that are intended to deepen self-awareness and alter destructive behavior patterns could be used as a spiritual practice with family and friends.
- In this modern age, we have more ways to access beauty than existed before. One means of access is the computer. Though it is often used for work, there is no reason why the computer cannot also serve as a source of beauty. Consider your desktop wallpaper. Every time you boot up your computer, the image on your wallpaper meets your eyes. Is it a beautiful image? If your family shares a computer, take turns picking beautiful wallpaper. Look for websites that offer free wallpaper. Start a conversation about why you or another family member chose a particular image. Your six-year-old sibling may not pick the same images as your parent, but remember that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. You can also ask your friends if you can see their wallpapers and discuss their choices.
- You may have heard of the concept random acts of kindness. How about committing random acts of beauty? This could mean either acting in beautiful ways—as did the individuals you discussed in this workshop's Faith in Action activity—or beautifying something. Decorate your friend's locker, just because it's Monday! Help your sibling add applique or patches to

his/her favorite jacket. Serve your parents dinner by candlelight.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: MY BEAUTIFUL POEM (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- List of beauty (from Activities 1 and 4, In Search of Beauty, Parts 1 and 2)
- Journals and pens or pencils

### **Description of Activity**

Participants write a poem about beauty.

Invite participants to create poems that communicate something about their personal notions of beauty. For raw material, have participants draw from their answers to the "What's the big idea?" questions in Activity 2: True Beauty, the thoughts and images they noted in their journals after the meditation, and the list of beauty they produced during Activities 1 and 4, In Search of Beauty, Parts 1 and 2. Allow ten minutes for participants to write. Then invite youth to share their poems by reading them aloud to the group.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: DESIGNING AN OPENING AND CLOSING (10 MINUTES)**

### **Description of Activity**

Ask if anyone has ever participated in an activity that opens with a chalice lighting. Many Unitarian Universalist worship services open with this ritual. Say that you would like this group to have both an opening and a closing ritual for their workshops. Having an opening ritual and a closing ritual will help those who are present know when you are starting and ending a workshop together. The rituals will also mark the workshop time as special and help everyone focus their attention on the here and now. These ceremonies need not be fancy; an opening ritual can be as simple as lighting a chalice, and a closing ritual can be as simple as extinguishing it.

Invite input from the group about the opening and closing rituals you used today and in the previous workshop. Decide if you will use the Openings and Closings that were written for this program or if the group wants to create others. If your religious education program has standard opening and closing rituals, consider using those. Other ideas for openings include ringing a chime, having a moment of centering silence, singing a short song, or sharing a prayer or meditation. Closing rituals you might consider include standing in a circle for a short blessing, sharing a reading and

extinguishing the chalice, saying a one-word check-out, or singing a song. Use the hymnals *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*, along with other meditation manuals that are available, for possible readings and/or songs.

After the group has decided what the rituals will be, identify the materials you need and who will be responsible for gathering them. Ask for volunteers to help so the activity truly belongs to the group, not to just the leaders. If the group decides to rotate responsibility, post a sign-up sheet and/or plan to send weekly e-mail reminders.

If the opening ritual includes lighting a chalice, be aware of the flame at all times. Having a lit chalice in the room during active lessons may not work. Also be aware that some building codes do not allow open flames. Check with your religious education committee to verify whether lighting a chalice is allowed, and—if so—be sure to choose a practical time to extinguish it. If chalice lighting is not allowed, consider using a battery-powered tea light instead or substituting the chalice with a bowl of water and stones.

# EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 2: HANDOUT 1: THE PROPHET ON BEAUTY

from *The Prophet* by Gibran Khalil Gibran (1883-1931)

Beauty XXV

But the restless say, "We have heard her shouting  
among the mountains,

And with her cries came the sound of hoofs, and the  
beating of wings and the roaring of lions."

At night the watchmen of the city say, "Beauty shall rise  
with the dawn from the east."

And at noontide the toilers and the wayfarers say, "We  
have seen her leaning over the earth from the windows  
of the sunset."

In winter say the snow-bound, "She shall come with the  
spring leaping upon the hills."

And in the summer heat the reapers say, "We have  
seen her dancing with the autumn leaves, and we saw a  
drift of snow in her hair."

All these things have you said of beauty.

Yet in truth you spoke not of her but of needs  
unsatisfied,

And beauty is not a need but an ecstasy.

It is not a mouth thirsting nor an empty hand stretched  
forth,

But rather a heart enflamed and a soul enchanted.

It is not the image you would see nor the song you  
would hear,

But rather an image you see though you close your eyes  
and a song you hear though you shut your ears.

It is not the sap within the furrowed bark, nor a wing  
attached to a claw,

But rather a garden forever in bloom and a flock of  
angels for ever in flight.

People of Orphalese, beauty is life when life unveils her  
holy face.

But you are life and you are the veil.

Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror.

But you are eternity and you are the mirror.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 2: LEADER RESOURCE 1: BEAUTY MEDITATION

- *Arrange the room so participants can sit comfortably in a private space.*
- *Before you start the meditation, set a timer for ten minutes. Otherwise, keep an eye on a nearby clock.*
- *Throughout the meditation, speak with a clear, soft voice. Alternate your spoken instructions with periods of silence, which meditation requires.*
- Gather the group in a circle. Tell everyone to sit in a comfortable, yet alert position. Explain that staying alert is an important part of meditation and prevents meditators from falling asleep!
- Invite participants to close their eyes and rest their hands on their thighs or fold them on their laps.
- Guide participants to notice the sound and feeling of their own breathing. Count slowly for the group, "In, two, three, four... . Out, two, three, four." Explain that the breath is the "home base" to which everyone can return when his/her mind drifts off in thought during the meditation.
- Instruct participants to direct their breath into each part of the body, in turn, until the body is fully relaxed. Begin at the top of the head, then guide participants' attention to the face and its muscles, the shoulders, the arms, the hands, the fingers, the belly, the sacrum (the small of the back), the thighs, the shins, and finally the feet and toes.
- Invite participants to observe their own thoughts by letting each thought go, "seeing" it pass by as a leaf would float by on a river. Invite participants to just notice. Just breathe. Just witness.
- Tell participants that meditation offers an ideal time to experience one's own awareness. Invite participants to notice, one sense at a time, what they
  - hear
  - smell
  - see in their mind's eye
  - feel inside their body: sleepiness or wakefulness; congestion or clear breathing; aching in their extremities, back, or knees; the rise and fall of their shoulders or belly as they breathe; hot or cold
  - feel outside their body: their clothing; the surface they sit upon; the temperature of the air

## FIND OUT MORE

For more suggestions of websites that publish young people's poetry, visit [poetryclass](http://www.poetryclass.net/index.htm) (at [www.poetryclass.net/index.htm](http://www.poetryclass.net/index.htm)) on the Internet.

Cornell University has a short biography of Gibran [Khalil Gibran](http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/gibrn.htm) (at [www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/gibrn.htm](http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/gibrn.htm)).

# WORKSHOP 3: KEENLY OBSERVING NATURE

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.*  
— Rachel Carson

Today's workshop asks participants about their spiritual connections to nature. Consider whether you might want to hold part of today's entire workshop outside to accentuate the natural theme. In today's busy world, it can be especially difficult for youth to find time to explore nature. Feel free to extend the workshop, if possible, or abbreviate some activities if you feel participants would benefit from just spending time outdoors and observing nature.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Engage youth in reading and discussing a poem about nature
- Use poetry as a way to experience and think about the natural world and our relationship to it
- Guide participants to observe the natural world
- Utilize the participants' sensory experiences to create poetry
- Optional: Give participants an opportunity to gift their community with a butterfly garden
- Optional: Expose participants to music about nature.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Share personal connections to the natural world
- Open their senses in order to use their powers of observation fully

- Experience conveying sensory information through poetry
- Identify a Principle that talks about our relationship to the natural world
- (Optional) Share the joy of nature with their community
- (Optional) Appreciate music as a poetic tool for expressing the beauty and wonder of nature.

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Loving Nature	10
Activity 2: A Sensory Meditation	40
Faith in Action: The Gift of a Garden	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: UUs and Nature	10
Alternate Activity 2: Nature Music	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Since the subject of today's workshop is nature, why not spend a little time outdoors preparing for the workshop? What do you like to do outdoors? Do you garden or hike? Do you enjoy picnics or football games? Does a thunderstorm give you a thrill? While outdoors, reflect upon important moments of your spiritual life that may have involved the natural world. Are there places or seasons that make you feel more connected to the earth than others? Is this because of a past experience?

You can ponder these questions or simply enjoy being outside, being part of the earth that sustains us all. Blessed be!

## WORKSHOP PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

#### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "nature" in silence. After about fifteen seconds invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "nature." When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying, "May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings."

Introduce today's workshop by saying,

Simplicity and miracles: they coexist regularly and profoundly in the natural world. Yet how often do we rush past what is beautiful in order to get where we are going? Poetry has a long tradition of looking to nature for solace, inspiration, and perspective. This workshop encourages us to make joyous connections between ourselves and the natural world, to recognize the inherent wonder that all creatures, including ourselves, can inspire, and to slow down enough to notice.

### ACTIVITY 1: LOVING NATURE (15 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, "A Nature-Lover Passes," by Daniel Henderson

#### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, "A Nature-Lover Passes," one for each participant.

#### Description of Activity

Participants read, hear, and discuss a poem about nature.

Use one of these questions to lead a warm-up discussion:

- What, to you, is the most amazing animal, place, or phenomenon in the natural world? What makes it so?
- What animal do you wish you could be more like? Why?

Distribute copies of Handout 1, "A Nature-Lover Passes." Invite two volunteers to read the poem aloud. Allow about thirty seconds of silence after each reading.

Use these questions to lead a "What do we have here?" discussion about the poem:

- What happens in the poem?
- Which lines lose or confound participants?
- Tell participants that this poem refers to an old tradition in parts of Great Britain where most families kept beehives. The tradition was that when a relative dies, the first thing that should happen is that the oldest and the youngest members of the family go to the beehive and tell the bees about the death. Sometimes they would tie a ribbon around the hive. It was believed that if you did not do this, the bees would leave or die. The origin of this tradition is unknown. What do you think this tradition says about our connection to nature? Is the death of this tradition significant?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion. Use these questions:

- This poem is about death. How does it make you feel: peaceful, hopeful, melancholy? Why?
- The subject of the poem is described as a nature-lover. Do you know any nature lovers? How do you think they would feel about the way death is described in the poem?
- Does this poem relate to any of the seven Principles? How so?

### ACTIVITY 2: A SENSORY MEDITATION (40 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint and markers, at least one sheet and marker for each participant
- Journals and pens or pencils

## Preparation for Activity

- Make sure each participant has a comfortable place to sit.

## Description of Activity

Participants will use their senses to meditate on or experience the natural world.

Distribute a sheet of newsprint and marker to each participant. Have participants put these items aside for the moment. Guide them through the following observation experience. It is written as a meditation and can be done indoors. If you prefer, you may take participants outdoors for this activity. If you do, instead of imagining a place, lead youth to an area where they can walk about and explore while still within range of your voice.

For the meditation, ask participants to close their eyes. Let them know you will lead them in the following guided meditation. Use a voice that is calm, but not too quiet.

Say,

Close your eyes and bring to mind a spot in the natural world that you love and know very well.

Wait about thirty seconds. Then say,

When you have a place in mind, picture yourself fully there, if you have not done so already. Imagine that you are walking around slowly. Notice how your feet feel on the ground.

Wait about fifteen seconds. Then say,

Now find a spot in your imagined place to sit or stand. Settle in. Take a deep breath in... and out. You have arrived, safely and calmly, in this beautiful place you know so well.

Wait about fifteen seconds. Then say,

Look around. What do you see?

Wait about thirty seconds. Then say,

Look closely at something that catches your eye, perhaps something you've never looked so closely at before... Touch it gently if you can and if you want to, or just observe it keenly and closely.

Pause. Then say,

What is its shape? Its texture? How does it function in its surroundings?

Pause. Then say,

Once again, inhale deeply... and exhale. When you inhale again, gently notice any scents, strong or subtle.

Wait about fifteen seconds. Then say,

Continue to breathe... and continue to notice elements of your surroundings. What does your body feel like in this place? Do you feel warmth or cold on your face? Wet or dry? Wind or stillness? Are you relaxed?

Allow another minute or two to pass. Then guide the youth out of the meditation by saying,

On your next breath, begin to come back to the here and now. In a minute, we will open our eyes while keeping our special place firmly in our mind's eye and in our senses.

Wait about thirty seconds. Then say,

Open your eyes gently.

As participants open their eyes, say,

On your newsprint, complete the statements I am about to give you about the place you visited in the meditation. Do not write the sentence starter itself.

Slowly read the sentence starters to the group, allowing time after each for participants to think and write.

- Around me I see...
- It looks...
- When I inhale deeply, I smell...
- On my body and on my face, I feel...
- When I stand or sit still, I hear...
- When I listen very closely, I hear...
- This place makes me feel...
- (And, once again), around me, I see...

Direct participants to read the lines they wrote, silently to themselves. Ask them to evaluate whether the lines capture the magic this particular place holds for them.

Invite volunteers to read aloud the lines on their newsprint, in order. Volunteers may wish to name the place afterward, or other participants may wish to guess.

Explain to participants that poets are often keen observers who use all of their senses, as the group has just done in the guided meditation. A person can use poetry to communicate a place, a feeling, a moment, or a sensory experience to another person. The sensory observations that participants gathered in meditation

and wrote on their newsprint might sound like a raw kind of poetry.

Use these questions to lead a discussion:

- Which of the lines from your raw poems are most important? Which of the senses you expressed are most important?
- Would you describe yourself as a keen observer of nature? If not, what keeps you from being one?
- If you are a keen observer, how would you explain to someone else how to be one?

Invite participants, now or independently, to continue crafting their raw poems into finished poems. Suggest that they copy the raw poems into their journals.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- Singing the Living Tradition

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: THE GIFT OF A GARDEN

### Materials for Activity

- Varied; see Leader Resource 1, [Butterfly Garden](#) (included in this document)
- Handout 2, [Tips on Caring for Your Butterfly Garden](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint and markers
- A calendar

### Preparation for Activity

- Before presenting this idea to participants, seek support from others in the congregation, particularly the religious educator, Board of Trustees, minister, and fund-raising committee. If the congregation has a committee that is frequently involved in community activities, its

support would be helpful. Congregational supporters could be useful in contacting local schools or school boards, fund-raising, publicity, and man/woman power.

- Research possible recipients for the butterfly garden. Local schools might show the most interest, and they would have a constant supply of people to help maintain the garden. Other possible recipients include assisted living facilities, medical centers, and city parks. Your local Ronald McDonald House, treatment centers for the mentally ill, or drug rehabilitation centers might also appreciate a bit of flora and fauna to brighten up their days. Come prepared with some suggestions to offer the group during the activity.
- Photocopy Handout 2, *Tips on Caring for Your Butterfly Garden*, one for each participant

### Description of Activity

In this activity, participants design and build a community butterfly garden.

Ask participants if they have ever watched a butterfly flit from plant to plant. What was that experience like? A popular elementary school activity involves raising caterpillars into butterflies. Ask participants if they have had that experience.

Then say, in your own words,

Many people enjoy watching butterflies. Some people plant butterfly gardens specifically to attract butterflies. Butterfly gardens are very popular. Does anyone know where a butterfly garden exists, or has anyone seen one? Do you think creating a butterfly garden for others to enjoy would be a good use of our time?

Give the group an overview of what is involved, including costs and the possible need to fund-raise or seek donations. Refer to Leader Resource 1, *Butterfly Garden*. (Leader Resource 1 is written for creating a garden in a local school, but can apply to any site.) If participants express interest, ask what could be gained by building such a garden. Write youths' answers on newsprint. If the list does not include "sharing the beauty and wonder of the natural world," suggest it as a possible goal.

Once the group has decided that building the garden is a worthwhile endeavor, brainstorm places to which they would like to give such a gift. Narrow the list down to two or three specific places, by either reaching consensus or voting. Rank the choices and decide who will make contact and offer the gift of the garden. The person in

charge of contacting potential recipients should approach the first-choice place first, the second-choice place second, and so on.

Set up a timetable on newsprint. The timetable needs to be specific for your project and should include target dates and/or timeframes for at least the following tasks: meeting with the owners of the garden space for further planning; designing the garden; estimating costs, required hours of labor, and tools/materials needed; receiving the funds to purchase materials; purchasing materials, including plants; planting the garden; and at least one follow-up visit to the garden. You might also need to schedule fundraising. If others will be maintaining the garden, make sure they will be available either during planting or during a follow-up visit to receive instructions. You can give Handout 1, Tips for Care of Your Butterfly Garden, to anyone who will be maintaining the space.

[The North American Butterfly Association](http://www.naba.org/pubs/bgh.html) (at [www.naba.org/pubs/bgh.html](http://www.naba.org/pubs/bgh.html)) sells guides to butterflies that are region-specific, and they are good sources for gardening.

### Including All Participants

Outdoor spaces can vary widely in accessibility. Accessibility to the butterfly garden is necessary for both your group and everyone who wants to enjoy it. Oklahoma State University has an [online guide](http://agability.okstate.edu/Resources/Gardening/accessibility_gardening_tips.pdf) (at [agability.okstate.edu/Resources/Gardening/accessibility\\_gardening\\_tips.pdf](http://agability.okstate.edu/Resources/Gardening/accessibility_gardening_tips.pdf)) by Carol Cross for making gardens accessible not only to those visiting the gardens, but also to the gardener. It includes information on raised flowerbeds, which you might consider adding to provide gardening space for people using wheelchairs.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Review today's workshop with your co-leader. How did the writing proceed? Was there enough time for participants to write and share fully? What worked well and what activities need adjustment? How do the answers to these questions affect future workshops?

## TAKING IT HOME

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.

— Rachel Carson

### DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We read the poem "A Nature-Lover Passes" and discussed some of our connections to nature. We used

our thoughts from a sensory meditation as the foundation for a poem about nature.

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Where in nature do you feel most spiritually connected and why?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- Compile a "nature CD" of songs and share it with your family, friends, and/or the workshop group.
- The Chinese solar calendar is a useful tool for farmers, but you could also use it as a helpful reminder to be a keen observer of the seasons. The calendar is composed of twenty-four solar terms that last between fifteen and sixteen days and have rather poetic names (names vary by translations). Here are the solar terms, including the Chinese names (in Western alphabet), each with one possible translation and the approximate date (which may vary by twenty-four hours):

Li chun Spring Begins February 5

Yu shui The Rains February 19

Jing zhe Insects Awaken March 5

Chun fen Vernal Equinox March 20

Ch'ing ming Clear and Bright April 5

Gu yu Grain Rains April 20

Li xia Summer Begins May 5

Xiao man Grain in Bud May 21

Mang zhong Grain in Ear June 6

Xia zhu Summer Solstice June 21

Xiao shu Small Heat July 7

Da shu Great Heat July 23

Li qiu Autumn Begins August 7

Chu shu Heat Ebbs August 23

Bai lu White Dew September 8

Qiu fen Autumnal Equinox September 23

Han lu Cold Dew October 8

Shuang jiang Frost Descends October 23

Li dong Winter Begins November 7

Xiao xue Small Snow November 22

Da xue Great Snow December 7

Dong zhi Winter Solstice December 21

Xiao han Small Cold January 6

Da han Great Cold January 26

Source of translations: Barnett, Raymond, Ph.D. *Relax, You're Already at Home: Everyday Taoist Habits for a Richer Life* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin Books, 2004).

- Keep a family nature journey journal (say that three times fast!). Purchase one notebook or journal for the entire family. Ask family members to take the journal with them when they spend time outside, either walking the dog, walking to the store, hiking, or just playing in the yard. Ask everyone to try to make at least one observation per journey. Alternatively, choose an area commonly visited by your family and observe it through the seasons. Members can make their entry unique: it could be a drawing, a poem, or prose. You could paste an item you collected during your journey into the journal. However, do not pick live leaves or blossoms; use only what has fallen onto the ground.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: UUS AND NATURE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of the [UUA Bookstore](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=236) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=236](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=236)), Skinner House and Beacon Press catalogs, one for every 3-4 participants
- Optional: A computer with Internet access

### Preparation for Activity

- You can request multiple copies of these catalogs by Internet or telephone: [UUA Bookstore and Skinner House catalog request](http://www.uuabookstore.org/client/client_pages/Get_a_Catalog.cfm) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/client/client\\_pages/Get\\_a\\_Catalog.cfm](http://www.uuabookstore.org/client/client_pages/Get_a_Catalog.cfm)), 800-215-9076; [Beacon Press](http://www.beacon.org/) (at [www.beacon.org/](http://www.beacon.org/)) 617-742-2110
- If you have Internet access in your workspace, visit the websites for the UUA Bookstore, Skinner House, and Beacon Press instead of using the catalog. This saves paper and waste.

### Description of Activity

Participants discover the wealth of material available to UUs on the topic of nature.

Look through the catalogs or websites of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Bookstore, Skinner House Books, and Beacon Press. Explain that Skinner

House is an imprint of the UUA and Beacon Press is an independent publisher that is a department of the UUA. The UUA Bookstore carries books by Beacon, Skinner House, and other publishers. Ask participants to search for books about nature. They will find non-fiction books about the environment, meditation and poetry anthologies, and children's books about the natural world.

Consider turning this activity into a game. Award points to the individual or team for each nature reference found. The winner gets to pick the snack for the next workshop. If using the activity as a game, make sure you have catalogs evenly distributed.

After the activity, discuss the following:

- Why are many UUs interested in nature?
- What nature or environmental activities involve members of your congregation?
- Discuss nature and environmental activities that the religious education program has offered and in which the youth have participated. Flower ceremony? Planting a garden? Earth Day activities?
- Discuss the seventh Principle and how it relates to spirituality.

### Including All Participants

If using the computer for this activity, also have a few catalogs available. It can be difficult for a group to view everything on a small screen and you want to keep everything accessible.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: NATURE MUSIC (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- CDs of popular songs about nature
- Optional: CDs with songs about our spiritual connection to nature

### Preparation for Activity

- Have songs cued and ready to play.

### Description of Activity

The group explores popular songs to discern their different characterizations of nature.

Invite the group to think of songs that deal in some way with nature. Examples are Julian Lennon's "Saltwater," the Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun," "Beautiful Day" by Ziggy Marley, "Big Sky" by the Kinks, and John Denver's "Rocky Mountain High."

Lead a discussion to investigate how different popular songs speak to the human experience of the natural world. As participants suggest or sing songs they know, ask:

- Is the song's view of nature welcoming, threatening, or something else?
- What does the singer gain from his or her experience with nature? Solace? Escape? Inspiration? Groundedness?
- Does the song make you feel happy, melancholy, or something else?
- How do the music and words reinforce one another or contradict one another?

# EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 3: HANDOUT 1: A NATURE-LOVER PASSES

Daniel Henderson (1880-1955)

*In certain parts of Great Britain, where families commonly kept beehives, people believed the first thing you should do when a relative dies is to tell the bees.*

BEES, go tell the things he treasured —

Oak and grass and violet —

That although his life was measured

He is with them yet!

Tell the wild rose and the clover

That the earth has made him over!

Tell the lilting, loitering stream

He is sharer of its dream!

Whisper to the April wood

Of his blending in its mood!

Tell the wind his spirit flows

In whatever path it blows!

Tell the thrush it draws its art

From the rapture of his heart!

Bees, to his green shelter bring

All of earth's bright gossiping:

Tales of feather, flower, or fur;

Sap upmounting; wings astir!

Now we may no more attend him,

Bid his loved wild things befriend him!

## **EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 3: HANDOUT 2: TIPS ON CARING FOR YOUR BUTTERFLY GARDEN**

From the Gulf Coast Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Welcome to your butterfly garden! The garden needs you to take care of it. Here are a few easy ways to care for your garden:

- Because many plants are poisonous, never taste or eat any plant part.
- Do not walk among the plants or step on plants. A broken branch wounds the plant.
- Please let the flowers remain for the butterflies and other students to enjoy; do not pick them.
- If you find an uprooted plant that a dog or other animal has dug up, please replant it. Always set plants in the soil at the same depth as before.
- Please remove paper trash that might blow into the garden.
- The better you care for your garden, the prettier it will be.
- If you see a caterpillar on a plant, don't disturb it. The plant is its food. The caterpillar will molt its skin as it grows into a larger caterpillar, and then molt again when it enters the pupal phase (an inactive stage). After a period of time, a winged adult butterfly or moth will emerge from the pupa.

A good book to help you identify the butterflies in your garden is *The National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Butterflies* by Robert M. Pyle (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

Enjoy!

# EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 3: LEADER RESOURCE 1: BUTTERFLY GARDEN INSTRUCTIONS

Adapted from instructions provided by Elizabeth Waldorf and the Gulf Coast Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (GCUUF), Gulfport, MS.

*These instructions are the steps taken by the GCUUF when they created a butterfly garden for a local elementary school. You may use these instructions or follow instructions from other sources (see Find Out More). You will need to tailor the plan for your region and climate.*

*The GCUUF built a U-shaped garden about fourteen feet long and three feet wide. They used ten sacks of topsoil, ten bags of composted manure, and two bales of peat moss. They planted about twenty kinds of plants, including a border of monkey grass (*Liriope*), and placed a birdbath at soil level. They mulched with more than ten bags of shredded bark. Six adults and four children tilled and planted the garden in about two hours. Because half the plants were donated, the total cost was about ninety-five dollars.*

## TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING A BUTTERFLY GARDEN

### PRELIMINARIES AND PLANNING

- Contact a local elementary school and obtain permission to plant a garden. Speak to either the principal or possibly a counselor. Request a site away from ball fields, preferably near classroom windows and a water spigot and hose. A sunny site is best.
- Dormant plants are easiest to transplant. If possible, plant your garden in cool weather between November and April.
- Select plants that provide food for butterflies. Not all plants will grow in all areas. A few suggestions are aster, bee balm, butterfly bush, verbena, lavender, lilies, violets, cypress vine, zinnia, African trailing daisies, and wild lupines. [The North American Butterfly Association](http://www.naba.org/pubs/bgh.html) (at [www.naba.org/pubs/bgh.html](http://www.naba.org/pubs/bgh.html)) sells butterfly guides that are region-specific and good sources for gardening.
- You will need some host plants, or plants that butterfly caterpillars eat. Examples are milkweed, red and white clover, and nettles. Do not be distressed if the caterpillars damage the plants.

- You will also need plants that produce blooms containing nectar that adult butterflies drink. Nectar consumption does not damage the plant, and pollination can result. The more nectar-rich flowers you have, the more butterflies will be attracted to your garden.
- Choose plants that have diverse forms, leaf shapes, and flower types. Choose some evergreens. Place contrasting plants together to produce an interesting design.
- Healthy, inexpensive plants are available at many farmers' markets. Members of your group might donate excess plants from their home gardens. You could also work with the schoolteachers to devise a plan for families of students in different classrooms to donate different plants. You will need to provide a different list of specific plants to each classroom to make sure you receive a variety of plants.
- Perennial plants live several years. Give them ample space to grow.
- Masses of one plant type will more effectively attract butterflies. Consider planting several shrub verbenas (*Lantana*) in one area.
- Supply water for the butterflies. Incorporate either a birdbath or a naturally low area that will remain wet. Another option is to bury a bucket to its rim. Partially fill the bucket with sand and add water.
- Once you have decided on all the elements you will use, draw a plan that shows garden shape, dimensions, and where to position each plant and the water source. If possible, involve the schoolchildren in the planning. They can also help with planting.

### PLANTING

- Till the soil and remove broken concrete, broken glass, and other debris. If the site is low and poorly drained, elevate the flowerbed. A few elevated beds will make the garden more accessible for people using wheelchairs and walkers.
- Add organic matter (peat moss), composted manure, and fertilizer and mix them into the soil.
- Set each plant at the depth of its original planting, whether it arrived in a pot or bare from someone's home garden. If you are transplanting from pots, set the complete soil mass—with the plant and its roots undisturbed—in the soil.

- Mulch the garden surface with either shredded bark or bags of leaves and grass clippings collected from the roadside. Thick mulch reduces weed growth.
- Place a sign in the garden. Note that, because of concern about the separation of church and state, some schools will not allow church names on the sign.

#### **UTILIZATION**

- Provide a map or plan of the garden that identifies the plants to elementary teachers. Alternatively, place labels on stakes beside each plant. This introduces plant names.

#### **MAINTENANCE**

- Thick mulch prevents the growth of some weeds and slows the growth of others. You will need to periodically replenish the mulch. Bags of grass clippings and mulched leaves work well.
- Ask the school groundskeeper to help water and protect the garden.
- Occasionally a plant will die. Either replace it or allow adjacent plants to grow into that space.
- Give the garden to the students. Distribute copies of Handout 2, Tips on Caring for Your Butterfly Garden, to encourage them to care for it.

## FIND OUT MORE

Many poets, such as Robert Frost, Wendell Berry, May Sarton, and Walt Whitman, are noted for their nature poetry, and you can find many anthologies of nature poems. One such anthology is *Poetry for the Earth*, edited by Sara Dunn and Alan Scholefield (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992).

The River of Words website has suggestions on how to write a good poem by [Robert Hass](http://www.riverofwords.org/youth/hass.html) (at [www.riverofwords.org/youth/hass.html](http://www.riverofwords.org/youth/hass.html)) and [Lawrence Ferlinghetti](http://www.riverofwords.org/youth/ferlinghetti.html) (at [www.riverofwords.org/youth/ferlinghetti.html](http://www.riverofwords.org/youth/ferlinghetti.html)).

Xerces Society, in association with the Smithsonian Institute, *Butterfly Gardening: Creating Summer Magic in Your Garden* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1998).

