

Philosophy of Religious Education Renaissance Module

LEADER'S GUIDE



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Introduction

Rationale

Unitarian Universalist religious education needs to be reinvented afresh for every era. This workshop is based on the belief that we need to re-examine the philosophies that served us well in the past and incorporate new research and new philosophies of religious education that expand and deepen our understandings. A changing world affects all of us, especially our children and youth. New theories of human development suggest that there may be new ways of meeting spiritual, ethical, and educational needs.

Religious education philosophy-making needs to be done not just by a few experts, but by everyone who participates in religious education. Each person operates on some de facto religious education philosophy. By becoming aware of it and examining it in light of others' views, we become empowered to act intentionally on our values and goals.

This workshop provides some opportunities to consider basic questions that are posed by theologians and educators. But it is just a beginning; leaders and participants are invited to return often to these basic questions, and to re-examine and re-vision individual and collective philosophies of Unitarian Universalist religious education.

Learning Objectives

- Increased knowledge of foundational questions of religious education: what, when, who, where, how, and why
- Increased ability to articulate one's own religious faith and religious education philosophy
- Increased clarity about the purposes of lifespan religious education

- Increased comfort and competence in sharing a philosophy of religious education with teachers and parents
- Increased comfort and competence applying new knowledge, worship processes, and educational awareness in the congregation

Reader

The participant reader for this module is *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education* (Boston: Skinner House, 2001). It is best if participants obtain the book in time to read at least these ten essays before the module:

- Andrews, “Educating for Faith”
- Hoertdoerfer, “Religion as Relationship”
- Harrison (Devine), “Youth Groups as a Model for Transformative Ministry”
- Nelson, “The Teacher as Spiritual Guide”
- Bowens-Wheatley, “Toward Wholeness and Liberation”
- Parker, “Education as Liberation”
- Morriss, “Doorway to the Sacred”
- Tolley, “Child’s Play”
- Frediani, “Making Sure There Is a There There”
- Smith, “Taking Our Children Seriously”

Supplies and Resource Materials

- Reusable name tags
- Masking tape
- Clear tape
- Scissors for leaders
- Large newsprint pad (at least 50 sheets)
- Easel
- Markers (for newsprint and for participant activities)

- Lined paper and pens
- Worship supplies (chalice, candles, altar cloth, table, etc.)
- CD player
- Bell or chime for indicating time periods
- List of participants' names and addresses
- Copies of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*, and its supplement, *Singing the Journey*; one for each participant, if possible
- Index cards
- Computer, projector, and screen for every session
- PowerPoint slides (available on the [UUA website](#))

Leader Preparation

- Read *Essex Conversations* with attention to the major themes of the essays.
- Be thoroughly familiar with the content and process of this Leader's Guide. Review the PowerPoint slides.
- Email a welcoming letter to participants.
 - Include the links to the participant guide (Philosophy of Religious Education Renaissance Module: A Guide to the Reader) and the handouts for this module.
 - Tell participants they are responsible for obtaining a copy of *Essex Conversations* and for printing their own copies of the participant guide and handouts.
- Do what you need to do to feel comfortable in your role as a leader committed to delivering an intensive program, in a limited time, with attention to relationship and creativity among all participants.

List of Handouts

Session 1

- 1 Introduction to Renaissance and RE Credentialing
- 2 Preparation for Module Evaluation
- 3 Group Covenant
- 4 The Religious Education Philosophy Module
- 5 Session Topics
- 6 The Essex Conversations: Introduction and Overview

Session 2

- 7 Faith Stages According to Fowler
- 8 Integration of Developmental Characteristics
- 9 Women's Different Voices
- 10 Tough Terms
- 11 More Tough Terms
- 12 Unitarian Universalist Principles

Session 3

- 13 Dewey and Progressive Education
- 14 Fahs and MacLean
- 15 Channing and Freire
- 16 Multiple Intelligences

Session 4

- 17 John Westerhoff: Modes/Dimensions of Consciousness
- 18 Bibliography (2002)

List of PowerPoint Slides

Session 1

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Introductions
- 3 Affirmation
- 4 Getting to Know You

- 5 Renaissance Program
- 6 Focused Conversations
- 7 Religious Education Is...
- 8 Essex Conversations Questions
- 9 Essex Conversations
- 10 Focused Conversation – WHAT?
- 11 WHAT is religious education?

Session 2

- 12 I Believe, I Feel, I Act
- 13 Fowler's Faith Development Theory
- 14 Faith Stages and Group Portraits
- 15 Tough Terms for UUs
- 16 Focused Conversation – WHEN?
- 17 WHEN does religious education take place?

Session 3

- 18 Who?
- 19 William Ellery Channing
- 20 John Dewey
- 21 Channing, Dewey
- 22 Sophia Lyon Fahs
- 23 Angus MacLean
- 24 Fahs, MacLean
- 25 Recent Eras
- 26 Influences from Larger Culture
- 27 Parents as Religious Educators
- 28 Focused Conversation – WHO?
- 29 WHO influences religious education?

Session 4

- 30 Where is religious education?
- 31 John Westerhoff
- 32 Maria Harris
- 33 Focused Conversation – WHERE?

- 34 WHERE does religious education occur?
- 35 Communities of Memory and Hope
- 36 Focused Conversation – WHY?
- 37 WHY do we do what we do?

Session 5

- 38 Focused Conversation – HOW?
- 39 HOW do we go about it?
- 40 Visioning: Taking It Home
- 41 Why: Mythical Religious Education Committees
- 42 Closing

Note: If you decide to insert optional “[break slides](#)” into your PowerPoint,” the number sequence of your Renaissance module slides will shift.

SESSION 1: What Is Religious Education?

Session-at-a-Glance

Opening Worship	10 minutes
Introduction of Participants and Schedule	35 minutes
Overview of the Module	15 minutes
“Religious Education Is...”	40 minutes
BREAK	10 minutes
Introduction to Essex Conversations	30 minutes
Focused Conversation on “What” Essex Papers	30 minutes
Closing	10 minutes

Total Time: 3 hours

Goals

- to build a sense of community
- to gain an overview of this module
- to invite participants to be open to new experiences
- to explore the nature of religious education
- to explore the meaning of “faith” and “religion” through discussion of the Essex conversations.

Preparation

Prepare newsprint sheets with the following information, or use slides:

- Six Foundational Questions (or use Handout 5, Session Topics)
- Module schedule
- Words for the ingathering exercise: "I'm _____ from _____ where I _____."
- Words for unison affirmation
- The label "Parking Lot"
- The label "Focused Conversation," as a participant sign-up sheet to form six small groups to facilitate discussions of What/When/Who/Where/Why/How of *Essex Conversations* essays
- The label "Ways to Participate," as a participant sign-up sheet to lead openings and closings, songs, energy breaks, etc.
- The three talking points of the Puzzle Activity: name, one person who influenced you religiously, and why you chose that person.

For the Puzzle Activity: prepare 3x5 index cards (one card for each two participants) by cutting them in half in different patterns.

Opening Worship (10 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: *Essex Conversations*

Description

Begin each session with a short worship element (a song or reading). If the session closes before a meal or at the end of a day, a closing could be added. After the first opening, encourage participants (individually or in pairs) to sign up and lead openings and closings. Tell participants that if they have marked excerpts from *Essex Conversations*, they may want to use them as readings for the appropriate session.

Suggested reading, from Jeanne Nieuwejaar's *Gift of Faith*:

Whether we wish it so or not, our children are religious, spiritual beings. From within their own magical selves they know feelings, intuitions, and impulses. From the people, stories, songs, and media of their environs they hear religious words and messages and see religious symbols and images. From the experiences of their daily living they encounter religious events. They see dry sticks sprout pulsing green leaves. They see the deer killed on the highway. They watch their teacher's tummy grow round with new life, and bid farewell to their uncle dying of AIDS. From the demands of their living and growing in the world they face situations that require from them a religious decision, response, or interpretation. They cannot choose whether they will be religious, but we can choose how and to what extent we will support, guide, and celebrate this dimension of their nature.

Suggested song: "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" (Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition*) or "Gathered Here in the Mystery of the Hour" (Hymn 389).

Introduction of Participants and Schedule (35 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 1, Welcome
- Slide 2, Introductions
- Slide 3, Affirmations
- Slide 4, Getting to Know You
- Prepared newsprint sheets
- Index cards for puzzle activity

Preparation

- Invite the local organizer or host to attend this activity to explain information about the meeting site.

Description

Display Slide 1 and briefly go over the module schedule printed on newsprint. Invite questions.

Introduce the local organizer or host and have them explain arrangements for home hospitality and meals, as well as information about the site—bathrooms, parking restrictions, etc.

