

Philosophy of Religious Education Renaissance Module

Online/Hybrid LEADER'S GUIDE



UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION

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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 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 understanding of learning and faith development theories

Reader

The reading material for this module consists of six essays from the book, *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education* (Boston: Skinner House, 2001) and the Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide (6th Ed.). It is best if participants obtain the books in time to read at these ten essays before the module:

From *Essex Conversations*:

- Hoertdoerfer, “Religion as Relationship”
- James, , “Building Strong and Radical Religious Communities
- Bowens-Wheatley, “Toward Wholeness and Liberation”
- Parker, “Education as Liberation”
- Morriss, “Doorway to the Sacred”
- Harper, “Learning Types & Their Needs”

From *The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide*:

- Bray McNatt, “Our Faith”
- York, “Our Religious Education”
- Nguyen, “Our Work for Social Justice”
- Hauser, “Our Communities”

Leader Preparation

- Be thoroughly familiar with the content and process of this Leader’s Guide.
- Review the PowerPoint slides. Since you will be using a lot less slides for the online module, you may want to create a shortened version for your ease of use. If you do so, recognize that the Slide numbers in the Leaders Guide will then be different.
- Email a welcoming letter to participants:
 - Asking them to give you their UUA log in

- 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 the Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide and for printing their own copies of the participant guide and handouts.
- Once you have participants' UUA Log-in information, add them to the group and allow them access to a shared Google Drive folder
- 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.

Online/Hybrid Module

This module utilizes many elements of a “flipped classroom” model with participants learning some material first on their own (through readings, reflection questions and videos) and then exploring and deepening their outside learning through activities and discussion during our online meetings. Therefore, **it is important to encourage participants to do the outside readings and watching the videos prior to the start of the session in will they will be covered.** It is also important that they complete their online reflections after each session, before the next one begins.

Requirements

This online (or hybrid) **Philosophy of Religious Education** Renaissance module is an distance learning experience comprised of **five** two-hour webinars with reading and other assignments for each session. Credit will be offered for full participation in the module. Full participation includes:

- Online attendance and active participation in five two-hour sessions
- Reading and reflection to prepare for each session
- Responses to Reflection Questions on the Discussion Forum after each session and **reply to or comment upon at least one other person’s post**. Note: The Discussion Forum will remain active until two weeks after the module closes.
- Submission of [final evaluation](#) within a week of the ending of the module

Technical Considerations

- The preferred webinar platform is Zoom, which you can download from the [Zoom website](#).
- Use a laptop or computer with headset (not ear buds) and camera (does not work as well from iPad); have your phone handy in case you need to call in instead of using computer audio.

- Create your UUA profile name: Go to UUA.org and click on “create account” at the top right and follow instructions on the page. Once you’ve gotten the confirmation, email the leaders of the Renaissance Module with your profile name so you can be added to the group; please include the module name in the subject line. To access the module online, log in with your UUA profile, and follow the link provided.
- Subscribe to comments in the Discussion Forum in each session. To post on the forum, click on the post and add your comments (please do not add a new post!) If you’d like to respond to a particular comment, look for the “reply” link below that comment (there’s also a like button and other options). Be sure to save!

List of PowerPoint Slides

The Online/Hybrid module uses fewer slides because when conducting an online learning experience like this, it is preferred that screen sharing is done only when necessary. These slides have important information on them and may be used during your online meetings:

Session 1

Slide 3 Affirmation

Slide 6 Explicit/Implicit/Null

Slide 7 Religious Education as Relationship Building Spiral

Session 2

Slide 8 Constructivist Learning Theories

Slide 9 Piaget vs. Vygotsky

Slide 10 Limitations of Piaget’s Theory

Slide 11 Fischer’s Skill Theory

Slide 12 Fischer’s Skill Theory (cont.)

- Slide 13 Fischer's Skill Theory (cont.)
- Slide 14 I Believe, I Feel, I Act
- Slide 15 Lifespan Perspective of Human Development
- Slide 16 Fowler's Faith Development Theory
- Slide 17 Strengths & Weaknesses of Fowler's Theory
- Slide 18 Faith Stages and Group Portraits

Session 3

- 19 Relationships Crucial to Fostering Faith Development
- 20 How Do We Help Parents in Primary Role as Religious Educators?
- 21 William Ellery Channing
- 22 John Dewey
- 23 Sophia Lyon Fahs and Angus MacLean's Philosophies
- 24 Multimedia Kit & RE Futures Committee Eras Questions
- 25 John Westerhoff
- 26 John Westerhoff (cont.)
- 27 John Westerhoff (cont.)
- 28 Head & Heart Exercise
- 29 Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Paulo Freire)
- 30 Pedagogy of the Oppressed Questions to Consider

Session 4

- 31 Tough Terms for Unitarian Universalists
- 32 Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture
- 33 Embracing Diversity
- 34 Justice vs. Equity vs. Liberation

Session 5

- 35 Moral Development
- 36 Moral Development (cont.)
- 37 Mythical Religious Education Committee Goal Setting Activity

SESSION 1: THE CONGREGATION AS A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Background and Preparation

Reading Assignments:

Complete the reading before the webinar for this session. The [handouts for this module](#) are online at UUA.org under Renaissance Modules Resources. Review the [Guide to the Reader](#) and be familiar with the Essex Conversations essays.

Reading Assignments:

- “Our Faith” essay by Rosemary Bray McNatt from [The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide](#)
- “Our Communities” essay by Aisha Hauser from [The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide](#)
- “Our Religious Education” essay by Jessica York from the [Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide](#)
- “Religion as Relationship” essay by Pat Hoerdoerfer from Essex Conversations

Plus:

Handouts for Session One

- 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 Religion as Relationship Spiral

Discussion Forum

Before the first webinar, post an introduction in the [Session 1, Discussion Forum](#) and answer the question: “What is Religious Education?”

After the webinar, reflect on the readings and discussions from each session and respond to the Reflection Questions in the [Session 1, Discussion Forum](#).

Webinar recordings will be added to the [shared folder](#) once completed.

Session-at-a-Glance

Introduction of Participants and Schedule	10 minutes
Overview of the Module	10 minutes
What’s in a Name?	10 minutes
The Religious Community as a Learning Community	30 minutes
BREAK	5 minutes
Sacred Spaces	30 minutes
Religious Education as Relationship Building	20 minutes
Closing	5 minutes
	Total Time: 2 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”
- To explore the difference between religious education and faith formation
- To consider the congregation as a learning community
- To evoke memories and feelings of one’s early associations with religious community

Introduction of Participants and Schedule (10 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 3, Affirmation

Description

As a way of introducing the module, say something like:

Welcome to the Philosophy of Religious Education Module. Since each person operates on some de facto religious education philosophy which shapes their goals and objectives for our RE programs, we need to become aware of this philosophy. This module explores the idea that, along with re-examining the philosophies that served us well in the past, we need to continually 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. In this module, we’ll explore theories of human and faith development and consider new ways of meeting spiritual, ethical, and educational needs as we help to build congregations that are learning communities.

Invite participants to introduce themselves in the following way: “I’m _____ and I’m from _____ where I _____ and If you use pronouns, please share them with us.”

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

When everyone has finished with introductions, display Slide 3 and read to the group in this affirmation:

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!

Overview of the Module (10 minutes)

Materials

- 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
-

Description

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. Explain that 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 like to add.

Encourage participants to join you in reading aloud the covenant together with volunteers reading portions of the covenant.

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

Finally, explain that for this online Philosophy of Religious Education module, it is important to do all reading and other assignments (watching videos, etc.) prior to the start of the session in which it will be covered. Our time together is limited and we would like to spend it engaging in activities and discussion around many topics instead of providing just an information dump. Attending the sessions ready to do the work after having completed the assignments in advance will allow you to gain the most out of this module. You can find details over what you will need to do in advance on the website page for each session under the Background and Preparation section for each session.