A web search for "butterfly gardens" will turn up many results. Here are a couple:

[The Butterfly Website](http://butterflywebsite.com/articles/constructlist.cfm?type=butterflygardening) (at [butterflywebsite.com/articles/constructlist.cfm?type=butterflygardening](http://butterflywebsite.com/articles/constructlist.cfm?type=butterflygardening))

[Monarch Watch](http://www.monarchwatch.org/garden/guide.htm) (at [www.monarchwatch.org/garden/guide.htm](http://www.monarchwatch.org/garden/guide.htm))

# WORKSHOP 4: WHO AND WHAT GUIDES US?

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Teachers open the door. You enter yourself.*  
— Chinese Proverb

This workshop asks participants to broaden their ideas about teachers and learners. It provides an opportunity for reflections, discussions, and writing of a more personal nature than previous workshops. If you are not doing the workshops in order, you will want to facilitate this workshop with a group that has had an opportunity to bond to a level at which its members are comfortable sharing personal experiences.

This workshop includes, as an alternate activity, a guided visualization. Both alternate activities provide an opportunity to focus on spiritual teachers or guides, which differ somewhat from the teachers of life lessons that are the focus of the main workshop activities. If you want to create a workshop that explores more fully the notion of spiritual guides, try using both alternate activities along with Activity 3, Life Lesson Poems. Simply adjust the Activity 3 instructions so that participants write a spiritual life lesson (a life lesson that helped the participant feel more connected to others, to nature, to their faith, or to the universe in general).

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Use poetry to explore our relationship to our spiritual and lifetime teachers, both human and nonhuman
- Remind us that sometimes teachers and teachings come in unlikely forms
- Encourage participants to write a poem about a teacher
- Optional: Provide an opportunity for participants to thank a past teacher
- (Optional) Use a guided meditation to envision a spiritual guide
- (Optional) Engage youth in making a bracelet

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Acknowledge and honor sources of guidance in their lives
- Experience poetry that illuminates the teacher/student relationship in new ways
- Express, through poetry, a lesson learned from a guide in their life
- Optional: Express thanks to someone from whom they have learned a life lesson
- Optional: Identify a personal spiritual guide through a guided meditation
- Optional: Create a visual reminder of their connection to their spiritual guide

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Life Lessons	20
Activity 2: Learner vs. Teacher	15
Activity 3: Life Lesson Poems	15
Faith in Action: Belated Thanks	15
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Meeting Our Spiritual Guides	20
Alternate Activity 2: WWMSGD? Bracelets	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Today the group will explore the relationships between learners and teachers. As the facilitator, your role in the group is similar to that of a teacher. Think of other circumstances in which you have been the teacher. What did you learn from those situations? Is the circular model, in which the teacher is the learner and the learner the teacher, a difficult one to keep active in these workshops? One way to practice this model is to acknowledge when you have learned something from a participant or an activity. Sharing such learnings with youth models lifelong learning to participants, yet you do not want your learnings to become the focus of your

time together. This workshop could be a starting point

for finding a balance between these issues.

# WORKSHOP PLAN

## OPENING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matchers

### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the words "spiritual guides," in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the words "spiritual guides."

When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

Introduce today's workshop. Say,

Who and what are our spiritual teachers? How do we absorb a lesson from a teacher and live it ourselves? In our culture, which celebrates independence in thought and deed, seeking or taking guidance from a teacher may be seen as weak or submissive. However, anyone who has had a truly great teacher or guide knows that there is something of the spiritual and sacred in this relationship. Guides and lessons can come in many forms. Today let us see what poetry has to say about expanding our openness to teachers. It is up to us to recognize a good teacher, temper her/his guidance with our own sense of what is right for us, and take a lesson to heart and run with it!

## ACTIVITY 1: LIFE LESSONS (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint or dry erase board and markers
- Pens or pencils and journal

### Preparation for Activity

Write each of the following prompts on newsprint (two per sheet) or on the dry erase board, leaving room around each for participant's comments:

- Argument with an authority figure
- Difficult break-up/rejection
- Stranger
- Wise elder
- Disagreement with your church
- Historical figure
- Animal
- Mistake
- Intuition/inner voice

### Description of Activity

Responding to prompts from the leader, participants write and then share what they have learned from guides, teachers, and experiences.

Explain that participants should write a response to each prompt that you read. If they have no response, write NA for Not Applicable. After the exercise, they may return to any prompt and write more about it. For now a one-line note will do. They will have one minute per prompt.

Read aloud the prompts below, flipping the corresponding newsprint pages as you go: What have you learned from...

- an argument with a parent or other authority figure?
- a difficult break-up or a friend's rejection?
- a stranger?
- a wise elder?
- a disagreement with your church or religion?
- a famous public figure?
- an animal?
- a mistake you made?
- your own intuition, an inner voice?

Invite participants to share answers to the nine prompts. Write notes from participants' responses on the corresponding piece of newsprint or on the board. Point out trends in responses as you notice them.

Explain that any of the events or ideas described by the prompts could lead to a valuable life lesson. Often we think of people—either in our lives, like a teacher; or historical figures, like Jesus—as spiritual guides. Many times these people are guides by intention. However, sometimes our life experiences, which usually happen unintentionally, can teach us lessons about ourselves

that are just as valuable. The exercise we just completed reminded us of lessons we can learn from people and life experiences.

Use the following questions to start a discussion about life lessons:

- Is it possible to look around and decide who or what we will go to for guidance, or do our guides, teachers, or lessons somehow find us? Can it be a combination?
- Do you learn more from painful experiences or from pleasurable ones?
- Do you learn on the spot, or can the learning hit you later?
- How can we recognize an unusual teacher or lesson that comes our way?
- Have we left out any life guides? What or who? What did you learn from them?

## ACTIVITY 2: LEARNER VS. TEACHER (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, "[A Story](#)," (included in this document) by Jane Hirshfield
- Handout 2, "[Love in the Classroom](#)," (included in this document) by Al Zolynas

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handouts 1, "A Story" and 2, "Love in the Classroom," one for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Distribute copies of Handout 1, "A Story," to all participants. Ask two or three volunteers to read the poem aloud. Allow about thirty seconds between readings and before delving into the questions below.

Lead a "What do we have here?" discussion about the poem. Use these questions:

- What is the story of the poem; what is it about?
- What is being taught, and what is being learned?
- Who or what are the teachers? Who or what are the students? Do only humans fill the roles? Is the bird in the poem a teacher?

Use these questions to lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion about the poem:

- What does the mother in "A Story" not want her daughter to see? Why?

- Is there an "a-ha!" moment in "A Story"? Who has a big realization, and what is it?
- Why is it that children are sometimes more effective teachers than adults?

Distribute copies of Handout 2, "Love in the Classroom," to all participants. Ask two or three volunteers to read the poem aloud. Allow about thirty seconds between readings and before delving into the questions below.

Lead a "What do we have here?" discussion about the poem. Use these questions:

- What is the story of the poem; what is it about?
- What is being taught, and what is being learned?
- Who or what are the teachers? Who or what are the students?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion, using these questions:

- Is there an "a-ha!" moment in "Love in the Classroom"? What is it?
- What does the speaker mean when he says, "Everything's a fragment and everything's not a fragment"? Can you find fragments of language, fragments of music, or other fragments in the poem? (Look in the poem's form, as well as its content.)
- What does music contribute to the poem? What does it contribute to the speaker's understanding? Is the music in "Love in the Classroom" a teacher?
- Why does the speaker in the poem say that he keeps a "coward's silence"? What does he hold back? What is he afraid of?
- What lesson does the class give their teacher? Do you think the students know the impact they are having on the teacher?
- Do you ever think your parent or teacher is having intense feelings or complex thoughts while she/he is instructing you? Can you think of any times, in the present or when you were younger, when an adult may have learned something from you?
- Who and what have been your best guides and teachers? Do they know?

NOTE: A Few Words about the Poems

"A Story" portrays a mother trying to protect her daughter's innocence, turning her face so her daughter will not see the truth that all things must die. Another

interpretation, that may be more ambiguous but interesting for this workshop, is that the daughter teaches the mother something about "true life," about innocence, and maybe about herself.

"Love in the Classroom" is both an account of the love a teacher can have for his/her students and a testament to the extraordinary lessons the students can teach the teacher. Music enters and exits the poem like jazz solos.

### **ACTIVITY 3: LIFE LESSON POEMS (15 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Pens or pencils and journals
- Optional: CD player and CD of instrumental music

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- If participants are allowed to leave the immediate area to write, decide how you will call everyone back (with a bell/chime, verbally, or by singing).
- Decide if you will have participants write in silence or with background music. You might ask the group which they prefer, or you might alternate approaches in subsequent workshops.

#### **Description of Activity**

Each participant crafts a poem about a teacher/learner relationship.

Say to participants, "Each of you will write a poem in which someone is learning and someone or something is teaching, inspiring, or guiding. In your poem, the teacher does not need to be aware that s/he or it is teaching. However, the poem should describe the lesson that the student learns."

To spark youths' imaginations, suggest the following as possible subjects of the poem:

- One of the "What have you learned from..." prompts from Activity 1
- A relationship between traditional teacher/learner pairs, such as minister/worshipper, human/pet, coach/athlete, older sibling/younger sibling
- Rewrite the story the author of one of today's poems by switching the point of view; for example, have the child or the bird tell Hirshfield's "A Story"

Invite participants to find a comfortable place to begin writing. You might play background music or have the group write in silence. If youth are allowed to leave the

immediate area and write elsewhere, they should tell you where they are going and you should tell them what time the group will reconvene. Check in with participants as they write. Give a five-minute and then a two-minute warning.

If there is time, gather participants and invite poets to share their work. If not, ask participants to hold their work for sharing at the next meeting.

### **CLOSING (5 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Chalice
- Singing the Living Tradition hymnal

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- If hymnals are not always available, consider printing the words below on newsprint and posting the sheet in the workshop space.

#### **Description of Activity**

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

### **FAITH IN ACTION: BELATED THANKS (15 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Blank note cards
- Pens or pencils
- Optional: Art materials such as pastels, markers, charcoal, or crayons
- Optional: CD player and music

#### **Description of Activity**

Each participant writes a thank-you note to a teacher in his/her past.

Have participants consider the various teachers that have come into their minds during this workshop. Suggest that they think about a traditional teacher such as a parent or kindergarten teacher; a stranger who spoke helpful words at the right moment; or a nonhuman teacher, such as an intense experience, from which they learned a lesson.

Direct participants to choose a teacher and write a thank-you note. Make art materials available if you want to offer the option of decorating the cards. Consider playing background music while youth work.

As participants begin writing, suggest that they consider what they might do with their finished thank-you notes. Will they send them? Not send them? Turn them into poems?

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Review today's workshop with your co-leader. This workshop is the first one during which participants used a prompt as a springboard to write their own poetry. What worked well and what activities need adjustment? How do the answers to these questions affect future workshops?

Now is the time to start thinking about the Poetry Slam. Equip yourself with possible dates based on your schedule, the church schedule, and what you know of school schedules. Send home a survey in a note/e-mail. Be sure to set a date that allows plenty of time for publicity.

## TAKING IT HOME

Teachers open the door. You enter yourself.

— Chinese Proverb

### DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We examined life lessons taught both intentionally and unintentionally by many different kinds of teachers. We read two poems about teachers and learners and wrote poems that reflect a way the teacher/learner relationship has played out in our own lives.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

If you had your life to live over again, what would you do differently? Would changing your life experiences change the person you are today?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- It is never too late to say "thank you." Ask your family members if there is anyone they need to thank for teaching them a life lesson. Encourage them to send their thanks now. If the person is deceased, the participant's family member could send her/his thanks to a surviving relative. Knowing that someone we loved had a lasting influence on someone else is another way the loved one lives on in our memory.

- Sometimes you find yourself in a situation in which you are having a tough time getting along with someone with whom you have a relationship. Maybe you are working on a team assignment in a class and one team member never completes her/his portion of the work. Maybe you have a difficult relationship with a sibling or stepsibling. One way to think about experiences with difficult people is to ask ourselves, "Is there anything I can learn from this experience?" In some situations, we can learn something that is not immediately clear. Meditation or prayer is one way you might reflect upon a difficult situation. Ask yourself, "Do I need to change or grow in some way in order to handle this relationship?" The choice of whether you will change in an effort to ease the relationship is up to you. Viewing a relationship with a difficult person as a growth opportunity never means letting yourself be abused or controlled; it means being open to the possibility of change.
- Have you ever tied a short string to your finger to remind you about something? A current popular piece of jewelry is a bracelet inscribed with "WWJD?" which stands for "What would Jesus do?" Such a bracelet can function as a reminder to Christians to live their lives according to the teachings of Jesus. Wearing jewelry as a reminder can function in another way. Does anyone in your family or among your friends own a piece of jewelry that previously belonged to another family member? Older or deceased family members often give or bequeath their jewelry to a younger family member. A parent might give her/his child a wedding ring that belonged to the child's grandparent. Your favorite aunt might bequeath her favorite brooch to you in her will. Wearing the item helps you to remember the person who gave it to you. It's a legacy, one that frequently involves a story. Ask your family and friends if they have any legacy jewelry and, if so, what the story behind it is.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: MEETING OUR SPIRITUAL GUIDES (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Pens or pencils and journals
- Art supplies such as drawing paper, pastels, markers, and crayons

- Optional: CD player and background music for meditation
- Leader Resource 1: [Spiritual Guides Meditation](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- If you plan to lead the group in a meditation, make sure your meeting room is arranged so that participants can sit comfortably at some distance from one another. If you plan to play background music, obtain and set up a CD player and music.

### Description of Activity

In a guided mediation, participants imagine a spiritual guide.

Lead the 10-minute meditation provided in Leader Resource 1, Spiritual Guides Meditation.

At the close of the meditation, invite participants to document—by writing, drawing, or a combination of the two—the story that unfolded during their visualization. Allow at least seven minutes for this segment of the activity.

Invite participants to share their stories either verbally or by reading or showing their documentation to the group. While participants share their stories, use these questions to introduce a range of ways we think about teachers and guides:

- Does your guide represent or remind you of any real-life person?
- Do you think you would trust this guide on all matters or just on particular matters? What other guides or teachers would you like to supplement this guide?
- What adjectives describe the qualities of the guide or teacher you conjured?

If you did not do Activity 1, Life Lessons, lead a discussion to explore our relationship to our spiritual and lifetime teachers. Ask:

- In real life, what guides and teachers have you found? What did you learn from them?
- Is it possible to look around and decide from whom or from what we will take our guidance? Or do guides, teachers, and life lessons only find us?
- How do you know if you can trust a person or experience enough to accept him/her, or it as a teacher?

- Do you learn more from painful experiences or from pleasurable ones?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: WWMSGD? BRACELETS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Soft, flexible wire, hemp, leather, or cotton cord cut into two-foot lengths
- Lettered beads
- Question mark beads
- Optional: A WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?) or WWUUD? (What Would UU Do?) bracelet

### Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have plenty of multiple-letter beads, especially W beads.
- Practice making a bracelet. Use your practice bracelet as a sample.
- If you want to have a sample WWUUD? bracelet available during this activity, you can purchase one designed by Susan Johnston from [UniUniques](http://www.uniuniques.com/main.html) (at [www.uniuniques.com/main.html](http://www.uniuniques.com/main.html)).

### Description of Activity

Participants make bracelets to help them remember to seek assistance from spiritual guides.

Ask participants if they are familiar with WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?) or WWUUD? bracelets. If you obtained one as a sample, pass it around. Ask why the youth think someone would wear such a bracelet. They might say for decoration or to identify their religious beliefs. If the idea does not come up during the conversation, ask if participants think wearing the bracelet might remind the wearer to live his/her faith by making decisions the way she/he imagines Jesus would or according to their UU faith.

Invite everyone to make a spiritual guide bracelet. Ask participants to think of someone who they would emulate in their decision-making. It could be Jesus, Buddha, Gandhi, their parent, older sibling, Nature, or anyone or anything they see as a guide in life. Have them pick out letter beads that would represent that guide and complete the following: WW(insert individual letter bead)D? Some participants may choose to make a WWUUD or WWMSGD? (What Would My Spiritual Guide Do?) bracelet. They can also keep the activity light by making a humorous bracelet, such as WWHPD? (What Would Harry Potter Do?).

Arrange the supplies on a table. Everyone will need a piece of cord or wire. A youth in your group might be an expert at making bracelets and be willing to help with this activity. The simplest instructions are to imagine the cord is divided into thirds (do not actually cut or mark the cord). Tie a small knot at the one-third mark. Add beads, checking the order. Add the question mark bead last. Tie another knot after the last bead. Put the cord around your wrist and ask someone to tie it. Trim the excess cord, leaving enough on the bracelet to allow for retying if needed. If you made a sample bracelet earlier, leave it on the table as a guide.

If you would like to make a more complicated bracelet, see Find Out More for websites with instructions.

## **EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 4: HANDOUT 1: A STORY**

Jane Hirshfield (1953- ), from *Of Gravity and Angels*  
(Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

A woman tells me  
the story of a small wild bird  
beautiful on her window sill, dead three days.  
How her daughter came suddenly running,  
"It's moving, Mommy, he's alive."  
And when she went, it was.  
The emerald wing-feathers stirred, the throat  
seemed to beat again with the pulse.  
Closer then, she saw how the true life lifted  
under the wings. Turned her face  
so her daughter would not see, though she would see.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 4: HANDOUT 2: LOVE IN THE CLASSROOM

Al Zolynas (1945- ), from Kowitz, Steve, ed., *The Maverick Poets: An Anthology* (Santee, CA: Gorilla Press, 1988).

Afternoon. Across the garden, in Green Hall,  
someone begins playing the old piano—  
a spontaneous piece, amateurish and alive,  
full of a simple, joyful melody.  
The music floats among us in the classroom.  
I stand in front of my students  
telling them about sentence fragments.  
I ask them to find ten fragments  
in the twenty-one sentence paragraph on page forty-five.  
They've come from all parts  
of the world — Iran, Micronesia, Africa,  
Japan, China, even Los Angeles — and they're still  
eager to please me. It's less than half  
way through the quarter.  
They bend over their books and begin.  
Hamid's lips move as he follows  
the tortuous labyrinth of English syntax.  
Yoshie sits erect, perfect in her pale make-up,  
legs crossed quick pulse minutely  
jerking her right foot. Tony,  
from an island in the south Pacific,  
sprawls limp and relaxed in his desk.  
The melody floats around and through us  
in the room, broken here and there, fragmented,  
re-started. It feels mideastern, but  
it could be jazz or the blues — it could be  
anything from anywhere.  
I sit down on my desk to wait,  
and it hits me from nowhere — a sudden  
sweet, almost painful love for my students.

"Never mind, "I want to cry out.  
"It doesn't matter about fragments.  
Finding them or not. Everything's  
a fragment and everything's not a fragment.  
Listen to the music, how fragmented,  
how whole, how we can't separate the music  
from the sun falling on its knees on all the greenness,  
from this movement, how this moment  
contains all the fragments of yesterday  
and everything we'll ever know of tomorrow!"  
Instead, I keep a coward's silence.  
the music stops abruptly;  
they finish their work,  
and we go through the right answers,  
which is to say  
we separate the fragments from the whole.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 4: LEADER RESOURCE 1: SPIRITUAL GUIDES MEDITATION

- Gather the group in a circle. Ask everyone to sit on the floor or in a chair, in a comfortable but alert position (legs crossed or tucked under them, and back straight). The "alert" part of this instruction is important to prevent meditators from falling asleep!
- Invite participants to close their eyes and rest their hands on their thighs or fold them on their laps.
- Guide participants to notice the sound and feeling of their own breathing. To encourage steady, relaxed breathing, count for the group slowly, "In, two, three, four ... out, two, three, four." Explain that the breath is the "home base" to which everyone can return if their minds drift to unwanted thoughts during the meditation.
- Ask participants to send their breath into each part of the body, in turn, until the body is fully relaxed. Begin at the top of the head, then move to the muscles of the face, the shoulders, the arms, the hands, the fingers, the belly, the sacrum (the small of the back), the thighs, the calves, and finally, the feet and toes.
- Encourage participants to observe their own thinking by letting each thought go, "seeing" it pass by as a leaf would float by on a river. Invite participants to just notice. Just breathe. Just witness.
- Allow participants to practice this way, in silence, for two or three minutes. Occasionally, softly remind them to return to their breath.
- Introduce and lead the visualization portion of this mediation:

I am now going to lead you to meet one of your life teachers. You may have met this person before, or perhaps your meeting will come in the future. Begin by imagining yourself in a pleasant, comfortable outdoor environment. It is very early in the morning, earlier than you usually wake up, yet you feel rested. Feel the air around you and listen to the soft sounds of birds and small animals moving nearby. Start to walk at a pace that is comfortable for

you. Let your surroundings embrace you.

Something pulls you forward. Notice how the scenery begins to change and how the day does not feel as nice as it did a few moments ago. What is wrong? Nothing is; the path you are on has simply become less clear. The trees, foliage, and undergrowth have grown thicker. Instead of walking easily along the path, you now have to find your way. You make a wrong turn and lose the path for a moment, but you come upon it again and continue. You are more cautious than before, and you are not sure what awaits you. You start to think about everything you need to do today, all the decisions you must make, and the people who are depending on you. You wonder, "Should I go back?" Yet you keep walking. You know you must keep going.

Up ahead, you see a shelter, under which someone is standing. The path to that place is clear. You walk forward, and gradually the image of that person comes into focus. Your heart quickens, and you pick up your pace. The person ahead is your guide. Your guide is someone with whom you can always talk about problems or decisions you need to make. This person can help you understand what you must do. As you approach the shelter, the person raises a hand to greet you. The person smiles and your heart relaxes. You are ready to hear what you must hear.

- Allow another minute of silence to pass before gently inviting participants back to open-eyed awareness.

## FIND OUT MORE

Read about [Jane Hirshfield](#) (at [www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/563](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/563)) at Poets.org.

Agonia.net, a website that creates an artistic community where writers may submit their work for feedback, has a short biography of [Al Zolynas](#) (at [209.85.215.104/search?q=cache:7ZxtxUbfrCYJ:english.agonia.net/index.php/author/0010108/index.html+Al+Zol](http://209.85.215.104/search?q=cache:7ZxtxUbfrCYJ:english.agonia.net/index.php/author/0010108/index.html+Al+Zolynas+biography&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us&client=firefox-a)

[ynas+biography&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us&client=firefox-a](#)).

[Making Friends](#) (at [www.makingfriends.com/jewelry/bracelet\\_wwjd.htm](http://www.makingfriends.com/jewelry/bracelet_wwjd.htm)) has instructions for another type of bracelet you might consider for Alternate Activity 1, WWYSGD? Bracelets. The bracelet will take longer to make, but it can be more attractive. [Love to Know](#) (at [crafts.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Beading\\_Bracelet\\_Instructions](http://crafts.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Beading_Bracelet_Instructions)) also has links to several websites that describe different methods of crafting beaded jewelry.

# WORKSHOP 5: FINDING OUR MISSION

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*To be tested is good.*  
— Gail Sheehy

As adults, many of us have questioned the purpose of our lives and whether we have a mission or a clear path in them. Youth are just beginning to engage in questions of this nature. Discussion of this workshop's poem, called "Perhaps," will help youth understand how it feels to be irresistibly drawn to an action—even though the action's outcome is uncertain. Activities that ask youth to identify what might be their own missions in life will have different levels of success, depending on the maturity of the youth involved. Even if participants are not able to define their own missions, these activities are valuable starting points for helping youth define a greater purpose in their lives.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Use poetry to reflect upon having a mission in life
- Invite participants to ponder how we have come to think about our mission, our journey, our path
- Inspire participants to create poems that reflect their personal experiences and individual missions
- Optional: Engage participants in writing an interfaith prayer

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify possible missions—things they feel compelled to do—in their lives
- Examine how pivotal events in their lives may have helped shape what they see as their mission in life
- Shape personal experiences and a sense of purpose into poetry
- Optional: Explore how interfaith prayers can be crafted to be inclusive of many faith traditions

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	10
Activity 1: In Pursuit of a Mission	20
Activity 2: Jazz Poems	25
Faith in Action: Interfaith Prayers	30
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Poetry Collage	30

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

This workshop focuses on personal missions or sense of purpose. The activities you will lead will help youth identify what might be a mission they already feel motivates their actions. You may have reflected upon lifetime missions, but have you thought about your mission related to leading this program? For what purpose are you working with youth? What do you hope to achieve by leading this program? Your mission might be to help youth appreciate poetry. It might be to examine the feelings that connect us as human beings. Whatever your sense of purpose may be, keeping it in focus while planning and leading the workshops might make the experience even more rewarding for you.

## WORKSHOP PLAN

### OPENING (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

#### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the words "life's mission" in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the words "life's mission." When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

If you did not get a chance to share the poems that youth wrote during Workshop 4, Activity 2, Spiritual Guides Poems, share them now. Then introduce today's workshop by saying,

Even at an early age, we can feel a sense of flow, or rightness, when we are doing something in our lives that feels like it is meant to be; like it is simply ours to do. Whether playing a sport or music, making the right choices for ourselves, or just being with others in an authentic way, some things just feel natural. So how do we identify our talents? Will using our talents automatically lead us to the right path or mission in life? Must we look for our mission or will a mission find us? Does everyone have a mission? How do we "heed the call" to live our lives as authentically as possible and follow our own path?

Today we will use poetry, discussion, and writing to explore what it means to discover our talents and have a mission and to help us answer the question, How does having a mission in life affect your spirit?

### ACTIVITY 1: IN PURSUIT OF A MISSION (20 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, "[Perhaps](#)," (included in this document) by Shu Ting

#### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, "Perhaps," one for each participant.

#### Description of Activity

Give everyone a copy of the poem. Ask two or more volunteers to read it aloud, pausing for thirty seconds between readings and after the last reading. Then use these questions to lead a "What do we have here?" discussion:

- What feelings or emotions does the poem evoke?
- What words or lines are unclear to you?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion.

- Guide the group to discover that the first and second stanzas of "Perhaps" provide different scenarios for what can happen when someone pursues a mission. The first is pessimistic and the second is optimistic, but not entirely so. Ask these questions:
  - Notice the space between the first and second stanzas. Why do you think it is there?
  - How are the outcomes described in the first stanza alike? How are the outcomes described in the second stanza alike?
  - Do the two groups of "perhapses" represent different worldviews? How can we describe the first worldview? The second?
  - Which worldview do you identify with more strongly?
- Guide the group to find a definition of "mission" in the poem. Here are some helpful questions:
  - Does the poem give any clues about which results are more likely to occur?
  - Does the poet suggest how someone can influence which outcomes will happen? Does the speaker seem to expect any particular outcome?

- Does the speaker seem to care about the outcome at all?
- What does it mean when the speaker says, "We have no choice"?
- What is the effect of the poet's use of the word "irresistible" to describe one's sense of mission? Do the words "powerful," "strong," or "compelling" do the same job? Why or why not?

Hand out paper and pen/pencil to each participant. Direct participants to list every aspect of themselves and their lives in which they "have no choice." Give the group two or three minutes to write.

Invite volunteers to offer a few items they jotted down. Then direct participants to think about the reasons why they "have no choice" for each item on their list, and provide these instructions:

- If you have no choice because an outside authority prohibits the item, cross it off the list; examples: drive a car, go to school barefoot.
- If you have no choice because of physical or other inherent limitations, cross the item off the list; examples: eat popcorn (braces), have a pet cat (allergic), buy a yacht (financial).

The remaining items on the list will probably be things that participants feel they **MUST** do (as opposed to **CANNOT** do). Make sure the difference is clear to them.

Now let us look deeper into the things we have no choice about and **MUST** do. Ask participants to draw two columns on a blank sheet of paper and add these column heads:

I **MUST**... **BECAUSE**...

Under "I must," have participants rewrite the remaining items about which they have no choice. Under "Because," have participants write the reason why they must do each thing. For example:

- I must... do my homework / Because... I will be punished and/or get poor grades if I do not.

Give the group several minutes to complete the exercise. Then ask volunteers to share some of the things they **MUST** do and the reasons why they must do those things. Did anyone write "irresistible sense of mission" as a reason why she/he has no choice but to do something? If any participants identified something they **MUST** do for reasons that come from inside themselves, they may have discovered a mission. Examples might be:

- I must... practice basketball every day / Because... I want to be the best player on my team.
- I must... pick up litter whenever I see it / Because... I would not feel right if I just ignored it.

Invite volunteers to share what they have discovered. Lead a discussion to further explore the nature of a "mission." Use these questions:

- Does a mission have to be for the betterment of others, or can it be for the betterment of you alone?
- Is it important to have a mission in your life?
- How do you think having a mission or a sense of purpose in life affects your spirituality?

## ACTIVITY 2: JAZZ POEMS (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- One set of three different colored sheets of paper for each participant; or three sheets of white paper and three different colored markers for each participant
- Journals and pens or pencils
- Optional: Jazz CDs and CD player
- Optional: Scissors, glue, and extra paper for collage

### Preparation for Activity

- If you plan to play jazz music during this activity, have your CD/tape player and music ready.
- On a dry erase board or on newsprint, write:
  - MOMENTS
  - MISSIONS
  - ADVICE
- For each participant, prepare either a set of colored paper or three colored pencils/markers and three sheets of white paper, as listed in Materials for Activity.
- Optional: To allow participants to create their jazz poems as a collage instead of in written form, have scissors, glue, and extra paper available. See Alternate Activity 1, Poetry Collage, for a description of how to create a collage.

## Description of Activity

Participants use their formative experiences, values, and ideas to create mission jazz poems.

Explain that this activity will help each person explore his/her own mission or path in life by using his/her own life experiences and thoughts as the raw material for a mission jazz poem.

Share with participants that Shu Ting is a contemporary Chinese poet whose birth name is Gong Peiyu. She started writing poetry during the Cultural Revolution when she was sent to work in the countryside. Her career has included periods of inactivity because of heavy criticism from the government and suspicion of subversion. Ask the group: do you think events in Shu Ting's life helped shape a sense of purpose or mission in her writing?

Distribute pencils/markers and three sheets of paper to each participant.

Give the following instructions, allowing one minute between each instruction for participants to complete the step. Refer to the words you wrote on newsprint or a dry erase board beforehand.

- On the first piece of paper, list the MOMENTS in your life that have made you who you are. These are likely to be moments of struggle, profound realization, change, or growth. Limit each to one simple line, in the form of a statement.
- Use a different color to make another list on another sheet of paper. This time write, in the same simple form, what you deem to be your possible MISSIONS. Write as many as you can, as quickly as you can.
- Use a third color to make a third list on another sheet of paper. In the same simple form, list pieces of ADVICE you would give your best friend who is undergoing a very big challenge, loss, or change.

