

**System Theory and Unitarian Universalism**  
**Association For Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries**

**Ann Arbor, MI**

July 20, 2022

**Presenters:**

Connie Goodbread ([cgoodbread@uua.org](mailto:cgoodbread@uua.org)), Cameron Young ([cyoung@uua.org](mailto:cyoung@uua.org))

**Workshop Objectives:**

Over the course of this workshop, participants will:

1. Gain a better understanding of systems thinking and its origins from General System Theory.
2. Develop a better framework for applying these principles in a religious context.
3. Discuss how these principles can be applied through a lens of Unitarian Universalist values and theology.

**Assigned Reading:**

All Participants: Primer (PDF from Connie and Cameron)

For credit participants/ MLCP Candidates: Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times by Peter Steinke; Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Maree Brown (Optional for auditors)

**Written Assignment for Credit Participants/MLCP Candidates:**

Write a reflection (2-3 pages double-spaced) on the reading materials expounding upon how you feel these concepts apply to your ministry.

**\*\*Assignment for All Participants:**

All participants should come prepared to share examples of situations they have witnessed or been part of that have included S-H-I-F-T (self-differentiation, homeostasis, identified patient, family field, triangulation).

Morning, July 20- 3 hours

1. Chalice lighting - Cameron
2. Presenter Introductions
3. Participants introduce themselves to one other person
  - Name
  - Pronouns
  - Where you live
  - What is the deepest value you serve?
4. Presentation

- Science – Connie
  - SHIFT – Cameron
5. Small Groups (approximately 20 minutes) – Bring examples of S-H-I-F-T from your context
  6. Large Group - Q&A
  7. Break
  8. Power and Privilege in System Thinking- Cameron
  9. Human Beings - Cameron
    - Physical
    - Intellectual
    - Emotional
    - Spiritual

(Break for Lunch)

Afternoon July 20 – 3 hours

1. Small Groups
2. Large Group Discussion
3. Break
4. Our Part of the System
  - 4.1. Faith Development is All We Do – Cameron
    - Dimensions of Faith
  - 4.2. Unitarian Universalism is the Faith We Teach – Connie
    - 4.2.1. Foundations
      - Five Smooth Stones
    - 4.2.2. Disciplines
      - Covenant
      - Pluralism
      - Transformational
  - 4.3. The Congregation is the Curriculum – Cameron
    - Explicit
    - Implicit
    - Null
5. Small Groups
6. Large Group - Q&A
7. Closing - Cameron

For Credit Participants/MLCP Candidates Session- 60-90 minutes

1. Discussion/ Q&A
2. Go over pre and post coursework

**Other Notes:**

Depending on group size and demographics, we are considering turning the small groups into identity-based caucuses. If this is something that interests you, please let your facilitator(s) know.

**For Credit Participants/MLCP Candidate Post-Course Assignments:**

Write a case study (real or imagined) from a congregation or comparable institution and analyze it from a perspective of system thinking (SHIFT, etc.) AND Unitarian Universalist values and theology. Include commentary about power dynamics in this case study. How might it be approached from an anti-racist/anti-oppressive vantage point? (3-4 pages double-spaced)