Make any other announcements, including calling for volunteers to lead focused conversations on *Essex Conversations* essays, worship leaders, and energy break leaders for each session. Point out the newsprint sheets for “Focused Conversations,” “Ways to Participate,” and the “Parking Lot” (for unfinished business, questions to be addressed later, etc.). Mention that other details of the module will be covered under Overview of the Module.

As a way of getting to know each other, display Slide 2 and invite participants to introduce themselves in the following way: “I’m _____ from _____ where I _____.”

When this exercise is complete, leaders should each introduce themselves more fully.

When everyone has finished with introductions, lead the group in this unison affirmation on Slide 3:

We celebrate ourselves.

We celebrate our being together.

We celebrate our being together here.

We celebrate our being together here in a spirit of learning.

Blessed be!

Pass out the index card halves you have prepared for the puzzle activity, making sure there is only one pair for every two participants. (If you prefer, you may use some other way to break participants into pairs.) Say something like this:

You are helping to shape the futures of children, youth, and adults. It is not important that you be professionally accredited teachers or even experienced religious educators. What is important is that you are willing to encourage participants' questions and searching, and that you are willing to share part of yourself and your own search, beliefs, and values in a positive way. You are role models for the children, youth, and adults in your religious community.

All of you have come to a Unitarian Universalist congregation from different paths; you are willing to engage in religious education for a variety of reasons. Perhaps some of you grew up as Unitarian Universalists and valued the experience. You want other children to have the same kind of experience. Perhaps some of you are excited about exploring specific curricula and Unitarian Universalist experiences in religious education. Perhaps you thrive on contact with children and feel personally fulfilled working with them. Whatever your reason, welcome. We are community.

Now let us get to know each other better, religiously.

Display Slide 4 with the three talking points (name, one person who influenced you religiously, and why you chose that person). Ask participants to find the person who has their matching index card puzzle piece. Invite them to take a few moments to reflect on the talking points and then to share their responses with their partner. Tell them that each person will introduce their partner to the group on the basis of this conversation.

Note that the person who influenced them religiously might be from a religious, secular, familial, or public context—a church school teacher, minister, friend,

parent, relative, public figure, etc. What character traits and qualities made them influential?

Allow ten minutes for this sharing, approximately five minutes per person. Let the group know when five minutes has passed, and ask them to switch speakers, if they have not already done so.

Invite participants to come back to the large group and briefly introduce their partners (one minute each).

Overview of the Module (15 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 5, Renaissance Program
- Slide 6, Focused Conversations
- Handout 1, Introduction to Renaissance and RE Credentialing
- Handout 2, Preparation for Module Evaluation
- Handout 3, Group Covenant
- Handout 4, The Religious Education Philosophy Module
- Handout 5, Session Topics
- Handout 6, The Essex Conversations: Introduction and Overview

Description

Display Slide 5. Review Handout 1, Introduction to Renaissance and RE Credentialing, and Handout 2, Preparation for Module Evaluation.

Ask: “For whom is this the first module? Who has taken five modules? For whom will this be the fifth module? Who has taken all currently available modules?”

Ask participants to look at Handout 3, Group Covenant. The practice of establishing a covenant is essential for groups that come together for a limited time. Ask participants to review the covenant to see if there is anything they would

add; if so, record the additions on newsprint. End by reading the covenant together, including any additions on the newsprint, asking individuals to read the various parts of the covenant and everyone to read the responses.

Ask participants to take out Handout 4, The Religious Education Philosophy Module, and go through it together.

Invite participants to turn to Handouts 5 and 6, and briefly point out the topics and the ten essays integral to this module. Add something like this:

It is important to remember that these questions and their answers overlap. For example, “What Is Religious Education?” can easily become “Why Religious Education?” We will be using these questions to help organize our thinking in developing a philosophy of religious education, but we need to remember that they are not really completely separate categories.

Display Slide 6 and explain the “Focused Conversations” process by saying something like this:

To fulfill the requirements of this module, you are asked to join a small group and provide collective leadership around the two (or more) Essex Conversations essays which are organized around the topics of the sessions. The Focused Conversation time is 30 minutes and you can use it for presentation, small group work, and/or large group sharing.

Religious Education Is... (40 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 7, Religious Education Is...
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Description

Display Slide 7 and write “What is Unitarian Universalism?” on newsprint. Explain that we will begin with, “What is Unitarian Universalism?” and go on to ask, “What is religious education?” Write this second question on the newsprint. Do a brief word association/brainstorm with “Unitarian Universalism” to launch the group in the following experiences. (Save the newsprint for Session 5.)

Invite participants to develop their own concise statement of what religious education is. Suggest that they might like to begin by writing “For me, religious education is _____” several times as a first step, completing the sentence each time. Encourage them to work quickly, as if brainstorming, not stopping to polish or critique their ideas. Then after gathering a number of ideas, they can pull the most pertinent ones together into a sentence or short paragraph.

When several participants seem finished or you sense the need to move on, invite individuals to join together in groups of four to share and discuss their statements.

Regather the whole group and invite participants to share reflections on the process of considering the nature of religious education. (Note that you are *not* asking them to share their definitions.) You might ask:

- How was the experience? Any discoveries?
- Which was easier, brainstorming or writing the concise statement?
- After hearing others’ definitions, do you want to refine your statement further?

Invite participants to reflect further in their journals before going to bed or upon rising.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Introduction to Essex Conversations (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 8, Essex Conversations Questions
- Slide 9, Essex Conversations
- *Essex Conversations*
- Handout 6, The Essex Conversations: Introduction and Overview
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation

- Prepare newsprint for each small group.

Description

Ideally, participants will have read at least the ten critical essays in *Essex Conversations* before the module. Given the realities of late registrations and so forth, this may not always be the case. You may want to poll the participants quickly to find out how much they have read.

Say something like this:

A little more than 25 years ago, Unitarian Universalist religious educators and other leaders gathered at the Stone House Club in Rhode Island to answer the question, "What is our vision for liberal religious education?" Their reflections, published as The Stone House Conversations, were part of an Association-wide process to determine our needs for new religious education curricula and other resources. This process also included the creation of the Religious Education Futures Committee and the reorganization of the UUA Department of Religious Education. The Stone House Conversations served to inform and inspire discussions of religious education issues for many years.

More recently, as our movement prepared to enter a new millennium, it was clear that it was time once again to evaluate our religious education programs and to develop new approaches and resources. In the spring of 1998, a coordinating committee was formed, composed of the Rev. Makanah E. Morriss and the Rev. Patricia Hoertdoerfer from the UUA Religious Education Department, the Rev. Dr. Susan Harlow from the Sophia Fahs Center at Meadville Lombard Theological School, and the Rev. Frances Manly representing the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA). (Makanah Morriss was later replaced by the Rev. Lena Breen, her successor as director of the RE Department.) The committee set to work to organize a new convocation of UU religious leaders to address these challenges and to provide a vision for the future of UU religious education.

A total of 32 religious leaders from across the continent participated in one of the two conversations held in April 1999 and April 2000. They included ministers, lay religious educators, representatives of congregations and UU theological schools, and UUA staff. Each participant presented a paper responding to three questions [display Slide 8]:

- 1. As we enter the 21st century, what is the core of our evolving Unitarian Universalist faith?*
- 2. What is your vision of the goals for our lifespan religious education?*
- 3. What are the vital components for Unitarian Universalist curricula?*

The papers were presented at each gathering, followed by small and large group discussion of each one. Each group devoted a session to assimilating what they had learned from one another and considering ways to continue the conversation and sustain reflection on these important questions.

Now that the papers from the Essex conversations have been published, we are all a part of the conversation. What we are doing together in this module, and the conversations that will continue after you go home, are part of a valuable process that will be continued in our congregations.

Divide participants into groups of about four people (different from the previous groups). Invite them to recall their reading from *Essex Conversations* and to work together to list the main themes they noticed, especially in response to the second and third *Essex Conversations* questions (goals and components). Encourage them to use the table of contents of the book, as well as Handout 6, to remind themselves of their reading. Display Slide 9 and ask them to record on newsprint themes they have identified, and to designate someone to be the reporter for their group.

Post the newsprint sheets around the room, and have each small group share its list. Note similarities and additions as they are mentioned. Invite reflection on the similarities and differences between these lists and the definitions of religious education produced by participants in the previous exercise.

Focused Conversation on “What” Essex Papers (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 10, Focused Conversation – WHAT?
- Slide 11, WHAT is religious education?
- Participant journals and pens/pencils

Description

Review the “Focused Conversation” process by saying something like this:

To fulfill the requirements of this module you are asked to join a small group and provide collective leadership around the two (or more) Essex

Conversations essays which are organized around the topics of the sessions. The Focused Conversation time is 30 minutes and you can use it for presentation, small group work, and/or large group sharing.

Explain that the leaders will facilitate this first Focused Conversation.

