**UU History Mysteries or How to Chalice Travel**

**Episode One: Off We Go**

**By Chris Johns**

**October 2014**

**Characters: (in order of appearance)**

Gina: RE Student Steve: RE teacher

Kyle: RE Student Quillen: Our Travel Guide

Aidan: RE Student Rev. DH: Sermon Presenter 1960

Claire: The new girl

*(At the top of our skit, we see three RE students who have arrived in class and are waiting for their teacher.)*

GINA: Hey. What’s wrong with him?

KYLE: If I were to take a guess I would say he has a recurring case of Sunday-itis.

GINA: Huh?

KYLE: Sunday-itis. It’s a horrible illness that strikes the minute your parents are trying to leave for

church. Symptoms include excessive tiredness and the inability to function in polite society.

GINA: That’s not a real thing.

AIDAN: It is. And I am about to die…

GINA: Oh. Now you are dying.

AIDAN: Yes. From acute boredom.

KYLE: Boredom? Really dude?

AIDAN: What? I can’t hear you. Senses failing. Everything is fuzzy. Gina? Kyle? Are you there? Come

closer. I want to see your faces one last time.

KYLE: *(throwing a cushion at him)* Get up. *(He doesn’t)*

STEVE: Hey guys. This is Claire. She’s new.

*(Gina and Kyle greet her. Aidan continues to lie there.)*

CLAIRE: Um, hi. What’s wrong with him?

GINA: He’s dying.

STEVE: Oh. What is it this week?

KYLE: Boredom.

STEVE: Again? Wasn’t that the ailment last month?

AIDAN: Ha ha. You are all so funny but you’ll be sorry when I’m gone.

STEVE: And what, my friend, could be so boring that it might actually cause your untimely demise?

AIDAN: *(sitting up)* My mom’s on the RE committee. She said we start UU History this week. Ugh. *(Falls*

*back)*

CLAIRE: RE? What’s that? I know that the UU stands for Unitarian Universalist but RE?

AIDAN: *(sitting up again)* Sorry. I forgot you’re new. RE stands for Religious Education. Welcome to RE

class. *(And he falls back down again.)*

CLAIRE: Um, thanks?

STEVE: All right. Come on, Aidan. Sit up, please. Let’s get started. Kyle? Will you light our chalice this

morning?

KYLE: Sure.

CLAIRE: Chalice?

GINA: Mr. Steve - she’s new, remember?

STEVE: Sorry, Claire. The chalice is the symbol of our UU faith, just like the cross represents

Christianity or …

GINA: The Star of David represents Judaism?

STEVE: Exactly. Good to know you’ve been paying attention. Each Sunday before we start our class, we

light our chalice and read words that say something about how we will be spending our time

together that morning. Would you like to read them for us? This week our chalice words come

from Mark Harris’ “Unitarian Universalist Origins: Our Historic Faith.”

CLAIRE: Okay. Um, as we light this chalice may we be reminded that, “Our history has carried us from

liberal Christian views about Jesus and human nature to a rich pluralism that includes theist and

atheist, agnostic and humanist, pagan, Christian, Jew, and Buddhist. As our history continues to

evolve and unfold, we invite you to join us by choosing our free faith.” I like that.

STEVE: I’m glad. I do, too.

AIDAN: Liberal Christian? Nuh-uh. We’re UUs.

STEVE: Ah, but our roots - where we began - are based in Christianity.

AIDAN: Huh. Who knew?

STEVE: Well, I did. And if you can manage to survive our UU History classes, you will be amazed at the

journey we have taken over the years. Kyle? What are you doing? I’d like to get started.

KYLE: Sorry, Mr. Steve but I think there’s something wrong.

STEVE: What?

KYLE: Well, did we get a new chalice or change the old one? There’s, like, these really faint numbers

around the outside of it and one kind of bright, glowy one.

*(Everyone gathers to look at the chalice.)*

STEVE: That’s odd. Which number is, uh, glowy?

KYLE: 1-9-6-0. Did you put them there?

STEVE: No. Can I see it? Huh. These aren’t just numbers, they’re years. And I happen to know that

this year – 1960 – is the year we’ll be exploring in UU history today. I suspect all of these

numbers represent significant years in our UU history.

AIDAN: Weird.

GINA: Light it. Let’s see what happens.

KYLE: Uh uh. I’m not lighting it.

GINA: Oh for goodness sake. I’ll do it.

*(As Gina lights the chalice everything goes black and we hear the sound of rushing things; cars, trains, horses, feet and finally wind. From the dark we hear…)*

QUILLEN: Well, it’s about time. I thought you’d never get here. We have to hurry. It’s about to start.

*(As the lights come back up, we discover that our heroes have traveled back in time.)*

STEVE: Children, get behind me and stay calm. I don’t know what’s going on, but we need to stay close

together.

QUILLEN: You are perfectly safe, I assure you, but we really must be on our way.

STEVE: Um, look, Mr… ?

QUILLEN: Reverend. Shinn. Quillen Shinn. I’ve been selected to be your guide.

STEVE: Our… guide?

QUILLEN: Why, yes. I have it on good authority that UU History has the ability to bore people to death. I

have been asked to bring you here by way of the Time Chalice to prove otherwise.

AIDAN: The Time Chalice?