After reading the instructions, give participants several more minutes to complete their lists. Then ask them to spread their three lists in front of them. Ask participants what they notice, using these questions as prompts:

- Which lines, either on the same or on different lists, seem to echo or contradict one another?
- Do any of the lines address the same topics or ideas?
- Do any of the lines surprise you?

Next, invite participants to assemble a "jazz" poem using lines from all three lists. The whole poem does not have to make a single point or make sense. Participants should simply notice relationships among their list items and choose the lines they like and want to use. They may repeat lines if they wish.

Distribute the journals and pens or pencils for writing the jazz poems. If you are offering participants the option to make their jazz poems by collage, do not use journals. Instead, indicate where they can find scissors, glue, and paper.

Consider playing jazz music to set a jazzy mood.

If participants leave the room to work on their poems, tell the group when to reconvene. Allow ten minutes for reading and discussing the completed poems.

Challenge the group to overlay a jazz-like interpretation on the readings, complete with responses befitting a jazz recital. Each volunteer may read aloud his/her own poem, or you may pass the poems around for a series of people to read aloud, line by line. Invite the group—and yourself—to celebrate, laugh, applaud, and/or be wowed in response to the poems, as one might at a jazz recital.

During and after the readings, guide the group to connect the exercise with their ongoing search for a personal mission. Use these questions as prompts:

- What are your thoughts on what this process was like?
- What has the process revealed to you? What did you learn about how you see your own mission or sense of purpose in life?
- How do we find out what our mission or sense of purpose is in life? Do we meditate? Guess? Stumble upon it? Ask a wise person? Or simply observe ourselves in life?
- How does your UU faith inform your sense of mission? Does Unitarian Universalism suggest that you have a mission or what that mission should be?
- Can you trust anyone outside yourself, such as your church, your parents, your teachers, or your friends, to articulate your mission for you?

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- Singing the Living Tradition

## Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: INTERFAITH PRAYERS (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Paper and pens or pencils
- Resources for interfaith prayers, including *Singing the Living Tradition* and books of meditation

### Description of Activity

One mission that some Unitarian Universalists take on is to help make our world a place that is more inclusive of religious differences. Hence, we often talk about the importance of interfaith work. Youth might not have the opportunity to engage in interfaith work as much as some adults, but there is one very simple way to help them further this work. It involves interfaith prayers.

Whether it be at a Parent, Teacher, Student Association meeting, a Thanksgiving meal for the homeless, or a vigil for a social justice cause, people of faith often participate in public prayer. Often, public prayer favors the beliefs in a Christian God. This can make participants who belong to other faiths feel excluded. As UUs, we can help by offering interfaith prayers that can bring together people from a wide range of theologies.

People generally address prayers to something or someone. To whom can your interfaith prayer be addressed? Brainstorm a list of addressees. The list might include words such as "spirit of life," "god of many names," "source of all life," "great mystery of life," "blessed spirit of all that is seen and unseen," and "loving spirit." Also pay attention to how the prayer will end. Will you say "amen," "we ask this in your name," or "blessed be"?

If your group is large enough, form two or three smaller groups and work on a short prayer. It could be a prayer for peace, justice, or wisdom or to help people work together toward a common goal. Groups can pick different purposes and different addressees. Use the hymnal and the books of meditation you brought as

resources. Let groups work for ten minutes, then come together and share prayers. Ask if everyone feels included in the prayers and, if not, continue working on the prayers until they do.

Suggest that participants learn one of the prayers by heart so they can volunteer to lead a prayer should they find themselves in a situation where modeling interfaith is appropriate. By doing so, they will help spread our UU value of inclusiveness.

### Including All Participants

Monitor groups to make sure all youth have the opportunity to participate, especially those who might be in a theological minority.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Review today's workshop with your co-leader. This workshop is the first in which participants were free to write their own poetry from just a prompt. What worked well and what activities need adjustment? How do the answers to these questions affect future workshops?

## TAKING IT HOME

To be tested is good.  
— Gail Sheehy

### DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We read a poem and discussed what it means to have a mission or a sense of purpose in life. We examined possible missions that we feel compelled to complete and wrote jazz poems about them.

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Do you believe it is necessary to feel that you have a mission in life?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- If you wrote an interfaith prayer during the Faith in Action activity, share it with your family and friends, possibly as a mealtime blessing. Ask if everyone feels included. Why or why not?
- In some of your classes at school, you might read about famous or infamous people. After class, start a conversation with your friends about how a sense of purpose or a mission might have affected that person's life.
- A mission can either be a lifelong endeavor or encompass a shorter period of time. *Mission Impossible* was a popular television show in the sixties. In each episode, a group of secret agents were given a difficult mission to complete

in a short timeframe. Your family or friends can have a "Mission Impossible" day. Choose a mission to accomplish: clean up the litter in a nearby park, bake cookies and deliver them to the elderly in your neighborhood, help your school librarian reshelv books, or teach the preschoolers in your congregation how to tie their shoes. Set a time limit that will make accomplishing your mission a challenge and go to it!

- In the poem "Perhaps," one set of outcomes could be described as optimistic; the other as pessimistic. Pick a serious topic about which you think most people will have a strong opinion. For example, can we ever end poverty? Can we reverse climate change? Will racism be eradicated in the United States? Take a poll amongst your family and friends. Are more people optimistic or pessimistic about the outcome of the issue you selected? Just for fun, you and your friends might search online and take a pessimistic/optimistic quiz.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: POETRY COLLAGE (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Jazz poems created in Activity 2, Jazz Poems
- Various art supplies, including poster board, glue, scissors, and markers
- Old magazines

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Have arts and crafts supplies available. Although poster board, glue, scissors, and markers are the minimum required materials, try to include additional materials such as old magazines, felt and other fabric, pipe cleaners, paint, and the like. The more art materials youth have to work with, the richer and more varied the results will be.
- If available, have one or more computers and printers ready so participants can choose from a variety of type fonts with which to produce their poems. Participants can also print out clip art for collages.
- Identify a space for a temporary or long-term "gallery" in which to display the finished collages.

### **Description of Activity**

Have participants neatly copy (or type on a computer and print out) their jazz poems. Invite each participant to

make a collage that features his/her jazz poem, using whatever images, colors, and materials best represent the participant's ideas. Allow participants at least twenty minutes to create their collages.

As participants complete their collages, display them in a designated "gallery" space. As time allows, encourage participants to view and respond to the collages, using these questions:

- Does the visual representation suit the words, challenge the words, or have some other effect?
- How does the visual representation change the meaning of the words? Does it seem to give the words more meaning?

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: THE POETRY OF HYMNS (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*

### **Description of Activity**

Participants search for hymns with poetry they find inspiring or beautiful.

Pass out hymnals. Ask participants if they have favorite hymns. As they do so, ask everyone to find the hymn in the hymnal and let the youth who suggested it (or a volunteer, if they prefer not to) read the words aloud. Look for hymns with poetic lyrics. If needed, turn to Hymn 34 "Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire." Discuss with participants how these lyrics reflect the poet's tools discussed in Workshop 1. Do the same for the favorite hymns of individuals or hymns sung commonly in your congregation.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 5: HANDOUT 1: PERHAPS

Shu Ting (1952- ), translated by Carolyn Kizer, from *Carrying Over: Poems from the Chinese, Urdu, Macedonian, Yiddish, and French African*. Copyright 1988 by Carolyn Kizer. Used by permission of Copper Canyon Press, [www.coppercanyonpress.org](http://www.coppercanyonpress.org).

Perhaps...

*for the loneliness of an author*

Perhaps these thoughts of ours

will never find an audience

Perhaps the mistaken road

will end in a mistake

Perhaps the lamps we light one at a time

will be blown out, one at a time

Perhaps the candles of our lives will gutter out

without lighting a fire to warm us.

Perhaps when all the tears have been shed

the earth will be more fertile

Perhaps when we sing praises to the sun

the sun will praise us in return

Perhaps these heavy burdens

will strengthen our philosophy

Perhaps when we weep for those in misery

we must be silent about miseries of our own

Perhaps

Because of our irresistible sense of mission

We have no choice

## FIND OUT MORE

Prentice Hall at School has information on the life of [Shu Ting](#) (at [209.85.215.104/search?q=cache:EznNDO6dyTQJ:www.phschool.com/atschool/literature/author\\_biographies/ting\\_s.html+Shu+Ting+biography&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us&client=firefox-a](http://209.85.215.104/search?q=cache:EznNDO6dyTQJ:www.phschool.com/atschool/literature/author_biographies/ting_s.html+Shu+Ting+biography&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us&client=firefox-a)). The UUA website has a [Worship](#)

[Web](#) (at [www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/by\\_topic.php?topic=Prayers](http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/by_topic.php?topic=Prayers)) that includes prayers that can be useful for the Faith in Action activity. A book that also can be a useful resource is *For Praying Out Loud: Interfaith Prayers for Public Occasions*, by L. Annie Foerster (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003). Foerster is a retired UU minister.

# WORKSHOP 6: CONSCIOUS LOVE: BETTER THAN ANY FAIRY TALE

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*With my poems, I finally won even my mother. The longest wooing of my life.*  
Marge Piercy

Today's workshop is about romantic love. The poetry we use in this workshop runs the gamut, from song lyrics to Yeats to urban hip-hop. Although romantic love is a universal theme in the world of poetry, youth have had limited exposure to it. Some youth might not find the theme engaging; others might find it embarrassing. Gauge your group, and remember to keep the workshop fun and active.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Identify and investigate cultural and personal ideas about romantic love
- Call upon poets' voices, including our own, to explore different aspects of love
- Address the question, how does one keep one's identity while falling in love?
- Optional: Compare and contrast love poems
- Optional: Provide ideas for organizing a Poetry Pajama Party for children in the congregation

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Question and express their attitudes about romantic love
- Compare their notions of romantic love to those of society, as viewed through poetry and fairy tales

- Examine their feelings about one aspect of romantic love in particular: that of becoming "one" with another person
- Optional: Share their love of poetry with children by hosting a Poetry Pajama Party

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Fairy Tale Love	30
Activity 2: Being Yourself in Love	20
Faith in Action: Poetry Pajama Party	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Lyrics as Poetry	15
Alternate Activity 2: Perfect and Imperfect Love	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

The activities in this workshop look at romantic love. Love poems are common and popular. Do you have a favorite love poem? If so, does it portray love in a realistic way or idealistically? There are two different ways to think about art: Some think that art should imitate life, or be realistic. Others think it should reflect ideal human behavior. Of course, the reality is that art can do (and does) both. Which do you prefer? Do you indulge more in realistic or idealistic art? Does that say something about your outlook on life?

# WORKSHOP PLAN

## OPENING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "love" in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "love." When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

Introduce today's workshop with these words:

From the moment we can toddle around and give sloppy kisses, we are presented with attractive, compelling images of love. These images suggest what love should look like, what love can do for us, and how necessary love is to complete us. As we move through our lives, the fantasy of the perfect, romantic love often comes into conflict with our experiences. Our own sexuality and our impossibly high expectations for what another person can give us are just two of many complicating factors. This workshop seeks to help us understand why romantic love is so compelling and to challenge us to be more conscious about how we define, experience, and conduct ourselves in love.

## ACTIVITY 1: FAIRY TALE LOVE (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Art supplies, including drawing paper, pencils, markers, colored pencils, and other materials
- Newsprint or a dry erase board and markers
- Journals and pens or pencils
- Optional: CD player and music

### Preparation for Activity

- If youth will be free to work in other spaces, make sure you have secured space for them to use. You will also need to check on them and have a way to call them back into the shared space.

### Description of Activity

Through drawing, participants visit their own notions of "fairy tale love" and examine the difference between love and infatuation.

Make sure each participant has a pen/pencil and his/her journal. Draw two columns on a piece of newsprint or the dry erase board. As you write the word "infatuation" at the top of the left-hand column, ask the group to write in their journals their own completion of this sentence: You know you're really infatuated when...

Wait until participants have finished writing. Then, as you write the words "in love" at the top of the right-hand column, ask the group to write their own completion of this sentence: You know you are really in love when...

When participants are done, invite them to share their fill-ins. Write each contribution, or phrases from it, in the appropriate column. As you collect participants' contributions, prompt observations and discussion. Use these questions:

- What is the key difference between true love and infatuation?
- What causes us to mistake one for the other?

Make the art supplies available. Tell the group, "Most of us have some version of a fairy tale romance in our heads, complete with a happy ending. Please draw a picture that represents your own fairy tale of true love as it is in your mind right now. Try not to edit it, even if you think it is a bit far out."

Let participants disperse and draw. Tell them how much time they have before they must reconvene. If the group enjoys background music while they work, play music. Monitor youth who are not in the shared space. Give a two-minute warning before the end of the work period.

When the group reconvenes, ask for volunteers to share their pictures show-and-tell style. Remind participants that it is fine to pass if they feel their pictures are too personal.

As volunteers present their drawings, invite each one to say more about his/her picture, using this question as a prompt:

- What would make your fairy tale more real but still retain its magic? What would the "reality" version look like?

Lead the entire group to explore these questions:

- What does Unitarian Universalism have to say about romantic love? How could we apply the principles of Unitarian Universalist faith to the notion of romantic love?
- Ask the following if participants have completed the *Our Whole Lives* program: What messages does the *Our Whole Lives* program send about romantic love?
- What does your faith tell you about a broken heart and ways to heal it?

## ACTIVITY 2: BEING YOURSELF IN LOVE (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [A Rumi Poem](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, A Rumi Poem, one for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Participants read a poem and explore their own views about a common theme in love poems: merging with another versus remaining an individual in a relationship.

Invite participants to discuss the idea of merging themselves with another person. Use these questions:

- What are some ways an individual can merge with another person? (You may suggest a few: physically, emotionally, socially, financially, and creatively.)
- Why and how does an individual merge with someone else in these ways? What compels us to merge like this, sometimes before we even realize that we are doing it?
- What is the connection between falling in love and this sort of merging?

Explain that a natural conflict arises between the desire to merge with someone who attracts us and the desire to keep ourselves separate. Although it is rarely portrayed this way in fairy tales, such a conflict can arise as a love relationship becomes "real." Invite participants to recap stories from movies, books, television programs, and real life that illustrate this conflict; for example, when one member of a couple disapproves of choices his/her partner makes. A common plot on

television tells of a substance-abusing teen whose boyfriend or girlfriend disapproves of the partner's habit. Another example is when a person moves to another city because of a new job opportunity, while his/her partner is invested in staying where she/he lives now.

Guide the discussion further into exploring this type of conflict. Challenge participants with this question: How can we fall in love without falling away from ourselves?

Tell participants that the subject of the poem they are about to read is merging in love. Distribute copies of Handout 1, A Rumi Poem. Lead a "What do we have here?" discussion about the poems. Use these questions:

- What are the nature images in Rumi's poem, and how do they relate to the notion of merging?
- Where is the "sweet, timeless land" the lover speaks of?

Lead a "What's the Big Idea?" discussion about the poems. Use these questions:

- How do the lovers merge?
- Though the speaker talks about merging, they frequently repeat the phrase "you and I." Why?
- Does the poem paint a picture both of merging and being separate? How does this relate to the previous conversation the group had about merging in romantic love?

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- Singing the Living Tradition

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: POETRY PAJAMA PARTY

### Materials for Activity

- Books of children's poetry

- Arts and crafts materials
- Blankets, pillows, sleeping bags, and/or bean bag chairs
- Congregational calendar
- Newsprint or dry erase board and markers
- Optional: Hand puppets or materials for making simple puppets
- Optional: Snacks

### Preparation for Activity

- From the congregation's religious educator, seek permission ahead of time to have the pajama party at your place of worship. She/he can tell you the guidelines for hosting such an event, including what space you can use, how many adults need to be present, whether you are allowed to serve food, and whether others in the congregation need to be consulted.

### Description of Activity

Host a Poetry Pajama Party for young children in your congregation.

This activity will help youth share their love of poetry with others and build multigenerational connections. When you have permission to hold the event, ask the group if they would like to share their experiences with poetry with younger children in the congregation. Youth who have not had much interaction with the younger children might be pleasantly surprised to see how many youngsters think they are extremely cool.

Use newsprint or the dry erase board to list the party logistics that you must settle. These may include:

- when the party will be held
- where the party will be held
- what ages will be invited
- how long will the party last
- which youth can help with the party

If some youth cannot attend the party because of conflicts, invite them to help with prearrangements such as making phone calls, sending e-mails, selecting poems, or planning snacks. If youth have transportation issues, arrange carpools according to your congregation's safety policies.

If you are serving food, be aware of allergies and which foods are off-limits. Decide how you will obtain the food.

Now decide what you will do at the party. A simple party format is best, such as:

1. Children arrive in pajamas and set up blankets and pillows in a large space.

Organize an activity for early arrivers to do while waiting for everyone else to arrive. You might consider having them make simple animal puppets. To do this, provide cartoon-like pictures of the animals that are included in the poems to be read. Have children color the pictures, cut them out (with assistance), and glue them to wooden craft sticks. Instruct them to write their initials on the back and set the puppets aside to dry.

2. When everyone has arrived, play a game. You may need another room or space for the game.

3. Reconvene in the party room. While participants take turns reading poems, children could snack on popcorn or another easy snack. Consider interspersing popular children's songs, riddles, or jokes between the poems. Alternatively, you could read poems for several minutes, stop for a craft activity related to the poetry, and then read a bit more before children collect their crafts and go home.

Decide which poems the group will read and by whom. Youth might have favorite books of poetry from their childhood. If not, search the library, ask a children's librarian, or check out these suggestions:

- [Ogden Nash](http://www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/ogden_nash_2004_9.pdf) (at [www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/ogden\\_nash\\_2004\\_9.pdf](http://www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/ogden_nash_2004_9.pdf)) poetry on PoemHunter.com
- *Honey, I Love*, by Eloise Greenfield
- Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*
- [The Children's Poetry Archive](http://www.poetryarchive.org/childrensarchive/poetsHome.do) (at [www.poetryarchive.org/childrensarchive/poetsHome.do](http://www.poetryarchive.org/childrensarchive/poetsHome.do))
- The [Children's Poetry page](http://www.poetry-online.org/childrens_poetry_resource_index.htm) (at [www.poetry-online.org/childrens\\_poetry\\_resource\\_index.htm](http://www.poetry-online.org/childrens_poetry_resource_index.htm)) of Poetry Online

Other ideas:

- Consider asking families to bring one of their favorite books of children's poetry and inviting children or their parents to read.
- Use an instant film camera to take group photographs, one for every child. Attach a photo to the inside covers of the books the families brought or to a small piece of poster board and let all the children and youth sign the memento.
- For the last poem of the night, choose one that includes many animals. Consider a book by Eric Carle or Bill Martin. Before reading the poem,

make sure every child has created a stick puppet, or bring in hand puppets and distribute them. During the reading, invite the children to hold up their puppets and make animal sounds.

With a few adjustments, the Poetry Pajama Party could be held at a local library and include children from the community.

### **Including All Participants**

Check with the congregation's religious educator to see if any of the children who will be attending the party have food allergies or other special needs. Bring these needs to the program participants' attention so they can be prepared to provide whatever each child needs to fully participate in the event's activities. During planning, if anyone proposes an idea that cannot be made accessible for every child who MIGHT attend do not use that idea.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

With your co-leader, discuss which activities were successful and which ones were less so. The date, time, and location of the Poetry Slam should be set by now. Start thinking about publicity outlets, especially congregational newsletters that might be printed a month in advance. If advance publicity is needed before Workshop 12, *Poems On Stage*, will be offered, let the group know. The quickest way to get word out about the Poetry Slam is to get permission from the group for co-leaders to write a short blurb for advance publicity. You might discover that a youth or two is interested in working with you and is able to do so at an agreed-upon time outside of regular meeting time.

## **TAKING IT HOME**

With my poems, I finally won even my mother. The longest wooing of my life.  
Marge Piercy

### **DURING TODAY'S SESSION...**

We drew pictures of our own fairy tale romances. We discussed popular notions of romantic love and our own ideas about what that might look and feel like. We read a poem about lovers being together as one and examined that concept for its desirability.

### **REFLECTION QUESTION:**

Which couple in your life exemplifies your notion of ideal love?

### **EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...**

- Use the medium of your choice to explore the tug-of-war between maintaining a separate self and merging oneself with another person in a love relationship. You might ask a friend to join you. Here are a few suggestions:
  - Write your own love song that pokes holes in the popular, fantasy image of the super-merged couple.
  - Write and illustrate a children's book that portrays a hero or heroine who is both a strong individual and a generous, loving member of a relationship (romantic or other).
  - Write a love song to your best friend; talk about what you appreciate in your similarities and in your differences.
  - Write a love poem to yourself.
  - Create a drawing or a collage that shows yourself in the middle, surrounded by aspects of your life that are shared or "merged" with others.
- How about creating valentines for people you love? You do not have to wait until Valentine's Day; after all, you love them the other 364 days, too, right? Write short love poems or use favorite lyrics from love songs for your valentine. Did your mom or dad ever put surprises in your lunchbox? Return the love. Put a valentine in your mom or dad's briefcase. Put one in your sibling's lunchbox.
- Have you ever wanted to turn a fairy tale on its head? Many authors have done this. Read any of the works by Gregory Maguire. He wrote the book *Wicked*, which was turned into a hit Broadway musical. (Be forewarned: the book is quite different from the musical!) Search for other authors' twisted fairy tales on the Internet or at your library. After reading a few, try writing your own.
- Retell a popular fairy tale in verse. You might want to read the poem at the Poetry Slam, a school talent show, or a coffeehouse at your congregation. You could tell the story in more than one voice and have others help you recite it or act it out.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LYRICS AS POETRY (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Index cards and pens

- Newsprint or a dry erase board and markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Prepare a few index cards with love lyrics as an example for participants.

### Description of Activity

Participants use the lyrics of popular songs to discuss cultural attitudes toward love.

Provide each participant with a few index cards and a pen or pencil. Ask everyone to think of song lyrics from popular songs—contemporary or older—that deal with romantic love and write down on each card a phrase from the lyrics. Have participants place their cards in a box, hat, or other container when completed.

While participants are working, draw a line down the middle of a sheet of newsprint or the dry erase board. Write the word "lyric" at the top of the left-hand column. Write the word "assumption" at the top of the right-hand column.

When participants' index cards are in the container, invite one or two volunteers to draw the cards out one by one and read them aloud. Ask another volunteer to write the lines and phrases in the left-hand column of the chart.

Choose some phrases to probe with the group. For each phrase ask participants to state, in less "lyrical" language, the assumption that it represents; for example, the lyric "You're my everything" represents the assumption, we are each incomplete and empty without someone else.

When you have enough lyric/assumption pairs, lead a discussion to explore our cultural beliefs about romantic love. Help participants frame a definition of love, based on the lyrics they contributed. Encourage them to discuss whether or not they accept the ideas about love that popular songs provide. Use these questions:

- What does our culture "believe" about true romantic love?
- What values do these lyrics reveal? Are these values consistent with our UU values?
- How can romantic love feed us spiritually?
- Why does our culture talk so much about romantic love versus other kinds of love?
- If your group did Activity 1, Fairy Tale Love, ask if any of the lyrics could be the caption for your drawing. What ideas about romantic love does your fairy tale image share with our popular culture?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: PERFECT AND IMPERFECT LOVE (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, "[To a Young Girl](#) (included in this document) ," by William Butler Yeats
- Handout 3, "[.05](#) (included in this document) ," by Ishmael Reed
- Journals and pen or pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handouts 2, "To a Young Girl" and 3, ".05," one for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Participants analyze two poems—one from the beginning of the twentieth century and one from the end of it—that paint different pictures of love.

Introduce this activity by noting that love is a topic about which almost every poet writes. Tell the group that they will look at two very different poems about their experiences in love. Distribute copies of Handout 2, "To a Young Girl" and Handout 3, ".05." Ask for volunteers to read the poems aloud, allowing thirty seconds of silence to pass after each reading.

Lead a "What do we have here?" discussion. Use these questions:

- What is the story behind the poems?
- In Yeats' poem, who is the speaker? Who is being addressed? Who else is in the poem, and how are all the people connected?
- How are the poems similar in style? How are they different in style?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion by asking:

- Is the speaker in Reed's poem just talking about his lovers or is he using the poem as an opportunity to comment on something else? What?
- By reading the poems, can you tell something about the speakers?

Ask participants to generate ideas about what these two poems have in common and how they are different—in both subject and style. Distribute pen/pencil and journals. Invite participants to either rewrite Yeats' poem in a Reed-like style or rewrite Reed's poem in a Yeats-like style. Reserve at least five minutes for participants to share their work at the close of the session.

## **EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 6: HANDOUT 1: A RUMI POEM**

Jalalud'din Rumi (13th Century), translated by Kulliyat-e Shams, from Rumi's Divan of Shems of Tabriz: Selected Odes (Element Classics of World Spirituality). (England: Dorset Books, 1997)

A moment of happiness,  
you and I sitting on the verandah,  
apparently two, but one in soul, you and I.  
We feel the flowing water of life here,  
you and I, with the garden's beauty  
and the birds singing.  
The stars will be watching us,  
and we will show them  
what it is to be a thin crescent moon.  
You and I unselfed, will be together,  
indifferent to idle speculation, you and I.  
The parrots of heaven will be cracking sugar  
as we laugh together, you and I.  
In one form upon this earth,  
and in another form in a timeless sweet land.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 6: HANDOUT 2: CELEBRATION

of love  
and everything

*This poem is written in dialect.*

I will bring you a whole person  
and you will bring me a whole person  
and we will have us twice as much  
of love and everything

I be bringing a whole heart  
and while it do have nicks and  
dents and scars,  
that only make me lay it down  
more careful-like  
An' you be bringing a whole heart  
a little chipped and rusty an'  
sometime skip a beat but  
still an' all you bringing polish too  
and look like you intend  
to make it shine

we be bringing, each of us  
the music of ourselves to wrap  
the other in

Forgiving clarities  
soft as a choir's last  
lingering note our  
personal blend

I will be bringing you someone whole  
and you will be bringing me someone whole  
and we be twice as strong  
and we be twice as sure  
and we will have twice as much

## **EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 6: HANDOUT 2: TO A YOUNG GIRL**

William Butler Yeats (1865 — 1939), from *The Wild Swans at Cooley* (1919)

My dear, my dear, I know  
More than another  
What makes your heart beat so;  
Not even your own mother  
Can know it as I know,  
Who broke my heart for her  
When the wild thought,  
That she denies  
And has forgot,  
Set all her blood astir  
And glittered in her eyes.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 6: HANDOUT 3: FIVE CENTS

Excerpted from *Chattanooga* by Ishmael Reed (New York: Random House, 1973). Permission granted by Lowenstein Associates, Inc.

If I had a nickel  
For all the women who've  
Rejected me in my life  
I would be the head of the  
World Bank with a flunkie  
To hold my derby as i  
Prepared to fly chartered  
Jet to sign a check  
Giving India a new lease  
On life  
If I had a nickel for  
All the women who've loved  
Me in my life I would be  
The World Bank's assistant  
Janitor and wouldn't need  
To wear a derby  
All I'd think about would  
Be going home.

## FIND OUT MORE

Jalalud'din Rumi is the oldest poet represented in this program. You can find a [biography of Rumi](http://www.poetseers.org/the_poetseers/rumi/bio) (at [www.poetseers.org/the\\_poetseers/rumi/bio](http://www.poetseers.org/the_poetseers/rumi/bio)) at the website, Poet Seers. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) website features a short piece about [Sufism](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sufis) (at [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sufis](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sufis)

[m\\_1.shtml](#)), Rumi's religion, which influenced his writing. Sufism is a sect of Islam and is famous for its beautiful poetry and whirling dervishes.

Check out the biographical information about [W.B. Yeats](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/117) (at [www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/117](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/117)) on Poets.org. You can read about [Ishmael Reed](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/750) (at [www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/750](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/750)) on Poets.org, too.

# WORKSHOP 7: DIFFICULT TIMES

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Difficult times have helped me to understand better than before, how infinitely rich and beautiful life is in every way...*  
— Isak Dinesen

Freedom. Freedom to question, explore, and make decisions based on our conscious. Freedom from prejudice and the right to be viewed as individuals. Hope for a world changed by love. Freedom and hope are two values that have always been important to Unitarians, Universalists, and now to Unitarian Universalists. This workshop explores freedom and hope by discussing poetry that deals with difficult issues: prison, death of a loved one, and racism. Whether the difficulties arise from a social wrong or personal loss, faith and hope are motivators that help us through tough times and into a brighter tomorrow.

This workshop deals with topics that are more solemn than those of other workshops. Gauge how well participants are able to think about these issues. Activity 2, Death of a Loved One, might be difficult for a youth who has recently experienced a loss. Check with your religious educator ahead of time.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Examine poetry that looks at tough issues and how people face difficult times
- Allow participants to explore writing as a spiritual practice that helps process the emotions resulting from life's difficulties
- Optional: Offer an opportunity for the congregation to promote literacy and memorialize a deceased loved one through donating to Reading is Fundamental

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Recognize some of the common dilemmas of our human existence
- Reflect upon the way several poets and songwriters have explored these dilemmas

- Acknowledge hope as an important tool in our work to right society's wrongs
- Express shared truths about the human condition in writing
- Optional: Provide a means for congregants to honor a deceased loved one
- Optional: Discover UU hymns that express our beliefs in freedom and hope

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Prison	10
Activity 2: Death of a Loved One	10
Activity 3: Racism	10
Activity 4: Hope	20
Faith in Action: Reading Is Fundamental	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: The Themes of Hymns	20
Alternate Activity 2: UUs Working Toward Freedom	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Just as the more serious topics of today's workshop might lead to unpleasant memories for some youth, you should process these activities yourself before starting the workshop. Think about how freedom, death (physical or of the spirit), hope, and courage have played into your life. Yet remember that total personal freedom is not always a good thing. Being responsible for each other, being part of a faith community, means that sometimes our personal desires must be sacrificed or postponed for the good of the community. The balance between personal freedom and communal responsibility can be a delicate one. How have you managed to keep that balance in your life?