Subsequently, Focused Conversations will be facilitated by small groups of participants who will collectively design their presentation to engage the whole group in a discussion of specific *Essex Conversations* essays. Remind participants to sign up for a Focused Conversation.

Show Slide 10 and 11 and facilitate the “What” Focused Conversation, using these discussion questions or others you develop:

- In his paper “Educating for Faith,” Barry Andrews includes spirituality and religious identity in his definition of faith. How does he define “spirituality” and “religious identity,” and the relationship between the two? In our lifespan learning communities, how can we help individuals of all ages develop their faith? What is the author's vision of religious education for the coming years? What are some of the challenges he articulates for educating in faith?
- In “Religion as Relationship,” Pat Hoerdoerfer promotes a model of education using the image of a spiral of dynamic, interacting, interconnecting relationships. What relationships does she feel need to be developed and tended to in our lifespan religious education programs? What is the relationship of the values the author espouses with the Principles and Sources of our UU faith? What is her vision for UU religious education in the next few decades? What challenges would we need to address to truly educate for religion as relationship in our congregations?

Following this discussion, invite participants to spend a few minutes journaling about the meaning of the words “faith” and “religion” and the relationship between community and education. Then ask participants to form groups of three to discuss their ideas. Encourage them to reflect on the similarities and differences

between the authors' ideas and their own. If time permits, invite sharing of insights in the large group.

Note: The extent to which participants can discuss the content of the essays (the first part of this Focused Conversation) will depend on how many have actually read them. Even those who have not read the essays can participate fully in the discussion of the concepts of faith and religion. You may need to adjust time allotments accordingly.

Closing (10 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Description

Suggested song: "Go Now in Peace" (Hymn 413 in *Singing the Living Tradition*) if the session is at the end of a day, or another song of your choosing.

SESSION 2: When Does Religious Education Take Place?

Session-at-a-Glance

Opening Worship	5 minutes
Faith: I Believe, I Feel, I Act	30 minutes
Fowler's Faith Development Theory	20 minutes
Faith Stages and Group Portraits	50 minutes
BREAK	10 minutes
Tough Terms for UUs	30 minutes
Focused Conversation on "When" Essex Papers	30 minutes
Closing	5 minutes

Total Time: 3 hours

Goals

- to continue group building
- to understand and critique Fowler's stages of faith development
- to explore developmental theories and their relevance to religious education
- to consider the meanings and implications of religious terms that may be challenging to Unitarian Universalists

Opening Worship (5 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Description

Suggested song: “Love Will Guide Us” (Hymn 131 in *Singing the Living Tradition*).

Faith: I Believe, I Feel, I Act (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 12, I Believe, I Feel, I Act
- Handout 10, Tough Terms
- Participant journals and pens/pencils
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Description

Introduce this section by saying:

Participants in the Essex conversations were asked first to attempt to define “the core of our evolving Unitarian Universalist faith” as a basis for answering the specific questions about religious education. To understand the WHAT and WHEN of a religious education philosophy, we too need to explore the meaning of our faith. At the same time, “faith” is a word that some Unitarian Universalists find difficult to use or define in terms of liberal religion. Let’s begin with a quick exercise to help us get a sense of where we are with this word.

Invite participants to line up along a continuum from one end of the space to the other. One end of the continuum is for those who are very comfortable using the word “faith” in reflecting on their own religious experience. The other end is for those who do not use the word, or are uncomfortable using it, or feel that it does not apply to liberal religion. When all the participants have found their places,

invite volunteers from each end and from near the middle to explain briefly what the word “faith” means to them, and why they are comfortable or uncomfortable using it.

Regather the group in a circle and continue by saying:

There are many different definitions of faith. For our purposes here, I suggest that we might consider faith as having more than one dimension. I'd like us to think of faith in three senses: a world view, a loyalty of one's heart, and a way of life. This threefold definition of faith—cognitive, affective, and behavioral—will form the framework of our next learning activity. But first, let's consider the various ways different theologians have defined faith.

Refer to Handout 10, Tough Terms, and offer a brief presentation about faith using some of the following ideas:

- Faith and its meaning are always in a state of change. People give up old faiths and embrace new faiths.
- Paul Tillich, in *Dynamics of Faith*, defines faith as “the state of being ultimately concerned. The dynamics of faith are the dynamics of a [person's] ultimate concern.”
- “Faith is often better understood as a verb than a noun, and as a process than as a possession,” says Frederick Buechner in *Wishful Thinking*.
- Faith development theorist James Fowler speaks of faith as a dynamic verb, as an active, not static, thing. He talks of “faithing,” something we do, a process of wrestling meaning from life, testing it through action, and subjecting it again and again to the scrutiny of our minds, to the leap of our hearts, to the reality of action.
- Psychologist Sam Keen, in *Life Maps: Conversations on the Journey of Faith*, looks at the developmental aspect of “faith as trust,” trust in the unfolding of life.

- Christian religious educator John Westerhoff defines faith as an expression of meaning revealed in a person’s lifestyle, or the foundation upon which people live their lives—that point of centeredness or ultimacy that underlies and is expressed abstractly in a world view and value system, in a person’s thought, feeling, and action.
- Catholic religious educator Thomas Groome suggests that faith is a lifelong developmental process involving the total person that addresses issues of ultimate concern, such as the meaning of life and death, the nature of being, the existence and nature of Deity, and the like.
- Faithing can occur among people who profess creeds and those who abhor them, in people who think of themselves as religious and those who see themselves as areligious.
- Faith can be defined in a threefold way: as “belief”—the cognitive (the best conclusions of our minds), as “feeling”—the affective (those allegiances of our hearts), or as “act”—the behavioral (those things we are willing to put our lives on the line for).

Explain that participants will now have the opportunity to explore the dimensions of their faith in the three ways mentioned. Display Slide 12, draw the following three columns on newsprint, and ask participants to draw them in their journals:

I BELIEVE	I FEEL	I ACT
(world view)	(loyalty of my heart)	(way of life)

Invite them to consider their faith in these terms. An example might be:

I believe the earth is a source of life.

I feel appreciation and gratitude for the gifts from our planet earth.

I act on my values and beliefs by planting seeds to nurture and to honor the earth.

Explain that they can make as many statements as they have time for now and they can always continue in the days and months ahead.

Invite participants to share some samples of their faith statements. Ask:

- How does your faith inform and influence your goals for religious education?

Fowler’s Faith Development Theory (20 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 13, Fowler’s Faith Development Theory
- Handout 7, Faith Stages According to Fowler
- Handout 8, Integration of Developmental Characteristics

Description

Say:

“To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.”

When we are visioning religious education programs, it is important to consider what is known or theorized about human development, so that the educational experiences we plan are appropriate to the seasons of life and the nature of growth.

The idea that humans develop slowly to maturity is an ancient one. The science of charting stages of human growth is a relatively new one. In the last 40 years, several sets of research and theory have attempted to answer the question “When are we to do what?”

In his book The Evolving Self, Robert Kegan summarizes some of the theories of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, James Fowler, and others which he believes are important for religious education. Stated broadly, the implications of these theories for religious education fall into two

categories: Living with and accompanying children, youth, and adults where they are, so that they fully experience the stage of life where they now are; and sponsoring children, youth, and adults in moving to a new stage of knowing, relating, deciding, being, faithing, doing, as they are ready.

Display Slide 13 and provide a presentation to the group on James Fowler's stages of faith development theory based on Handout 7, Faith Stages According to Fowler, your own knowledge of faith development, and Handout 8, Integration of Developmental Characteristics.

You may say something like this:

Psychologists interested in the development of faith throughout an individual's lifespan have proposed various frameworks for understanding how our perceptions of the religious—a broad category, including meaning, morality, and relatedness—change as our lives unfold. The framework many UU religious educators use is the one offered by James Fowler. Fowler's work is shaped by the work of Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson. It is also referenced in the work of Robert Kegan and Carol Gilligan. There are many prominent psychiatrists, psychologists, and theologians who take the development of faith in children, youth, and adults very seriously. But a note of caution: stage theories can be helpful in understanding general patterns of development, but they do not provide absolute typologies or truths that apply to everyone. Let's look at the descriptions of Fowler's stages of faith by the Rev. Lindsay Bates and the religious educator Cynthia Wade in your handout.

There may be participants in the group very familiar with Fowler and other faith development theories. Do not lecture if you can engage others in a discussion.