What's In a Name? (10 minutes)

Materials

- Participants' responses to online forum question: What is Religious Education?

Preparation

- Read through participants' responses to "What is Religious Education" on the forum prior to the session and reply or comment on some answers. Be ready to refer to some people's responses to that question (positive, affirming notions you can lift up, not criticisms)

Description

Introduce this activity by saying:

The name of this Renaissance Module is Philosophy of Religious Education. But the term "religious education" means different things to different people. (Reflect on

some of the participants' responses to "What is Religious Education?" that they posted to the online forum.)

Recently, Unitarian Universalists have been examining their programs and going through a process of renaming them because of changing philosophies about congregations as learning communities. Instead of referring to it as religious education, many congregations are starting to use terms like "faith development" or "faith formation." Even the Unitarian Universalist Association has changed the name of the department which oversees the religious education credentialing program and all thing "RE" to the Faith Development Office.

Then read this passage from the Introduction of Betty Middleton's book, *To Touch Inward Springs*:

"We have all grown accustomed to the term "R.E." being used almost universally among us for "religious education," and often really meaning, "the children's program of the church." I use the term "religious education" to mean programs designed for teaching and learning faith development, for any and all ages, but not to mean faith development itself. Sometimes I use "religious growth and learning programs" to mean the same thing as religious education."

She also explains:

"Pedagogy is the various teaching approaches, methods and learning activities appropriate and effective for faith development in persons of all ages. By faith development, I mean a person's growing and evolving engagement with and commitment to life, a person's relationship with self, others and the universe."

*Remind participants that in Jessica York's essay, "Our Religious Education" from the Unitarian Universalist Guide, she says **the ultimate goal of religious education is transformation.***

Read this passage from Jessica York's essay, "Our Religious Education" from the UU Pocket Guide:

"As Unitarian Universalists, we realize that we are imperfect beings. Always we can do better: be more empathetic; show up more often for justice, care for the sick, the lonely, the brokenhearted; and create more love in the world. We are a long way from creating that heaven on earth we all desire. How do we get to that place? If there were easy answers, we would be there already ..."

"Religious education is a tool for deepening and widening our faith development ... it provides dedicated time to find ways to distinguish the values that are the foundation of your life and how you can live them more fully ... it provides a brave space for the questions you need to ask, both big and small ... religious education programs bring people together to support each other in the work of making meaning of their lives."

Then ask:

So what's in a name, and why does it matter what we call it? How does what we call it reveal our collective philosophy toward learning, growth, spirituality and faith development?

Are there people in your congregation who would reject the notion of faith formation? Are they the parents in your program or the elders of the congregation? Or both?

Conclude with these words:

When we reframe religious education as "religious growth and learning," or "teaching and learning for faith development," we are more likely to develop programs that not only keep the mystery and wonder of the young child alive, we can begin thinking about lifespan faith formation when the religious community becomes a learning community.

The Religious Community as Learning Community (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 6, Explicit/Implicit/Null

Preparation

-

Description

Introduce this activity by reading this excerpt from *The Church as Learning Community* by Christian author and religious educator, Dr. Norma Cook Everist:

“How differently would we set about our task if we believed that everyone in the faith community is already a teacher and a learner? In a culture that nearly worships Individualism, people still hunger for values and communities of meaning. Religious educators grow frustrated that people seem to be looking everywhere but to the church for identity, continuity, and challenge. ... The faith community’s curriculum is much more than material on paper to be read and recited; it embraces all of the people in this time and context as well as people in God’s global and historic community. People need to understand one another and one another’s faith ... to broaden our concept of the church as a learning community will challenge us, but need not overwhelm us.”

Divide the participants into breakrooms to discuss: :

Do we view our congregations as learning communities? Why or why not?

What happens when our philosophy affirms that all in the community are both teachers and learners?

How will broadening our concept of the church as a learning community challenge us?

Allow small group discussions for ten minutes. Then bring everyone back and ask if anyone has any comments, reflections or ideas they wanted to share with the whole group.

Explain that Angus MacLean wrote “The Method is the Message” in 1951, yet it is still so relevant today. He said:

“I place method in the heart of our curriculum because methods determine so largely the human relations that prevail in our work with children ... I place method at the heart of our work because the methods of address to life and people are at the heart of our liberal faith.”

Then ask:

How do the methods used by our congregations’ religious education programs reveal its philosophy?

If the program is “for the children and youth,” how are adults invited into the community of learning?

Finally, bring up religious educator and author Maria Harris’ view that the entire congregation is the curricula. (Note: this is also in the Curriculum Renaissance Module.) However, I would go beyond that term, as curricula is a vehicle from which an experience is generated. Instead, perhaps religious education and faith formation is all that we do in a congregation. No matter what we call it, we are definitely teaching our children, youth and adults even outside of their scheduled “R.E.” time, through the messages we send and the words we use.

Display Slide 6, Explicit, Implicit & Null

Maria Harris uses the terms: **Explicit, Implicit and Null** to explore the messages we send and the lessons we teach, often without being aware of it. For example:

Explicit = We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people

Implicit = But not children, because they are not allowed to help themselves to food during coffee hour

Null = Children are not people

Send participants to breakout rooms and ask the participants what they think of this idea, and how they see the Explicit, Implicit and Null messages that are being sent, not only to the children or youth & their parents, but other adults in the congregation. After ten minutes has passed, bring everyone back from the breakout rooms to report any interesting learnings they had from the conversation.

BREAK (5 minutes)

Sacred Spaces (30 minutes)

Materials

- Meditation on Sacred Spaces

Description

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 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.

Then say something like:

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 and offer them the choice of turning off their video cameras, thereby allowing time for people to explore their imaginations in private. Lead them through the following guided meditation (adapted from the *Haunting Church* curriculum):

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...

A place where you had a religious or spiritual experience...

A place 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 10 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 10 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.

Let the participants know that when they are feeling comfortable they may return to the group, turn their video cameras back on and join us. Allow a few minutes for people to regroup, then ask for a brief moment of quiet reflection on the meditation:

Where were your sacred spaces?

Are these similar or different from the sacred spaces we try to create for our children, youth & adults? Why or why not?

Then say:

How can we create positive memories for the children and youth in our congregations? Let's take a some time to consider this through small group discussions.

Divide participants into breakout rooms for the following task:

Your task is to imagine the children and youth at your current congregation are grown, it is 30 years later and they are doing the Sacred Spaces meditation. What would you like them to take away, to have memories of as they think back to their church home? As you do so, think about the issues raised by Jessica York and Aisha Hauser in their essays on community and religious education.

Allow ten minutes for conversation in the breakout rooms. Remind participants when they have 2 minutes left before the breakout rooms close. Once breakout rooms are closed, take a few minutes to ask for reflections or comments which were meaningful in their small group discussion.

Religious Education as Relationship Building (20 minutes)

Materials

- Handout 6 Religion as Relationship Spiral
- "Religion as Relationship," essay by Pat Hoerdoerfer in Essex Conversations

Description

Introduce this activity by reading this portion of the essay:

“Religion is our quest for meaning and our ultimate commitment. By nature religion is relational. Our religious imperative is to live with ourselves, with others, and with our earth. These are the three inescapable relationships: psychological (self), social (others) and natural (planet earth) ... Growing into relationships is essential to becoming a person. We all exist within a vast interacting web of relationships and we are shaped by them. As we grow we become aware of their enormous variety and complexity. We begin with these qualities and experiences in the process of becoming a self. We start with our own bodies. Then we move on to experiences with other people, building relationships with parents, siblings, extended family members, friends, acquaintances.”