# WORKSHOP PLAN

## OPENING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "freedom" in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "freedom." When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

Introduce today's workshop, saying,

We opened with the word "freedom" today, but there are different types of freedom. There is physical freedom, which you lose if you are imprisoned, caged, and even when you feel unsafe or threatened in your environment. There is also spiritual freedom, which is attained when you feel free to make your own choices in life, unburdened, or enlightened. The workshop is structured differently today: we will look at several poems that illustrate human beings in difficult situations, and we will also look at poems that talk about ways we can survive those hard times. After reading the poems, we will have a writing exercise that allows you to reflect upon the poems and your own ideas about how you can keep your spirit healthy during life's difficult times.

## ACTIVITY 1: PRISON (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, "[End of a Discussion with a Jailer](#)" (included in this document) , by Samih Al-Qasim
- Journals and pens/pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, "End of a Discussion with a Jailer," one for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 1, "End of a Discussion with a Jailer." Ask two or more volunteers to read it aloud, pausing for thirty seconds between readings and after the last reading. Then lead a "What do we have here?" discussion, using these questions:

- What is the story of the poem?
- What is the "large cell" to which the speaker refers?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion, using these questions:

- Is the theme of death present in the poem? Is this death a spiritual death, a physical death, or both? Explain.
- What does this poem say about freedom?
- How does this poem make you feel, and why?

Invite participants to spend about three minutes journaling about this poem. The journal entry could include their thoughts about the discussion with the group, or it could be about a time in their lives when they felt imprisoned, stifled, bound, or prevented from acting freely in accordance with their conscious.

## ACTIVITY 2: DEATH OF A LOVED ONE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, "[Animal Liberation](#)," (included in this document) by Genny Lim
- Journals and pens/pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 2, "Animal Liberation," one for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 2, "Animal Liberation." Ask two or more volunteers to read it aloud, pausing for thirty seconds between readings and after the last reading. Then use these questions to lead a "What do we have here?" discussion:

- What is the story of the poem?
- Who do you think Danielle might be?

- What effect does the great amount of detail in the poem have on your senses?
- Do any of the poet's tools we discussed in the first workshop stand out in "Animal Liberation"?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion, using these questions:

- How is the theme of freedom played out in this poem?
- Is the theme of death present in the poem? Is this death a spiritual death, a physical death, or both? Explain.
- How does this poem make you feel, and why?

Invite participants to spend a few minutes journaling about this poem. The journal entry could include their thoughts about the discussion with the group, or it could be about a time in their lives when they faced the death of a loved one.

NOTE: *Sukhavati* is "The Place of Great Bliss," according to a branch of Buddhism. It is not the equivalent of "paradise," but the attainment of enlightenment.

### ACTIVITY 3: RACISM (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Handout 3, "[Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-Read Person, Could Believe in the War between the Races](#) (included in this document) ," by Lorna Dee Cervantes
- Journals and pens/pencils

#### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 3, "Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-Read Person, Could Believe in the War between the Races , one for each participant.

#### Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 3, "Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-Read Person, Could Believe in the War between the Races." Ask two or more volunteers to read it aloud, pausing for thirty seconds between readings and after the last reading. Then lead a "What do we have here?" discussion, using these questions:

- What is the story of the poem?
- What words or references confound or confuse you?

- What do we know about the speaker's life from the poem?

Use these questions to lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion:

- How is the theme of freedom played out in this poem?
- Is the theme of death present in the poem? Is this death a spiritual death, a physical death, or both? Explain.
- Find the places where the poet contradicts herself. What effect do these contradictions have on the tone and mood of the poem?
- Does the speaker believe in a war between the races?

Invite participants to spend about three minutes journaling about this poem. The journal entry could include their thoughts about the discussion with the group, or it could be about a time in their lives when they encountered or witnessed racism.

### ACTIVITY 4: HOPE (20 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Handout 4, "[A Change Is Gonna Come](#) (included in this document) ," by Sam Cooke
- Journals and pens/pencils
- A recording of "A Change Is Gonna Come"

#### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a CD with the Sam Cooke song, "A Change Is Gonna Come." You can also purchase and download the song or, if your meeting space has Internet access, you can access it free online at a few sites, including [Last FM](#) (at 209.85.207.104/search?q=cache:hpKUpSKCbaUJ:www.rollingstone.com/news/story/6595857/a\_change\_is\_gonna\_come+song+a+change+gonna+come&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=7&gl=us&client=firefox-a).
- Photocopy Handout 4, "A Change Is Gonna Come", one for each participant.

#### Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 4, "A Change Is Gonna Come." Explain that these are the lyrics to a song by Sam Cooke that participants will hear. Cooke was a popular African American singer who had eighteen Top Thirty hits during his career, including "You Send Me" and "Twistin' the Night Away."

Lead a discussion, using these questions:

- What difficult times does the speaker face?
- Are the themes of freedom or death present in this song? Explain.
- What proof does the speaker have that a change will come?
- What is the tone or mood of the song?

This discussion might touch upon faith, as the speaker does not present any evidence of a change coming, yet strongly believes it will happen. If the topic of faith does come up, feel free to explore that thread of the discussion and let participants know that you will be talking more about faith in a later workshop. If no one mentions "hopeful," ask if participants feel the speaker is hopeful. Ask what hope has to do with the previous poems and themes of today's workshop.

Invite participants to craft a poem in their journals. There are several ways they might approach this writing assignment; they could write:

- A poem about one or more of the difficult times they described in their journals today
- A poem in response to one of the poems they read today
- A poem about one of the problem's currently facing the world and their hope, or lack of hope, for a solution
- A song about any of the above

If you have time, and if they are comfortable doing so, invite participants to share their writing.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, one for each participant

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

### Materials for Activity

- Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) donation forms

### Preparation for Activity

- Print out In Memory Of [donation forms](https://secure2.convio.net/rif/site/Donation2?df_id=1240&1240.donation=form1) (at [secure2.convio.net/rif/site/Donation2?df\\_id=1240&1240.donation=form1](https://secure2.convio.net/rif/site/Donation2?df_id=1240&1240.donation=form1)) from the RIF website or call the Donor Relations Desk at 1-888-725-4801 to request forms.

### Description of Activity

Participants discover ways of memorializing a loved one. If your congregation recognizes the Day of the Dead or holds another service in remembrance of the dead, consider connecting this service activity to that event. (Do not have the activity at a memorial service.)

Say to the participants,

Poetry and other forms of writing offer constructive ways of talking about difficult issues. They can also be used to comfort us when our minds and hearts are troubled. The death of a loved one can be such a time. Many UUs hold memorial services for the dead, and often readings of poetry, prose, or selections from a holy book are part of these services. These readings might be favorites of the deceased person or they might be meant to comfort the living. Sometimes a person will request a specific reading for his/her own memorial service. Has anyone ever attended a memorial service during which poetry was read?

Ask if anyone has ever known a family to request that, in lieu of flowers, friends of the deceased give a donation to an organization. Tell them that [RIF](http://www.rif.org/) (at [www.rif.org/](http://www.rif.org/)) is one such organization that accepts memorial donations. One of RIF's programs includes giving away free books to schoolchildren.

Discuss the following questions:

- Is anyone familiar with RIF? If so, let them tell about the organization. If not, explain that RIF is the nation's oldest and largest non-profit literacy program for children and families. Although many people associate RIF with young children, they also have programs that work toward increasing the high school completion rate in underserved communities and a multicultural

literacy campaign. RIF distributes sixteen million free books to children every year.

- How does the work of RIF relate to our UU values?
- Is there anything spiritual about helping RIF, through donations or otherwise?

Ask participants how promoting memorial donations to RIF would put our UU faith in action. If the group decides to pursue this activity, arrange a time to set up a table after a worship service and accept donations. You will need information about RIF, pens, and donation forms at the table. Decorate the table with children's books. Distribute the donation forms and review the information needed. If you provide the online form, note that it asks for a credit card, but donors can choose to mail in a check instead.

Other ways in which this activity could be used are: ask the group to contribute money and donate the money to RIF in memory of past members of your congregation or deceased congregational ministers (RIF accepts a fifteen dollar minimum); or, if your congregation celebrates a Blessing of the Animals, decorate your donation table with children's books about animals and seek contributions in honor of deceased pets.

After the event, discuss with participants what the experience was like for them and what they gained from it.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Discuss the workshop with your co-leader. Which activities worked best? Which could use improvement? Did the youth appreciate talking about difficult issues? If so, you might find ways to bring more social justice issues or current events into the workshops in the future.

## TAKING IT HOME

### DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We read a few poems about people's experiences during difficult times. We thought about our own tough times. We heard a song about hope and wrote a poem based on all the reflections of the day.

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

We all have times when we need help to stay hopeful or to act courageously. What have been the sources of that help for you: music, people, or inspirational words?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- Create a board game that serves as a metaphor for something else (as all board games do, really). Perhaps it is a metaphor for working to end racism or bringing just and peaceful solutions to countries torn apart by political unrest. Think out such things as how to "move forward," what the pieces will look like/be, and what winning will look like.
- Ask your family and friends about their favorite hymns. Do they like them because of the music, words, or both? If they like the words, what is it about the words that they like? Ask if there are other hymns that inspire them.
- The poems in this workshop touched upon situations that many UU congregations are involved in improving. For example, your congregation might support advocates for prison reform, justice for political prisoners, animal rights, and racial justice. Talk to a few of the people doing such work. Ask them what brings them hope and what gives them courage?
- *Emotional Contagion*, by Elaine Hatfield, John T. Cacioppo, and Richard L. Rapson (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993) is a body of research that supports the belief that emotions can be spread from person to person. This and other research suggest that if you surround yourself with positive people you will have a more positive outlook on life. Make a list of the people with whom you spend the most time. Are you surrounding yourself with positive, hopeful, and supportive people? If not, you might consider seeking out friends who fit this description. You might need to also ask yourself if you are a positive influence on others.
- The PBS series *Independent Lens* has an extensive list of protest music, categorized by era on the series site's web pages called [Strange Fruit](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/protest.html) (at [www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/protest.html](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/protest.html)) (named for the famous song about lynching, performed by Billie Holiday and written by Lewis Allan). [CounterPunch](http://www.counterpunch.org/atapattu02012003.html) (at [www.counterpunch.org/atapattu02012003.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/atapattu02012003.html)) newsletter has an article on protest music. *Highway Is Alive Tonight: A History of American Protest Music*, by Marc Leverette (New York: Praeger Publications, 2008), is a current book on the subject. Julia Ward Howe is included in the Strange Fruit web pages. How many other UUs can you find?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: THE THEMES OF HYMNS (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*
- Journals and pens/pencils

### Description of Activity

Participants search for hymns that have themes of freedom, hope, or the difficulties of life.

Distribute hymnals. Ask participants to search for hymns that reflect the themes you discussed in today's workshop (freedom, death, hope, and—if you used Alternate Activity 1—courage). Some examples from *Singing the Living Tradition* include Hymn 4, "I Brought My Spirit to the Sea" (renewal of spirit); Hymn 6, "Just As Long As I Have Breath"; Hymn 112, "Do You Hear?"; Hymn 159, "This Is My Song"; and Hymn 346, "Come, Sing a Song with Me."

Invite volunteers to read the lyrics aloud. Discuss how the hymns relate to the themes and their tone and mood. Suggest to participants that singing a favorite hymn can be a tactic for remaining hopeful during hard times. If participants find a hymn they like in particular, invite them to copy the words into their journals so they can practice singing it.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: UUS WORKING TOWARD FREEDOM (15 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

If you have time for a longer workshop, extend the topics discussed in Activities 1-4. One way to do this is by noting Unitarian Universalists who have worked to alleviate society of the ills addressed in the poems in Handouts 1-4.

If your group is well informed, you might simply ask them to tell about UUs who worked to end war, racism, mistreatment of animals, or classism. If help is needed, talk about the following UUs (or use your own examples):

- Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), winner of the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature and author of "Why I Am Not a Christian", imprisoned for his stand against WWI and again in 1951 for civil disobedience calling for nuclear disarmament. This philosopher and mathematician of British birth was Unitarian until his teens, then turned

against organized religion, yet is part of our great humanist tradition;

- Whitney Young (1921-1971), African American Medal of Freedom recipient and civil rights activist who chaired the Urban League. While chairing the Urban League, he actively pursued greater economic opportunity for blacks. In his later life, his interests expanded to include civil rights issues abroad.
- Viola Liuzzo (1926-1965), the only white woman honored on the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, AL, who worked for education and economic justice. She was murdered in Selma, AL after a civil rights march. She is also included on a plaque honoring those who were murdered in Selma at UUA headquarters at 25 Beacon Street, Boston.
- Henry Bergh (1811-1888), founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), worked to help create and support anticruelty laws to protect both animal and children, both of which were frequently treated (and mistreated) as property;
- Clarence Skinner (1881-1949), Universalist minister, teacher and social activist, was a pacifist and a believer in a socialist new world order. His book, *The Social Implications of Universalism*, published in 1915, inspired a new interpretation of the church's mission and envisioned creating a "heaven on earth". He established Community Church of Boston, "a free fellowship of men and women united for the study of universal religion, seeking to apply ethical ideals to individual life and the cooperative principle to all forms of social and economic life."

After this discussion, ask the youth to identify people in their congregation who work towards social justice. Be ready to supply examples. Remind participants of activities your congregation participates in that might have included the youth. These could include marches, demonstrations, letter-writing campaigns, activities of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee or working with other faith organizations in your community. When they stand beside the disenfranchised, demanding equal rights, they are following a long line of UU activist and living out their UU values.

### Including All Participants

When noting members of your congregation, include a diverse group of activists.

**EXPLORING OUR VALUES  
THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 7:  
HANDOUT 1: END OF A DISCUSSION  
WITH A JAILER**

Samih Al-Qasim (1939- ), translated by Abdullah al-Udhari

From the window of my small cell

I can see trees smiling at me,

Roofs filled with my people,

Windows weeping and praying for me.

From the window of my small cell

I can see your large cell.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 7: HANDOUT 2: ANIMAL LIBERATION

Genny Lim

Other than a chickadee which I bought from  
a pick-up truck vendor many, many years ago  
I had never purchased a live animal  
Today I went to Chinatown and parked on the south end  
of Grant  
I walked down the street combing the poultry shops for a  
live duck  
Most of the old markets had been shut down  
under pressure from the Animal Humane Society  
No more cages piled high on the sidewalks with the odor  
of fowl  
or loose feathers dusting the already acrid air  
Wooden crates jammed with roosters, hens and pigeons  
Barrels of live frogs and turtles had been replaced by  
Spanking new tourists emporiums spilling silk brocades  
Chinaware and hand-carved deities from their over-  
stocked shelves  
I make my way through the crowds into one market  
displaying  
Roasted ducks hanging upside-down  
I ask the proprietress, "Do you have any live ducks?"  
She points next door  
I walk into a long, narrow room with wooden cages kept  
behind a glass partition  
"Do you have any live ducks?" I ask the old poker-faced  
poultry man  
Without blinking, he asks "How many?"  
I ask him "How much for one?" in Chinese  
He answers "Sup-yih-gah-bun!"  
Twelve dollars and fifty cents for the life of a duck?  
I reply, "One!"  
He turns around and opens the door to one of the crates  
and reaches in and pulls out a big, speckled brown duck  
He grabs it by the neck and ties its feet together

Then he stuffs the bird into a paper bag punctured with  
holes at the top  
I pay him my money and he hands over the bag  
I am so excited my heart is racing all the way out the  
door  
I clutch the duck's warm body against my chest and  
It feels like that of my baby before she had grown into a  
young lady  
Hard to believe nineteen years had passed since  
I had held her tiny body to me just like this  
I walk the length of Grant Avenue with my contraband  
I'm relieved I don't have a ticket and place the duck in  
the back of the car  
I head out to the park with a heightened awareness of  
my sudden new surroundings  
The buildings are unusually vivid, the pedestrians  
unusually alive  
I park at Stow Lake and walk around till I find a spot  
near the reeds obscured from view  
I walk down the embankment with my heart throbbing  
I open the bag half expecting the duck to bite me  
But she sits there calmly and patiently and as I untie  
the right band of wire wrapped around her legs  
Talking to her gently as I free her  
I'm afraid to upset her by picking her up so  
I turn the bag upside down and literally pour her into the  
water  
She tumbles into the lake and as soon as her body  
makes contact with liquid  
There is instant recognition  
She dives into the pool and emerges with her feathers  
wet and glistening  
She spreads her wings wide for the first time and quacks  
with joy  
She dives in and out again and again  
Baptizing her entire body with miraculous water  
My heart sings to see this once captive duck  
Frolic in the lake, diving and dancing, flapping her wings  
as flocks of black guinea hens pass by in cool demeanor  
And proud mallards observe their new member with  
calm disinterest

She quacks and cavorts like a prisoner released from  
death row

I sigh, never taking my eyes off her for a moment

Until she is joined by an identical speckled brown duck

They swim together past the boaters, past the reeds  
beyond sight

"Free!" I breathe, "at last!" One life saved for another  
one lost

Good-bye my darling, Danielle!

May your consciousness leap into the vast and familiar  
depths of Sukhavati!

And may you reunite quickly with the hosts of  
enlightened beings

Who have gone on ahead of you and who will soon  
follow!

## **EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 7: HANDOUT 3: POEM FOR THE YOUNG WHITE MAN WHO ASKED ME HOW I, AN INTELLIGENT, WELL- READ PERSON, COULD BELIEVE IN THE WAR BETWEEN THE RACES**

"Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-Read Person Could Believe in the War Between Races" is from *Emplumada*, by Lorna Dee Cervantes, copyright 1982. All rights are controlled by the University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. Used by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.

In my land there are no distinctions.  
The barbed wire politics of oppression  
have been torn down long ago. The only reminder  
of past battles, lost or won, is a slight  
rutting in the fertile fields.  
In my land  
people write poems about love,  
full of nothing but contented childlike syllables.  
Everyone reads Russian short stories and weeps.  
There are no boundaries.  
There is no hunger, no  
complicated famine or greed.  
I am not a revolutionary.  
I don't even like political poems.  
Do you think I can believe in a war between the races?  
I can deny it. I can forget about it  
when I'm safe,  
living on my own continent of harmony  
and home, but I am not  
there.  
I believe in revolution  
because everywhere the crosses are burning,  
sharp-shooting goose-steppers round every corner,  
there are snipers in the schools...  
(I know you don't believe this,

You think this is nothing  
but faddish exaggeration. But they  
are not shooting at you.)  
I'm marked by the color of my skin.  
The bullets are discrete and designed to kill slowly.  
They are aiming at my children.  
These are facts.  
Let me show you my wounds: my stumbling mind, my  
"excuse me" tongue, and this  
nagging preoccupation  
with the feeling of not being good enough.  
These bullets bury deeper than logic.  
Racism is not intellectual.  
I cannot reason these scars away.  
Outside my door  
there is a real enemy  
who hates me.  
I am a poet  
who yearns to dance on rooftops,  
to whisper delicate lines about joy  
and the blessings of human understanding.  
I try. I go to my land, my tower of words and  
bolt the door, but the typewriter doesn't fade out  
the sounds of blasting and muffled outrage.  
My own days bring me slaps on the face.  
Every day I am deluged with reminders  
that this is not  
my land  
and this is my land.  
I do not believe in the war between the races.  
but in this country  
there is war.

# EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 7: HANDOUT 4: A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

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*These are the lyrics to a song you will hear.*

I was born by the river in a little tent  
Oh and just like the river I've been running ever since  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

It's been too hard living but I'm afraid to die  
Cause I don't know what's up there beyond the sky  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

I go to the movie and I go downtown  
Somebody keep telling me don't hang around  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

Then I go to my brother  
And I say brother help me please  
But he winds up knocking me  
Back down on my knees

There been times that I thought I couldn't last for long  
But now I think I'm able to carry on  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

## FIND OUT MORE

You can find "End of a Discussion with a Jailer" in the anthology, *The Space between Our Footsteps*, by Naomi Shihab Nye (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998). Samih Al-Qasim is featured in the PBS Online NewsHour [poetry series](#) (at [www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth\\_coverage/entertainment/poetry/profiles/poet\\_alqasim.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/entertainment/poetry/profiles/poet_alqasim.html)) web pages.

"Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-Read Person, Could Believe in the War between Races" and "Animal Liberation" are from the anthology, *From Totems To Hip-Hop: A Multicultural Anthology of Poetry Across the Americas, 1900-2002*, edited by Ishmael Reed (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2003). Poets.org has a short biography of [Lorna Dee Cervantes](#) (at [www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/80](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/80)).

You can find an [interview with Genny Lim](#) (at #gennytop) at a website created by Jaime Wright, a Ph.D. student at University of California, Berkeley, and the [Bush Foundation](#) (at #Lim) (an organization that funds the arts) has a biographical paragraph about Lim.

For a bit of history about "A Change Is Gonna Come," go to [Songfacts](#) (at [www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=3673](http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=3673)) or [Rolling](#)

[Stone](#) (at [209.85.207.104/search?q=cache:hpKUpSKCbaUJ:www.rollingstone.com/news/story/6595857/a\\_change\\_is\\_gonna\\_come+song+a+change+gonna+come&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=7&gl=us&client=firefox-a](http://209.85.207.104/search?q=cache:hpKUpSKCbaUJ:www.rollingstone.com/news/story/6595857/a_change_is_gonna_come+song+a+change+gonna+come&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=7&gl=us&client=firefox-a)). The [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum](#) (at [www.rockhall.com/inductee/sam-cooke](http://www.rockhall.com/inductee/sam-cooke)) has a short biography of Sam Cooke.

[Answers.com](#) (at [www.answers.com/topic/whitney-moore-jr-young](http://www.answers.com/topic/whitney-moore-jr-young)) has biographical information on Whitney Young.

The Unitarian Universalist Historical Society has a biographical dictionary. It includes an entry on [Viola Liuzzo](#) (at [www25-temp.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/violaliuzzo.html](http://www25-temp.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/violaliuzzo.html)), [Bertrand Russell](#) (at [www25-temp.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/russellfamily.html](http://www25-temp.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/russellfamily.html)), and [Clarence Skinner](#) (at [www25-temp.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/clarencerusellskinner.html](http://www25-temp.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/clarencerusellskinner.html)).

Go to [Unitarian Universalists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals](#) (at [209.85.215.104/search?q=cache:8XPGzaSxoqEJ:www25.uua.org/ufeta/henrybergh.htm+uu+founder+of+human+e+society&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=5&gl=us&client=firefox-a](http://209.85.215.104/search?q=cache:8XPGzaSxoqEJ:www25.uua.org/ufeta/henrybergh.htm+uu+founder+of+human+e+society&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=5&gl=us&client=firefox-a)) for more information on Henry Bergh.

# WORKSHOP 8: ON A LIGHTER NOTE

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*The gods, too, are fond of a joke.*  
— Edward Albee, from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

This workshop gives participants a chance to have fun, and it comes at just the right time. In the next three workshops, youth examine the fairly solemn topics of faith, identity, and transformation, and after that it is time to prepare for the Poetry Slam. Now is a good time to lighten things up a bit; do not be afraid to have fun in this workshop.

This workshop offers the alternate activity of journal reviewing, which will also appear in the remaining workshops that lead up to the Poetry Slam. If you believe the group can benefit from journal review, build in time to do it during the next four meetings.

The Faith in Action activity features a guest speaker who will talk about ways to be a good ally to traditionally marginalized or oppressed groups. Locate a speaker several weeks ahead of time, work with her/him to design this activity during the ensuing time, and confirm his/her participation in the days before the activity.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Share humorous poems
- Contribute a game
- Expose participants to UU jokes
- Open discussions about humor and religion

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Play

- Laugh
- Joke
- Identify different ways poetry uses humor
- Judge the humor of UU jokes
- Reflect upon the place humor has in religion

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Apple Acting	15
Activity 2: Fruity Whine	10
Activity 3: UU Humor	15
Activity 4: The Kiss Off	10
Faith in Action: Allied in Humor	30
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: The Great Debate	15
Alternate Activity 2: Journal Review	

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Humor is such an individual characteristic. We do not all find the same things funny. Luckily, most of us find humor somewhere. Humor can be an effective tool for dealing with some of the challenging situations you discussed in Workshop 7, *Difficult Times*. When in your life has humor been a saving grace?

# WORKSHOP PLAN

## OPENING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and lighter

### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "funny" in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "funny." When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

To introduce today's workshop, say,

Today we are going to read humorous poems, tell UU jokes, and have some fun. Some of your earliest memories of poetry might include humorous poems. How many of you have read books by Lewis Carroll, like Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, or books by Eric Carle? Children love silly rhymes, and adults do too. We also enjoy poems that are not only funny, but have some deeper meaning. Many humorous poems have a message or a moral, like The Lorax and some other Dr. Seuss's poems. They show us that poetry can be both funny and serious. The question we face in this workshop is, can something be both funny and spiritual?

## ACTIVITY 1: APPLE ACTING (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint or a dry erase board and markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Be prepared with several apple allusions in case participants need help. See Find Out More or Handout 1 for examples.

### Description of Activity

In this activity, participants play a game with apple allusions.

Invite the group to play a pantomime game. Explain that pantomime is what mimes do: it is acting something out without sound, like charades. Form teams of no more than four participants each. Instruct the groups to come up with several cultural allusions to apples. These can be sayings or proverbs about apples, famous stories we all know about apples, or other common apple words. Offer newsprint and markers to groups for listing their ideas. Give groups several minutes to brainstorm, and then gather everyone together.

Explain that the groups will take turns pantomiming their apple allusions for the other groups. The audience will guess the allusions that the groups perform. The goal of the performing group is not to stump the audience, but to pantomime the allusion so well that the audience can instantly guess what the allusion is. Make sure everyone understands the instructions. If the groups need an example, pantomime someone working on a computer (for Apple Mac).

Choose which group will go first. As the audience correctly guesses the apple allusions, note the allusions on newsprint. Have the participants continue performing, alternating groups, until you run out of time or allusions.

### Including All Participants

If there are youth in the group who are differently abled, make sure they are actively involved in the pantomime.

## ACTIVITY 2: FRUITY WHINE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, "[Pear's Complaint](#)," (included in this document) by Greg Youmans

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, "Pear's Complaint," one for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Invite two or more volunteers to read Handout 1, "Pear's Complaint," aloud, pausing for thirty seconds between readings and after the last reading. Then ask this question to lead a "What do we have here?" discussion:

- Who is the speaker?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion, using these questions:

- What apple allusions can you find in the poem?
- Does the poem paint only a humorous picture or is it also talking about something else? Does the poet's experience mirror any common human experience, such as jealousy?
- How does this poem make you feel?

### ACTIVITY 3: UU HUMOR (15 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- UU jokes, at least as many as the number of participants you expect to attend
- A bowl or other container

#### Preparation for Activity

- Write UU jokes on slips of paper or print them off the Internet and cut them into slips. Select jokes that do not speak of other religions in a derogatory manner. Here are some UU web pages that feature jokes: [Laughing at Ourselves: UU Jokes](#) (at [bowieuu.org/alaughinguuserm.html](http://bowieuu.org/alaughinguuserm.html)) (a sermon by Rev. Cynthia A. Snavely); [Coffee Hour](#) (at [www.coffeehour.org/archives/001127.html](http://www.coffeehour.org/archives/001127.html)); [The Jokes on UU](#) (at [www.uuottawa.com/jokes\\_uu.htm](http://www.uuottawa.com/jokes_uu.htm)), from First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa.
- Put the slips in a bowl or other container.

#### Description of Activity

Participants share UU humor and reflect upon the place of humor in religion.

Gather participants in a circle. Say,  
 Sometimes we all need time to defuse,  
 to let go of the stress and seriousness  
 of life and just be silly. Laughter is food  
 for the soul, so it is feeding time!

Pass around the container holding the UU jokes and have each youth take one. After the container goes around the circle once, ask participants to read aloud the joke they selected, one at a time. When all participants have read their joke, or when you have just a few minutes before the end of the activity, ask the following questions:

- Do you know other UU jokes?
- Would you say these jokes play on stereotypes? Is there any truth to the stereotypes?
- Does humor have a place in worship services or other aspects of religious life? Why? What is spiritual about humor?

Share this joke with the group:

Conversation overheard: Person A (Mainstream Protestant Denomination): I hear that you allow all sorts of weirdos in your church. Atheists, Buddhists, Pagans...  
 Person B (Unitarian Universalist): We allow Christians too—we're very open-minded!

Ask:

- How is this joke different from the ones you shared earlier?
- Why do you think some UUs object to jokes like this?
- Is this just about differences in what people find funny or is there a deeper issue here?
- Does this joke put down Christians?
- When UUs tell a joke about UUs, is that different from hearing a non-UU tell a joke about UUs?
- In the previous question, replace the words "UUs" and "non-UU" with "homosexuals" and "heterosexual"; is the answer to the question the same?
- Can our UU Principles relate to the use of humor?

### ACTIVITY 4: THE KISS OFF (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, "[Bladder Song](#)," (included in this document) by Leonard Nathan

#### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 2, "Bladder Song," one for each participant.

#### Description of Activity

Ask one or two volunteers to read Handout 2, "Bladder Song," aloud. Allow about thirty seconds between readings and before delving into the questions below.

Lead a "What do we have here?" discussion to draw out what happens in the poem:

- What is the story of this poem?
- Why do you think the poet used the word "piss" instead of another term for urine?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion, using these questions:

- Does the poem paint a humorous picture or does it also express something serious?
- Is the poem about celebrating the ordinary, transcending it, or both?
- What do you make of the last line? Why "if it's human"?
- Is this a love poem? If so, who/what loves who/what?
- Do you prefer serious poetry, funny poetry, or both? All the time or sometimes?

### NOTE: A Few Words about the Poem

The odd, optimistic, and humorous short poem "Bladder Song" can be read as an ode to our human interconnectedness. Its last line, "Ah, nothing's wasted, if it's human," celebrates a sort of faith in the signals and signs the universe sends to us.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, one for each participant

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: ALLIED IN HUMOR (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Journals and pens or pencils
- Information about how to be a good ally. See Description of Activity for suggestions.