You may want your co-leader and/or an especially knowledgeable participant to speak with another voice about Fowler’s faith development theory. Highlight some of the following points in your dialogue:

- Fowler draws a distinction between faith and belief. Belief, he says, involves assenting intellectually to concepts as set forth in religious doctrines, creeds, and traditions. With religious beliefs, we must recognize the variations among the different religious traditions. Faith is a more inclusive term and calls attention to the similarities among different traditions. Faith involves “an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goal to one’s hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions.” While beliefs may divide, faith unites. Fowler finds adventure in the dynamic changes at the core of our lives and trusts that the resulting disruptions and crises will lead to a new flourishing of faith.
- The developmental features of Fowler’s model rely heavily on the psychological theory of Erik Erikson and the cognitive theory of moral development set forth by Lawrence Kohlberg. The stages of faith according to Fowler are “cumulative in that one brings to each new *crisis/disequilibrium* the mixed residue of past solutions and contains in it an anticipation of the issues of crisis/disequilibrium in future stages. “Conflict is the dynamic force that drives developmental advance. Fowler states that “stages in faith development are hierarchical, sequential, and invariant” (*Life Maps*).
- One of the greatest strengths of Fowler’s theory is its inclusiveness. By focusing on the *process* rather than the *content* of faith development, Fowler sidesteps some divisive theological issues. His relational definition of faith in terms of “shared centers of value and power” includes both theistic and non-theistic understandings of ultimacy (*Stages of Faith*). The ultimate goal of faith development—the growth process of wrestling meaning from life, testing it through action, and subjecting it again (and again) to the scrutiny of our minds, hearts, and actions—is compatible with Unitarian Universalist tradition.

- A critique of Fowler’s model is voiced on three dimensions by Edward Piper in his paper “Faith Development: A Critique of the Fowler Model and a Proposed Alternative” in the *Journal of Liberal Religion* (Winter 2002), published online by Meadville Lombard Theological School and available from the Meadville Lombard archives. He challenges the empirical support for Fowler’s theory at the methodological level. He then critiques the form and substance of the underlying model and offers his alternative to Fowler’s model of faith development. He analyzes Fowler’s sample populations and interview procedures and notes shortcomings in the ethnic composition, religious and denominational tradition, and categories (faith-stage labels) of interviewees.
- Thorough and convincing critiques of “vertical” models of development can be found in Carol Gilligan’s pivotal book, *In a Different Voice*. Attention to the “horizontal” dimension of faith development—interpersonal relationships—is needed to balance the “vertical” dimension of faith development described as an intra-psychic process.

Invite questions and comments from participants. It is important to note that human development, cognitive growth, faith development, religious identity, and moral development are complex and contextual theories and concepts. These theories and concepts speak directly to religious education and our congregations as learning communities. Encourage participants to check resources in the bibliography for further reading and study.

Faith Stages and Group Portraits (50 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 14, Faith Stages and Group Portraits
- Newsprint and markers

Description

Invite participants to form three to six self-chosen groups. The numbers in the groups may be uneven, but each group should have at least three members. Each group will work with one age/developmental level: preschool, elementary, adolescent, young adult, adult, and elder. Give each group a large piece of newsprint and markers and display Slide 14. Invite participants to create a faith development portrait of the age chosen using pictures, words, phrases, and symbols. Encourage them to use their imagination. Remind them to focus on faith development, and only secondarily consider mental, physical, emotional, and social characteristics. Finally, ask them to list three or four implications of faith development for religious education and the congregation as a learning community.

Allow 20 minutes for small groups to work on their portraits.

Note: If you are meeting in a congregation, and it is possible, have the small groups work in the room used for their age group on Sunday morning. The goal is to give participants a chance to think about the relevance (applications and limitations) of developmental theories for religious education.

Highlight these resources:

- Handout 9, Women's Different Voices
- Essays in *Essex Conversations* which take a developmental approach to religious education. These include Daniel Harper, "Learning Types and Their Needs"; Logan Harris, "What Youth Want"; and Kathy M. Silver, "Doing the Work of Becoming Unitarian Universalists." Point out that participants may wish to refer to these and other essays in *Essex Conversations* later in this session during Focused Conversation.
- If Internet access is available, remind participants that Tapestry of Faith curricula, available on the [UUA website](#), contain developmental information in each program's introduction.

Large group presentations allow the whole group to benefit from the thinking of each small group and to remind participants of their own considerable knowledge. Invite each group to come forward and share their portrait and its implications for UU congregations. Allow about five minutes for each presentation. Leaders and participants may wish to add characteristics that were missing. Invite further comments from the whole group about the implications of faith development and human development theories for UU congregations. You might ask for a volunteer to take photos of the portraits so that the implications for UU congregations can be shared with the group.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Tough Terms for UUs (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 15, Tough Terms for UUs
- Handout 10, Tough Terms
- Handout 11, More Tough Terms
- Blank paper for each participant
- Pens/pencils

Preparation

- Place blank paper on a table for each participant.

Description

Display Slide 15 and invite participants to take a sheet of a paper, fold it in half, and then fold it in half again. Ask them to open the paper and label the four quadrants with the following terms: faith, religion, spirituality, ethics. Then invite them to write, in the appropriate quadrant, at least five or six words that they associate with each term. When they have finished writing, invite them to read Handout 10, Tough Terms, and reflect on the similarities and differences between the words on their paper and the words on the handout.

Invite participants to turn to a partner to discuss the “tough terms,” their associations with them, and their feelings about them. Let them know they have about five minutes each.

Ask participants to read Handout 11, More Tough Terms, and invite them to write these words on their paper in the appropriate quadrant(s). Invite participants to share discoveries that they made, associations they identified, and insights they gained. Are there areas of similarity and difference in the group? Ask:

- Do you consider these to be “tough terms”? Why?
- Does your congregation? Do different ages (children, youth, adults, elders) relate differently to these terms?

Focused Conversation on “When” Essex Papers (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 16, Focused Conversation – WHEN?
- Slide 17, WHEN does religious education take place?

Description

Display Slide 16 and 17. Invite the designated volunteers to lead this Focused Conversation. The following notes are provided for your information:

- Jen Harrison (Devine), in her paper “Youth Groups as a Model for Transformative Ministry,” states that, for decades, UU youth groups have been meeting for the purpose of community building and spiritual growth. What can people of other age groups learn about the philosophy of small group ministry that the youth have been doing for years? Name five ways UU youth groups seek to live our principles. What are some of the ways the author discusses in which youth groups influence congregational membership and growth? Have you experienced any of these issues in

your congregation? Is small group ministry in your vision of lifespan religious education? Why or why not?

Closing (5 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Description

Suggested song: “I’ve Got Peace Like a River” (Hymn 100 in *Singing the Living Tradition*).

SESSION 3: Who Influences Religious Education?

Session-at-a-Glance

Opening Worship	5 minutes
Introduction	10 minutes
Historical Perspective: Roots of Liberal Religious Education	30 minutes
Unitarian Universalist Forebears	30 minutes
Current Influences from the Larger Culture	15 minutes
BREAK	10 minutes
Revisiting the “Who” of Religious Education	45 minutes
Focused Conversation on “Who” Papers	30 minutes
Closing	5 minutes

Total Time: 3 hours

Goals

- to continue group building
- to articulate one’s own philosophy of religious education
- to gain a basic historical perspective on liberal religious education
- to understand the Unitarian Universalist legacy in religious education

Preparation

- Prepare on newsprint the two questions in the introduction so they are ready to be posted. These can also be found on slide 18.
- Familiarize yourself with the handouts for this session.

Opening Worship (5 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Description

Suggested song: “Here We Have Gathered” (Hymn 360 in *Singing the Living Tradition*).

Introduction (10 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 18, Who?
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Electronic device or digital camera for taking pictures

Preparation

- Post the prepared newsprint.

Description

Begin by quoting Hebrews 12:1 from the Bible: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, . . . let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Explain that this section will focus on two central questions:

- Who has historically influenced religious education?
- Who are the partners in the enterprise of religious education?

Referring to Slide 18, present the first question: “Who has historically influenced religious education?” Invite a quick calling out of names of the “cloud of witnesses” who influence us in this gathered circle. Write the names on newsprint.

Then ask participants to brainstorm responses to the second question. Record responses on newsprint. After the exercise is complete, ask for a volunteer to take photos of the newsprint and share them with the group.

Include some of the following points in a brief discussion: At the very least, the “who” of religious education includes

- the children and youth
- the parents
- the teachers and leaders
- the minister or director of religious education
- the parish minister

The “who” includes all of the people of the congregation.

The “who” includes religious educators, historical and contemporary.

As we think about these responses to “who,” we know that the *relationship* among these people will be crucial to fostering religious growth.

- The role of the teachers and leaders must be in harmony with the goals of the program.
- The relationship of the children and youth with the teachers and leaders must be one that fosters the kinds of growth we wish to encourage.
- The parents must be included in the educational venture, for they are the prime religious educators.
- The professional and lay leaders of the congregation need to be supportive of parents’ educational ministry to children, youth, and adults.