Sum up by saying:

In “Religion as Relationship,” Pat Hoerdoerfer promotes a model of religious education using the image of a spiral of dynamic, interacting, interconnecting relationships.

Invite participants to think of a child, youth or adult within their congregation and take some time to fill out the relationship spiral that is Handout 7.

Remind the participants when they have only 2 minutes left. Allow them up to 10 minutes to complete the spiral (keep watch of their actions to judge how much time is still needed by who appears to still be working and who needs more time).

After participants have completed their spirals (or ten minutes has passed), invite those who would like to share their spirals to do so. Then ask:

How difficult was this activity, trying to imagine those spiraling out relationships?

How are relationships built in our congregations among the generations?

How is multigenerational community built and why is it taking us so long to do it effectively?

Close by saying:

According to a study by the Christian group LifeWay Research, “teens who had five or more adults from the church invest in them during the ages of 15 to 18 were less likely to leave the church after high school. That’s a powerful statement of how

important relationship building needs to be integral to our philosophies of religious education.

Then ask:

What challenges would we need to address to truly educate for religious education as relationship building in our congregations?

Closing (5 minutes)

Materials

- Closing reading

Description

Remind participants to share reflections in the online forum, answering the reflection questions designed to follow session one and responding to the post of at least one peer.

Remind participants to do the reading and other assignments prior to the next session.

Then offer closing words from the last chapter of Betty Jo Middleton's book: *To Touch Inward Springs*:

“As we seek to become more truly educating communities, instead of dividing the church into worship, education, music, service and social action components, perhaps we may think of ways in which we can provide all of these experiences to people of all ages ... We live in a time of change and uncertainty. We must be courageous and creative to meet the needs of the times ahead. We are called to new beginnings even as we honor what has gone before, that we may be worthy of the heritage we have been given. It is our privilege and responsibility to contribute to this heritage of hope and faith and love for children, and for tomorrow's.”

SESSION 2—LEARNING THEORIES & FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Background and Preparation

Advanced Required Reading and assignments:

- Daniel Harper’s essay, “Learning Types & Their Needs” from *Essex Conversations*
- Article: [Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development](#) or watch video: [Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory](#)

Plus read the following handouts:

- Handout 7 Constructivist Learning Theories
- Handout 8 Faith Stages According to Fowler
- Handout 9 Women’s Different Voices

Discussion Forum

After the webinar, reflect on the readings and discussions from the session and post a response to the Reflections Questions in the [Session 2, Discussion Forum](#).

Webinar Information

Date:

Time:

Webinar recordings will be added to the [shared folder](#) once completed.

Session-at-a-Glance

Opening	5 minutes
Constructivist Learning Theories	20 minutes
Creating Learning Experiences	30 minutes
BREAK	5 minutes
Faith: I Believe, I Feel, I Act	15 minutes
Fowler's Faith Development Theory	20 minutes
Faith Development & Group Portraits	20 minutes
Closing	5 minutes
	Total Time: 2 hours

Goals

- To continue group building
- To continue inviting participants to be open to new experiences
- To continue exploring the nature of religious education
- To continue exploring the meaning of “faith” and “religion”
- To understand and critique Fowler’s stages of faith development
- To explore developmental theories and their relevance to religious education
-

Opening (5 minutes)

Materials:

- Opening Reading by Confucius

Preparation

- None

Description

Share this opening reading by Confucius:

“By three methods we may learn wisdom:
First, by reflection, which is noblest;
Second, by imitation, which is easiest;
And third by experience, which is the bitterest.”

Constructivist Learning Theories (30 minutes)

Materials:

- Slides 8-13: Constructivist Approaches to Learning
- Handout 7 Constructivist Learning Theories

Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with the learning theories presented in this session
- Familiarize yourself with the limitations and criticisms of Piaget, Vygotsky, Fischer theories

Description

Introduce the session by saying something like:

Today we will be exploring different theories of learning and how it impacts our work as religious educators. Many of you have backgrounds in education, and even if you do not, you are probably familiar with Pavlov’s Conditioning. While this is an effective technique for many learning environments, constructivist learning theories reject the idea that learning is simply the behavioral response to stimuli.

- Display Slide 8: Constructivist Approaches to Learning

Explain:

Constructivist Learning Theories emphasize that children learn about the world by acting within their environment and are active participants in their learning. Two major Constructivist theorists are Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Their common goals were to explore cognitive development defined as thinking leading to rational thought, making mental representations in the brain, and eventually leading to abstract and logical reasoning.

Display Slide 9: Piaget vs. Vygotsky

However, whereas Piaget focused primarily upon internal influences, Vygotsky emphasized the external forces which shape cognition, seeing it as more of a collaborative process that is both social and psychological. Piaget believed that social interaction and language are primarily mechanisms for disrupting equilibrium which are then reestablished when children individually reconstruct their understanding and advance their thinking.

Vygotsky's theory is continuous and lifelong, whereas Piaget's theory is based upon a child progressing through a series of distinct stages and implies that cognitive development ends with adolescence. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory stresses the importance of language to establish social relationships conducive for learning. His Zone of Proximal Development and the presence of a More Knowledgeable Other in modeling and helping with scaffolding leads to cognitive development within a cultural context. Because Vygotsky's theory emphasizes cultural influences, his constructivist view is not universal in that some children will develop social or motor skills at different rates depending upon the values of their culture. For example, in Westernized nations, independence is highly valued and so developing cognitive abilities that lead to independence are considered more important than in countries which place a high value on interdependence.

Display Slide 10: Limitations of Piaget's theory

Explain:

Piaget's theory of cognitive development is primarily criticized because of his research methods. Piaget's observations of his own three children served as the bulk of his

research. When using children other than his own for research and experiments, Piaget's small research samples were all taken from children of well-educated professionals of high socioeconomic status. Because of this unrepresentative sample, it is difficult to generalize his findings to a larger population.

Another criticism of Piaget's theory is the idea of having to complete a stage before moving on to the next one. The idea of stages as an approach to learning theories is not supported by brain research and has fallen out of favor with most learning theorists. Even Piaget himself believed that development does not always follow such a smooth and predictable path.

Finally, Piaget's theories underestimate the abilities of children. Modern research has proven that children possess many of the abilities at an earlier age than mapped out by Piaget's theories. For example, children are far less egocentric than he believed as they have some ability to take the perspective of others as young as 3 years old.

Ask participants to consider whether the pedagogical approaches in their religious education programs better resemble Piaget's theories or Vygotsky's and why. Invite them to take out a piece of paper or open a Word document, make two columns and list the aspects of their religious education programs which more closely resemble Piaget or Vygotsky's theories. (Allow participants 10 minutes for this activity.)

When time is up, inform participants that we will return to this idea of the different aspects of our religious education programs and their pedagogical approaches, but first we will examine another constructivist approach to learning, Fischer's Skill Theory.

Display Slide 11: Fischer's Skill Theory

Then explain:

Kurt Fischer's Skill Theory builds upon Piaget's constructivist theory of cognitive development in that his view includes a series of skills to be mastered. His theory includes additional levels to represent cognitive development which happens throughout life as opposed to Piaget's stage theory which assumes cognitive development ends with adolescence. His dynamic skill scale involves not stages but restructurings of thought. As

people move along this scale, their thinking becomes increasingly abstract, complex, and integrated.

According to this theory, learning and development involve the whole brain, cognition develops through levels and tiers, context matters, learning is slow and variable, and support is essential.

Display Slide 12: Fischer's Skill Theory (cont.)

Explain:

People learn best when in a rich environment that engages learners emotionally, motivationally, kinesthetically, and reflectively.