### Preparation for Activity

- Inviting a guest speaker to facilitate this Faith in Action activity is a good way to involve other members of your congregation in the *Poetry*

workshop. Talk to the Social Justice Committee several weeks in advance. Ask if someone would like to help the youth become better allies. The congregation's minister might also be a good speaker on this topic. If you have youth in your congregation, or in your district, who have taken anti-racism/anti-oppression training with the UUA, ask if they would like to facilitate this exercise.

- After lining up a speaker, discuss the presentation with him/her. Plan a presentation that is interactive by including opportunities for youth to share their experiences, role-play, and ask questions. Offer these suggestions to the speaker:
  - Speaking from personal experience is best
  - Create a safe space in which youth can share their experiences by keeping all participants respectful and reminding everyone that they can choose to pass if they wish.
  - Design a few role-plays so participants can practice being an ally. One example might be reacting to a sexist joke. (The speaker should be prepared to give the participants tips on how to say, "I do not find that funny," in a non-threatening way.)
- Ask the speaker to bring resources that participants can take home. Stay in touch with the speaker, and confirm his/her attendance during the week before this activity is scheduled.

### Description of Activity

Participants learn about one way to be an ally of traditionally marginalized or oppressed groups.

Say to participants,

Speaking out when you hear someone tell a hurtful joke is one way to be an ally to traditionally marginalized or oppressed groups. How do you confront someone who uses a joke to indulge in Christian bashing, sexism, racism, ageism, ableism, or homophobia?

Introduce the guest speaker. During or after the discussion, distribute resources such as the list, *Becoming a Strong Ally 101: Guidelines for Dealing with Oppression in the Community*, which you can find at the UUA's [Leaders' Library](http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/leaderslibrary/26942.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/leaderslibrary/26942.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/leaderslibrary/26942.shtml)). Bring other resources for youth to see, such as

*Come Out and Win: Organizing Yourself, Your Community, and Your World*, by Sue Hyde (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), available at the [UUA Bookstore](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=236) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=236](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=236)).

After the event, discuss with participants what the conversation was like for them and what they gained from the experience. Invite them to write, in their journals, one tip they will use to be a good ally.

### **Including All Participants**

This activity focuses on being an ally to an oppressed group of people. Be sensitive to members of the *Poetry* workshop who identify with or belong to an oppressed group. Be aware, however, that members of one oppressed group might be actively working as allies of another group. Try not to make assumptions. Do make sure that individuals from marginalized groups are not singled out in this activity or asked to speak as the authority for the group to which they belong. For example, a remark such as, "Hey, Stacy, you are black. Would you find this joke offensive?" could make Stacy question how safe the space is for her. Monitor the group for any such reactions.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

Review today's workshop with your co-leader. Did participants have fun? Fun can be a strong bonding experience. The next few workshops will ask youth to share in a deeper way. Do you think the group is ready?

## **TAKING IT HOME**

The gods, too, are fond of a joke.  
— Edward Albee, from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

### **DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...**

We read humorous poems and played a game based on apple allusions. We heard UU jokes and thought about the roles stereotypes and put-downs play in humor. We also asked ourselves what is spiritual about laughing.

### **REFLECTION QUESTION:**

How has your sense of humor changed since childhood?

### **EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...**

- Make a few pocket poem cards of poems that are funny or can otherwise brighten your day. Pocket poems are individual poems printed on little pocket-size cards that you can hand out, keep, carry, trade, inspire, and remind. One way

to make them is to type the poems into a business-card-size template of a word processing or label-making program and print them out on perforated card stock (the kind people buy to make business cards). You can also print them on index cards. Put them in different places, such as your school locker or someplace at home, or tape them into your diary or journal. If you ask your friends to do the same, you can trade pocket poems with each other.

- If you have not already done so, check out [Poetry 180](http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/) (at [www.loc.gov/poetry/180/](http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/)). This website features one hundred eighty poems, enough to read one aloud each day of the school year. Read the poems to yourself or ask your English teacher if she/he would like to start a Poetry 180 program. In such a program, the morning announcements include a new poem every day. Teachers can refer to the poem during class. Youth can discuss it at lunch. You can also use the website at home and share a poem with your family every weekday. Many of the poems are humorous. The website has more information on creative ways to use Poetry 180.
- What do the UUs in your congregation think of UU jokes? You could take a poll. Ask members of the congregation if they have a favorite UU joke they would like to contribute to the congregational newsletter. Write a short piece for the newsletter explaining why you are interested in UU jokes and the jokes submitted to you. Publish only the jokes that are not put-downs of other groups or religions.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: THE GREAT DEBATE (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint and markers

### **Description of Activity**

Youth debate the merits of apples versus pears, for fun.

Only use this activity if you are also doing Activity 2, *Fruity Whine*. Divide the group into two teams. Tell the teams that you want them to prepare arguments in order to debate the statement, "Pears are superior to apples." Assign one team to argue in the affirmative and another to argue in the negative. Give teams ten minutes to prepare, and then gather the entire group for the debate. Let each team have two turns speaking, alternating between the teams. Consider asking a few youths to

volunteer as judges instead of being on a team. To avoid a stalemate in the debate, make sure you have an uneven number of judges.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: JOURNAL REVIEW**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Journals and pens or pencils

### **Description of Activity**

Participants review their journals and finish incomplete work.

As the date for the Poetry Slam approaches, encourage participants to use whatever time remains at the end of the workshops to review the writing in their journals, with an eye to completing any work they would consider performing.

# EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 8: HANDOUT 1: PEAR'S COMPLAINT

Greg Youmans

I have raged for thousands of years.  
I was on the *other* tree in Eden  
and I escaped Greece unexploited by the Gods.  
I never was fruit of fantasy for seers and bards,  
nor the food of tales for old wives.  
For I am not so red, not so self-contained,  
no so easily held or thrown.  
Never have poets said "the pear of mine eyes,"  
nor any of my kind served homage to the teacher's desk  
and I keep no children from the dentist's drill.  
Yet my veins run sweeter  
and my flesh more tender.  
Slit my skin with baby's teeth  
and run my juice down your throat.  
I will feed your cells and your soul;  
I will satiate your hunger.  
But an hour later, I will not dance in your dreams.  
You cannot grasp my complexity.  
I am not ordinary enough to be your small miracle.  
I am not shaped in a friendly red ball.  
I am too esoteric to play roles in your myths.  
So imprison me in your still life—  
In a timeless bowl with the banana and grapes—  
Frozen in a moment—attainable.  
At other times, feed on me when passions blur sense:  
In these epiphanies, I am a treat—  
exotic but common, tangy but sweet, long but round.  
Savor me then in the ways you can.  
Then, tomorrow, return to your apple  
with its insidious worm.

## **EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 8: HANDOUT 2: BLADDER SONG**

Leonard Nathan, "Bladder Song" from *The Day the Perfect Speakers Left* (C)1969 by Leonard Nathan and reprinted by permission of Wesleyan University Press.

On a piece of toilet paper

Afloat in the unflushed piss,

The fully printed lips of a woman.

Nathan, cheer up! The sewer

Sends you a big red kiss.

Ah, nothing's wasted, if it's human.

## FIND OUT MORE

"Pear's Complaint" is from the anthology, *From Totems to Hip-Hop: A Multicultural Anthology of Poetry across the Americas, 1900-2002*, edited by Ishmael Reed (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2003).

You can find "Bladder Song" in *A Book of Luminous Things: An Anthology of Poetry*, edited by Czeslaw Milosz (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company,

1996). Leonard Nathan died in 2007. You can get biographical information from his obituary on the [San Francisco Chronicle](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/06/09/BAG4AQCGKG1.DTL&feed=rss.bayarea) (at [www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/06/09/BAG4AQCGKG1.DTL&feed=rss.bayarea](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/06/09/BAG4AQCGKG1.DTL&feed=rss.bayarea)) website.

A good source for apple allusions is the [Allusions — Cultural, Literary, Biblical, and Historical: A Thematic Dictionary](http://www.faqs.org/allusions/A-As/Apple.html) (at [www.faqs.org/allusions/A-As/Apple.html](http://www.faqs.org/allusions/A-As/Apple.html)).

# WORKSHOP 9: FAITH FOR THE JOURNEY

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Faith is the bird that feels the light when  
the dawn is still dark.  
Rabindranath Tagore*

"Faith," a word we use in religious language, can have many different meanings. Within this workshop, participants explore faith in terms of the definitions "confidence or trust in a thing or person" and "making meaning out of life's experiences." Participants might know other definitions of faith. Try to be inclusive of everyone's idea of what faith can mean, but do not get caught up in semantics. Let participants use their own definitions to explore how faith plays out in their lives. You do not need to reach consensus on a definition.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Introduce the concept of a spiritual journey
- Explore the role of faith in a spiritual journey
- Use poetry to explore what it means to have faith in something larger than ourselves, and to have faith in our own innate wisdom
- Decipher what two poets have to say about faith and prayer
- Optional: Inspire participants to write poems about faith
- Optional: Provide time for participants to review their poetry in preparation for the Poetry Slam

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Decipher elements of a spiritual journey
- Think about their own spiritual journey

- Understand our relationship to our faith within the context of Unitarian Universalism
- Discover connections between spiritual journeys and faith
- Optional: Explore an opportunity to utilize individual and collective energy toward fundraising for a good cause
- Optional: Review their writing from previous workshops

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Ruby Slippers	25
Activity 2: Mystery and Faith	25
Faith in Action: Fun and Fundraising	30
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Faith Poetry	20
Alternate Activity 2: Find Faith	25
Alternate Activity 3: Journal Review	

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

In today's workshop, you will use the movie *The Wizard of Oz* as a vehicle to discuss life journeys and the lessons they teach us. What has been the tornado in your life? Who have been the Tinman, Scarecrow, and Lion? Who was your Glinda? What power or talent did you have to lose or leave before you learned to appreciate or wield it?

# WORKSHOP PLAN

## OPENING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "faith" in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "faith." When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying, "May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings."

Introduce today's workshop by saying, "At the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, a perplexed and somewhat irked Dorothy finds out that, from the very start of her difficult journey dodging flying monkeys, the Wicked Witch, and laced poppies, she possessed the power to return home. She needed only to click together her fabulous ruby slippers. When Dorothy asks why no one told her sooner, she is met with an essential truth: even if someone had told her about the power she possessed, Dorothy would not have believed it and could not have used it. Like Dorothy, we each need to experience each step in our journey—including our crises of faith and our wonder—before emerging stronger on the other side.

"Faith of some kind seems to be an essential ingredient in the spiritual wholeness for which humans yearn. You, personally, may have faith in an entity greater than humankind, in the connectedness of all beings, or in a worldview that is uniquely your own. "Unitarian Universalist tradition embraces both the doubt and the inherent wisdom we each bring to the development of our own faith. When it comes to faith, poetry and Unitarian Universalism have some things in common. Both can help us pursue spiritual wholeness, and both provide more questions than answers. Poetry appears often in Unitarian Universalist worship, and some renowned American poets have a connection with Unitarian Universalism. A poem has the power to celebrate faith, capture our difficulties in

keeping faith, present a challenge to faith, or all three. The poems we share today will help us ask ourselves how our faith informs our spirituality and how our spirituality informs our faith."

## ACTIVITY 1: RUBY SLIPPERS (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint or a dry erase board and markers

### Description of Activity

Participants explore notions of a spiritual quest and faith by finding parallels in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Start this activity with a review of Dorothy's experience in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. If you have time, a fun and active way to do this is to ask for volunteers to perform a speedy reenactment of the story. Before starting, ask the group if they feel Dorothy's experience was similar to a spiritual quest. If needed, allow a few minutes for the group to discuss the notion of a spiritual quest.

Start the reenactment. Anyone in the group can yell "stop" when the story reaches a part that she/he feels correlates to a traditional spiritual quest. If time is limited, you could present this part of the activity yourself as a verbal review.

Write on newsprint the words and phrases participants use to describe ways in which Dorothy's journey parallels a spiritual quest. Listen for these words in particular: lost, confused, magic, persistent, determined, not sure, disappointed, enlightenment. Possible comments may include:

- Feeling lost and alone
- Looking for "home"
- Experiencing doubt, fear, and excitement during the search
- Experiencing trials and challenges along the way
- Needing others, such as guides and companions, along the way
- Meeting fellow travelers, even though they are not all looking for the same thing
- Having the answer/solution/wisdom inside oneself (e.g., Dorothy clicking the ruby slippers)
- Having to experience the journey and find out the truth for oneself

- Inability to explain to others, such as Auntie Em and the farm hands, exactly what has happened and how one has been transformed

If you see that the group has missed important parallels, state them aloud and write them down.

Lead a discussion to help the group form a notion of what a spiritual quest is. Use these questions:

- If you are on a spiritual quest, what are you seeking?
- Does everyone eventually go on a spiritual quest? What motivates people to look for spiritual answers?
- What does Unitarian Universalism have to say about spiritual quests?
- Do you believe that, like Dorothy, you have the "answers" within you already?
- In real life, do spiritual quests unfold as neatly as they do in *The Wizard of Oz*, with a beginning, middle, and end? Or do they weave in and out of other stories going on in our lives? Can you think of experiences in your life that you would consider part of your long-term spiritual quest?

Ask the group whether faith helped Dorothy and, if so, how? In what did Dorothy have faith?

Lead a discussion to investigate what faith is and what part it plays in a spiritual quest. To spark the discussion, offer the metaphors below and ask the group to decide how well they work. Invite the group to tinker with one or more of the metaphors to arrive at a good description of faith and its role.

- A spiritual quest is a trip to an endless, perfect vacation spot; faith is the bus that takes you there.
- A spiritual quest is a climb up a mountain whose peak is obscured by clouds; faith is the food in your backpack.
- A spiritual quest is a night in a dark room; faith is your flashlight.

## ACTIVITY 2: FAITH, MYSTERY, AND DOUBT (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, "[The Ancient Sage](#) (included in this document) ," by Alfred Lord Tennyson; and Handout 2, "[Finders Keepers](#) (included in this document) ," by Patrice Vecchione

### Preparation for Activity

- Make enough copies of Handouts 1 and 2 so that each participant may have a set.

### Description of Activity

Participants use two poems as the basis for a discussion about faith and prayer.

Distribute copies of Handout 1, "The Ancient Sage," and Handout 2, "Finders Keepers." Invite two volunteers to read the first poem aloud twice. Allow thirty seconds of silence to pass between readings. Repeat the process for the second poem.

Lead a "What do we have here?" discussion about each poem. Use these questions:

- Who is "she" referred to in "The Ancient Sage"?
- Would you say the speaker is a person of deep faith? In what does he/she have faith?
- What words would you use to describe the speaker's father? How do you think she/he feels about him?
- Are the speakers in both poems talking about religious faith or faith in something else? Is this distinction clear? Does it matter?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion about the poems. Use these questions:

- In "The Ancient Sage," what argument does the speaker present to the son as a reason for having faith?
- Do you think this is a good reason? Have you ever heard an argument for religious faith based upon similar premises?
- In "Finders Keepers" the author talks about looking for faith. Is there a difference between "having" faith and "looking" for faith? How do these concepts relate to the common phrase "keeping the faith?"
- Both poems address mystery and seeking answers to some of life's big questions. Both talk about faith in the face of hardship. How do you think the two speakers differ in how they feel about living through life's hardships?
- What do the words "our Unitarian Universalist faith" mean to you?
- How do we, as UUs, deal with the "mystery"? Is there one right answer to this question? Why or why not?

- Does either poem take the reader on a journey? From where to where? Is there a spiritual journey, and if so, what happens along the way?

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- *Singing the Living Tradition*

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: FUN AND FUNDRAISING (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint and markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Visit [Donors Choose](http://www.donorschoose.org) (at [www.donorschoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org)) and research possible projects to present to the group.

### Description of Activity

Participants decide if they wish to use the Poetry Slam as a fundraiser for a good cause. Here is a list of potential questions you might ask:

- To what cause could we donate? Is there a connection between the cause and our poetry? Can the cause be the event's theme? For example, to raise funds for Heifer International, participants could include poems on themes of farming life, international rural poverty, or domesticated animals. They could also consider donating to a project that involves increasing literacy or supports creativity.
- Should we sell tickets, food, or something else? Should we ask for donations at the door?
- How can we publicize the event?

- Who will take responsibility for the funds we raise?
- Do we need to seek approval from the Board of Trustees or another committee in the congregation to fundraise? How will that be done?

One possible resource for projects in need of sponsors is [DonorsChoose.org](http://DonorsChoose.org) (at [www.donorschoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org)). Your group can pick a project based on a theme (such as poetry) and/or based on location; the project could benefit your community or your neighbors. Your congregation's social justice committee is another resource you can approach for ideas.

If participants decide to add a fundraising element to the Poetry Slam, make sure individuals assume responsibility for specific tasks. Use newsprint to create a list of the tasks involved, and include the name(s) of those who volunteer to complete each task. As you get closer to the date of the performance, especially if you are leading Workshops 11 and 12, remember to include updates on the planning efforts for the fundraiser as you plan other aspects of the Poetry Slam.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, discuss which activities were successful and which ones were less so. Follow up on anything you need in order to coordinate the Faith in Action, Fun and Fundraising activity. If you did not have time to offer Alternate Activity 4, Journal Review, decide if you need to make time in the next three workshops for such a review. You will find that journal review is featured as an Alternate Activity in Workshops 8, 9, and 10. If there is not time to do such a review during a workshop, consider suggesting that youth take journals home and work on incomplete writing during their free time.

## TAKING IT HOME

Faith is the bird that feels the light when  
the dawn is still dark.  
Rabindranath Tagore

### DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We discussed Dorothy's journey in *The Wizard of Oz* and its analogy to a spiritual quest. We asked ourselves how faith helps us on a spiritual quest and talked about various definitions of "faith." We read a poem about faith and prayer and wrote our own faith poems.

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

How do you think faith relates to religion?

## EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- Interview people in your congregation about their faith. A few possible questions you can ask are:
  - How do you define faith?
  - In what do you have faith?
  - How does being a part of a UU community relate to your faith?
  - Has your faith changed over your lifetime?
- The survey will be most interesting if you interview a variety of people. Try to include different genders, ethnicities, ages, and theologies. Interview people who are new to the congregation and the elders who have been involved with the congregation for a long time. Interview children and other youth. Look for patterns in the answers. Share your findings with the members of your Poetry workshop, family, friends, and/or the congregation through an article in the newsletter.
- Watch *The Wizard of Oz* with your family and/or friends and discuss Dorothy's journey. The movie is based on a series of books by Frank L. Baum. The books are more complex than the movie. Read the books and look for differences between the series and the movie. Are the differences significant?
- Invite your family to share, through creating art, their own spiritual quest and the role faith played in that journey. Try including poetry, drawing, painting, and drama in your choices of art form.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAITH POETRY (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Journals and pens or pencils
- Newsprint or dry erase board and markers

### Description of Activity

Participants craft poems as a way to examine the relationship between wondering, believing, and knowing.

Distribute journals. Divide a sheet of newsprint into three columns—or make three columns on a dry erase board—each headed by one of the following, in this order:

- I wonder...

- I believe...
- I know...

Invite participants to write a three-, six-, or nine-line poem or set of statements using these phrases to start each line. In other words, within each three-line group, the first line should begin with "I wonder..."; the second should begin with "I believe..."; and the third should begin with "I know...". Allow ten minutes or more for the group to complete this assignment.

If time is limited, break into small groups for sharing. If time is not limited, invite volunteers to read aloud the poems or statement sets they created. As participants share their writing, spark reflective discussion with these questions:

- How have your "wonder," "believe," and "know" lines changed as you have grown older? Do you wonder more now than when you were younger, or less? Believe more now, or less? Know more now, or less? Are there specific things you have upgraded from "wonder" to "know" or demoted from "know" to "wonder"?
- Which part of your poem or statement sets most closely represents what you would call your faith?

Ask participants how *The Wizard of Oz* might have been different if Dorothy had known the power of her ruby slippers earlier in the story. What would she have gained? Lost? Did her faith go on a journey? Where did it end up?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: FINDING FAITH (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Journals and pens or pencils

### Description of Activity

Prompts that you read to participants spark individual explorations of faith concepts.

Make sure each participant has a pen/pencil and paper or a journal. Instruct participants to write an immediate, stream-of-consciousness response to each prompt that you will read, numbering each response. If they have no response, have them write NA for not applicable.

Tell participants that for this activity, the word "faith" is not necessarily connected to religious beliefs. It refers to your belief that something is true, whether or not you have hard evidence. One can have faith in a god, his/her own potential, the allegiance of a friend, or the ability of a particular baseball team to win the World Series.

Read each prompt, allowing time for participants to respond in their journals.

- I have faith in...
- My faith is really tested when...
- My faith is really strengthened when...
- I use my faith to...
- My faith abandons me when...

Invite participants to share their responses to the prompts. Ask the group to find trends and differences among responses, as well as any answers that sound surprising. Encourage the group to make connections where they can. The following prompts might help the discussion:

- Do you think any of the similarities the group found could be attributed to age? To our common UU faith?
- Does being part of a UU congregation affect your faith?
- In what ways is your congregation a "faith community"?

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: JOURNAL REVIEW**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Journals and pens or pencils

### **Description of Activity**

Participants review their journals and complete unfinished work.

As the date for the Poetry Slam approaches, encourage participants to use any time that remains in each workshop to review the writing in their journals, with an eye to completing work they might consider performing.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 9: HANDOUT 1: THE ANCIENT SAGE

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

*This is an excerpt from the poem "Ancient Sage"*

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,  
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,  
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one:  
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no  
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay my son,  
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,  
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,  
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,  
Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,  
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,  
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith  
She reels not in the storm of warring words,  
She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and 'No',  
She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,  
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,  
She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,  
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,  
She hears the lark within the songless egg,  
She finds the fountain where they wail'd 'Mirage'!

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 9: HANDOUT 2: FINDERS KEEPERS

by Patrice Vecchione, from *Faith and Doubt* (New York: Henry Holt, 2007)

Just what can be found with eyes open?

\$10,000 in coins, anyway.

Enough to fill a few five-gallon jugs.

When his friend asked for a loan,

"Take this," said my father,

pointing to a bottle full

of the small money

other men leave behind.

A kind of fath in the possibility

a nickel has.

The wristwatch I wear daily

was left on a park bench

till my father came along.

Once, shortly after my mother left,

bills were due and Dad was down

to soda crackers and cigar butts.

In line to buy a cigar,

with his shoe,

he needed for a fifty.

Most people look in the wrong direction,

locating faith above them.

Pennies don't fall

from Heaven.

They're down below; more likely

to be found near sewer drains,

on the asphalt, beside dog droppings

and spent matches, worn shoes

even beggars leave behind.

## **FIND OUT MORE**

Alfred, Lord Tennyson is a famous Victorian poet. A short, online biography can be found at [The Literature Network](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1980/milosz-bio.html) (at [nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1980/milosz-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1980/milosz-bio.html)).

# WORKSHOP 10: YOU AND ME

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Identity would seem to be the garment with which one covers the nakedness of the self, in which case, it is best that the garment be loose, a little like the robes of the desert, through which one's nakedness can always be felt, and, sometimes, discerned.*  
— James Arthur Baldwin

This workshop has only two activities, and they both contain several steps that could easily take more than the suggested time, if the discussion is rich. If your schedule allows, you could break this lesson into two workshops. For example, Activity 2, Alike on the Inside?, could be coupled with Alternate Activity 3, Reconciliation, for one workshop period; and Activity 1, Different on the Outside, could be expanded to fill another workshop period. You can achieve the latter change by either adding additional discussion questions or by starting Alternate Activity 1, Face Forward; for instance, take photographs during the workshop and have participants or co-leaders complete the gallery set-up at a later time.

If you are unable to divide this lesson into two workshops, keep your eye on the clock and be prepared to end discussion when time runs out.

The self-portrait poems or drawings that participants create in this workshop can be included in the "time capsule" they will make in Workshop 11, Transformation. Either collect the self-portraits or ask participants to keep them in their journals with other workshop writing.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Utilize self-portrait poetry and drawing to reflect on and reframe participants' personal histories
- Investigate the distinctions between how we see ourselves and how others see us
- Utilize poetry to explore what it means to celebrate, rather than tolerate, diversity
- Help youth articulate and share perspectives on what sets human beings apart from one another and what connects us

- Affirm youth as valuable, loving, and lovable individuals
- Optional: Supply suggestions for ways to educate others on the UN World Millennium Goals
- Optional: Engage youth in creating a game for the congregation
- Optional: Encourage youth to write a reconciliatory poem or letter that recognizes similarities they share with the recipient
- Optional: Provide time for participants to review their poetry in preparation for the Poetry Slam

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Appraise themselves in order to create a self-portrait
- Reflect upon whether their outer selves represent their inner selves
- Discover the diversity that exists within the group
- Appreciate both the differences and similarities among the group
- Optional: Act on their responsibilities as world citizens by spreading the word about the UN World Millennium Goals
- Optional: Offer others a peek at their inner beings during a matching game
- Optional: Strive to reconcile themselves to a difficult relationship
- Optional: Review their writing from previous workshops

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Different on the Outside	25
Activity 2: Alike on the Inside?	25

Faith in Action: Millennium Development Goals

Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Face Forward	30
Alternate Activity 2: Diversity Pie	30
Alternate Activity 3: Reconciliation	10
Alternate Activity 4: Journal Review	

others see us lead to further questions about how safe we feel when we show our true selves. Have you felt safe showing your true self while leading this program? Deciding how much of ourselves, as adult facilitators, to bring to a group that includes youth is always a balancing act. The focus of the work must always remain on the youth. Yet you must bring aspects of your true self to the group in order to form genuine relationships. Are you pleased with the way you have balanced this so far or do you wish to make adjustments? A conversation with your co-leader on the topic might be enlightening.

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

This workshop is rich with possible topics to explore, both alone and/or with your co-leader. The answers to questions about how we see ourselves versus how

# WORKSHOP PLAN

## OPENING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "me" in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "me." When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

Introduce today's workshop by saying,

Adolescence can be a time of ruthless, and not necessarily fair, self-examination. Most of us look in the mirror several times a day; but when was the last time you looked at yourself in complete acceptance of who you see? We are often ready to see flaws in ourselves rather than beauty, weaknesses rather than strengths. In Robert Graves' poem, "The Face in the Mirror," a man in his later years takes a cold, hard, retrospective look at himself as he shaves. He does so with honesty and, in the end, love and self-respect. May we all strive to see our true spirits in our own reflections.

## ACTIVITY 1: DIFFERENT ON THE OUTSIDE (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Drawing paper
- Pencils
- Mirrors, one for each participant
- Handout 1, "[The Face in the Mirror](#)" (included in this document), by Robert Graves
- Newsprint or dry erase board and markers
- Journals and pens or pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, "The Face in the Mirror," one for each participant.
- On sheets of newsprint or on the dry erase board, write the unusual words that appear in Robert Graves' poem and their definitions (if using newsprint, post the words and definitions in advance of the workshop):
  - inhering: the act of being a natural or integral part of something
  - furrowed: rutted or grooved in its surface
  - frenetic: characterized by feverish activity, confusion, and hurry
  - jowl: the jaw, especially the lower one; a cheek, especially a prominent one
  - pugilistic: characterized by the practice, sport, or profession of boxing
  - ruddy: red or reddish in color; with a healthy reddish glow
  - ascetic: choosing or selecting self-denial and austerity
  - derision: contempt and mockery

### Description of Activity

An older poet's thoughtful tour of his own face informs a self-portraiture exercise.

While a volunteer passes out journals and pens or pencils, divide a sheet of newsprint into two columns labeled "Your Personal History" and "Your Personality." Direct participants to draw the same two columns on their own paper.

Ask the group to respond, on the paper, to the following questions. If participants are comfortable with one another, you may also invite them to share their answers aloud. Be sure to leave time between prompts for participants to respond.

- What could someone tell about your personal history just from gazing at your face? How could they tell? (Write responses in the personal history column.)
- What could someone tell about your personality? How could they tell from your face? (Write responses in the personality column.)

- When you look in the mirror, how do you think you see yourself differently than someone else might see you? Be as specific as possible.
- Why might we see ourselves differently than others do?
- When do you worry least about how you look? Why do you think that is?

Tell participants that the poem they are about to read uses some words that they might not know, and direct them to read the posted definitions. Read and define each word aloud, as you feel necessary.

Distribute copies of Handout 1, "The Face in the Mirror." Ask for two volunteers to read the poem aloud. Allow at least thirty seconds of silence after each reading.

Lead a "What do we have here?" discussion about the poem, using these questions:

- What happens in the poem?
- What can we infer, or guess, about the speaker's life? Where has he been; what has he done?
- What do we know, literally, about how the speaker looks? Be specific.
- What is unclear in the poem?

Lead a "What's the Big Idea?" discussion, using these questions:

- How does the speaker feel about himself? How do we know?
- In the last stanza the speaker seems to wonder why, after all he's been through, he still sees a boy full of confidence and hope in the mirror. Do you think the speaker sees himself realistically? Do you think our true spirit is reflected in our outer selves? If yes or no, what are the consequences of how we interact with each other?

Now explain that each participant will have a chance to look at him-/herself as Robert Graves does in the poem, and to document what she/he sees in a self-portrait poem. Distribute mirrors, pencils, and drawing paper to the group.

Ask participants to look in the mirror and try to see what their faces say about their personal history. Ask participants to look still deeper and try to see what their faces reveal about who they are inside. How do they feel about what, or who, they see looking back?

Say,

Here is a chance to view your face clearly and appreciatively. If you feel the urge to look away, try to notice why. Try not to look away. Look at your face as if seeing it for the first time. What do you see? Where has it been? Are there scars that tell a story? Or does your face tell a story in a more subtle way? What is that story? What is your inner reaction to what you see? Here is the real challenge: Can you see yourself as someone who loves you very much would see you? Can you look at yourself with complete acceptance? With objectivity? Without judgment? With love?

Invite participants to choose one of these approaches to a self-portrait:

- Write a three-stanza poem, modeled after the Graves poem
- Use a completely different form for your poem
- Instead of writing a poem, draw a self-portrait

(Participants who choose to draw may use words or a poem within their drawing; it need not be a conventional, representative self-portrait.)