Historical Perspective: Roots of Liberal Religious Education (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 19, William Ellery Channing
- Slide 20, John Dewey
- Slide 21, Channing, Dewey
- Handout 13, Dewey and Progressive Education
- UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Description

Introduce this section by saying:

In order to understand where we are in religious education today, we need to know where we have come from, for we are part of a movement with roots reaching back nearly three centuries. In this section we will look at a few of the forebears of liberal religious education, not all of them Unitarians or Universalists, as well as the historical context in which liberal religious education grew.

To give participants a historical reference, share Slide 19, 20, and 21 about William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) and John Dewey (1859-1952). Share some of the following information about Channing:

- He was a leader of liberal Christianity, largely responsible for adoption of the name “Unitarian” by the liberals.
- His guiding principle was faith—faith in the child, in God, in scriptures.
- His religious education methodology was to get the attention of children, which means you must love them and teach by questioning.
- His fear was that Sunday schools would become mechanical teaching vehicles and pass on religion as a “lifeless tradition and not as a quickening reality.”

- His address to the Unitarian Sunday School Society in 1838 lifted up a very different view of religious education from that of the Bible-based Sunday schools.

Engage the group in a responsive reading excerpted from *The Sunday School: A Discourse Pronounced before the Sunday School Society*, Boston, 1838 (Reading 652 in *Singing the Living Tradition*).

The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds on the young, but to stir up their own;

Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;

Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;

Not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs;

Not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect or peculiar notions,

but to prepare them for impartial, conscientious judging of whatever subjects may be offered to their decision;

Not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought;

Not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment.

In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul; to bring understanding, conscience, and heart into earnest, vigorous action on religious and moral truth, to excite and cherish spiritual life.

Introduce John Dewey by saying that he was one of the great progressive educators of the 20th century and had a strong influence on UU religious educators such as Angus MacLean and Sophia Lyons Fahs. Share some of the following information:

- He emphasized experiential learning, insisting on the interrelatedness of doing and knowing, “learning by doing.”
- He articulated a need for child-centered, not creed-centered or content-centered, curricula.
- He focused on the “whole child,” including psychosocial and political aspects.
- He founded the Religious Education Association.

Refer to Handout 13, Dewey and Progressive Education, from *Educating in Faith*, by Mary Boys. Ask participants to read it and reflect on Dewey’s purpose of education.

Invite participants to turn to a partner and reflect together on what they understand about these roots of liberal religious education. Show Slide 21 and ask:

Do these ideas speak to you? Do you see evidence of the philosophies of Channing or Dewey in the religious education programs in your congregations today? Any new insights? Do you see the purpose of religious education as being to hand on a religious tradition or to create a new world?

After the discussion, encourage participants to write in their journals their responses to these questions during their free time today.

Unitarian Universalist Forebears (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 22, Sophia Lyon Fahs
- Slide 23, Angus MacLean
- Slide 24, Fahs, MacLean
- Slide 25, Recent Eras

- Handout 14, Fahs and MacLean

Preparation

- Review the curricula eras information before leading this activity.

Description

With Slide 22 and 23, introduce Fahs and MacLean by saying:

We honor Sophia Lyon Fahs every year at the Fahs Lecture at General Assembly, and Angus MacLean through the MacLean Award given annually at General Assembly. But the truest way to honor them is by understanding their philosophies of religious education and by learning from them.

Ask participants to read Handout 14, Fahs and MacLean, which presents “Fulfilling Channing’s Challenge,” by Jeanne Nieuwejaar. Invite them to reflect on the following questions, found on Slide 24:

- What were Fahs’ and MacLean’s philosophies of religious development?
- What were some of the principles of their religious education theories?
- What was their understanding of the nature of the child and how we nurture religious growth?
- What did they see as the role of experience in education?
- What was the goal of religious growth and learning?

Allow ten minutes for individual reflection.

Ask participants to form groups of three to four people to discuss their responses to the questions above and their own experiences and understanding of Fahs and MacLean. Ask:

Was there anything that seemed outdated? Was there anything that we have not yet achieved but are still reaching toward?

For background information, here are some biographical highlights (slides 22 and 23):

Sophia Lyon Fahs (1876-1978)

- She was curriculum editor for the American Unitarian Association, 1937-54, and for the Unitarian Universalist Association, 1954-64.
- She saw the education process as involving creative discovery, intelligent examination, and free decision.
- Her book *Today's Children and Yesterday's Heritage* (1952) summarizes her philosophy of religious education.
- “What”: anything and everything can be appropriate to explore in religious education.
- “Who”: She focused on children’s needs and interests.
- “Where”: She saw religious education as taking place in the classroom, in worship “with questioning minds,” and at home.
- “How”: It is carried out through books and stories, art, and field trips, and in conversations with children.
- “Why”: We should search with minds and hearts for truth and righteousness; religious experience inspires openness toward others and depth of soul.
- The RE curricula she edited during this era were the New Beacon Series.

Angus Hector MacLean (1892-1969)

- He was a professor at, and dean of, St. Lawrence Theological School (Universalist).
- He held that immediate experience of the whole community is the child’s religious education.
- He believed that “the method is the message.”

- He emphasized education and experience; children learn by doing with hands and heart.
- He valued home patterns in religious education, seeing parents as religious educators.
- He stressed the importance of wonder and nature.
- He also emphasized home and community.

Summarize the following eras of RE philosophy and curriculum development, found on Slide 25. At the end of the section on each era, allow a few minutes for questions and comments, and for participants to share experiences they may have had with the curricula of that era, either as students or as religious educators.

Multimedia Era (1970s)

A guiding figure in UU religious education for this period was Hugo “Holly” Hollerorth, curriculum editor at the UUA, 1964-80. The curricula produced during this period consisted of multimedia kits which included books, filmstrips, photographs, and a variety of other materials.

- The direction of religious education was toward liberation.
- Curricula of the multimedia era included *Haunting House*, *About Your Sexuality (AYS)*, *Decision-Making*, *Culture Builder*, *Meaning Maker*, and *Freedom and Responsibility*.
- These curricula emphasized *process*.
- One important process was that of achieving a life-enhancing orientation to a power-filled world.
- Others included the processes of decision-making, culture-building, and meaning-making.
- Value clarifying processes, discovery method, games, multimedia
- Religion was seen as a process rather than a set of meanings; the goal of religious education was to help children and youth learn to use that process.

- They should be taught to use the power of the mind, the inquiry method, creative interaction with others, and knowledge from the secular as well as the religious world.
- Religious education's focus was wide-ranging and non-sectarian; it was a "university" for children and youth.

Religious Education Futures Committee Era (1980s-90s)

A guiding figure for this period of UU religious education was Elizabeth Anastos, curriculum editor at the UUA, 1980-90. The philosophy that guided the religious education of this period was influenced by the *Stone House Conversations*, 1979, and by the report of the Religious Education Futures Committee, October 1981.

- The direction of religious education in this period was toward socialization.
- Its goals were for children, youth, and adults to develop Unitarian Universalist identities (in contrast to previous eras); to outline our UU Principles; to develop spirituality, think freely, and seek justice.
- Its themes were UU identity, world religions, our Jewish-Christian heritage, spirituality, and peace and social justice.
- It focused on the Unitarian Universalist Principles.
- Curricula of this era included *A Stepping Stone Year*; *Travel in Time*; *A Growing-Up Year*; *World Religions*; *In Our Hands* (five levels); *Rainbow Children*; *We Are Many, We Are One*; *Race to Justice*; *Neighboring Faiths*; *Beyond Pink and Blue*; *On the Path*; *Life Issues for Teenagers*; and *Weaving the Fabric of Diversity*.
- It gave attention to social justice issues (racism, homophobia, sexism, etc.).
- It also gave attention to the developmental needs of children.
- And it gave attention to the spiritual dimension through meditation, worship, etc.
- It fostered the development of teacher-friendly curricula.

- Also written during this period was *Philosophy Making: A Process Guide for Religious Growth and Learning*, 1984.

Current Era: Lifespan Integrated Curriculum (1990s and beyond)

A guiding figure in this current era of UU lifespan faith development was Judith Frediani, former director of the UUA's Faith Development Office.

Drawing on *Essex Conversations*, extensive surveys, and focus groups, together with an association-wide Curriculum Visioning Committee (2000) and Curriculum Advisory Committee (2001-present), the Curriculum Office of Lifespan Faith Development is developing a lifespan integrated curriculum for Unitarian Universalists of all ages.