As opposed to most cognitive development models, Fischer's levels are used to establish a child's skills, not the child's overall developmental level. Since most children will be at different levels for different skills, in order to characterize a particular child's cognitive development, a cognitive profile is required.

Display Slide 13: Fischer's Skill Theory (cont.)

Development is not like climbing a ladder where each step leads to the development of a particular set of skills. Instead, he likens cognitive development to a spider's web, with growth and change happening among many pathways at the same time.

Divide participants into breakout rooms to discuss in small groups:

- *If these theories of learning are not part of your current pedagogical approach to religious education, how could some programs be adapted?*
- *What can we take away from these constructivist theories and their application to our religious education programs including selection of curricula?*
- *What do these theories tell us about the importance and role of the volunteer teacher in our religious education programs?*

Allow small group discussions to continue for ten minutes. Remind participants when they have two minutes left. Close the breakout rooms and ask for any brief reflections or

interesting observations participants would like to share about the comments made in their small groups.

Creating Learning Experiences (30 minutes)

Materials:

- None

Preparation:

- None

Description:

Introduce this activity by saying something like:

We've explored a number of different learning theories relevant for developing a comprehensive approach to religious education pedagogy. Now we will break into small groups and your task will be to create a multigenerational learning opportunity for members of a fictional congregation that utilizes a pedagogical approach based upon one or more of the learning theories we explored in this unit. Your small group will have fifteen minutes to come up with a presentation, and each group will have a few minutes to present and then address questions from participants in the other groups. Make sure your group identifies the learning theory/ies that this program utilizes.

Then Ask:

Does anyone have any clarifying questions as to the assignment before we begin the process?

Divide participants into three breakout rooms to create their multigenerational programs. Allow 10 minutes for this activity. Remind participants when they have only 2 minutes left until the breakout rooms close.

Have each of the three groups present their program and explain how it utilizes one or more of the learning theories we explored in this unit. After each presentation, invite comments and reflections from the rest of the participants before moving onto the next

group's presentation. Present your own observations and evaluation of the groups' work after the other participants have had a chance to share theirs.

BREAK (5 minutes)

Faith: I Believe, I Feel, I Act (15 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 14, I Believe, I Feel, I Act
-

Description

Introduce this section by saying:

We've examined a number of learning theories, and now we turn to learning for faith development. To do this we need to explore the meaning of the word "faith." At the same time, "faith" is a word that some Unitarian Universalists find difficult to use or define in terms of liberal religion.

Ask participants who are comfortable using the word "faith" in reflecting on their own religious experience to raise their hands. Ask for responses for those who do not use the word, or are uncomfortable using it, or feel that it does not apply to liberal religion.

Discuss the fact that there are many different definitions of faith. Then say:

For our purposes here, I suggest that we might consider faith as having more than one dimension. I'd like for us to think of faith in three senses: a world view, a loyalty of one's heart, and a way of life.

Looking at it this way, Faith development 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). This threefold definition of faith—cognitive, affective, and behavioral—will form the framework of our next learning activity.

Explain that participants will now have the opportunity to explore the dimensions of their faith in the three ways mentioned. Display Slide 14, and ask participants to draw the three columns on a piece of paper or in a Word document:

I BELIEVE (world view)

I FEEL (loyalty of my heart)

I ACT (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. Before time wraps up, invite participants to share some samples of their faith statements.

Fowler’s Faith Development Theory (20 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 15 Lifespan Perspective of Human Development
- Slide 16, Fowler’s Faith Development Theory
- Slide 17, Strengths & Weaknesses of Fowler’s Theory
- Handout 8, Faith Stages According to Fowler

- Handout 9, Women's Different Voices
-

Preparation

• Familiarize yourself with Fowler's Faith Development Stages and the criticisms of his theory so that you have enough comfort with the talking points below.

Description

Introduce this activity by saying:

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. However, the science of human growth is a relatively new one and is constantly evolving. In the last 100 years, several sets of research and theory have attempted to answer the question: "When are we to do what?"

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.

But a note of caution: theories can be helpful in understanding general patterns of development, but they do not provide absolute typologies or truths that apply to everyone.

Display Slide 15: Lifespan Perspective of Human Development

Remember, modern researchers believe that rather than completing a series of stages, lifespan development is lifelong, multidimensional and multidirectional, highly plastic and influenced by multiple, interacting forces. So while Fowler's theories offer a

guide for faith development needs in terms of helping us understand some of the complexity, we need to recognize some of its limitations as well.

Display Slide 16: Fowler's Faith Development Theory

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 handouts, number 8.

Provide a brief presentation to the group on James Fowler's stages of faith development theory based on Handout 8, Faith Stages According to Fowler, and your own knowledge of faith development.

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.

Display Slide 17: Fowler's Faith Development Theory Strengths & Weaknesses

Highlight some of the following points in your dialogue:

- **Fowler draws a distinction between faith and belief.**
- **While beliefs may divide, faith unites.**
- **Fowler's Stages of Faith 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) and conflict is the dynamic force that drives developmental advance.
- **Fowler's Stages in faith development are hierarchical, sequential, and invariant**
- **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 perspectives.

- **Some limitations and weaknesses of Fowler’s theory are the 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. Note that this information is also included in the UU Identity module because of the implications for faith development and being exposed to Fowler and other faith development theories multiple times is valuable because you can take away more understanding each time. Encourage participants to check resources in the bibliography for further reading and study.

Faith Development and Group Portraits (20 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 18, Faith Development and Group Portraits

Description

Display Slide 18 as you explain this activity. You will be assigning participants to a breakout room and a learning group. 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. Invite participants to create a faith development portrait of the age chosen using pictures, words, phrases, and symbols. Remind them to focus on faith development and learning theories, 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.

Allow 10 minutes for small groups to work on their portraits in Break Out Rooms.

Highlight these resources:

- Handout 9, Women's Different Voices

Let participants know when they have five minutes left in their breakout rooms for this task.

Once you have brought the participants back from the breakout rooms, invite each group to share their portrait and its implications for faith development in Unitarian Universalist congregations. 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. Consider asking participants to upload any documents created to the [shared folder](#).

Closing (5 minutes)

Materials

- Closing Words

Description

Remind participants to post in online forum for session two as well as to do the reading and other assignments prior to the next session. Mention that next week we will begin an examination of our historical and theological traditions and how religious education in the past impacts what we do with our religious education philosophies today.

Close with this reading from Sonia Ricotti:

“Surrender to what is.

Let go of what was.

Have faith in what will be.”

SESSION 3: OUR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PHILOSOPHIES OF THE PAST

Background and Preparation

Reading Assignments:

Read the following handouts:

- Handout 10 Dewey and Progressive Education
- Handout 11 Fahs and MacLean
- Handout 12 Channing and Freire

PLUS:

- Watch Gail Forsyth-Vail's RE History video before this webinar (36 mins)
<https://www.uua.org/re/adults/curricular-resources/uu-history-videos>

Discussion Forum

After the webinar, reflect on the readings and discussions from the session and post a response to the Reflections Questions in the **Session 3, Discussion Forum** thread.

Webinar Information

Date:

Time:

Webinar recordings will be added to the shared folder once completed.

Session-at-a-Glance

Opening	5 minutes
Who Influences Religious Education Philosophy?	20 minutes

Roots of Liberal Religious Education	15 minutes
Unitarian Universalist Forebears	30 minutes
BREAK	5 minutes
Head & Heart (John Westerhoff)	20 minutes
Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Paulo Freire)	20 minutes
Closing	5 minutes
	Total Time: 2 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

- Familiarize yourself with the handouts for this session
- Watch Gail Forsyth-Vail’s RE History video before this session (36 mins)
<https://www.uua.org/re/adults/curricular-resources/uu-history-videos>
-

Opening (5 minutes)

Materials

- Opening reading

Description

Begin with this quote from Hebrews 10:24-25:

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,
not giving up meeting together,
as some are in the habit of doing,
but encouraging one another –
and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Who Influences Religious Education Philosophy? (20 minutes)

Materials

- None

Description

Start by brainstorming:

Who influences religious education philosophy?