NOTE: The self-scrutiny required for a mirror-based self-portrait can feel too intense and/or threatening for some participants. If this seems to be the case for an individual in your group, suggest that she/he observe her/his hand instead; or envision another person whom the youth knows very well and loves very much and use that person's face as the subject to complete the assignment.

Instruct participants to use the mirror as a tool and not worry about sounding poetic or sounding any particular way. Participants who are drawing need not worry about making their faces look a certain way. Most importantly, participants should try to document not just physical observations, but also their own knowledge about what they see, their memories that are inspired by the act of looking, and anything else their faces are trying to tell them.

When everyone has completed a self-portrait, form small groups of no more than four people each. Within the small groups, invite participants to take one minute each to share their self-portrait and anything about the process they wish to add. Tell participants that since this activity is about how we see ourselves, only the self-portrait maker is allowed to speak during the minute; listeners may not ask questions or comment. Remind the group that everyone has the right to pass.

NOTE: A Few Words about the Poem

In "The Face in the Mirror," the speaker uses his face as a timeline or map to trace his personal history. He is mercilessly honest and gives us a portrait of a craggy-faced old man. Still, there is wonder in the last stanza; why is this rugged old man—an ex-fighter, soldier, and football player—still full of a boy's confidence and hope?

## ACTIVITY 2: ALIKE ON THE INSIDE? (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Three markers
- Journals and pens or pencils
- Handout 2, "[The Same Inside](#)" (included in this document), by Anna Swir

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 2, "The Same Inside," one for each participant.
- Head sheets of newsprint with the following three statements, one statement per sheet:
  - Human beings are more alike than different, because...
  - Human beings are more different than alike, because...
  - The top reasons why members of one group may not get along with members of another group are...

### Description of Activity

Participants explore their own views of similarities and differences, and explore how one poet tackles the same question.

Ask participants to arrange their seats into three groups for discussion. Give each group a marker and a sheet of newsprint on which to complete one of the statements below.

- (group 1) Human beings are more alike than different, because...
- (group 2) Human beings are more different than alike, because...
- (group 3) The top reasons why members of one group may not get along with members of another group are...

Have each group choose a scribe and then brainstorm while the scribe writes down all responses. Give the groups about five minutes to complete the exercise.

When you reconvene, ask one person from each small group to read aloud the statement and all of the responses.

Distribute journals and pens or pencils to participants. Have them each write a list of at least ten groups to which they belong. They may include any type of group, from both broad categories (like Republicans, working class, immigrants, or people who wear braces) and specific categories (like Campfire, cheerleaders, or yearbook staff). They may include groups they were born into and those they joined. Give the group a few minutes to make a list.

Ask participants to view their lists for the groups that others can see they belong to, just by looking at them. Have them circle those groups.

Now have them look for and underline groups they belong to that might surprise an acquaintance.

Next, have the group look around the room. Ask whether they think the people in this room are diverse.

- If most participants say yes, ask them to identify the ways in which they are diverse. Suggest to the group that, because they already know one another, they may be aware of less obvious ways in which the group is diverse and be less prone to label people or make assumptions about them.
- If most say no, invite volunteers to read aloud some of the underlined items from their list. Point out the diversities as they emerge.

Now ask the group whether they are a more diverse or less diverse group than they originally thought.

Use these questions to lead a discussion that explores assumptions:

- What assumptions do we make when we see a person who looks like we do?
- What assumptions do we make when we see a person who looks different from us?

Distribute Handout 2, "The Same Inside." Ask for two volunteers to read the poem aloud, and allow about thirty seconds of silence after each reading.

Lead a "What do we have here?" discussion, using these questions:

- What is the poem's story? What happens in the poem?
- What words or lines lose or confound you?
- How is the speaker different at the end of the poem than at the beginning?

Lead a "What's the big idea?" discussion, using these questions:

- How does the poem make you feel? (Sad? Hopeful? Melancholy?) Why?
- What does the speaker get from this woman, a stranger, who makes her forget why she was walking to her lover's place?
- What does the speaker mean by "the same inside"? How are they the same? Are you and the woman the same inside?
- When you consider the first part of this activity (refer to the newsprint) and the diversity we exposed in the exercise that follows it, would you say people are more alike or different?
- How does being aware of our differences and our similarities affect you spiritually? What does it mean for you as a UU?

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- Singing the Living Tradition

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### Materials for Activity

- Information about the UN World Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- Optional: Leader Resource 1, [One World Worship Service](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Leader Resource 2, [Components of a Traditional Worship Service](#) (included in this document) Optional: A computer with Internet access and the ability to access or download Google Earth.

### Preparation for Activity

- Download information about the MDGs from the [UN website](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals) (at [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)).

### Description of Activity

Youth discover ways to help promote the United Nations' World Millennium Development Goals.

In general the United States has a very high standard of living, although wealth is not evenly distributed. Poverty exists in many pockets of the country, but that poverty is generally not as extreme as the poverty that exists in other countries around the world. In 2000 the United Nations (UN), an organization to which many UUs feel closely aligned, set eight [Millennium Development Goals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/) (MDGs), for the world to reach by 2015. The goals are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

From the website, you can print out the latest progress report. The [2007 Progress Chart](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/docs/MDG_Report_2007_Progress_Chart_en.pdf) (at [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/docs/MDG\\_Report\\_2007\\_Progress\\_Chart\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/docs/MDG_Report_2007_Progress_Chart_en.pdf)) not only reports how close different regions are to attaining specific goals; it also uses color-coding to project the possibility of attaining the goal by 2015. Review the progress report. Which goals are faring poorly? Which ones seem attainable?

If you have access to a computer with an Internet connection, you can download Google Earth and the MDG Monitor, which tracks the goal.

Ask how many youth were aware of these goals before today. Ask how many think adults in their congregation are aware of the MDGs? Invite participants to help educate the congregation on the MDGs. Several ideas for ways to do this include:

- Conduct a survey asking adults to identify the eight goals in a list of a dozen. List the goals on the back of the survey, along with websites that adults can visit in order to learn more and help.
- After a Sunday service, set up a computer in the entrance area of your congregation's meeting place and display the MDG tracker. To attract people to view the monitor, place an array of international snacks on the table with the

computer. Prepare handouts that list the goals and ways to help.

- As a reminder, distribute a list of the goals to people in your congregation. You can design and laminate bookmarks that feature the goals. You can also order wallet cards from [Augsburg Fortress](http://AugsburgFortress.org) (at [www.augsburgfortress.org/store/item.jsp?redirected=true&isbn=6000209363](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/item.jsp?redirected=true&isbn=6000209363)) that present the goals and information about the ONE Campaign to end hunger. NOTE: Augsburg Fortress is an Evangelical Lutheran publishing house, and the wallet card says "Become a ONE Lutheran" on one side and lists the website for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA).
- Design a worship service, or part of a service, that focuses on the concept of One World. See Leader Resource 1, One World Worship Service Ideas for suggestions.

Any of the suggestions above will work just as well in the community outside your congregation. Brainstorm places at which to disperse MDG information; a school fair, community health fairs, and Earth Day celebrations are a few possibilities. Bear in mind, however, that if you distribute the wallet card, recipients outside your congregation might think you represent the ELCA. If you want to distribute the cards at a community event, consider inviting an Evangelical Lutheran Church to co-host the activity and make an interfaith connection.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leader, discuss which activities were successful and which ones were less so. The next workshop (Workshop 11, Transformation) is the last one before you start planning the Poetry Slam. Review pre-arrangements related to the performance and the fund-raiser (if you are doing a fund-raiser) that need to be made.

## TAKING IT HOME

Identity would seem to be the garment with which one covers the nakedness of the self, in which case, it is best that the garment be loose, a little like the robes of the desert, through which one's nakedness can always be felt, and, sometimes, discerned.

— [James Arthur Baldwin](http://JamesArthurBaldwin.com) (at [thinkexist.com/quotes/james\\_arthur\\_baldwin/](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/james_arthur_baldwin/))

## DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We looked at how we are all alike and different, inside and out, by hearing two poems, learning about the diverse groups to which we belong, and creating a self-portrait.

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Think back to a time when you discovered you were different from a loved one. Remember what that felt like. It might have brought you closer together or caused you to drift apart. Perhaps it did not change your relationship at all. What are some of the tools you have learned to use in order to co-exist with people who are different from you?

## EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- Check out the book *If the World Were a Village*, by David Smith (Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press Ltd, 2002) or visit [Miniature Earth](http://MiniatureEarth.com) (at [www.miniature-earth.com/me\\_english.htm](http://www.miniature-earth.com/me_english.htm)) to see a video with similar information. Find a creative way to share this information with your family and friends. It is crucial to living in today's postmodern world for us to acknowledge not just the ways we are the same, but also how we differ. As citizens of the most powerful nation in the world, it is also important to understand that our way of life differs drastically from the lives of the majority of people in the world. NOTE: The video on Miniature Earth is well done and impressive and worth watching. However, you will note that the images used to illustrate world poverty levels are all images of African people. Though the sub-Saharan region probably has the most extreme poverty, using images of only Africans to illustrate world poverty can lead to the false belief that, 1) poverty does not exist on other continents; and 2) all of Africa is impoverished. If you share this video with others, point out this issue to help alleviate misconceptions.
- Compare visual portraits from different periods in your life. Use school photographs or other photos from family albums. Choose three that you feel truly reflect your inner spirit. Put them back where they were. Then ask family members to each choose three portraits that they feel reflect your inner spirit. Compare and contrast the chosen photos. Does your family see you as you see yourself? Invite other family members to try this exercise.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FACE FORWARD (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- An instant camera and enough film for an individual photograph of each participant
- Arts and crafts materials for a bulletin board or other gallery-style display

### Preparation for Activity

- Identify a space in which to display self-portraits when participants have completed them

### Description of Activity

Participants randomly display self-portraits, with portrait photographs, inviting viewers to match two views of the same face.

After participants have completed their self-portrait poems, tell the group you would like to display them along with photographs of each participant in a random way that invites viewers to guess which self-portrait poem belongs with which portrait photo.

Ask for volunteers to take on the following roles:

- Collect the self-portrait poems from each participant
- Design the display space and create signage to explain the display
- Take instant photographs of each participant whose self-portrait will be displayed
- Add the photographs to the display
- Create a key that identifies which poem goes with which portrait photo

Invite the group to collaborate on what the display's signage should say. Tell participants how much time they have to complete the display project, and distribute the camera, film, and arts and crafts materials to the individuals who will use them.

Monitor progress, and be sure to leave time for cleanup before dismissing the group. If the group would like to review the guesses viewers made, devise a method for the results to be reported. For example, assign a number to each self-portrait and a letter to each photograph. Create small slips of paper on which letters and numbers can be matched. Place the slips of paper, along with several pencils, beside a box in the gallery area.

It is also fine if the group decides not to know the guesses.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: DIVERSITY PIE (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint with easel, or dry erase board, and markers
- Drawing paper and markers, crayons, or colored pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Determine where you can display finished pie charts at the close of this activity, and make sure you have tape, push pins, or whatever you need to create the display.

### Description of Activity

Participants create pie charts to categorize members of a group of people according to various differences among them.

Set up your easel and draw on a piece of newsprint—or draw on the dry erase board—four columns. Write the information below in the columns. As you write, offer the group this commonly used microcosm of the world's population. (You may use the Internet to find the most recent numbers.) If today's world population were reduced to a village of one hundred people, the village would include:

61 Asians

13 Africans

13 North/South Americans	51 males 49 females	67 non- Christians	70 people of color
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12 Europeans

33 Christians

30 whites

1 South Pacific  
Native

Point out that these columns represent four different ways of categorizing the same one hundred people. Ask the group to think of a title for each column. Participants are likely to offer race or geographical origin, gender, religious affiliation, and skin color.

Assign one column to each of four volunteers, and have them draw a pie chart representing the information in their assigned column. While volunteers are drawing, challenge the whole group to think of additional human attributes that could be used to divide the members of a group. Encourage imaginative thinking. You may hear responses such as shoe size, eye color, favorite sport or type of music, allergies or no allergies to nuts, glasses-wearing or non-glasses-wearing, or astrological sign. The object of this exercise is to begin naming the innumerable ways that people can be classified.

To find the diversity in your workshop group, lead a discussion by asking participants to apply to themselves some of the classifications they have generated. To give the conversation more impact, ask participants to move to different places in the room to align themselves with "similar" people. For example, everyone who is a teenager can stand near the door, and everyone who is an adult can stand by the window; everyone whose mother was born in the United States can stand by the door, and everyone whose mother was born in another country can stand by the window.

Tell participants that they will use the pie chart format to document some of the diversity that exists in this group. Use blank pieces of newsprint to create several lists that show the diversity in the room. Follow these steps to make each list:

- Choose, or have participants choose, an attribute such as eye color, urban versus suburban living, age, family size, and so on.
- Ask participants to generate all the differences people might have within the attribute, such as green eyes, blue eyes, brown eyes, or hazel eyes. Write them all down.
- Have participants raise their hands to indicate which subgroup they belong to, and use tally marks to record the number of people in each category.

**NOTE:** As you choose which human attributes to explore with your group, use your knowledge of your group and its members and your faith in your own ability to manage sensitive conversations. While asking participants to categorize themselves by eye color is unlikely to spark feelings of exclusion, superiority, or discomfort, asking participants to categorize themselves by belief in God, sexual preference, what you will do after high school graduation, or another personal, possibly hidden attribute can bring out participants' judgments and vulnerabilities. The objective of this activity—to call our attention to multiple kinds of diversity—can be accomplished without pushing individuals to an emotional or social brink.

When you have made enough lists, direct participants to work with a partner to make a pie chart that represents one particular aspect of the workshop group's diversity. To avoid duplication, note which pair of youths will do which list. Allow enough time for participants to complete and decorate their pie charts.

Save time at the close of the activity to display the pie charts. Give participants a few minutes to assess the visual representation of diversity within their group.

Lead a discussion to observe the pie charts' representation of multiple kinds of diversity within the group. Use these questions:

- Does seeing all of our attributes displayed in this way teach you anything about our group? If so, what?
- Are you surprised by anything you see represented in the pie charts?
- Find a pie chart that has a very small wedge that you know represents you. That wedge shows that you are a minority when it comes to that attribute. How does that make you feel?
- Do the pie charts make you feel you know the other people in this group better? Why or why not?

### **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: RECONCILIATION (10 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Journals and pens or pencils
- Stationery

#### **Description of Activity**

Participants write poems or letters to people in their lives who seem quite different from themselves and with whom they have had difficult relationships.

Make sure each participant has pen or pencil, her/his journal, and a private, comfortable place to sit and write.

Direct participants to close their eyes and think about particular people they have encountered in their lives who seem to be very different from them and with whom they have had extreme conflict or misunderstanding. After a minute or two, have participants open their eyes and write in their journals the names of the people who came to mind.

Give the group this instruction, and allow time for writing:

Write a poem or a letter in which you address someone you have had a difficult time with in your life. The theme of your poem or letter should be how you and this person are "the same inside."

Make stationery available.

### **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: JOURNAL REVIEW**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Journals and pens or pencils

**Description of Activity**

Participants review their journals and finish incomplete work.

As the date for the Poetry Slam approaches, encourage participants to use whatever time remains at the end of the workshops to review the writing in their journals, with an eye to completing any work they would consider performing.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 10: HANDOUT 1: THE FACE IN THE MIRROR

Robert Graves (1895 - 1985), from *The Complete Poems* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

Grey haunted eyes, absent-mindedly glaring  
From wide, uneven orbits; one brow drooping  
Somewhat over the eye  
Because of a missile fragment still inhering,  
Skin deep, as a foolish record of old-world fighting.  
Crookedly broken nose — low tackling caused it;  
Cheeks, furrowed; coarse grey hair, flying frenetic;  
Forehead, wrinkled and high;  
Jowls, prominent; ears, large; jaw, pugilistic;  
Teeth, few; lips, full and ruddy; mouth, ascetic.  
I pause with razor poised, scowling derision  
At the mirrored man whose beard needs my attention,  
And once more ask him why  
He still stands ready, with a boy's presumption,  
To court the queen in her high silk pavilion.

## **EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 10: HANDOUT 2: THE SAME INSIDE**

Anna Swir, "The Same Inside," translated by Czeslaw Milosz and Leonard Nathan, from *Talking to My Body*. English translation copyright © 1996 by Czeslaw Milosz and Leonard Nathan. Reprinted with the permission of Copper Canyon Press, [www.coppercanyonpress.org](http://www.coppercanyonpress.org).

Walking to your place for a love feast

I saw at a street corner

an old beggar woman

I took her hand,

kissed her delicate cheek,

we talked, she was

the same inside as I am,

from the same kind,

I sensed this instantly

as a dog knows by scent

another dog.

I gave her money,

I could not part from her.

After all, one needs

someone who is close.

And then I no longer knew

why I was walking to your place.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 10: LEADER RESOURCE 1: ONE WORLD WORSHIP SERVICE

*You can use the following ideas to design a worship service to present the UN World Millennium Goals to the congregation. Keep in mind that, although a worship service can include an educational piece, it needs much more to be spiritually fulfilling. If you are new to designing worship, use Leader Resource 2, Components of a Traditional Worship Service, to help guide you. Every worship service need not include every component, but should strive for a balance. You could ask a congregational worship coordinator or a minister to assist you in this activity.*

- Several YouTube videos use the "one hundred people" concept. Although statistics in it might be old, a video from [estacia1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHhNNozJRLE) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHhNNozJRLE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHhNNozJRLE)) includes material you might find useful in a worship service. Your worship service will be most effective if it not only encourages congregants to try to make the world a more balanced place, but also allows them to appreciate the gifts they possess.
- One way to achieve these two goals is to have a few worship participants name a gift they are thankful for and state a way to share that gift. For example, one might say, "I am thankful for the gift of literacy, and I will use it to write a letter to my senator and ask how our country is working toward providing health care for all its citizens."
- Make the service multigenerational by including young children, young adults, and elders in various roles. For instance, people of different ages dressed in attire from around the world could read the eight [Millennium Development Goals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/) (at [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)).
- Ask the religious education classes to draw or paint pictures of "One World," and decorate the sanctuary with them.
- Feature world music. Invite congregational musicians of all ages to play or sing.
- Youth could prepare a homily on how the goals are interdependent and how meeting them will increase the standard of living for earth's residents.

- Close with an activity that signifies how we are interdependent. You could have a bread communion; or you could send a pulse around the sanctuary by having each congregant—one at a time, in sequence—gently squeeze the hand of the person next to him/her; or everyone could simply hold hands for the benediction.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 10: LEADER RESOURCE 2: COMPONENTS OF A TRADITIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE

Reverend Barbara Pescan

**Gathering**—Call to worship, choral call/call with music. Marks the intentional gathering of religious community for the purpose of common worship.

**Opening**—Opening words, lighting the flame in the chalice, covenant, hymn. This indicates the opening of the sacred time we have chosen to spend with one another. The music and words heard, sung, and spoken here, the flowers and vestments, the flame of our heritage, the silences—all are lifted up and vested with special meaning. If we touch each other in greeting, it is sacramental touch. If we look upon each other in acknowledgment, it is sacramental seeing. If we partake of food, the elements are more than they would ordinarily be because we have declared ourselves to be a community and we intend to be changed by these things of which we partake.

**Acknowledging**—Family focus (story or special attention paid to children), welcome and announcements, joys and sorrows, greeting each other. By this we open to putting ourselves in the stream of our history; and we acknowledge that we are part of the present company, its values and aspirations; its children are our children, its elders are our elders. We also address the bounty shared here and into the larger community, its needs and concerns touching us and requiring our response.

**Giving**—Offertory. By this we participate in the life of the religious community—by the gifts of our physical substance and by our willing presence.

**Centering**—Prayer or meditation, silence for reflection. This invites us to center down, to be aware of what may arise from within us or enter our awareness from outside us. There might also be a responding song such as "Spirit of Life."

**Receiving**—Readings, sermon, dance, poetry, visual art. This inspires, informs, deepens, declares the possibilities, encourages, comforts, disturbs. This part may include congregational sharing. Never a "talk back," in the sense of argumentation or disputation for which there are more appropriate forums outside of worship.

**Acknowledging**—Song, responsive reading. This is the congregational response to the end of the service. We who have gathered are about to disperse. It is good to

be together. Let us rejoice in each good thing and in what we have done here.

**Closing**—Benediction. This marks the end of the sacred time and is an invitation to take what has been shared, strengthened, quickened in this time and place and community out into the rest of life.

**Dispersing/Postlude**—Re-entering the world refreshed, enlivened, touched, changed, challenged, exalted. Doing this to music adds the dimension of moving into the ordinary to the rhythms of the sacred.

## FIND OUT MORE

[The St. John's College Robert Graves Trust](http://www.stjohnscollege.org.uk/robert-graves-trust/) (at [www.robertgraves.org/bio.php](http://www.robertgraves.org/bio.php)) website has a very complete biography of the artist.

The [enotes.com biography of Anna Swir](http://www.enotes.com/biography-of-anna-swir/) (at [www.enotes.com/maternity/author-biography](http://www.enotes.com/maternity/author-biography)) tells about her life in Poland.

# WORKSHOP 11: TRANSFORMATION

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Well, that's the trick: the sudden  
unexpectedness inside the overknown.  
— Heather McHugh*

This is the last workshop before planning the Poetry Slam. Both the planning and the presentation of the Poetry Slam provide opportunity for participants to use their individual voice and for the group to use its collective voice. Appropriately, this workshop is about the balance between the individual and the community.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Utilize poetry to examine the relationship between the individual self and self in community
- Provide participants with a metaphorical method of looking at their life experiences
- Optional: Guide participants through creating a time capsule for future reflection
- Optional: Present a game that uses words to illustrate how a poet turns randomness into meaning
- Optional: Encourage participants to review their poetry in preparation for the Poetry Slam

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Acknowledge how the self is transformed in community
- Analyze how the various elements of their lives have combined to make them the person they are today

- Optional: Create a vehicle to inspire self-reflection in future years
- Optional: Experience poetry as a tool for light wordplay
- Optional: Develop a theory on the composition of poetry and relate it to their work
- Optional: Review their writing from previous workshops

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Transforming Communities	20
Activity 2: Life Recipes	30
Faith in Action: Time Capsule	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Poetry Improv	15
Alternate Activity 2: Recipes and Equations	15
Alternate Activity 3: Journal Review	

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

In Workshop 10, *You and Me*, we asked you to think about how much of your true self you have contributed to this program. Now ask yourself another question: if you have indeed brought aspects of your true self to this program, have you been transformed as a result?

## WORKSHOP PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

#### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word “transformation” in silence. After about fifteen seconds, invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word “transformation.” When everyone who wishes to speak has had a chance to do so, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

Introduce today’s workshop by saying,

Life holds many transformations in store for us. As youth, you are in the process of transforming from children to adults. Our Unitarian Universalist living faith is in the process of almost constant transformation as we process our life experiences and make meaning of them. We do not do this in isolation: part of the transformation process involves community. Our lives in community provide reflection of our selves and others. It provides opportunities for us to practice ways of being in the world, including living out our UU values. Who we are on the inside can be transformed by our experiences in community and our communities are transformed by what individuals bring to them.

### ACTIVITY 1: TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES (20 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, “[Pull the Next One Up](#)” (included in this document) ,” by Marc Kelly Smith
- Journals and pens/pencils

#### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, “Pull the Next One Up,” one for each participant.

#### Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 1, “Pull the Next One Up.” Ask two or more volunteers to read it aloud, pausing for thirty seconds between readings and after the last reading.

Then lead a “What do we have here?” discussion, using these questions:

- What words or references confound or confuse you?
- What metaphor is the basis for this poem?

Use these questions to lead a “What’s the big idea?” discussion:

- What difficulties do the people in the poem face, literally and figuratively?
- This poem is obviously about courage. What other themes can you find in this poem? (Possible answers include cooperation, social action, our shared human condition, setting and reaching goals, and community action.)
- Frequently, when someone talks about mountain climbing, it is to exemplify the glory of one person “conquering” the mountain. This poet says one mountain climber reaching the top is meaningless if they do not bring others along with them. Is he really talking about climbing mountains? What do you think he is talking about?
- What does the poem have to say about the progress of the individual versus that of the community? (Do not let participants miss the point that *individual* climbers must reach each new plateau before they can pull others up.)
- Is concentrating on the rope and those “dangling bodies” that still need help up the mountain, instead of planting flags and claiming victory, a different way of thinking about defining success in mountain climbing?
- Is there anything in the poem that speaks to transformation?

Ask for a show of hands from youth who have participated in ropes courses or a group retreat where the group had to help each other overcome physical challenges. Now expand the metaphor to a broader scale and discuss how this metaphor could be a way to think about community and social action. Does this metaphor provide a model for how communities are transformed? Ask participants to give examples. Does the metaphor apply to other aspects of their lives? Are there other models for transforming communities?

Remind participants that in the next workshop, the group starts planning the Poetry Slam. Does the metaphor in this poem pertain to this project? How do participants

hope their community (the congregation or the Poetry group) will be transformed by the experience of the Poetry Slam?

Ask for a definition of the word "synergy." The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as "the interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects." Let the group provide examples. The Poetry Slam is an example. Tell participants that the next activity is another example of synergy, transformation, and the interaction between the individual and the community.

## ACTIVITY 2: LIFE RECIPES (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large index cards, one for each participant
- Pens or pencils
- Newsprint or a dry erase board and markers

### Preparation for Activity

- If you choose to use the Dewey Delight recipe provided below as an example, consider writing it on newsprint before starting the workshop.

### Description of Activity

Each participant creates a "recipe" for him-/herself which reflects his/her formative experiences and life journey.

Hand out an index card and pens or pencils to each participant. In past workshops, we have talked about what guides us, inspires us, how we are perceived, and who we feel we really are on the inside. We are going to do an activity that makes us think a little differently about our lives. We will make our own Life Recipe cards. Instead of listing food ingredients, our recipe cards will list the ingredients that make us who we are. These include the feelings we have talked about before. It also includes our life experiences, relationships, and other aspects of life in community.

Have the group list the components of a recipe, and write down their responses on newsprint or a dry erase board. You should end up with something like:

- which ingredients to include
- the amount of each ingredient so the proportions are right
- preparation and cooking instructions

Lead the group to create a practice "life recipe" for someone they all know. You can practice with a movie character, such as Dewey from the film *School of Rock*, or a popular fictional character whose story is known to all, such as Spiderman, or Santa Claus. You may invite

suggestions. Refer to the sample recipe below, and follow these steps, writing the recipe on newsprint or a dry erase board:

- Pick a character.
- Encourage the group to name the recipe, e.g., "Dewey Delight."
- Lead a discussion about what makes up this character. Ask participants to express the character's "ingredients" in the form of experiences, life lessons, and relationships.
- Once you have a few ingredients, ask participants how much of each ingredient the recipe should call for. Be prepared for some lively debate as participants weigh which experiences and relationships are more or less important.
- Once you have a working list of ingredients, ask participants how to "cook" the character. Prompt with cooking terms such as preheat, melt, puree, add, fold in, in a separate bowl, sift, marinate, and sprinkle. Be prepared for the debate to continue as participants discuss the sequence of events, which ingredients are grouped together in what ways, and how long the character must bake.

### Sample Life Recipe: Dewey Delight

Dewey's ingredients and instructions might look something like this:

3 cups love of rock music from years of listening

4 cups experience playing guitar

1 cup rejection by band

A dash of humility from falling in front of the crowd during a stage dive

1/4 cup living with a "sell-out"

1/4 cup poverty

1/2 cup vague feeling of determination

3 cups realizing that he admires and loves his students

3 tbsp realization that students are better musicians than he

1 tsp insecurity from lack of teaching experience

1 tbsp fear of headmistress

1 cup wanting to show up his old band at Battle of the Bands

4 cups feeling absolute glee from playing show

Bring to a boil love of rock music and experience playing guitar; let simmer for ten years. Next, fold in rejection by band. In a separate bowl, combine dash of humility, living with a sell-out, and poverty. Blend the two mixtures. Marinate for a few weeks. Grease a loaf pan with vague feeling of determination. Pour in batter and bake for a month.

For icing, combine love for students, realization that they are good musicians, insecurity, fear of headmistress, and wanting to show up old band. Smear icing on loaf. Serve with a garnish of absolute glee from playing show.

Send participants off to write their own Life Recipes on the index cards. Have them reconvene at an agreed-upon time, and invite volunteers to share some names, ingredients, and processes from their recipes. You may use these questions:

- How would you describe your recipe to a friend with whom you would share this meal?
- Do you think you are fully cooked now? What other ingredients might you add? When will you really be “done”?
- Are you simply a set of ingredients? Can you have strong teachers and powerful experiences and still form your own beliefs and choose your own path?
- Think about the balance we spoke of earlier: between the individual and the community. How many ingredients do your relationships to people make? How many ingredients are life events? Are some ingredients parts of your personality?
- Is there something inside you that stays present, no matter what life experiences you encounter? If so, what do you call that part of you? How was it created: by nature, nurture, or divinity? What keeps that part of you intact? However intact, is it possible for this part of you to change?
- What is the relationship between cooking and transformation? Is this an apt metaphor for life?

Participants may choose to use their recipe cards in Faith in Action: Time Capsule.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, one for each participant

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: TIME CAPSULE

### Materials for Activity

- Shoeboxes, mail tubes, or plastic storage containers, one for each participant
- Arts and crafts materials
- Journals and pens or pencils
- Newsprint or dry erase board and markers
- Other materials as mentioned in the activity and contributed by participants

### Description of Activity

To preserve this time in their lives for future reflection, participants plan and fill a real or imaginary time capsule. This activity takes place in two parts: one to plan what will go into the time capsule and the other to assemble it. During the time in between, youth can gather items from home and other places that they would like to include.

### PART ONE

Make sure each participant has a pencil/pen and his/her journal. Explain the project to participants, saying,

Today, we are going to mark this particular point in time. You will freeze your ways of being and thinking about things in this moment in a time capsule that you can revisit later—at another stage of life—in order to remember and reflect on where you are in your life right now. Often the Faith in Action activities require us to put our values into practice out in the world. In this activity, we will recognize the value of self-reflection as a way to put our UU faith in action. We believe that self-reflection leads us to a greater understanding of who we are and how we are in the universe. It helps us make meaning out of life.