The curriculum is integrated through four strands:

- Ethical development
- Spiritual development
- Religious identity
- Faith development

The following vision statement has been developed. We envision children, youth, and adults who:

- know that they are lovable beings of infinite worth, imbued with powers of the soul, and obligated to use their gifts, talents, and potentials in the service of life
- affirm that they are part of a Unitarian Universalist religious heritage and community of faith that has value and provides resources for living
- accept that they are responsible for the stewardship and creative transformation of their religious heritage and community of faith in the service of diversity, justice, and compassion

- realize that they are moral agents, capable of making a difference in the lives of other people, challenging structures of social and political oppression, and promoting the health and well-being of the planet
- recognize the need for community, affirming the importance of families, relationships, and connections between and among the generations
- appreciate the value of spiritual practice as a means of deepening faith and integrating beliefs and values of everyday life
- experience hope, joy, mystery, healing, and personal transformation in the midst of life's challenges

Another major project of the current era is *Our Whole Lives*, developed in cooperation with the United Church of Christ. *Our Whole Lives* is a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum series for five age groups with companion *Sexuality and Our Faith* volumes.

Current Influences from the Larger Culture (15 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 26, Influences from Larger Culture
- Handout 15, Channing and Freire
- Handout 16, Multiple Intelligences

Preparation

- Review the handouts and notes below before leading this activity.

Description

Mention leaders in religious education from the larger culture who have had and are currently having considerable influence on UU religious educators: Maria Harris, Gabriel Moran, Thomas Groome, bell hooks, and others. With Slide 26, introduce Paulo Freire and his education philosophy by highlighting some of these points:

- Brazilian-born Freire (1921-97) did not work explicitly within the field of religious education, but his theories have influenced a number of contemporary religious educators (including Thomas Groome, Letty Russell, and Rebecca Parker).
- Freire's deep conviction is that education is inherently political and that a liberating education has a reconstructive character because it involves a commitment to overcome the forces of oppression and reconstruct society. For Freire, the purpose of education is to help the oppressed participate in the pedagogy of their liberation so that they can live the fullness of their humanity (*Educating in Faith*, by Mary Boys).
- Freire's pedagogy begins with a critique of "banking education," a methodology which assumes ignorance on the part of the learner so that the teacher is the expert and the student is a passive receptacle of preselected knowledge (and misinformation). Thus the teacher dominates the educational process, controls the information, shapes perceptions, and maintains the status quo. The more the students strive to store the "deposits" given to them, "the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*).
- Freire proposes "problem-posing" education so that a "critical consciousness" can emerge and oppressive situations can be transformed. "Problemizing" recognizes that reality is socially constructed and acknowledges that the teacher does not possess all the answers. Therefore, genuine educational situations must be characterized by dialogue (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*).
- Freire's influence on the field of religious education can be summed up in two words integral to his work: "conscientization" and "praxis." The first term refers to the process of coming to critical awareness of the social, political, and economic contradictions of "reality." The second term refers to his commitment to keep theory and practice in a dialectic so that one acts reflectively and thinks for action (*Educating in Faith*).

Ask participants to read Handout 15, Channing and Freire, and then find a partner to discuss the five steps in Freire’s method. After ten minutes, invite participants to share their insights with the whole group.

Highlight these concepts:

- Education as a means to transform society
- Deep conviction that education is inherently political
- “Conscientization”: the process of coming to awareness of the social, political, and economic contradictions of society
- “Praxis”: commitment to keep theory and practice in a dialectical relationship so that one acts reflectively, and one’s thinking is directed toward action
- Education as liberation: a commitment to education as a method to overcome the forces of oppression and to reconstruct society (creating a new world)

If time permits before the break, invite participants to review Handout 16, Multiple Intelligences, and ask volunteers to share ways they have incorporated these intelligences in their religious education programs. If time doesn’t permit, do this immediately after the break.

Note the following in your discussions:

- The multiple intelligences identified here are musical, bodily-kinesthetic, mathematical-logical, verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential ways of learning and knowing.
- Plural intelligences call for imaginative curricula.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Revisiting the “Who” of Religious Education (45 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 27, Parents as Religious Educators
- Participant journals and pens/pencils

Description

Introduce this set of activities by saying something like this:

So far we have been looking at who influences (and has influenced) religious education as it is practiced today—both historical and contemporary influences, from within the Unitarian Universalist tradition and outside it. For the rest of this session, we will be considering who actually does religious education, right now, within our congregations.

In *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer writes, “Mentors and apprentices are partners in an ancient dance—the old empower the young with their experience and the young empower the old with new life, reweaving the fabric of the human community as they touch and turn.”

UU religious education teaching is a living tradition, and sometimes the creative interchange (and dance) between leaders and participants, children and teachers, ministers and congregants, is a sacred transforming relationship.

Invite participants to share moments when they have witnessed this sacredness of the educational process. Then engage them in a conversation around this question:

What would it take for your program to help people see teaching as a sacred gift rather than a required duty?

The role of parents as religious educators has been recognized throughout the development of religious education theory and practice, from Sophia Fahs and Angus MacLean to the present day.

Point out that if parents and other adults are significant religious educators and spiritual guides, they will need help, too. Display Slide 27 and give the group a few minutes to write in their journals three things that they would want to share with parents to help them in this role at home and in our congregations:

- Some knowledge...
- Some attitudes...
- Some skills...

Briefly ask volunteers to share the ideas with the whole group. Ask for a volunteer to collect the ideas and share them with the group.

Invite participants to share their insights from this session, thinking of their experiences in the group discussions, journal writing, readings, and their own experience.

Focused Conversation on “Who” Papers (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 28, Focused Conversation – WHO?
- Slide 29, WHO influences religious education?

Description

With Slide 28 and 29, invite designated volunteers to lead this Focused Conversation. The following notes are provided for your information:

- In “The Teacher as Spiritual Guide,” Nelson asserts that only *kindled souls* can really do religious teaching. What does she mean by “kindled souls”? What is the role of UU teachers and leaders in her vision of lifespan

religious education? In what ways can our congregations encourage teachers and parents to engage and deepen their own spiritual search? How is your program nurturing and affirming parents in their role as primary religious educators? The author names two tasks to meet the challenges of the coming years: what are the most critical of these tasks, in your opinion?

Closing (5 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Description

Suggested song: “Over My Head” (Hymn 30 in *Singing the Living Tradition*).

SESSION 4: Where Is Religious Education?

Session-at-a-Glance

Opening Worship	10 minutes
Sacred Places	30 minutes
Religious Community	30 minutes
Focused Conversation on “Where” Papers	30 minutes
BREAK	10 minutes
Communities of Memory and Hope	20 minutes
Focused Conversation on “Why” Papers	30 minutes
Closing Worship	20 minutes

Total Time: 3 hours

Goals

- to continue community building
- to evoke memories and feelings of one’s early associations with religious community
- to understand the differences between developmental and socialization theories
- to experience a UU worship ritual

Preparation

- Read through (or practice) the guided meditation until you are comfortable with leading it. Conduct it carefully; this can be a powerful experience for participants.
- Prepare the closing worship with your co-leader. Divide leadership roles and prepare the space, including an altar with a chalice, items of beauty and wonder, and a few RE mementos.
- Recorded or live music would greatly enhance the closing worship experience.

Opening Worship (10 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Description

Suggested song: “I Brought My Spirit to the Sea” (Hymn 4 in *Singing the Living Tradition*), or one that seems to fit the mood of the group at this point.

Use the reading “From Generation to Generation,” Reading 649 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, unless you prefer to read it at the beginning of the section on Communities of Memory and Hope.

Sacred Places (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 30, Where is religious education?
- Participant journals and pens/pencils

Description

Display Slide 30 and remind the group that many Unitarian Universalists come to our faith community from other religions, and often there are several stops along the path into Unitarian Universalism. Note also that in recent years more and

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more people (quite possibly including some participants in this module) come to our congregations “unchurched,” that is, they were not raised in any religious tradition or community. And there are increasing numbers of “birthright” UUs, those raised in the faith. Take a quick poll by show of hands to see which categories are represented in the group.

Say:

Our experiences in other religious situations—whether or not those experiences took place in an organized religious setting—are carried with us into our identity as Unitarian Universalists. Many of us move into our current identities and communities with ease; others move through the experience feeling angry, or estranged from family, or marginalized from the center of their culture. To be fully present in our religious community we need to understand our memories and acknowledge our religious past. I would like to invite you on a guided meditation to explore your imaginations and to bring us some tools to establish connections and bridges between past and present and possibly the future.

Invite participants to get into a comfortable position. If possible, some may wish to lie down. Lead them through the following guided meditation (adapted from the [Haunting Church curriculum](#)), allowing time for people to explore their imaginations.

Please find a comfortable position...

Take a few deep breaths... Relax...

Now move back in time to when you were a child...a time before you were the age of sixteen...

Now think of a place...a place where you felt the sacred...where you had a religious or spiritual experience...

where you felt the presence of the “other”...or a oneness with all creation.

It might be a church... it might be outdoors... it might be anywhere...