QUILLEN: Of course, how else could I get you here? I’ve always enjoyed traveling myself and I am particularly fond of this mode of transportation. Most efficient. Takes you where and when you

want to go.

GINA: Are you, were you, like, a minister?

QUILLEN: Not just a minister. I was quite the missionary back in my day. I started up about 40

Universalist churches all over the country – and Canada - but who’s counting. In fact, there are

those who called me the “Grasshopper Missionary” because I would hop from place to place

setting up new churches wherever I went. But that is a lesson for another day. Right now, I need

to show you something and get you back where you belong. We don’t want to miss it.

GINA: Miss what?

QUILLEN: You’ll see. Hurry now.

*(The students look to Steve for guidance.)*

STEVE: It’s okay. Let’s see what he wants to show us. Just stay close. No wandering off.

QUILLEN: Ah. I believe that we are just about there. Yes. We have arrived.

CLAIRE: But… Where are we? I mean, when are we? Is this a church? There are so many people here.

*(She points towards the audience, indicating a large crowd)*

QUILLEN: No. But that is a very good guess. This is May 23, 1960 and we are at Symphony Hall in Boston,

Massachusetts. What we are privileged to witness is a worship service celebrating the decision of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America to merge.

KYLE: What? Merge? What is he talking about? Mr. Steve?

STEVE: Reverend Shinn is right. There was a time in our history - and it wasn’t so long ago – when the

Unitarian church and the Universalist church were two separate denominations.

GINA: *(musing)* I always wondered why the name was so long.

QUILLEN: Shhh. Listen, children. Reverend Donald Harrington from the Community Church of New York

is about to speak…

*(Reverend Harrington, steps into the scene, looking out towards the audience and unaware that he is being watched by our time travelers. The children, Steve and Reverend Quillen watch quietly but with excitement.)*

REV DH: “There is a mysterious magic in milestones, as in the first quavering cry of a newborn babe, or

the combination of challenge and accomplishment in a commencement, or the breathless

moment of ultimate meaning in the marriage of a man and woman, or the anguished solace of a

last goodbye. In the milestone moment, we are led by the significance of the event to take more

than customary thought, to reach more urgently for perspective, to let our glance slide along

the rim of the horizon as far as it will go, to gird up our loins for a special effort to understand, to

experience deeply and to act.

We stand tonight at such a milestone, one which is partly a new birth, partly a commencement,

partly a kind of marriage, and which involves also a degree of death, an end of things which have

been precious to us and of institutions with which we have been lovingly familiar. It is this which

makes this milestone moment a living moment of truth, a time to remember, a season for hope

and faith.

We have achieved a union which is the result of more than a hundred years of striving, upon

which generations of human life have been lavished, and which now, at last, when the time was

fully ripe for it, has come this day to completion. It is our tremendous potential, born of the

world's response to our new relevance, caused in turn by this new world's need for a religion

which is dynamic instead of static, unitive instead of divisive, universalistic instead of particularistic, history-making rather than history-bound; I say, it is our tremendous potential, and the feeling of its surge and excitement in us and in our churches, that made this Unitarian Universalist merger necessary and indeed inevitable.” \*

*(The children and Mr. Steve are amazed by what they have just heard.)*

AIDAN: Woah. So that’s how we started.

QUILLEN: Started? Oh no my friends, we started hundreds and hundreds of years ago. Back in the earliest

days of Christianity, those Unitarians who did not believe in the idea of Father, Son and Holy

Ghost as one and those Universalists who believed that all are worthy of salvation, risked a great

deal, sometimes their very lives, to make their voices heard. These brave men and women stood up for what they believed. They are all part of your heritage – yes, even yours, New Girl - and I am trusting you all to carry those voices on into our future.

REV DH: “This is the vision, the challenge, the opportunity. These are the tasks that wait the coming of

the great, uniting new world faith. May we who are gathered here on this historic night, with

Unitarians, Universalists and men and women of goodwill everywhere, strive with all our might

to make our personal lives, our churches and fellowships and our new Unitarian Universalist

Association-the vehicles of this vision!”

STEVE: Amen.

QUILLEN: Amen indeed. Oh dear. Time to get you back. I wouldn’t want your parents to worry.

*(Everything goes dark once again and we hear the rushing sound again in reverse.)*

STEVE: Is everyone here? Claire? Gina?

GINA: *(taking inventory)* We’re all here. Did that really just happen?

KYLE: That was pretty cool.

AIDAN: Pretty cool? That was AWESOME! We went back in time, bro! We went back in time!

KYLE: I heard you. And YEAH WE DID!

CLAIRE: Are classes always like this?

STEVE: No. That was unusual.

GINA: Look there’s a note. I think it’s from Reverend Shinn. (*reading)* Dear children, I did not have time

to say good-bye but I will see you again very soon. I can’t wait to see where – and when - our

travels take us. Yours, Quillen Shinn

AIDAN: Woah…

CLAIRE: Do you really think we’ll see him again, Mr. Steve?

STEVE: I hope so. I wonder where we’ll go next time.

AIDAN: You mean, when we’ll go.

STEVE: Yes. That, too.

THE END… or is it?

\* The sermon, “Unitarian Universalism Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” by Reverend Donald Harrington can be found in its entirety on the UUA website.