Participants may call out historical figures, affirm these answers, but then get participants to think about their congregations.

Who influences religious education philosophy in our congregations?

Include some of the following points in a brief discussion:

At the very least, the “who influences” religious education philosophy 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, both historical and contemporary.

Display Slide 19, Relationships Crucial to Fostering Faith Development

Then say:

As we think about these responses to “who influences religious education philosophy,” 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 primary religious educators of their children and youth.

- The professional and lay leaders of the congregation need to be supportive of parents’ educational ministry to children, youth, and adults.

Display Slide 20 as you introduce the next task for small group discussion.

Divide participants into breakout rooms to discuss:

How do we include parents in the educational venture of their children?

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?

How do we get support from other professional staff and leaders of the congregation to be supportive of the parent's role as primary religious educator?

Allow discussion in breakout rooms to continue for 10 minutes. Remind participants when they have two minutes before the breakout rooms close. After everyone has returned from the breakout rooms, invite reflection or comments on something said in their small group discussion.

Roots of Liberal Religious Education (15 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 21, William Ellery Channing
- Slide 22, John Dewey
- Handout 10, The Great End in Religious Instruction
- Handout 11, Dewey and Progressive Education
-

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 21 about William Ellery Channing (1780-1842). 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.

Invite participants to take out Handout 10.

Engage the group in a responsive reading excerpted from *The Sunday School: A Discourse Pronounced before the Sunday School Society, Boston, 1838* (also Reading 652 in *Singing the Living Tradition*) by asking for volunteers to read the passages in alternating fashion.

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.

Display Slide 20. 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 share with the group as they are willing:

Do you see evidence of the philosophies of Channing and Dewey in the religious education programs in your congregation today?

How might they have influenced Sophia Lyon Fahs & Angus MacLean in their philosophy development?

Unitarian Universalist Forebears (30 minutes)

Materials

-
- Slide 23, Fahs & MacLean’s Philosophies
- Slide 24, Multimedia Kit Era & Futures Committee Era Philosophies
- Handout 12, Fahs and MacLean

Preparation

- Review the curricula eras information before leading this activity.
- Watch Gail Forsyth-Vail's RE History video before this webinar (36 mins)
<https://www.uua.org/re/adults/curricular-resources/uu-history-videos>

Description

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 refer to Handout 12, Fahs and MacLean, which presents "Fulfilling Channing's Challenge," by Jeanne Nieuwejaar and along with their memories of the RE history video, invite them to reflect on the following questions:

- *What were Fahs' and MacLean's philosophies of religious development?*
- *What were some of their religious education theories?*

Display Slide 23 with questions to be considered in breakrooms. Send participants to breakrooms to discuss their responses to these questions and their own experiences and understanding of Fahs and MacLean:

- *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 conversations to continue for ten minutes. Remind participants when they have two more minutes left before the break rooms close. After participants have returned from the breakrooms, ask:

Was there anything in their philosophies which seem outdated today?

Were you surprised by some of your discoveries about them watching the RE history video?

*Was there anything that we have not yet achieved but are still reaching toward?
Any other interesting discoveries?*

Display Slide 24 with questions to be considered in small group discussion in break out rooms.

Send participants to break out rooms to discuss their reflections and their own experiences and understanding of the Multimedia Kit and RE Futures Committee eras, including whether or not they experienced any of the curricula of this era as a child, youth, or adult. Encourage them to consider the following questions in their breakout rooms:

How did the new emphasis upon secularism influence the creation of the curricula of the Kit era?

How did the new emphasis upon UU identity in the RE Futures Era influence a huge change in Unitarian Universalist religious education philosophy?

What essential parts of our religious education philosophy can you trace back to the philosophies of the Multimedia Era or Religious Education Futures Committee Era?

Allow conversations to continue for ten minutes. Remind participants when they have two more minutes left before the break rooms close. After participants have returned from the breakrooms, ask for any brief reflections or observations they had during the discussion.

BREAK (5 minutes)

Head & Heart (20 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 26, John Westerhoff
- Slide 27, John Westerhoff (cont.)
- Slide 28, Head & Heart activity
- Handout 17, John Westerhoff: Modes/Dimensions of Consciousness

Preparation

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

Description

Introduce this activity by saying:

The question of where and when 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 faith 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.

With Slide 26, 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

Display Slide 27 as you point out Handout 14, John Westerhoff: Modes/Dimensions of Consciousness. Read aloud, or have participants 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.

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 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.

Display Slide 27, John Westerhoff (cont.)

Through our participation in a community’s life and its rituals, we enact and represent 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.

Display Slide 28, Head & Heart Activity

Encourage participants to take out Handout 15 with the Venn Diagram . Then encourage them to think about the various programs offered at their congregation (religious education or otherwise) and place them in the proper circle. Items which could be both can be placed in the space where the two circles overlap.

After allowing adequate time for the participants to complete their Venn Diagrams, send them into breakout rooms to share with others what they included in their diagrams and where.

If time permits, return group from breakout rooms to discuss any reflections or new understandings participants had as part of their creating the diagram or learning from the diagrams others.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Paulo Freire) (20 minutes)

Materials

- Slides 29-30 Paulo Freire & Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Handout 13, Paulo Freire
- •

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.

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).

Display Slide 29, Pedagogy of the Oppressed Part I

Explain:

- 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*).

Encourage participants to look at Handout 13 on Freire. Briefly discuss as a whole group. Display Slide 30 with questions about Freire and questions to be reflected upon in small group discussions. Divide participants into breakout rooms for them to engage in small group discussions on:

What do you think of Freire’s deep conviction that education is inherently political?

How does politics affect education in our society?

How does his idea of education as a means to transform society mesh with Unitarian Universalist religious education philosophy?

Closing (5 minutes)

Materials

- Closing reading

Description

Remind participants to answer reflection questions before the next session in the online forum as well as do the reading and other assignments before the next session.

Share this poem from Roberta Nelson's essay, "The Teacher as Spiritual Guide" by Christopher Logue as closing words:

"Come to the edge."
It's too high.
"Come to the edge."
We might fall.
COME TO THE EDGE.
And they came,
And she pushed them.
And they flew.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

SESSION 4: DOING THE HARD WORK

Background and Preparation

Reading Assignments: Complete the reading before the webinar for this session.

- Essay, “Our Work for Social Justice” by Elizabeth Nguyen from the Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide
- Essay, “Building Strong and Radical Religious Communities” by Dr. Jacqui James from *Essex Conversations*
- Essay, “Toward Wholeness & Liberation” by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley from *Essex Conversations*
- Essay: “Education as Liberation” by Rebecca Parker from *Essex Conversations*

Review these other materials prior to the start of this session:

- [Dismantling White Supremacy Culture](#) from *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun
-
- Mini Book of Welcoming Children with Special Needs
-
-

Discussion Forum

After the webinar, reflect on the readings and discussions from the session and post a response in the **Session 4, Discussion Forum** thread.

Webinar Information

Date:

Time:

Webinar recordings will be added to the shared folder once completed.