In your mind's eye, see the neighborhood, the location in which you find yourself... Approach it slowly...

Move around it and let its presence impress itself upon you...

If you are thinking of a building, imagine walking around the outside...

If it is not a building, imagine walking toward the place, seeing it from outside... What do you see?... Are there flowers? Trees?...

Are there sidewalks? Signs? What do they say? Is there more than one way to enter this place?...

Choose the one you feel most comfortable with and enter.

[Pause for 30 seconds.]

You have time to walk around this place... As you do, be aware of all of your senses... What do you smell?...

What do you hear?...

Pay attention to light and dark...to warmth...and cold...

If this is a place where people gather, where do they gather? Are you there, or are you looking at it from outside?

Do you have a favorite place?

Are there places here where you are not allowed, that are off limits? Can you go there now?

Take time to sit down...or lie down...whatever you do in this place...

Where are your eyes drawn? What do you hear? Go to the place you feel most at ease.

[Pause for 30 seconds.]

Are there people there? If so, who are they?... Visit with them...

How are you feeling about seeing them?

[Pause for 30 seconds.]

After your visit, say goodbye...take one last look...and slowly leave this place.

When you are ready, return to this room...into this present time and this circle of friends.

[Pause.]

When you are ready, open your eyes.

Invite participants to write in their journals, reflecting on their memories. Ask them to pay particular attention to the thoughts, feelings, and emotions they experienced during this guided imagery. (Alternatively, you could invite people to draw a response to the meditation.)

Ask participants to find a person they have not had an opportunity to meet or talk with and share their experience. Invite them to take turns sharing their memories of space, activities, people, and feelings.

Invite participants to return to the whole group. Ask them to reflect briefly on the experience of the meditation using questions such as the following:

- What was it like to visit your sacred place?
- What memories came to you?
- Did more or different memories come when you were writing in your journal? When you were sharing the experience?
- Any insights? Any surprises?

Religious Community (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 31, John Westerhoff
- Slide 32, Maria Harris
- Handout 17, John Westerhoff: Modes/Dimensions of Consciousness

Preparation

- Review the information about John Westerhoff and Maria Harris before leading this activity.

Description

Introduce this activity by saying:

The question of where religious education happens depends somewhat on what you believe about how young people grow in faith. If you believe that faith and values are formed as we each think about the issues, discussing and clarifying them, the place where that happens may be one place. But if you believe that values and faiths are formed as our hearts are shaped by our experiences and our feelings about them, the place where that happens may be another place entirely.

Several of the essays in *Essex Conversations* make the latter assumption—for example, in urging the importance of multigenerational community as one of the most important loci for religious education. Invite a few participants to share observations along these lines from their reading of *Essex Conversations*. Then present these ideas of John Westerhoff and Maria Harris:

With Slide 31, introduce John Westerhoff and give the following information:

- Prominent influence on religious education in the 1970s
- Professor at Duke University Divinity School, formerly at Harvard
- An editor of *Colloquy* and *Religious Education Magazine*
- An editor of *Religious Education*, the journal of the Religious Education Association (REA)
- Author of *Generation to Generation: Will Our Children Have Faith?*
- An exponent of religious socialization, a critic of “church school,” and an advocate of religious community

Point out Handout 17, John Westerhoff: Modes/Dimensions of Consciousness. Read aloud, or have a participant read aloud, the selections below from Westerhoff's "Values for Today's Children," from an informal address published in *Religious Education*, the REA journal, vol. 75, no. 3, May-June 1980. Westerhoff sees values and faith as being formed by socialization, with "conceptualizations of meaning and rational reflection upon experience" following later.

Almost everyone is aware that the human mind organizes experiences in two different manners, or to say it another way, consciousness has two distinct modes or dimensions. One has been called a responsive-intuitive mode of thinking and the other, an active-intellectual mode of thinking. The active-intellectual mode...is characterized by reflection, order, prediction, logical analysis, control. It is nurtured by the sciences and verbal activity and expressed through signs, concepts and reflective action. The responsive-intuitive mode, on the other hand, focuses upon the affective processes and feelings, is characterized by experience, chaos, surrender, mystery, imagination and surprise and is nurtured by the arts and non-verbal activities. It is expressed through symbols, myths and rituals.

How we envision the ends and means of our lives frames the content of our values... We transmit, acquire and sustain our values by identification with and imitation of significant others and by participating in the drama, stories, songs, dances and visualization of a community. Through our participation in a community's life and its rituals, we enact and re-present a myth (true story) of how the world began, how it will end and the nature of meaningful and purposeful life in the interim. In this manner we acquire and sustain the values for which and by which we live... But we have yet to convince a significant number of people in the church that the growth of individuals and the development of humanity is dependent upon the integration of liturgics and education, of the intuitive and intellectual, of socialization and development. It is not a question of either/or but of both/and.

With Slide 32, introduce Maria Harris, author of *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*, written in 1989. Harris saw curriculum as an exciting process embracing the entire course of the church's life, encompassing the total teaching mission of the church. Harris was a national consultant in religious education. Her references to "curriculum" can be translated to "religious education."

Share the following section from her book:

The entire course in the church's life is the meaning of curriculum that has been emerging over the last several decades. Designers and planners of curriculum, as well as general educators in the church, have come to see the need for a broader, more extensive, and more complete basic understanding of curriculum than is often used. Widespread agreement exists today that although the meaning of curriculum from which the church works includes schooling and teaching...curriculum is a far broader reality.

Necessarily, it includes the other forms through which the church educates, such as worship, proclamation, community, and service. Today we are moving toward a refusal to limit curriculum as it has been limited in the past... We are moving toward a creative vision that sees all the facets of the church's life as the church curriculum, with curricular materials named simply "resources."

Divide participants into groups of three or four to discuss key points made by Westerhoff and Harris. Consider Westerhoff's responsive-intuitive and active-intellectual modes of consciousness, and their implications for religious education. Consider Harris's statement that the curriculum is the entire course of the church's life.

Focused Conversation on “Where” Papers (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 33, Focused Conversation – WHERE?
- Slide 34, WHERE does religious education occur?

Preparation

- Review the notes provided in the Description before leading this activity.

Description

With Slide 33 and 34, invite the designated volunteers to lead this Focused Conversation. Ask participants to recall their learning experiences from the previous session, especially the focus on Freire and education as liberation, for these *Essex Conversations* papers. The following notes are provided for your information:

- “Toward Wholeness and Liberation,” by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, critically explores some of the issues in our anti-oppression work and some of the impediments to our spiritual wholeness. The author distinguishes between liberalism and liberation. What are the strengths and limitations of liberalism for religious education? What are the strengths and limitations of liberation for religious education? What would a liberationist approach to UU religious education look like?
- How does our collective Unitarian Universalist identity (our inherited history, heritage, and culture) affect our willingness to move from liberalism to liberation from oppression?
- Paulo Freire’s educational methodology is rooted in love, which he says is inherently dialogic. “It brings people who seek reconciliation into relationship.” How can our religious education programs embrace this dialogic method or other approaches that move people from naive awareness to critical consciousness, to social transformation?

- Rebecca Parker, in her essay “Education as Liberation,” asserts that the purpose of education is to “save souls.” How does this premise apply to *liberal* religious education? In analyzing philosophies of education, Parker affirms Channing’s view that humanism and spirituality must be united, a factor that she believes obliges religious educators to actively counteract systems that dehumanize people. She contrasts Channing’s view with Paulo Freire’s view of “education as the practice of freedom.” In the context of “our time,” what contribution does Parker feel Freire makes to religious education? Parker sets forth a model for congregationally based social action as an educational practice. What steps does she outline? How would you apply Parker’s model for a congregational setting in the context of the local community?

BREAK (10 minutes)

Communities of Memory and Hope (20 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 35, Communities of Memory and Hope
- UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Participant journals and pens/pencils

Description

Read “From Generation to Generation,” by Antoine de St.-Exupéry (Reading 649 in *Singing the Living Tradition*), if it was not used in the opening worship for this session. Leaders may read it responsively, or ask two participants to do so.

Display Slide 35 and invite participants to answer the following question in their journals: “What memories are we making with our children and youth?”

Ask participants to share in small groups their thoughts and feelings from their journal writing. Then gather the whole group together and ask for volunteers to share their “passwords” or insights.

Focused Conversation on “Why” Papers (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 36, Focused Conversation – WHY?
- Slide 37, WHY do we do what we do?
- Handout 18, Bibliography (2002)

Preparation

- Review the notes provided in the Description before leading this activity.