Help individuals both identify the materials they will gather for their time capsules and begin to construct their time capsule containers from the materials provided. Start by listing, on newsprint or a dry erase board, the items that will go into the time capsules:

- A representative poem or song
- A poem or song written by you
- Recipe card (NOTE: Omit if your group did not do Activity 2, Life Recipes.)
- Letter from the now-you to the future-you
- Symbolic object, representing your personal spirituality
- One or more symbolic objects representing a community to which you belong
- Photograph
- Letter from another person to you
- Items representing our world as it is today
- Items representing our world as it is today—these objects could include a current paperback bestseller, a dated newspaper clipping, TV listings, a movie or concert poster; anything you associate with the state of the world today versus your own personal state.

Invite the group to suggest additional items they might like to include.

Give a shoebox, cardboard mail tube, or plastic storage container to each participant and indicate where participants can find arts and crafts materials. Allow the group to begin decorating their time capsules and assembling the items to place inside. Participants may also use the time to brainstorm a list of time capsule contents and begin writing their letters to their future selves.

Have participants copy the list of items in their journal. Lead a discussion to explicate each item.

- A representative poem or song—a poem or song, written by someone else, that represents your worldview, along with a brief description of why it's meaningful to you.
- A poem or song written by you—your self-portrait poem or drawing from Workshop 10; or another poem or song you have written that you think represents who you are at this time in your life.
- Recipe card—if your group did the Life Recipe card lesson in Activity 2, Life Recipes.
- Letter from the now-you to the future-you—decide whether you will open your time capsule in two, five, or ten years and address your letter to the “you” who is that much older than you are now.
- Symbolic objects—one small, simple object that holds symbolic meaning for you, but not something irreplaceable or too valuable. If you think you might forget later why you chose the object, write and attach a note explaining its meaning. Try to pick something connected to your spirituality. Another object(s) that represents a community you strongly identify with.
- Photograph—one that you think epitomizes who you are at this time in your life.
- Letter from another person to you—a sealed letter, prose words, or poem of insight or advice written to you by someone close to you. After asking someone to write the letter, insist that she/he seal it before giving it to you.

Before participants leave, tell them the date of the follow-up workshop. Remind them to bring in their remaining time capsule contents at that time so they can complete the project. If the group wants to listen to music while they finish assembling their time capsules, challenge participants to bring musical selections related to growing older and the passage of time.

Leave at least ten minutes at the end of Part One for participants to both describe what they will place in their time capsules and explain why. Use these questions to lead a reflective discussion:

- How do you think you might be different in two, five, or ten years than you are now? Might you actually see, feel, or think differently? How? Why?
- Do you think you might forget what it is like to be as close to childhood as you are now?
- In addition to changes that will happen inside you, what changes do you think will happen outside you? Do you think your personal world might be different? How? Do you think the larger world around you might be different? How?
- Do you think your spiritual connections might change over the selected time period? Do you think your connection to Unitarian Universalism will change?

## PART TWO

Between Part One and Part Two, remind participants to gather the time capsule items. When you reconvene, participants will complete their time capsules, seal them, and write the date they plan to open them clearly on the outside. Everyone should decide where they will keep their time capsule and plan to place it there as soon as possible after leaving the workshop. Participants may

decide to meet at the congregation, after the selected time period passes, to open their time capsules together. If so, they should mark this information next to the date on the outside of the container.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Discuss which activities were successful and which ones were less so with your co-leader. If you are storing time capsules until they are complete, make sure you have a safe and private place to keep them. The next two workshops will be used to plan the Poetry Slam. If you are not doing the Poetry Slam, read the alternate activities in Workshops 12 and 13. You can use these and other alternate activities or Faith in Action exercises you have not used from Workshops 1 through 11 to create additional workshops.

## TAKING IT HOME

*Well, that's the trick: the sudden unexpectedness inside the overknown.*

— Heather McHugh

### DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We discussed how our lives are balanced between the individual self and the self in community.. We created recipe cards that attempt to describe our complex lives.

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Everyone has hopes and dreams for the future. There are ingredients you hope to add to your life recipe as you mature, but life is not always predictable and our dreams do not always come true. It is good to have a Plan B. What are your biggest dreams for your future and what are your Plan Bs?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- Ask significant adults what their lives were like when they were your age, including how they felt about growing older and leaving childhood behind. Ask if there is anything they sacrificed that they wish they had not.
- How does your family treat the toys and other objects children outgrow? Do you discard them? Do you pass them down to the next generation? Ask the adults in your family to share stories of any such mementos with you. Passing down a toy to your younger sibling or cousin is a great way to honor your experiences and strengthen community. Do you have an item that you are ready to pass down? One note of caution: You have to be ready to let go of the object if you

pass it down. The stuffed animal that you slept with every night might end up at the bottom of your cousin's toy box. If you are afraid she/he might not treasure it enough, perhaps you would rather hold on to it and pass it on to children you might have. Take steps to preserve the object until you're ready to pass it down. If a relative passed a special item down to you, ask yourself if you are taking good care of that person's memories.

- How do your families and friends balance their individual needs with those of the community? Make a suggestion that everyone keep a log that lists personal time versus communal time. Some time might be debatable. Do you shower in the morning to keep your body clean and healthy or because society has standards of cleanliness or both? Mark the activities that might fit into both categories and discuss them with others. At the end of the week, everyone can review the log and ask if the balance seems correct to them. If not, perhaps a few changes are in order.
- Is there a recipe box or book of family recipes in your house? Hold a family recipe cookout. Invite your best friends and an adult from their families (or their entire families) to come to your place and bring a family recipe to be prepared for the group. While you learn to make the food, you and your friends can converse with the adults about the person who passed the recipe down. Recipes do not have to be written; many families keep such recipes in their heads. All the more reason to make a special occasion out of having the recipe passed down to you.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: POETRY IMPROV (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Small slips of paper
- Journals and pens or pencils
- Several envelopes, bowls, boxes—anything in which to collect the slips of paper—one container per category you choose

### Preparation for Activity

- In this activity, you will ask participants to contribute random words to be used to create poems. The easiest way to collect random words is to request them by category, i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs. You can increase the number of word submissions by

breaking down the categories. For instance, instead of asking for a noun, ask first for a person, then a place, and then a thing. You can ask for a specific type of adjective, such as a color or a number. Decide how many and which categories you will use for this exercise. The more categories you use, the more challenging the exercise.

### Description of Activity

The group uses a theatrical improvisation game to turn random words into cohesive poetry.

Distribute one slip of paper per category you will use, journals, and pens or pencils to participants. Ask them to write a word from the first category on a slip of paper. For instance, you might say, "Write the name of a place on the slip of paper," or "Write an animal on a slip of paper." Have participants fold the paper in half and place it in whatever container you are using to collect words from that category. To ensure that the categories remain separate, collect words from each category before moving on to the next category and container. Use as many categories as you like, but at least four.

After everyone has submitted a word for each category, pass around the containers. Have everyone take one slip from each. If a participant draws his/her own slip, let the youth pick again. Challenge participants to each create a short poem from their collection of words. They must use all the words in their collection, and they can add additional words.

Share the poems during the last five minutes of this activity. Have participants hold up their poems as well as read them aloud, so that all may see how the poet used line breaks and stanzas. Encourage interactive response to each poem. Use these questions:

- Why do you think the poet arranged the words this particular way?
- Did the way the poet used a word you submitted surprise you? Explain.
- What was challenging about this exercise?
- Are there other ways you could create communal poetry?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: RECIPES AND EQUATIONS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Journals and pens or pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Post the list of poet's tools from Workshop 1, Listening and Speaking with Poetry, where it can be seen by all:
  - Figurative Language
  - Form, Line, Stanza
  - Sound, Rhythm, Repetition
  - Tone and Form

### Description of Activity

Participants use metaphor to describe how a poem is made.

Introduce the two types of metaphor participants can use to describe how a poem is made.

- In the recipe metaphor, a poem has certain ingredients and is made in a step-by-step process.
- In the mathematical metaphor, a poem is the sum of an equation. Math is very precise.

Ask youth to each choose one or the other type of metaphor and jot down either the recipe or the equation for a poem. Participants may refer to the poet's tools from Workshop 1. Allow several minutes to complete the assignment, and then ask if people need more time.

When the group is finished, invite volunteers to share by either reading aloud or writing on the dry erase board their recipe or equation for a poem. To keep the activity cohesive, share all the recipes first, and then share the equations. Lead a discussion in response to each recipe or equation. Ask:

- How would a poem "taste" if it were made this way?
- Does a poem always add up the same way?
- What happens to a recipe or equation if you change an ingredient or a number? Given this, how well does your metaphor for making a poem hold up?
- Look at your own poems in your journal. Can you identify a poem that follows a recipe or an equation?

Does either type of metaphor work completely well to describe how a poem is made? Why or why not? Does this mean that there is no single way to make a poem? Is there another metaphor that could do the job? What techniques of poetry writing have you used successfully during these workshops? What techniques of reading and understanding poetry have you found useful?

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: JOURNAL REVIEW**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Journals and pens or pencils

### **Description of Activity**

Participants review their journals and finish incomplete work.

As the date for the Poetry Slam approaches, encourage participants to use whatever time remains at the end of the workshops to review the writing in their journals, with an eye to completing any work they would consider performing.

## EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 11: HANDOUT 1: PULL THE NEXT ONE UP

Marc Kelly Smith (1957- )

When you get to the top of the mountain  
Pull the next one up.  
Then there'll be two of you  
Roped together at the waist  
Tired and proud, knowing the mountain,  
Knowing the human force it took  
To bring both of you there.  
And when the second one has finished  
taking in the view,  
Satisfied by the heat and perspiration under the wool,  
Let her pull the next one up;  
Man or woman, climber of mountains.  
Pull the next hand over  
The last jagged rock  
To become three.  
Two showing what they've already seen,  
And one knowing now the well-being with being  
Finished with one mountain,  
With being able to look out a long way  
Toward other mountains,  
Feeling a temptation to claim victory.  
When you ask how high is this mountain  
With a compulsion to know  
Where you stand in relationship to other peaks,  
Look down to wherefrom you came up  
And see the rope that's tied to your waist  
Tied to the next man's waist,  
Tied to the next woman's waist,  
Tied to the first man's waist,  
To the first woman's waist  
...and pull the rope!  
Never mind the flags you see flapping on

conquered pinnacles.

Don't waste time scratching inscriptions into the  
monolith,

You are the stone itself.

And each man, each woman up the mountain,  
Each breath exhaled at the peak,  
Each glad I-made-it...here's my hand,  
Each heartbeat wrapped around the hot skin  
of the sun-bright sky,  
Each noise panted or cracked with laughter,  
Each embrace, each cloud that holds everyone  
in momentary doubt...

All these are inscriptions of a human force that  
can

Conquer conquering hand over hand pulling the  
rope

Next man up, next woman up.

Sharing a place, sharing a vision.

Room enough for all on all the mountain peaks.

Force enough for all

To hold all the hanging bodies

Dangling in the deep recesses of the mountain's  
belly

Steady...until they have the courage...

Until they know the courage...

Until they understand

That the only courage there is is

To pull the next man up

Pull the next woman up

Pull the next up...Up...Up.

## FIND OUT MORE

You can find “Pull the Next One Up” in the anthology, *The Spoken Word Revolution*, edited by Mark Eleveld (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2003). Marc Kelly Smith is considered the Poetry Slam founder. Read

more about him at his website, [slampapi.com](http://slampapi.com) (at [www.slampapi.com/](http://www.slampapi.com/)).

The [parenting page](#) (at [parenting.ivillage.com/mom/memories/0,,41wp,00.html](http://parenting.ivillage.com/mom/memories/0,,41wp,00.html)) on iVillage (an Internet media company that features content aimed at women) offers ideas for building time capsules.

# WORKSHOP 12: POEMS ON STAGE: EXPLORING POETRY OUT LOUD

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.*

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

This is the first of three workshops dedicated to planning the Poetry Slam, although reminders and plan suggestions for a possible fund-raiser were provided in previous workshops. Workshops 12 and 13 outline the planning process. Workshop 14 focuses on the actual performance. If your group desires planning workshops more than two weeks before the performance, adjust your schedule. You can hold Workshops 12 and 13 earlier in the semester and schedule one or two workshops between those and Workshop 14. You can also rearrange the workshops in this program or design your own workshop. See Workshop 13, Alternate Activity 1: Rainy Day Plan, for ideas that fit the latter model. However, do not start planning the Poetry Slam too early, because you want to give the group time to bond before working on the performance, and you do not want the group to lose enthusiasm because of overplanning.

Be prepared to spend additional time outside of the workshop, if needed, to ensure the success of the Poetry Slam. If needed seek additional help from youths' families, your religious educator, minister, or writers within the congregation.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Honor our spirits, creativity, and craftsmanship by making poems and sharing them with others
- Explore differences between reading and hearing a poem
- Provide steps for participants to thoughtfully plan and implement a public performance of poetry
- Allow participants to experience a new way of working together through crafting a choral reading

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Analyze the differences between reading poetry and hearing it
- Craft poetry while paying particular attention to how the experience of the listener influences the writing process
- Work cooperatively to plan a group performance
- Identify specific talents they and others possess that will contribute to the success of a group performance
- Engage the congregation through an invitation to participate in the group performance

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Poetry Out Loud	15
Activity 2: Speaking Our Own Words	20
Activity 3: You and the Poetry Slam, Part I	15
Faith in Action: Planning a Choral Reading	20
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Poetry Out Loud	15
Alternate Activity 2: The Spoken Word	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

This workshop begins the preparations for a Poetry Slam. Asking youth to perform for non-peers is a challenge. Think back to such a performance you might have had in your youth or childhood. Did you volunteer to perform or was it thrust upon you? Were you anxious during your preparations? Who helped you? Was the final result an affirming experience? If not, what would have made it so? Realize that any steps you take to help

youth remember the Poetry Slam as a positive experience are important. Never underestimate the

valuable role you play in the lives of participants. Hold and cherish this knowledge.

## WORKSHOP PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

#### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "cooperation." Invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "cooperation." When enough time has passed for everyone who wishes to speak to do so, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

Introduce today's workshop with these words,

Writing a poem is an act that certainly can be its own reward. However, as an art form and a mode of communication, poetry lends itself to sharing with an audience. A Poetry Slam, or a public poetry reading, provides a forum to do just that. Unlike some poetry slams, ours will not be a competition, but a cooperative performance that allows everyone to contribute according to his/her own talents.

When you release a poem into the world, it ceases to be a private treasure or an unconnected object. Your poem suddenly has a new power: the power to affect others. A number of questions arise: For whom, or to whom, did you write your poem? Would you prefer that someone read it or hear it? What do you hope your reader or listener will feel? Think? Do? How can you fine-tune your poem to "speak" for you most clearly? Today, as we hear and create create poems, we will pay attention to how a poem that is read aloud can touch the listener. Next time we meet, we will select poetry that we ourselves have written and poems by other, favorite poets to share with an audience in a

public poetry event. After that, we will host our poetry-reading event.

### ACTIVITY 1: POETRY OUT LOUD (15 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Recording or live computer link of poetry read aloud
- Print-outs of the poems to be heard
- DVD or CD player or computer with Internet connection
- Poetry anthologies suitable for youth (see Find Out More for suggestions)
- Paper and pencils or computer and printer for writing during the workshop
- Newsprint and markers

#### Preparation for Activity

- Locate recordings of poetry that are suitable for youth. Include a diversity of authors and styles. The youth section of the library is a good place to start. Librarians may be on hand to give you suggestions. [The Library of Congress Poetry website](http://www.loc.gov/poetry) (at [www.loc.gov/poetry](http://www.loc.gov/poetry)) has recorded poetry. The books *The Spoken Word Revolution* and *The Spoken Word Redux*, edited by Mark Eleveld (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2003 and 2007) contain the text and CD recordings of poems. Locate the recordings first, then find the printed work, as not all printed poems will be available on live recordings. Another resource is writers in your congregation, who might be thrilled to help pick material for this workshop. Preview both recordings and written poems provided by writers in your congregation.
- Set up the computer or CD or DVD player where all participants can see and hear.
- Cue up the first poem.

#### Description of Activity

Participants listen to or watch a recording of poetry read aloud, silently read the printed text of the same poems to themselves, and then compare the experiences.

Provide a context for the poetry participants will hear/see: Where was it recorded? Who is the poet? Who was the audience? Ask participants to observe their own reactions as audience members, such as how

the poetry reading makes them feel, so they can share their responses at the end of the exercise.

Play the recording. Then hand out the printed text of the poem and ask participants to read the poem silently to themselves. When they are finished reading, play the recording for a second time. Repeat the process for two to four different poems.

Using these questions as prompts, lead a discussion about how voiced poetry differs from poetry on the printed page:

- How does hearing a poem in the presence of other people differ from reading it silently to yourself? Which did you prefer and why?
- Do certain kinds of poems lend themselves to reading aloud? What features does a poem need to be a good candidate for reading aloud?
- Do certain words jump out at you when you listen to a poem? By contrast, what makes you notice certain words when you read a poem?
- When someone reads or performs the poem aloud, what makes for good delivery of the poem? Is a highly dramatic rendering inherently better than a simple reading or not? Does it depend on the poem?

Encourage participants to keep their observations about spoken poetry in mind as they prepare a Poetry Slam for an audience.

### **Including All Participants**

At the beginning of the activity, ask participants if the sound level is high enough. Often it is difficult for people with hearing impairments to speak up and ask for greater volume. By asking the question, you provide the space for that request to happen.

## **ACTIVITY 2: SPEAKING OUR OWN WORDS (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Pencils or pens and journals
- Optional: Computers and printers

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Decide how much time you can give participants for writing and be sure to have a clock on hand. Reserve several minutes at the end of this activity so that everyone has a chance to read his/her work aloud to another participant.

### **Description of Activity**

Participants craft their own poetry with special attention to how the poem will sound when performed aloud.

Explain that participants will have some time in the workshop to write poetry of their own; tell them how much time they will have to write. Remind them that they can also work on their poems at home.

Tell youth that, unlike many poetry exercises in which participants write poems for their own satisfaction, they WILL be asked in this case to read their poem(s) aloud to the group. Participants should craft their poems with attention to how they will perform the poem and how it will sound. Reassure participants who might be uncomfortable with the thought of reading their poetry to an audience that only those who wish to read aloud will do so. Others will have an opportunity to participate in the Poetry Slam in other ways that you will discuss later.

Distribute journals and pencils or assign computer workspace to participants. Invite participants to begin working on a poem. Offer a free-writing exercise to youth who want help getting started. Have these participants write, "I want you to know..." and keep writing from there. After three or four minutes, provide a second sentence starter: "It hurts when..." Finally, give this sentence starter: "I feel better when..."

Give the group a five-minute warning when their writing time is almost up. When participants are finished writing, organize them into pairs or groups of three and invite them to read their work aloud to one another. Remind participants that they always have the right to pass if they would rather not read their poetry aloud.

## **ACTIVITY 3: YOU AND THE POETRY SLAM, PART I (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint and markers
- Journals

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Write the date, time, and place for the Poetry Slam on the newsprint. You could also list the discussion questions (see Description of Activity, below, for the questions).
- Be ready to direct participants toward specific resources if they choose to select and perform poems by published authors. Possible books and websites are listed in Find Out More, below.

### **Description of Activity**

The group comes together to shape their Poetry Slam. Before leaving at the end of this workshop, each

participant will decide whether to work on crafting her/his own original poetry for performance, select and practice a poem by another poet for performance; or play a behind-the-scenes role in the Poetry Slam.

Announce that the group needs to plan the logistics of the Poetry Slam. Start by making sure everyone knows the date, time, and place for the event.

To keep ideas for the next workshop, ask a volunteer to record the ideas generated in the discussion that follows, the poems participants suggest, and the roles participants decide to take. Have the group consider and decide:

- How many youth should read or perform poems? Who will volunteer?
- Should participants read in pairs, groups, or one at a time?
- Should the event include music? When, how, and who?
- Should the event include a choral reading (see Faith in Action for details for creating the choral poem)? For now, youth need to know that a choral reading involves making several poems into one poem to be read by a group.

Once the group has established some event parameters, facilitate the assignment of roles. Encourage each person to choose a role from the following list:

- Read/perform their own poetry
- Read/perform another poet's work
- Participate in the choral reading (optional; see Faith in Action)
- Emcee to introduce reader/performers
- Volunteer for a behind-the-scenes task such as producing advance publicity, setting up the room, ushering guests, operating audio/visual equipment including microphones, assisting with an optional fund-raiser, or collecting tickets

Encourage individuals to commit to specific roles until all key roles are filled.

While it can be a good idea to expose shy youths to performance possibilities and, likewise, a poor idea to assume that quiet youths prefer a backstage role, be mindful that pushing someone into a role s/he is uncomfortable with can backfire. The youth may feel unsuccessful, and the job may not get done.

NOTE: In this model, the leader acts as the event's producer and director and oversees all roles and

decision-making processes. However, one or more participants in your group may be capable of and want to take a leadership role in planning the order of poems for the event, stage-managing the event, preparing flyers or event programs, or leading the optional fund-raising activities. When you place a participant in a leadership role, be sure to support the youth by providing a clear scope of responsibility, resources (such as yourself, other participants, use of an office photocopier, and the like), and appreciation.

Before the group meets for the next workshop, participants who plan to read a poem aloud should (a) either write their own poem or pick a previously written poem from their journal, or choose a poem by another poet; and (b) practice performing the poem. Participants who offer to do advance publicity may draft a flyer before or during the next workshop. Inform them about print publicity that has already been placed.

Give participants five minutes to talk with others they need to work with and make plans for the next workshop. Publicity people might bring art for a flyer. Audio/visual coordinators might start a list of equipment they need. Poetry readers could practice or decide the order in which they will read.

### **Including All Participants**

If possible, use a microphone for the performance. Explain to participants that this is important because sometimes it is difficult for those with hearing impairments to speak up and ask for amplification. By providing a microphone without being asked, you avoid putting people in an uncomfortable position. In addition, see if your congregation has assisted listening devices for the hearing impaired, noting that these only work when a sound system is used.

## **CLOSING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Chalice
- Singing the Living Tradition

### **Description of Activity**

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: PLANNING A CHORAL READING (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: 8.5 x 11 inch paper and art materials for creating flyers
- A box or basket to collect submissions

### Description of Activity

Participants prepare to add a choral reading that will involve the congregation in the Poetry Slam. This long-term Faith in Action is composed of four activities: Planning a Choral Reading, Practicing the Choral Reading (Workshop 13), Performing the Choral Reading (Workshop 14), and the Choral Reading Review (Workshop 15).

Explain to participants that a choral reading takes place when a group or "chorus" of readers recites a written work. It is a unique way to perform a poem, and, in this activity, it is coupled with a unique way of creating a poem that involves the entire congregation.

In a choral reading of a poem, individuals may read a single word, line, or stanza independently or in unison. They may repeat particular portions of the poem. They might include music and/or movement. Answer any questions the group has about choral readings, and then decide if you will include one in your Poetry Slam. A choral reading can be an ideal way to include youth who may be shy about reading alone. It is not necessary to have everyone participate in the choral reading; if you have three or more interested youth, you can proceed.

One way to involve the congregation is to invite members to submit short poems to workshop participants. In Workshop 13, youths will use submitted works to craft a new, hybrid poem for the choral reading. You need to get the word out quickly that you are seeking submissions. You could hand out flyers immediately before or after the regular worship service, send out a congregation-wide e-mail, or appeal directly to a writers group if your congregation has one.

Decide whose e-mail address can be made available for submissions, and place a box for submissions in a convenient location at your congregation. You need submissions by the next workshop, so make sure the deadline is included in flyers and e-mail messages.

Decide who will collect the submissions. Also, decide whether you want to include copies of the original poems in your program. If so, get poets' permission to do so before the next workshop. Make sure each poet understands that bits and pieces of their poem will be used to create a hybrid poem and that some poems

might be used more extensively than others. Explain that the choice of material used from each poem is not an indication of how much participants like or dislike a particular work; it only reflects how well the words fit into the new poem.

The Faith in Action in Workshop 13 leads you through the next steps of creating a hybrid poem and practicing the choral reading.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Planning a performance for workshop participants is a big job. Take time to check in with your co-leader on how each of you is feeling. Is the work divided evenly between you? Do you both feel the preparation is going as planned? If not, what can you do to get plans on track?

After monitoring your own level of stress or anxiety, review how the workshop participants are dealing with plans for the Poetry Slam. Hopefully, most participants are enthusiastic and actively assisting in the preparation.

Examine the newsprint from Activity 3, You and the Poetry Slam, Part I. Is anything missing? Highlight roles that have not been assigned. You will have a chance to fill these in during Workshop 13. Review the responsibilities and decide who will lead which ones.

## TAKING IT HOME

*One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.*

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

## DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We discussed the difference between reading poetry and hearing it. We started our preparation for the Poetry Slam.

Date/Time/Place for Poetry Slam:

---

My role in the Slam:

---

## REFLECTION QUESTION:

You can write a poem and keep it to yourself, and you will know exactly what it means to you. Once you share it with someone else, however, you lose control over its

meaning as the audience will have its own interpretation. What does that feel like?

### **EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...**

- Make sure your family knows what is expected of you in your role in the Poetry Slam. If you will need transportation or other help, ask family members and friends for support. Do not forget to invite them to the Poetry Slam.
- If you have never been to a Poetry Slam, ask your family and friends if they have and, if so, what it was like. Better yet, locate a poetry slam or poetry reading in your town or city and invite family, friends, and other workshop participants to attend it with you. If you cannot locate a reading nearby, check your local TV listings or rent a DVD, such as the Poetry Hall of Fame Collection, from Netflix or a video store. You might also see if your local library has such a DVD or video you can borrow.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: POETRY OUT LOUD (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Print-outs of the poems to be read aloud
- Poetry anthologies suitable for youth (see Find Out More for suggestions)
- Paper and pencils or computer and printer for writing during the workshop
- Newsprint and markers

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Familiarize yourself with the poem(s) you will read aloud, so that you can deliver them smoothly. Be prepared to model a heartfelt performance of poetry.

### **Description of Activity**

Participants listen to and watch the leader read poems aloud, read the printed text of the poems to themselves, and compare the experiences.

Before you read a poem aloud, ask participants to observe their own reactions as audience members and be prepared to share their responses at the end of the exercise.

Read a poem aloud. Then hand out the printed text of the poem and ask participants to read it silently to themselves. When they are finished reading, read the poem aloud a second time. Repeat the process for two to four different poems.

Using these questions as prompts, lead a discussion of how voiced poetry differs from poetry on the printed page:

- How does hearing a poem in the presence of other people differ from reading it silently to yourself? Which did you prefer, and why?
- Do certain kinds of poems lend themselves to reading aloud? What features does a poem need to be a good candidate for reading aloud?
- Do certain words jump out at you when you listen to a poem? By contrast, what makes you notice certain words when you read a poem?
- When someone reads or performs the poem aloud, what makes for good delivery of the poem? Is a highly dramatic rendering inherently better than a simple reading, or not? Does it depend on the poem?

Encourage participants to keep their observations about spoken poetry in mind as they prepare a Poetry Slam for an audience.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: THE SPOKEN WORD (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Provide books, handouts, and other resources to allow participants a choice of poems for the activity (see Find Out More for suggestions)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Write on newsprint:
  - What do you think the poem is about?
  - How does it make you feel?
  - How does hearing the poem enhance its meaning?
- Be prepared to divide the group into pairs or small groups.

### **Description of Activity**

Participants take turns reading a poem aloud to a partner or a small group. After each reading, the listeners provide feedback on the "performance." When the exercise is finished, participants gather for a large-group discussion.

Have youths form pairs or small groups, and explain the exercise:

- Take a few minutes to find a poem to read aloud. Each of you can read a poem of your choice or everyone in your group can read the same poem in his/her own way.

- First reader: Practice your poem quietly to yourself, and then read your poem aloud to the other(s).
- Listener(s): Respond to the reading with answers to the following questions (on the newsprint):
- What do you think the poem is about?
- How does it make you feel?
- How does hearing the poem enhance its meaning? Its power?
- Repeat the process until each member of your group has had a chance to read.

When the exercise is finished, gather the entire group and lead a discussion based on the following questions:

- Did the poems that members of your group chose seem to have been written more for the eye or for the ear? Why do you think so?
- Do certain words jump out at you when you hear a poem? By contrast, what makes you notice certain words when you read a poem to yourself?
- In what ways might reading a poem aloud resemble acting in a play? Does it matter whether or not the reader is the author? Explain.
- Knowing that a poem of yours will be read aloud, what writing techniques might you use when you compose the poem? What characteristics or features might you avoid when you write the poem?

## FIND OUT MORE

[Youth Speaks Online](http://youthspeaks.org/) (at [youthspeaks.org/](http://youthspeaks.org/)) is the nation's leading non-profit presenter of spoken word performance, education, and youth development programs.

[The Library of Congress poetry page](http://www.loc.gov/poetry/) (at [www.loc.gov/poetry/](http://www.loc.gov/poetry/)) has links that enable you to listen to poetry read aloud.

Glazner, Gary Mex, ed. *Poetry Slam: The Competitive Art of Performance Poetry*. San Francisco: Manic D Press, 2000.