Session-at-a-Glance

Opening	5 minutes
The Hard Way	10 minutes
Tough Terms for Unitarian Universalists	15 minutes
Social/Emotional and Learning Challenges	30 minutes
Break	5 minutes
Building Strong & Radical Religious Communities	30 minutes
Toward Wholeness & Liberation	20 minutes
Closing	5 minutes
	Total Time: 2 hours

Goals

- To continue community building
- To consider the meanings and implications of religious terms that may be challenging for some Unitarian Universalists
- To consider the ways our congregations exclude or include people (either intentionally or unintentionally)
- To gain a basic understanding of white supremacy culture and how our congregations are responding to the challenge of diversity
- To explore differences between theories of liberalism and liberation when it comes to religious education and faith development

•

Opening (5 minutes)

Materials

- Opening reading

Description

Share this chalice lighting from the resources packet, “The Promise and the Practice,” by the Rev. Rebekah Savage:

We light our flaming chalice as a beloved people
united in love
and thirsting for restorative justice.

May it melt away the tethers that uphold whiteness in our midst.
May it spark in us a spirit of humility.
May it ignite in us radical love that transforms our energy into purposeful action.

This a chalice of audacious hope.
This chalice shines a light on our shared past,
signaling our intention to listen deeply, reflect wisely,
and move boldly toward our highest ideals.

The Hard Way (10 minutes)

Materials

- Essay: “Our Work for Social Justice” by Elizabeth Nguyen from the *Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide*

Description

Refer to the essay by Elizabeth Nguyen where she talks about “there is only the hard way.”

Share this excerpt:

“Many of us want to do the right thing, the just thing, the generous thing, and also not to have to give anything at all ... we want to be part of that powerful, courageous, game-changing, direct action without the long-past-midnight planning meetings, the messy decision-making, the frayed relationships, and the constant wondering if this is even worth it.”

Ask participants for their comments and reflections on that statement, then if no one brings it up, ask:

*Are our congregations doing the hard work of living our faith out in the world?
What challenges do we face as religious educators when it comes to doing the “hard work” of our faith?*

Tough Terms for Unitarian Universalists (15 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 31, Tough Terms for UUs
- Handout 10, Tough Terms
- Handout 11, More Tough Terms

Description

Introduce this section by saying some of the roadblocks to doing the hard work of our faith and developing the necessary relationships in the community for social justice work is the continued legacy of the rejection of religious language.

Display Slide 31 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, and ethics. Then invite them to write, in the appropriate quadrant, at least five or six words that they associate with each term. Remind them that Handouts 10 & 11 contain many of the “tough terms” many Unitarian

Universalists still struggle with and might be useful for this exercise. Let them know they will have 5 minutes to complete this activity.

Divide participants into breakout rooms to discuss the “tough terms,” their associations with them, and their feelings about them. Allow ten minutes for small group discussions.

Let the participants know when they have two minutes left for their conversations. After all participants have returned from the breakout rooms, invite participants to share anything they found meaningful in the conversations.

Close with the words of Rev. Jean Nieuwejaar from the book, *Fluent in Faith*:

“Our children need good words to bring their spiritual lives into focus and to engage with others about their religious journeys. The core concepts of many of the ancient words are relevant to these tender, young spiritual journeys, as they are to our own. Our work is to reach beyond the often narrow meanings attached to these words, to find the beauty in their depths. If we can talk comfortably about prayer, faith, and salvation with our children, we needn’t fear that they will adopt narrow, damaging notions of these concepts. These words will come to mean for them whatever they mean in the integrity of our minds and hearts. If we do this work well, our children will not learn rigid, archaic meanings but will adopt life-affirming meanings that are consistent with our faith.”

Social/Emotional and Learning Challenges

Materials

- Mini Book of Welcoming Children with Special Needs

Preparation

-

Description

Begin this part of the session by commenting that we've looked at who in our congregations influences religious education philosophy, and how some historical figures have influenced our religious education philosophies. We've explored theories of learning and faith development. Now we continue doing the hard work of being Unitarian Universalist religious educators as we consider how to be welcoming to children with special needs as a result of mood, behavioral or cognitive disorders. Encourage participants to refer to the mini book of welcoming children with special needs. Let them know that they will be taking on a special needs label for this next activity. This may be uncomfortable for some of you, especially if you have any of these challenges yourself. Think about how a person with that label might be treated. Consider asking participants to temporarily change the display of their onscreen name to that of their "label", or write the word down on a piece of paper to hold it up in front of themselves so that the words can be seen.

Ask the group of participants to share their "labels" in breakout rooms and consider these issues:

What might it feel like to have the first things someone notices about you is your mood/behavioral or cognitive challenges?

What might it be like for this to be the focus of how people think of you?

What would you like people to know about you and the other parts of your identities?

Allow ten minutes for discussion in breakout rooms. After bringing everyone back, ask for comments/reflections/thoughts.

Encourage participants to pull out the Reframing the Negative to Positive handout.

Go over it together as a group. Then encourage the participants to change their "label" by reframing it into something more positive. Give them a few minutes for this activity then ask if anyone wants to share their reframes.

Close this session by returning to the Reframing the Negative to Positive handout as you read:

- We minister to all children and some of these children have special needs and special challenges.
- Any child would prefer to be viewed as bad rather than dumb.
- Children with difficult behavior are distinguished by their regrettable ability to elicit from others exactly the opposite of what they need.
- The hurt that troubled children and youth cause is never greater than the pain they feel.
- In our RE programming our children should not have to adapt to our curricula, we should be adapting our curricula to the needs of our children.
- A disruptive child needs adult care and attention.
- A child can only control their own behavior and performance and should not be compared with others.
- There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals.

BREAK (5 minutes)

Building Strong and Radical Religious Communities (30 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 32 Elements of White Supremacy Culture
- Slide 33 Embracing Diversity

Preparation

Review the following materials in advance of this session:

- Essay: “Building Strong and Radical Religious Communities by Dr. Jacqui James from *Essex Conversations*
- [Dismantling White Supremacy Culture](#) from *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun

Description

Begin this activity by highlighting these points from the essay, “Building Strong and Radical Religious Communities.” by Dr. Jacqui James:

“Even in our liberal congregations, despite many years of passing resolutions on issues of social justice, we continue in largely subtle, unintentional, and unconscious ways to oppress and exclude people ... Acknowledging the many ways in which our society and our religious communities continue to separate and divide people based on their “perceived differences” is another of our tasks. It is to ignore much of what we do see, to feel that we have no way to intervene, to blame the victims instead of the systems that hold the various oppressions in place – to be part of what holds these systems in place instead of being about the business of dismantling oppressions.”

Break participants into breakout rooms (depending upon the racial identity of the participants, you may need to consider breakout groups based upon personal racial identity):

Why are we still facing this same challenge?

How do our programs exclude and oppress others?

Who is it we are excluding or oppressing, either intentionally or unintentionally?

Allow groups 10 minutes to discuss in their small groups. Then after everyone has returned, invite sharing of the process and the conversation.

Encourage participants to recall the Mark Morrison Reed video and their reading assignments, particularly the elements of [white supremacy culture](#):

Display Slide 32: Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture

Briefly go over the aspects of white supremacy culture as displayed in the slide.

Then ask:

Where do you see white supremacy culture at work in your congregation or other UU organizations? What are the antidotes to those elements of white supremacy culture? How might these be implemented in our church communities or religious education programs?

Display Slide 33: Embracing Diversity

Briefly go over the aspects of embracing diversity as displayed in the slide.

Then explain:

Since our dominant culture equates words such as “white supremacy” and “racism” with right-wing extremist hate groups, white people have learned over the years that being racist is bad. This requires a culture shift, especially for many white Unitarian Universalists who believe their progressive ideas about race and the friendships or relationships they have with people of color make them anti-racist.