Description

There are two Focused Conversations in this session in order to allow participants maximum time for their learning project in the final session. Display Slide 36 and 37 and invite the designated volunteers to lead this Focused Conversation. The following notes are provided for your information:

- Judith Frediani challenges us, in her paper “Making Sure There Is a There There,” to claim our unique responsibilities as a liberal religious community. What are our unique responsibilities as professional religious leaders, as UU congregations, and as social justice activists in local communities? If we are to survive and thrive in the 21st century, how do our concepts, practices, and curricula need to change, according to this author? Religious educators need to be engaged in many contexts and Unitarian Universalist communities must offer something of abiding value; name the *there* there.
- Gary Smith, in his essay “Taking Our Children Seriously,” describes beautifully his vision of intergenerational religious education. What are some of the components of this lifespan religious education? Give

examples. The author names his two passions in UU religious education for the next century: *task* and *relationship*. What does he mean by “task”? And what does he mean by “relationship”? How would you translate “task” and “relationship” to the philosophy, practices, and programs in your congregation?

Remind participants that Handout 18 is a bibliography covering all topics of the module.

Closing Worship (20 minutes)

Materials

- Chalice with candle and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Small table
- Items of wonder and beauty, mementos of RE experiences
- UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation

- Prepare the meeting space for the closing worship.

Description

Gather participants in a silent circle around an altar with a chalice, items of wonder and beauty, and mementos of RE experiences. Invite participants to relax into the silence.

Opening Words

For the beauty of the earth,

For the joy of human companionship,

We come together

In reverence

To this time and place

Rediscovering the gifts of human communion

*Renewing our Unitarian Universalist faith
(Re)claiming a philosophy of religious education.*

Chalice Lighting

*Let us kindle our chalice flame and celebrate the power and joy of this
community:*

For the joy of searching

For the joy of remembering

For the joy of wondering

For the power of love

For the power of truth

For the power of faith.

Song

“Spirit of Life” (Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*)

Reflection and Sharing

Invite participants to recall and share briefly with the group a pivotal moment or transformative event for them within religious education, one that nurtured their faith or informed their religious education philosophy.

Meditation

“They Are with Us Still” (Reading 721 in *Singing the Living Tradition*)

Name those persons who give strength to our lives.

Song

“There Is More Love Somewhere” (Hymn 95 in *Singing the Living Tradition*)

SESSION 5: How and Why?

Session-at-a-Glance

Opening Worship	10 minutes
Focused Conversation on “How” Papers	30 minutes
Visioning: Taking It Home	35 minutes
BREAK	10 minutes
Why: Mythical Religious Education Committees: Goal Setting	70 minutes
Evaluations	5 minutes
Closing Worship	20 minutes

Total Time: 3 hours

Goals

- to articulate a philosophy of religious education and apply it to a practical outcome
- to integrate religious education philosophy and goal statements into a usable format
- to learn from the diverse perspectives of others in the group
- to celebrate participants' knowledge, understandings, and competence in a closing worship

Preparation

- Prepare a worship area with an appropriate table, chalice, candles, and music. Plan the elements of the closing worship.
- Write the three critical questions from the “How: Visioning” section on newsprint: “What is Unitarian Universalism?” “What is religious education?” and “What is your philosophy of religious education?” Have markers, newsprint, and index cards for four to six groups.

Opening Worship (10 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Description

Suggested song: “Love Will Guide Us” (Hymn 131 in *Singing the Living Tradition*).

Focused Conversation on “How” Papers (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 38, Focused Conversation – HOW?
- Slide 39, HOW do we go about it?

Preparation

- Review the notes provided in the Description before leading this activity.

Description

Display Slide 38 and 39, and invite the designated volunteers to lead this final Focused Conversation. The following notes are provided for your information:

- Makaanah E. Morriss, in her essay “Doorway to the Sacred,” writes that UU religious education is all about *unlocking people*. Describe some of the keys to opening the sacred doorway in our lifespan religious education for the coming years that the author articulates as “unlocking people.”

role do the UU Sources play in the philosophy and programming of our learning communities? What components are important to curriculum development?

- In John Tolley’s “Child’s Play,” the author advocates for a *countercultural revolution*. What does he mean by “countercultural revolution”? His vision for lifespan religious education in the next century understands art as a powerful tool for effective religious education and spiritual expression. Describe some of the arts and their expressions in our intergenerational communities. How extensively are the arts integrated into your religious education program?

Are your teachers encouraged to bring their own creativity to the curriculum you offer? If so, how do you encourage them?

Visioning: Taking It Home (35 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 40, Visioning: Taking It Home
- Participant journals

Description

Using Slide 40, say:

At the beginning of this module, we considered two questions: “What is Unitarian Universalism?” and “What is religious education?” These were very similar to the first two questions asked of the Essex Conversations contributors. Now we will add the third question: “What is your philosophy of religious education?” Take this time to integrate your understandings from your journal writing and from your learning experiences of this module into a comprehensive philosophy of religious education. From the foundations of our religious education philosophy we build the goals for our lifespan religious education programs, plan activities to meet those goals,

and recruit and train teachers and leaders to engage participants in these experiences. Throughout the coming year you may be asked many times to express your religious education philosophy to parents, teachers, and your entire congregation.

Ask participants to articulate their philosophy of religious education, first through journal writing and then in small group sharing. They may want to review the statement in their Session 1 journal notes (Religious Education Is...) and revise it to reflect their current understanding.

Have participants form groups of four people. Ask them to share and discuss their religious education philosophy statements and, if possible, come to consensus on major components of Unitarian Universalist religious education philosophy.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Why: Mythical Religious Education Committees: Goal

Setting (70 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 41, Why: Mythical Religious Education Committees
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Index cards
- Laptops or computers
- Chalice with candle and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Small table

Preparation

- Give each small group a sheet of newsprint.
- Make sure groups have a laptop or computer to create their religious education brochures. Test equipment if necessary.

Description

Introduce this session by saying:

In the next activity, you will have a chance to bring together all the ideas we have been exploring in this module. Small groups will work to create a religious education brochure articulating a philosophy of religious education and integrating that philosophy into a set of goals for a religious education program.

Display Slide 41 and ask participants to form groups of three or four. Ask each group to pretend it is a religious education committee, and invite participants to create a religious education brochure. Give each group sheets of newsprint, several index cards, and markers; participants can also use laptops and PowerPoint to make sharing easier. Ask them to write their collective religious education philosophy statement on the newsprint and each of their goals on separate index cards. Tell participants that the cards will be used in the closing worship.

While the groups are working, prepare for the worship service:

- Arrange a small table in the center of the group with a chalice and/or candles.
- Prepare newsprint or a slide with the order of service. Be sure to include participants who have volunteered their talents (in music, dance, etc.).

Ask the whole group to reconvene and invite each small group, in turn, to present its philosophy of religious education. Post these newsprint sheets on the walls. When each group has finished its presentation, collect the goal cards. NOTE: The cards will be used in the closing worship.

If presentations cannot be shared electronically, ask a volunteer from each group to take a picture of the newsprint and email the photo and the goals to the whole group.

Evaluations (5 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 42, Closing

Preparation

- Write the participant evaluation link on newsprint, and post.

Description

Display Slide 42 and direct participants to the online evaluation link. Remind everyone that all evaluations (participant and leader) are done online and should be submitted within one week of the close of the module:

- Participant: <http://www.uua.org/careers/re/renaissance/277437.shtml>
- Leader: <http://www.uua.org/careers/re/renaissance/277435.shtml>

Remind participants that they will receive a module completion certificate via email after their evaluation is submitted. Those who have completed their fifth module should indicate that on their evaluation. The UUA will mail the Renaissance Recognition certificate and the Renaissance pin directly to participants.

Closing Worship (20 minutes)

Materials

- Newsprint or PowerPoint slide with the Order of Service
- Index cards with participants' written goals
- UUA hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Description

Regather the group. Point out the order of service so all will be familiar with what will be happening. Hand out goal cards so that each person has one card.

Lead the group in the closing worship service, which may be something like the following:

Chalice/Candle Lighting

We light this chalice for the light of truth. We light this chalice for the warmth of love. We light this chalice for the energy of action. We light this chalice for the fire of commitment.

Song

“God of Many Names” (Hymn 198 in *Singing the Living Tradition*) or another song of your choice.

Litany

“We would _____.”

(Each person, in turn, reads the goal written on their card. After each goal, the whole group responds.)

“May it be so!”

If there are participants completing their fifth module, honor them at this time. This is a good time to formally thank those who contributed to organizing the module. Sometimes module sponsors have thank-you cards or gifts for the leaders; these can also be presented at this time.

Sharing

Invite each participant to complete this sentence: “I brought to this module _____, and I am taking home with me _____.”

(Optional: Pass a candle or the chalice around the circle, each one holding it as they speak.)

Extinguish the chalice.

Song

“Go Now In Peace” (Hymn 413 in *Singing the Living Tradition*), “Shalom Havayreem” (Hymn 400), or another song of your choice.

Thank each person for their participation and say goodbye.