**POETRY ANTHOLOGIES:** There are literally hundreds of poetry anthologies. Availability will be a factor in which ones you use. Before bringing any resources to the group, make sure the content is appropriate for youth. Look for violent images, sexual or other

inappropriate language, mature situations, and stereotyping. Aim for ethnic, racial, gender, and cultural diversity. Consider asking a local youth librarian for suggestions. Here are a few anthologies to consider:

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Roman, Camille, Thomas Travisano, and Steven Gould Axelrod, eds. *New Anthology of American Poetry*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

# WORKSHOP 13: PLANNING A POETRY SLAM

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*A goal without a plan is just a wish.*  
— Antoine de Saint-Exupery

In today's workshop, you will continue to plan for the Poetry Slam. If after the workshop you feel the need for additional planning time, establish a time to reconvene. If you are doing a fund-raiser during the Poetry Slam, do not forget to include the organizers in all your plans.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Honor our spirits, creativity, and craftsmanship by making poems and sharing them with others
- Plan a public performance of poetry
- Solidify the roles each individual will play in the Poetry Slam
- Rehearse the choral reading
- Optional: Rally individual and collective energy toward fund-raising for congregational youth activities or another purpose of the group's choice.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Volunteer their talents for the purpose of group creation
- Recognize that many different talents are needed to create a successful performance
- Experiment with synergy by taking words from several individual manuscripts and creating a new manuscript that is different

- Affirm the work of other writers within the congregation by incorporating their work into a choral reading

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: You and the Poetry Slam, Part II	15
Activity 2: Small Group Planning	25
Activity 3: What Next?	10
Faith in Action: Practicing the Choral Reading	40
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Rainy Day Plan	50

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

One activity in today's workshop involves small group planning. We get better at working in groups as we mature, and some youth will have more experience in this type of planning than others. Unitarian Universalists often joke about the pervasiveness of committees in our faith. We all know the downsides of committee work. Take a few moments to reflect upon the upsides. What happens (in the best of all possible worlds) when individuals come together to create as a group? Garnering group respect for one's own ideas and input can be quite affirming. Think of a time when you felt fellow group members' respect for your ideas and input. What kind of environment led to this affirmation? Respecting each other for ALL that we have to bring to a group effort is not always easy. How can you help create an atmosphere of respect and affirmation as the group plans their final event?

## WORKSHOP PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

#### Description of Activity

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "perform." Invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "perform." When enough time has passed for everyone who wishes to speak to do so, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

Introduce today's workshop with these words,

In this program, we have tasted the experiences of reading, hearing, writing, and sharing poetry. Congratulations for finding the openness, creativity, and gameness of spirit to take your personal exploration of poetry this far. Today we will turn our attention outward in order to plan a public poetry event.

You may have discovered already that the more invested you are in a poem, the more you care how others respond to it. When a poem speaks from our own hearts, we certainly hope for a gentle, appreciative, energized, or otherwise positive response. Today let us shape our Poetry Slam in a way that encourages listeners to receive our poems with the open hearts that our own hearts desire and deserve.

We can simply read our poems aloud. We can include music. Our Poetry Slam can be a free-admission event or a fund-raiser or it can include a fundraiser like a bake sale. In the open mike tradition of the beatniks, anyone can stand up and recite his/her own work. In the poetry slam tradition that began in the 1990s, performing poets compete before judges. Our Poetry Slam will draw from both traditions, by being a non-competitive, planned piece of performance art. Today we will choose the poems we want to share and design

a space where our audience can truly listen.

### ACTIVITY 1: YOU AND THE POETRY SLAM, PART II (15 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Books and handouts of poetry that participants either have used in previous program workshops or may peruse today for inclusion in the Poetry Slam
- Paper and pencils or computer and printer for writing during the workshop
- Newsprint and markers

#### Preparation for Activity

- Be ready to remind participants of the date, time, and place for the Poetry Slam.
- Post the documentation from Workshop 12, Activity 3: You and the Poetry Slam, in which participants began to generate ideas.
- Write the roles on newsprint, leaving room to fill in names of volunteers. Roles may include:
  - Event program
  - Publicity
  - Room set-up
  - Audio-visual equipment and tasks
  - Optional: Fund-raiser planning
  - Tickets/usher
  - Reader/performers
  - Emcee
  - Room cleanup
  - Thank-you notes
  - Optional: Fund-raising wrap-up

#### Description of Activity

Participants build upon the plans for the Poetry Slam that they started in the previous workshop.

Explain that today's process will include (a) firming up plans begun in the last workshop and (b) working in small groups to complete the planning process. By the end of today's workshop, most participants will have an assignment to complete before the event, such as practicing his/her own performance of poetry, getting audio/visual equipment and making sure it functions

properly, or creating and photocopying the event program.

Remind participants of the date, time, and place for the event. Ask participants to commit to attending. If some participants cannot attend the event, encourage them to help with today's planning nonetheless and consider providing a poem for another participant to read aloud.

Begin to shape the event with a maximum of five minutes' brainstorming. To get things started, refer to the newsprint on which participants' suggestions from Workshop 12 are listed. To stimulate more discussion, ask the group these new questions:

- Should we invite young children?
- Should everyone sit in a circle or should readers be on a stage?
- Do we want to include music?
- Do we want to videotape the event?
- Do we want to ask the audience for feedback? If so, should we ask for it at the end of the event? In a guest book we provide at the event?
- Do we need an intermission?

Discuss the need to use microphones for the performance (see Including All Participants, below, for more information). Let the group know that they will have time to practice with the microphone on the day of the performance. Are cordless microphones available? This will affect your decision concerning how to seat performers.

Lead a discussion to assign roles and responsibilities. Have a volunteer document the roles and responsibilities on the easel or chalkboard, using the list of roles you prepared earlier. Ask the following questions if roles are unfilled from Workshop 12:

- Who would like to read or perform a poem? Will you use your own poem or one by someone else?
- Who would like to provide a poem for someone else to read or perform?
- Who would like to be an emcee?
- Can anyone come early to help set up the space? Can anyone stay after the event to help clean up the space?

Draft the order in which people will read/perform.

### **Including All Participants**

If possible, use a microphone for the performance. Explain to participants that this is important because

sometimes it is difficult for those with hearing impairments to speak up and ask for amplification. By providing a microphone without being asked, you avoid putting people in an uncomfortable position. This is one way to be an ally to differently-abled people. In addition, see if your congregation has assisted listening devices for the hearing impaired, noting that these only work when a sound system is used.

## **ACTIVITY 2: SMALL GROUP PLANNING (25 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint and markers
- Paper and pencils or computers and printer
- Poetry anthologies suitable for youth

### **Preparation for Activity**

Make sure the room in which you meet is large enough for small groups to spread out and work independently of one another. If it is not, locate other rooms that youth can use and reserve them ahead of time.

### **Description of Activity**

Small groups and individuals pursue assigned tasks, determine what additional tasks to do between this workshop and the Poetry Slam, and decide who will do them.

Ask the participants to work in small groups or independently, depending on their Poetry Slam role(s), to accomplish a final, detailed plan and move the plan forward. Provide newsprint and markers to groups that need them. At the end of the workshop, participants will reconvene as one group to smooth out rough spots in the overall plan and assign any outstanding jobs.

Use this template to create the small groups:

<b>SMALL GROUP</b>	<b>GOALS FOR TODAY</b>
	Fine-tune your own poems.
	Choose poems by other poets.
Poetry writers, readers, and performers	Practice how you will read or perform the poem(s). Provide the title, author, and reader/performer(s) of your poem to the Production Crew.
	Provide audio/visual needs to the Production Crew.

Publicity Planners	<p>Write and design a flyer or other publicity for the event.</p> <p>For the flyer, gather information about the poems, poets, reader/performers, and fundraising activity if the Poetry Slam includes a fundraiser.</p> <p>Photocopy the flyer or make a plan to do so.</p> <p>Make a plan for distributing the flyer.</p> <p>Write and design an Event Program to hand out at the event.</p> <p>For the Event Program, gather information about the poems, poets, reader/performers, and fundraising activity if the Poetry Slam includes a fundraiser. Be sure to include "special thanks" to everyone outside the program group who is helping with or contributing to the Poetry Slam in any way.</p>
Production Crew (includes emcee)	<p>Find out the audio/visual requirements of people performing poetry; strategize what equipment you need; make a plan for how to get it and who will operate it at the event.</p> <p>Remember to locate a microphone. You may need to ask a member of the congregation who routinely handles the sound system to help with this.</p> <p>Strategize how to set up and decorate the space for the event: Where will you locate seating? What will ushers do? Who will hand out programs? Who will operate the lighting?</p> <p>Make plans as needed to obtain food, tickets, or other items for sale.</p> <p>Decide how to provide information about the cause at the event: Will you produce a poster? Will you generate printouts from the Internet? Assign the tasks involved.</p>
Fundraising Team	<p>Decide who will be responsible for handling the money.</p> <p>Connect with the Publicity Planners and Production Crew to make sure the fundraising information is included in the Publicity Flyer and the Event Program.</p>
	<p>Circulate among the groups as participants work and make sure each group remains focused on its goals.</p>

### Including All Participants

Monitor small groups to make sure everyone who wishes to contribute has opportunities to do so.

## ACTIVITY 3: WHAT NEXT? (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Preparing for the Poetry Slam Review](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- To the extent that is permitted in your congregation, distribute participants' telephone numbers and e-mail addresses in order to facilitate the youths' preparation for the Poetry Slam. Alternatively, remind participants to gather the contact information they need.
- Photocopy Handout 1, Preparing for the Poetry Slam Review, one for each participant
- Throughout this activity, aim to capture and nurture participants' enthusiasm for staging and presenting their poetry. In the midst of detailed planning, the objectives and benefits of staging the Poetry Slam can be lost.

### Description of Activity

The entire group convenes in order to assign remaining tasks that are necessary to implement the public poetry event.

Gather the entire group. Ask one person from each small group to report on (a) the plans the group has made, (b) tasks yet to do and who will do them, and (c) what outside help the group needs.

Assign remaining jobs. Remind poetry readers/performers to rehearse.

Specify the time participants must arrive for the Poetry Slam. When planning when participants must arrive, allow enough time for readers/performers to practice using the microphone before the audience arrives. Note special concerns about the location or other logistics.

Lay the groundwork for post-event reflection by giving participants a preview of the reflection assignment they will complete after the Poetry Slam, during Workshop 15. The assignment's purpose is to help participants articulate their personal responses to the Poetry Slam. Distribute Handout 1, Preparing for the Poetry Slam Review. Emphasize that youth need not work on this at home; you are distributing the handout now so they are aware that you will ask them to reflect upon their experience at a later date. Inform participants that

Workshop 15 will also provide time for reflection upon the entire program.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- Singing the Living Tradition

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: PRACTICING THE CHORAL READING (40 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Poems submitted by the congregation
- Paper, pens or pencils, or computer and printer
- Optional: Copier

### Preparation for Activity

- Collect poems submitted by the congregation, in either hard copy or electronic form.

### Description of Activity

Participants blend pieces of poems into one poem to perform as a choral reading at the Poetry Slam.

Seek enough volunteers to each read one poem aloud. From each poem, have youth choose words, phrases, or entire lines because they like how they sound, they are central to the meaning of the poem, or for any reason at all. Remind participants that you will be using pieces of every contributed poem to construct a new, hybrid poem; each poem must be represented in your final choral reading, even if only by a single word. Youth must select words and phrases in a way that ensures everyone is heard and involved in the process. Be prepared for friendly arguments!

From among the participants, choose a "scribe" who has neat handwriting. Ask the scribe to write chosen words, phrases, and lines on newsprint.

Assemble a script from the chosen material. Then make performance decisions, such as:

- Decide who will recite each piece of the reading and the order in which the material will be recited. Each person's voice must be heard at some point in the choral reading. Will you use repetition in your performance? Will you vary the volume? Will you whisper? Shout? Sing? Will you overlap words?
- Will you add music? If so, what music will you use and who will bring it?
- Will the audience have a spoken part? If so, does the part need to be printed in the program or can it be easily learned during the performance?
- Think of the space in which you will perform: Where will you stand in relation to one another? Will you move within the space?

Your choral reading may not make sense or tell a story. However, do not be surprised if it does end up sounding cohesive and powerful.

Practice! You can use a script when you read, but run through the reading a few times to be sure everyone is comfortable with her/his part; when each voice comes in and whatever else you will each be doing.

Allow at least thirty minutes to prepare for rehearsal. As the youths work, observe and offer support. Before dispersing, review the jobs that still need doing. If you received permission to distribute copies of the original poems, how will you distribute copies? Will you produce an insert for the program? Who will make copies? Is there information that needs to be reported to the Production Crew or Publicity Planners? Are there audio-visual needs that require attention or props to be gathered? If participants appear uneasy, is another rehearsal possible?

### Including All Participants

To ensure inclusiveness and fair treatment, monitor the process by which the group decides who will do what in the choral reading. If your group is large, consider dividing it into teams. Each team would use an assigned portion of the chosen words to write a stanza.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Review all the plans for the Poetry Slam and, if applicable, the choral reading and fund-raiser. Decide who will contact others who play a key role in organizing and follow through by contacting them in the upcoming week. Especially ensure that someone informs congregational leaders and invites them to the

performance. Make sure you have extra copies of all materials, including original poems participants will read.

## TAKING IT HOME

A goal without a plan is just a wish.  
— Antoine de Saint-Exupery

### DURING TODAY'S WORKSHOP...

We continued planning for the Poetry Slam.

What I need to do before our next meeting is

---

What I need to bring to our next meeting is

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### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Is your role in the Poetry Slam one that both enables you to use the talents you have and challenges you to grow in a new way?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- Do not forget to include your family in your plans for the Poetry Slam. Ask for their help if you need it. Family and friends can help by listening to you read aloud. They can donate food if refreshments are part of the plan. Most of all, they can be a supportive audience. Make sure the Poetry Slam is on your family calendar.
- Does your family say grace before meals? If so, consider using poems for the grace. Family members can take turns choosing poems to share. If you have young children in your family who are not yet readers, spend time reading poems to them and help them learn a short one to recite as grace.
- Wordplay, like writing poetry, can provide creative enjoyment. Invite your family to try playing with magnetic words. [Magnetic Poetry](http://www.magneticpoetry.com/) (at [www.magneticpoetry.com/](http://www.magneticpoetry.com/)) is a website that sells magnets of words or phrases that you can randomly place on your refrigerator, metal filing cabinet, or any other metal surface. You can create your own magnets by laminating words on paper and gluing them to pieces of magnetic strips sold at craft stores. When the mood strikes you, arrange the magnets into poems. You can leave messages on your friends' lockers at school, but nothing too personal! You can also use the magnets to leave messages for family members. Combine the need for a message with a desire to create art:

A poet deep within my soul,

To write, the chance I seize.  
If going to the market  
Be sure to pick up cheese.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: RAINY DAY PLAN (50 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Poetry anthologies suitable for youth (see Find Out More for suggestions)

### Preparation for Activity

- If planning on reading outside, find a suitable spot that will not disturb other groups. Consider bringing blankets, pillows, and special snacks to make the event festive.

### Description of Activity

If your group is not planning to hold a Poetry Slam, use this workshop in one or both of the following ways;

**My Favorite Poem:** Ask each participant to bring a favorite poem from their childhood to read to the group. After each reading, discuss the possible differences in interpretation that readers made as children versus those made as youth.

**Reading on the Green:** Taking your poetry outside combines two great joys: the appreciation of poetry and the out-of-doors. Special snacks will turn the event into a picnic. You might let youth read to themselves from poetry anthologies. You could invite youth to bring poetry on a certain theme: the current season, nature, UU poets, or the like. You could also combine My Favorite Poem with Reading on the Green. Just have fun.

### Including All Participants

If you choose to go outside, make sure your space is accessible to both regular participants and anyone who might visit.

## **EXPLORING OUR VALUES THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 13: HANDOUT 1: PREPARING FOR THE POETRY SLAM REVIEW**

*During the final workshop of this program, your leaders will ask you to reflect on your Poetry Slam experience. This handout will get your thinking started about what you might write at that time; you do not need to do the assignment until then.*

Choose one of the following ways to reflect upon the Poetry Slam:

- Prepare a one page, journal-style response to planning and presenting the Poetry Slam.
- Write a poem about the experience of presenting poetry, from the perspective of either a reader/performer or an organizer responsible for another aspect of the Poetry Slam.
- Write three to five open-ended questions you would like to ask an audience member after the poetry event. Yes/No questions such as "Did you like it?" are not allowed!

You may choose to provide reflection by any of the three options. To reiterate, you do not need to work on this at home; your leaders will provide time during the final workshop to complete the assignment.

## FIND OUT MORE

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Gary Mex Glazner, ed. *Poetry Slam: The Competitive Art of Performance Poetry*. San Francisco: Manic D Press, 2000.

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Roman, Camille, Thomas Travisano, and Steven Gould Axelrod, eds. *New Anthology of American Poetry*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

# WORKSHOP 14: THE POETRY SLAM

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*A poet who reads his verse in public  
may have other nasty habits.*  
— Robert Heinlein

Today is the big day: the Poetry Slam performance. You have checked and double-checked your list. You have talked to your co-leader and youth who are playing pivotal roles to make sure they are ready. If you are including a fund-raiser at the event, do not forget to confer with those organizers. Eventually, all that will be left to do is to have a great time.

Instead of an Opening, this workshop has a Gathering and Focus activity. There is no Closing.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Honor our spirits, creativity, and craftsmanship by sharing our poems with others
- Implement a public performance of poetry, and experience its impact
- Optional: Contribute individual and collective energy toward fund-raising to help others in the wider community

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Entertain
- Connect with the congregation through the sharing of ideas/reflections

- Gift the congregation with a live performance while making use of their individual talents
- Optional: Use their talents to raise money to help those in need

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Activity 1: Gathering and Focus	10
Activity 2: Poetry Slam!	50
Closing	5
Faith in Action: Performing the Choral Reading	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

You have worked hard to bring the participants to this point. Before their performance they are bound to be anxious. Your role as a "nonanxious" presence will be very important. How do you get to a place of relative calm within yourself? What helps you keep things in perspective? Some people find it useful to visualize an event before it happens. To do this, get comfortable in a place where you do not expect distractions. Close your eyes and visualize this workshop, from the Opening you have prepared, through the performances, to afterward when you will receive everyone's heartfelt congratulations and give participants your own. Know down deep in your heart that you can deal with any obstacles. Know that youth can look to you to help them shine... and go do it!

# WORKSHOP PLAN

## OPENING

*a space where our audience can truly listen.*

### Materials for Activity

Chalice and matches

### Description of Activity

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "perform." Invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "perform." When enough time has passed for everyone who wishes to speak to do so, close by saying,

*May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.*

Introduce today's workshop with these words,

*In this program, we have tasted the experiences of reading, hearing, writing, and sharing poetry. Congratulations for finding the openness, creativity, and gameness of spirit to take your personal exploration of poetry this far. Today we will turn our attention outward in order to plan a public poetry event.*

*You may have discovered already that the more invested you are in a poem, the more you care how others respond to it. When a poem speaks from our own hearts, we certainly hope for a gentle, appreciative, energized, or otherwise positive response. Today let us shape our Poetry Slam in a way that encourages listeners to receive our poems with the open hearts that our own hearts desire and deserve.*

*We can simply read our poems aloud. We can include music. Our Poetry Slam can be a free-admission event or a fund-raiser or it can include a fundraiser like a bake sale. In the open mike tradition of the beatniks, anyone can stand up and recite his/her own work. In the poetry slam tradition that began in the 1990s, performing poets compete before judges. Our Poetry Slam will draw from both traditions, by being a non-competitive, planned piece of performance art. Today we will choose the poems we want to share and design*

## ACTIVITY 1: GATHERING AND FOCUSING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches
- Microphones and sound system

### Preparation for Activity

- Make sure microphones are live.

### Description of Activity

Participants receive guidance before the Poetry Slam to help them gather their energies for the event, focus on their roles, and observe their own responses.

Take attendance; in the event of a participant's absence, re-delegate roles as needed. Solve last-minute crises. Allow readers a minute to practice with the microphone.

Remind participants to be mindful of their own experiences during this event, to help them form their thoughts for the reflection activity you will do in the next workshop.

Have everyone come together for a quiet moment, to gather group energy. You may use the Opening designed by the group or the one below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "fun." Invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "fun." When everyone who wishes to has had a chance to speak, close by saying, "Go out and have fun!"

## ACTIVITY 2: POETRY SLAM! (50 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of poems to be read
- Microphones and sound system
- Printed program of readers
- Optional: Other audio-visual equipment and props as needed

### Description of Activity

Perform the Poetry Slam.

## Including All Participants

Remind participants to use the microphone for all readings, even if they think they have a voice that can be heard without amplification.

## CLOSING

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice
- Singing the Living Tradition

### Description of Activity

Use the Closing designed by your group or the one provided below.

Recite together Reading 712 from *Singing the Living Tradition*:

*Do not be conformed to this world,  
But be transformed by the renewing of  
your minds.*  
— Romans 12

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: PERFORMING THE CHORAL READING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Props, costumes, or music that the group planned to use
- Copies of the choral reading script

### Preparation for Activity

- Make enough copies of the choral reading script for each reader to have one
- If additional rehearsal time is needed, plan to meet thirty minutes before the scheduled gathering time for the Poetry Slam and run through the choral reading a couple of times.

### Description of Activity

Perform the choral reading. If the group decided to include a spoken part for the audience, announce this at the beginning of the performance. Refer the audience to their part, which should be printed in the program unless it is short enough to be remembered. Remember to acknowledge the congregants who contributed poems.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

You all did it! Take a deep breath. Thank your co-leader for her/his help in the process. The next workshop is your final meeting with the group. Go over the activities, deciding who will lead which ones. If there is anything you want to share with the group and have not yet found the time to do so, make sure you plan to include that in the next workshop.

## TAKING IT HOME

A poet who reads his verse in public may have other nasty habits.

— Robert Heinlein

### DURING TODAY'S SESSION...

POETRY SLAM!

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

How does your experience with the Poetry Slam compare to other performances of which you have been a part?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

- In preparation for Workshop 14, read Handout 1, Preparing for the Poetry Slam Review, that was distributed during Workshop 12.
- The Heinlein quote is a humorous remark concerning poetry readings. It often helps to keep a sense of humor about performances. Think about your experience of the Poetry Slam. Were you nervous? Did you make a mistake? Did you feel the audience was responsive? Was there any part of your experience that was funny or amusing? People often say that experience is a great teacher. What has this experience taught you?

## FIND OUT MORE

**Youth Speaks Online** is the nation's leading non-profit presenter of spoken word performance, education, and youth development programs.

Gary Mex Glazner, ed. *Poetry Slam: The Competitive Art of Performance Poetry*. San Francisco: Manic D Press, 2000.

**POETRY ANTHOLOGIES:** There are literally hundreds of poetry anthologies. Availability will be a factor in which ones you use. Before bringing any resources to the group, make sure the content is appropriate for youth. Look for violent images, sexual or other inappropriate language, mature situations, and

stereotyping. Aim for ethnic, racial, gender, and cultural diversity. Consider asking a local youth librarian for suggestions. Here are a few anthologies to consider:

Cosman, Carol, Joan Keefe, and Kathleen Weaver, eds. *The Penguin Book of Women Poets*. New York: Penguin Books, 1978.

Collins, Billy, ed. *Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry*. New York: Random House, 2003.

Reed, Ishmael, ed. *From Totems to Hip Hop: A Multicultural Anthology of Poetry Across the Americas 1900-2002*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002.

Roman, Camille, Thomas Travisano, and Steven Gould Axelrod, eds. *New Anthology of American Poetry*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

# WORKSHOP 15: TO TELL THE TALE

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*A poem is never finished, only abandoned.*  
— [Paul Valery](#) (at [www.worldofquotes.com/author/Paul-Valery/1/index.html](http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/Paul-Valery/1/index.html)), French critic and poet

This workshop provides the opportunity for review and reflection. Feel free to add an element of celebration to this final workshop by bringing food and drink or sharing photographs or a videotape of the Poetry Slam.

### GOALS

The workshop will:

- Allow participants to reflect upon the Poetry Slam experience and integrate what they learned
- Allow leaders to collect feedback on the program

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Give voice to their experience of the Poetry Slam
- Shape the future of Exploring Our Values through Poetry by evaluating the program
- Give thanks to those who helped them with the performance

### WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Poetry Slam Review	40
Activity 2: Evaluations	10
Faith in Action: Choral Reading Review	20
Closing	5

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

This workshop will ask participants to reflect upon their experiences during the Poetry Slam performance and the program as a whole. Take time before the workshop to reflect upon your own experience. Use Handout 1, Exploring Our Values through Poetry Evaluation, included with this workshop or some other means of reflection. What has leading this program meant to you? Would you like to lead it again? What changes would you make? It may seem as though the program is comprised of words on paper or a computer screen, words that describe activities, materials, and goals. Actually, the program is a living, breathing entity that you, the participants, and the words themselves created together. As such, the program will be different every time you facilitate it. You can control some elements of the program, but not others. If there are parts of the program you wish you had led differently, forgive yourself for not doing so. If there are parts you feel were successful, allow yourself to experience the joy of those moments.

## WORKSHOP PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and matches

#### Description of Activity

Use the Opening designed by your group or the one provided below.

Gather around the chalice. As a volunteer lights the chalice, ask the group to focus on the word "closure." Invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the word "closure." When everyone who wishes to has had a chance to speak, close by saying,

May the space we create here today be wide enough to hold all our individual ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for new beginnings.

### ACTIVITY 1: POETRY SLAM REVIEW (40 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Journals
- Pens or pencils
- Blank thank-you cards
- Postage stamps (optional)

#### Preparation for Activity

- To add a celebratory note to this final meeting, consider having refreshments. Program leaders can either provide them or ask families in advance to contribute food and drink. If congregational policies allow such actions, you can consider meeting in a nearby coffeehouse or restaurant.
- Write the following choices of means of review on newsprint:
  - Prepare a one page, journal-style response to planning and presenting the Poetry Slam.
  - Write a poem about the experience of presenting poetry, from the perspective of either a reader/performer or an organizer responsible for another aspect of the Poetry Slam.

- Write three to five open-ended questions you would like to ask an audience member after the poetry event. Yes/No questions such as "Did you like it?" are not allowed!

#### Description of Activity

Participants evaluate the Poetry Slam experience.

Direct participants to gather, and make sure everyone has their journal and a pencil or pen. Explain that although it is natural to want to analyze the poems and the event itself, this writing exercise is intended to give participants a chance to describe their personal experiences, not make judgments; to express their feelings, not their opinions.

Read the writing choices aloud. Ask participants to choose one and start writing. Tell those who choose the second option that, regardless of their actual role in the event, they may write their poem from any perspective, except the audience's. After four or five minutes, ask participants if they would like to stop and share their thoughts or if they prefer more time to write. If participants wish, give them several more minutes to work.

Invite participants to read aloud part or all of what they have written. Thank each participant for contributing his/her reflections.

In follow-up conversation, explore what different people felt during the experience. Point out both shared and differing feelings. Deflect critiques of the poetry or the event itself. It may be hard to tell the difference between feelings and opinions; let the group help you.

Now invite the group to critique. Explain that "I didn't like..." is most useful when accompanied by a thoughtful "because..." Use these guide questions:

- How well did we honor our poems? In that regard, what worked and what did not?
- How well did we honor our audience and make it easy for its members to truly listen? What worked and what did not?
- Did we feel a connection between the poems and the audience? Were the poems truly heard? Why?

Thank everyone for participating in the Poetry Slam and for the openness, creativity, and responsibility they contributed to the entire project. Invite participants to write thank-you notes to anyone who was not involved in the workshop but played a significant role in supporting

the Poetry Slam. If mailing is necessary, assign someone to mail the thank-you cards.

## ACTIVITY 2: EVALUATIONS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Exploring Our Values through Poetry Evaluation](#) (included in this document)
- Pens
- Journals

### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, Exploring Our Values through Poetry Evaluation, one for each participant.

### Description of Activity

Thank participants for the work you shared together. Ask participants to complete and return the handout. Remind the youth to take their journals home.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice

### Description of Activity

Gather around the chalice. Ask the group to focus on the words "exploring Our Values through poetry." Invite participants to speak freely into the space a word or two that they associate with the words "exploring our values through poetry." When everyone who wishes to has had a chance to speak, close by saying,

May the space we have created within ourselves by the work done here be wide enough to hold all our collective ideas and deep enough to allow those ideas to grow, to fruit, and to provide seeds for our new beginnings.

Extinguish the chalice.

## FAITH IN ACTION: CHORAL READING REVIEW (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Thank-you notes and pens
- Optional: Postage stamps

### Description of Activity

Discuss the youths' experiences of creating and performing a choral reading. Use these questions:

- What was this experience like?

- How did the use of poem fragments destroy, enhance, or otherwise change the meaning or impact of each original poem?
- Identify moments when fragments complemented each other or seemed to clash
- What does it feel like to take the poems out of their original context on the printed page and into the realm of audio and movement? Do the poems seem "liberated"? What qualities do they have in the choral reading that their printed forms lack?

Spend the rest of the time writing thank-you notes to everyone who submitted poetry for the choral reading. Assign someone to deliver or mail the notes. Provide stamps if mailing.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Find time to celebrate with your co-leaders and reflect upon the entire program experience. The information from the evaluations should help you. The religious educator in your congregation might appreciate your comments on how the semester progressed.

## TAKING IT HOME

A poem is never finished, only abandoned.

— [Paul Valery](#) (at [www.worldofquotes.com/author/Paul-Valery/1/index.html](http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/Paul-Valery/1/index.html)), French critic and poet

### DURING TODAY'S SESSION...

We reviewed the experiences of the Poetry Slam, fundraiser, and Choral Reading. We evaluated the overall program.

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Which poems from the program were your favorites and why?

### EXPLORE THE TOPICS FURTHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS...

If you enjoyed writing poetry during these workshops, commit to writing as a spiritual practice. Using the journal you used in the workshops (or a new one), write a poem or verse that addresses your reflections on daily living. Rituals set best when you do them at the same time each day, so choose a good time to journal and stick to your schedule.

Two books that might be helpful are:

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986.

McDowell, Robert. *Poetry as Spiritual Practice*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2008.

**EXPLORING OUR VALUES  
THROUGH POETRY: WORKSHOP 15:  
HANDOUT 1: EXPLORING OUR  
VALUES THROUGH POETRY  
EVALUATION**

*Please complete the evaluation form and return it to a workshop leader.*

My favorite part of Exploring Our Values through Poetry was ...

My least favorite part of Exploring Our Values through Poetry was ...

I wish we had more time to ...

Something that would have made this program better is ...

When I started the program, I felt ...

After completing the program, I feel ...

## **FIND OUT MORE**

Two books that might be useful to youth who decide to write poetry as a spiritual practice:

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986.

McDowell, Robert. *Poetry as Spiritual Practice*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2008.