Developing an understanding that racism is systemic in our society is crucial and while being racist is bad, white people behaving in racist ways (even unintentionally) happens all the time through microaggressions toward people of color. However, instead of accepting the idea that good intentioned white people often speak, act or behave in ways which perpetuate this systemic racism, what often happens is that people will often react with defensiveness, expect to be in a comfortable environment where they are not challenged, or make comments about how the congregation will no longer be “the way it used to be.”

*These common responses are known as **white fragility**, a term referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially. White fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including crying, argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue.*

Divide participants into breakout rooms (again, depending upon the personal racial identities of the members of your group, you might want to select breakout rooms based upon racial identity) Then ask them to explore:

Are you witnessing white fragility in your congregations or in individuals of your congregation?

How has it manifested?

Has it been addressed or ignored? Challenged or encouraged?

After returning the participants from their breakout rooms, ask for reflections from the group members, any new understandings or challenges which arose. Remind participants that we have just begun to scratch the surface of this topic and that if they are white and haven't done their own work around these issues, they are encouraged to review in greater detail the resources outlined at the beginning of this session along with Robin DiAngelo's book, [*White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism.*](#)

Close with this quote from Dr. Jacqui James' essay, Building Strong and Radical Religious Communities, from Essex Conversations:

“Our task is to provide skills, tools, and attitudes that help to dismantle the various oppressions and build bridges between people. A large part of the task of the educating community is to prepare people for the lifelong nature of this work ... change happens so slowly that it is easy to become discouraged, to begin to think that this is never going to happen, and certainly not in our lifetimes. It is the responsibility of our religious communities to equip people with ways in which to nurture and sustain themselves through this journey.”

Then ask:

Are we preparing people for the lifelong nature of the work of social change?

How does this perspective on, challenging the cultures of exclusion in our congregations, and the notion that one of our tasks is to equip people for the long haul when it comes to social change shape our religious education philosophy?

Toward Wholeness & Liberation (20 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 34, Justice/Equity/Liberation/Inclusion
- Essay: “Toward Wholeness & Liberation” essay by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley from *Essex Conversations*
- Essay: “Education as Liberation” essay by Rebecca Parker from *Essex Conversations*

Preparation

- Review essays by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley and Rebecca Parker from *Essex Conversations*

Description

Introduce this part of the session by saying something like:

In the essay, “Toward Wholeness and Liberation,” by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, critically explores some of the issues of our anti-oppression work and some of the impediments to our spiritual wholeness. The author distinguishes between liberalism and liberation. Likewise, Rebecca Parker in her essay, “Education as Liberation” stresses that humanism and spirituality must be united, a factor that she believes obliges religious educators to actively counteract systems that dehumanize people. Parker also sets forth a model for congregationally based social action as an educational practice.

Then ask:

What does Parker outline for a model of social action as educational practice?

How would you apply Parker's model for a congregational setting in the context of the local community?

Display Slide 34: Justice/Equity/Liberation/Inclusion

Invite comments and reflections on the graphic. Then divide participants into breakrooms to discuss in small groups:

Then ask:

What are the strengths and limitations of liberation theology 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 and away from oppression?

Closing (5 minutes)

Materials

- Closing reading

Description

Remind participants to answer reflection questions before the next session in the online forum and to complete the assignments necessary for the last session.

Share this excerpt from Carol Thomas Cissel's "Words Matter" reading from *The Promise and the Practice* Worship Materials as closing words:

Words matter. They lift and hold us.
They illuminate the future and shower us with possibilities.
When misused, they hurt.
Verbal cuts and abrasions sting.
Language leaves wounds that become scars.

Words matter.

Please don't invite me to sit at your table
unless you have a warm, satisfying meal to serve.
It doesn't have to be a gourmet feast; a potluck is fine.
The soufflé may only have risen halfway.
The cookies might be burned on the edges.
The pasta can be overcooked.
That's okay. I'm starving.
What it must be is full-filling, real, made with love, and ready to be eaten.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

SESSION 5: CREATING A PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Background and Preparation

Reading Assignments:

- Review the statement you added to the Discussion Forum prior to session one on “religious education is ...” (you may want to print it out, type it into a Word document or have it viewable online because we will be adding to them in this session)
- Read Makaanah Morriss’ essay, “Doorway to the Sacred” from *Essex Conversations*
- Read handouts:
 - #18 Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources

Discussion Forum

After the webinar, reflect on the readings and discussions from the session and post a response to the Reflection Questions in the **Session 5, Discussion Forum** thread.

Evaluation

Please submit the **Participant Evaluation—Online Module** within a week after the module ends.

Webinar Information

Date:

Time:

Webinar recordings will be added to the shared folder once completed.

Session-at-a-Glance

Opening	5 minutes
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Doorway to the Sacred	15 minutes
Technology & Social Media	20 minutes
Visioning: Taking it Home	20 minutes
BREAK	5 minutes
Mythical Religious Education Committees: Goal Setting	50 minutes
Closing	5 minutes
	Total Time: 2 hours

Opening (5 minutes)

Materials

- Opening words

Description

Share this Children’s Wording of the Sources by Michelle Richards from the book, *Come Into the Circle*, as a call-back (one leader says the wording, then the other leader responds with the next line in an alternating fashion):

We can search for answers in the magic and mystery of everything alive.

We can search for answers in the words and deeds of people who showed us how to live fairly and in peace.

We can search for answers in the sacred texts and wisdom from the world’s many religions to inspire us to do what’s right.

We can search for answers in Jewish and Christian teachings which remind us how to love our neighbor and treat them how we wish to be treated.

We can search for answers in logic and science which helps us remember our priorities and how important the choices we make are.

We can search for answers in traditions which celebrate the earth and show us how to live in harmony with nature.

Doorway to the Sacred (15 minutes)

Materials

- Handout 18 Unitarian Universalist Sources

Preparation

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

Description

Say something like:

Makanah E. Morriss, in her essay “Doorway to the Sacred,” writes that UU religious education is all about *unlocking people*. Encourage participants to 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.”

Then ask:

What role do the UU Sources play in the philosophy and programming of our learning communities?

What are the implications for selection of and curriculum development?

How does utilizing the UU Sources help us to build in diversity and inclusion for all people?

Technology and Social Media (20 minutes)

Materials

- Handout 19 Development of Morality
-

Preparation

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

Description

Visioning: Taking It Home (20 minutes)

Materials

- Participants' "Religious Education is ..." statement from preparation for first session

Description

Say something like:

At the beginning of this module, we considered, "What is religious education?" and the philosophy behind using other words such as faith formation or faith development. We have examined the "who," "what," "where," and "how" religious education happens through the essays of Essex Conversations. We have explored how the philosophies of the past and the realities of the future are both in conflict and yet interdependent. After every topic we've explored, we've asked: "How does this fit into our philosophies of religious education?"

*Now we will add another question: "What is **your** philosophy of religious education?"*

Take this time to integrate your understandings 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 by reviewing the statement they wrote in the forum during their preparation for Session 1 (“Religious Education Is...”) and revising it to reflect their current understanding after all they have explored through this module.

After allowing participants to work on their statements individually for about ten minutes, (watch to see who has finished and who appears to still be working and adjust time accordingly), send participants into breakout rooms to share and discuss their religious education philosophy statements.

BREAK (5 minutes)

Mythical Religious Education Committees: Goal Setting (50 minutes)

Materials

- Slide 41, Why: Mythical Religious Education Committees
- Sample RE program brochure with philosophy and goals

Preparation

- Find or prepare a sample RE program brochure with an articulated philosophy of religious education and the goals based upon that philosophy

Description

Introduce this section by saying:

Now that you’ve had a chance to articulate a philosophy of religious education and explore it with others, you’ll now have a chance to create a philosophy of religious education with a group. Since a congregation’s religious education philosophy should be created as a group, preferably with a variety of people at the table: the minister, members of the Religious Education Committee/Council, frequent teachers, and parents.

Ask if the participants can think of anyone else who might need to be at the table (members of the Board, the treasury committee, etc.)

Display Slide 41 and let participants know that they will be working in Break Out Rooms for this activity. Ask each group to pretend it is a religious education committee tasked with creating a philosophy of religious education (or faith formation/faith development) and to showcase that philosophy, invite participants to create a religious education brochure.

Ask them to write their Mythical Church Community's collective religious education philosophy statement that would appear in such a brochure and the goals for this mythic community's religious education based upon that philosophy. Tell them they will have 30 minutes to create this brochure and then we will reconvene to share our brochures with their philosophies and goals with the rest of the group.

Send the participants into breakout rooms. Let them know when they have 5 minutes left.

Bring the participants back from the breakout rooms and ask the groups to present their philosophy and goals. The more groups you have, the less time each group has to present, so you as leader will need to adjust the time for each group to share based upon how many groups you have (for instance, with two groups, each has 10 minutes, with three groups, each has six minutes, etc.)

Ask the whole group to reconvene and invite each small group, in turn, to present its philosophy of religious education. Encourage participants or group leaders to upload any documents created to the shared folder.

Closing (5 minutes)

Materials

- Closing words

Description

Remind participants to respond to questions for this final session in the online forum. The online forum will be up for one week following the close of the module. If participants missed responding to any of the session's reflection questions, they will have a week to complete their assignments. Remind them that these reflection questions are an important part of completing the module.

Remind Participants (and leaders!) that they should also complete the online evaluation within one week of the close of the module:

<https://www.uua.org/careers/re/renaissance/evaluation-forms>

Offer closing words from the last chapter of Betty Jo Middleton's book, *To Touch Inward Springs*:

“As we seek to become more truly educating communities, instead of dividing the church into worship, education, music, service and social action components, perhaps we may think of ways in which we can provide all of these experiences to people of all ages ...

“We live in a time of change and uncertainty. We must be courageous and creative to meet the needs of the times ahead. We are called to new beginnings even as we honor what has gone before, that we may be worthy of the heritage we have been given. It is our privilege and responsibility to contribute to this heritage of hope and faith and love for children, and for tomorrow's.”

Leader Resources

Online Forum Discussion Questions

Before Forum One

Please introduce yourself. Please include your current role, the congregation you serve and any other information you wish to share.

Religious Education is ...

Forum One

After hearing others' definitions of religious education or faith development and the conversations as part of the first session, do you want to refine your statement further?

What do you think of the idea of religious education as relationship building? How can those relationships be built?

Forum Two

What is your reflection on the "I Believe, I Feel, I Act" activity?

What new insights do you have after discussing Fowler's Faith Development Theory?

How does Daniel Harper's essay on "Learning Types and their Needs" affect the faith development of our youth and adults? How do we balance the needs of "old youth" as opposed to "new youth"?

Forum Three

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?

Do you have any new insights after learning more about Unitarian Universalist Forebears?

Forum Four

What discoveries did you make, associations identified or insights were gained during the “Tough Terms for UUs” conversation?

How is examining oppression and white supremacy within our congregations an important part of religious education philosophy-making?

How can we work for the elimination of oppression and white supremacy in the greater world when we have trouble working on these issues in our own congregations?

Forum Five

What is your philosophy of religious education?

What further insights or questions do you have at the conclusion of this module?

What essays are missing from Essex Conversations: themes which we face today which were not an issue (or as large an issue twenty years ago – like technology)?

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 Religion as Relationship Spiral

Session 2

- 7 Constructionist Learning Theories
- 8 Faith Stages According to Fowler
- 9 Women's Different Voices

Session 3

- 10 The Great End in Religious Instruction
- 11 Dewey and Progressive Education
- 12- Fahs and MacLean
- 13 Channing and Freire
- 14 John Westerhoff: Modes/Dimensions of Consciousness
- 15 Head & Heart Activity

Session 4

- 16 Tough Terms
- 17 More Tough Terms
- 18 Unitarian Universalist Principles & Sources
- 19 Development of Morality
- 20 Resources

Sample Welcome Letter from Leaders to Online/Hybrid Participants

Hello to all of our Philosophy of Religious Education Online/Hybrid Module Participants!

We look forward to our first online meeting for the Module on (date). Since this module has been designed in many respects to model a “flipped classroom,” it is important for you as a participant to do the assignments before the sessions. During our online sessions, you will want to have some paper on hand for note-taking and some of the activities or plan to have your word processing program open for the exercises and note-taking.

This online (or hybrid) **Philosophy of Religious Education** Renaissance module is a distance learning experience comprised of **five** two-hour webinars with reading and other assignments for each session. Credit will only be offered for full participation in the module. Full participation includes:

- Online attendance at all two-hour sessions
- Reading and reflection to prepare for each session
- Responses to Reflection Questions on the Discussion Forum after each session and **reply to or comment upon at least one other person’s post**. Note: The Discussion Forum will remain active until two weeks after the module closes.
- Facilitating a Focused Conversation in a small group over four or five Essex Conversations essays grouped by theme (see the Guide to the Reader for which essays fall under which foundational questions)
- Submission of final evaluation within a week of the ending of the module

The Reader for this module is six essays from *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education* (Boston: Skinner House, 2001) and four essays from The

Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide. It is best if you obtain the book in time to read at least these six essays from Essex Conversations before the module:

- Hoertdoerfer, Pat, “Religion as Relationship”
- Harper, Daniel, “Learning Types & Their Needs”
- James, Jacqui, “Building Strong and Radical Religious Communities”
- Bowens-Wheatley, Marjorie “Toward Wholeness and Liberation”
- Parker, Rebecca, “Education as Liberation”
- Morriss, Makaanah, “Doorway to the Sacred”

And these four essays from The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide:

- McNatt, Rosemary Bray, “Our Faith”
- Hauser, Aisha, “Our Communities”
- York, Jessica, “Our Religious Education”
- Nguyen, Elizabeth, “Our Work for Social Justice”

The Handouts for the Philosophy of Religious Education Renaissance Module can be downloaded from the Group page’s [module materials](#). You will be responsible for printing your own copies of the handouts or having a window open on your computer (or other electronic device) so that you are easily able to refer to them during our online meetings.

Technical Considerations

- The preferred webinar platform is Zoom, which you can download from the Zoom website.
- Use a laptop or computer with headset (not ear buds) and camera (does not work as well from iPad); have your phone handy in case you need to call in instead of using computer audio.
- Create your UUA profile name: Go to UUA.org and click on “create account” at the top right and follow instructions on the page. Once you’ve gotten this confirmation, email the leaders of the Renaissance Module with your profile name so you can be added to the group; please include the module name in the subject line. To access the module online, log in with your UUA profile, and follow the link provided.

- Subscribe to comments in the Discussion Forum in each session. To post on the forum, click on the post and add your comments (please do not add a new post!) If you'd like to respond to a particular comment, look for the "reply" link below that comment (there's also a like button and other options). Be sure to save!
- Email the leaders with your first and second choices for leading Focused Conversations. Reviewing Handout 5 and the Guide to the Reader in advance will explain which essays will be covered in the Focused Conversations as part of the session topics and may help you select your preferences.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact one of us leaders. We'll distribute the assignments for Focused Conversations before the module if all the slots are filled in advance, otherwise we will discuss it during our first meeting time on (date/time).

Sincerely,
(Leaders' names & emails)

Focused Conversations Assignment Grid

Date	Session Topic(s)	Names
	WHEN does religious education take place?	
	WHO influences religious education?	
	WHERE does religious education occur?	
	WHY do we do what we do?	
	HOW do we go about it?	