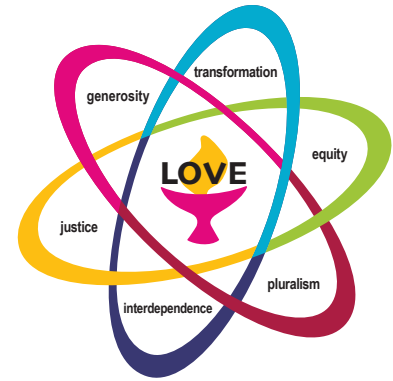




Our Shared Unitarian Universalist Values



Unitarian Universalists are people of all ages, many backgrounds, and many beliefs. For hundreds of years, we have held onto the pluralistic idea that religious communities can be held together by shared values and purposes instead of a single creed or set of doctrinal statements.

Covenantal not Creedal

Traditionally, a creed is a single statement of belief that holds a group of religious people together. It draws the boundaries and gives a sense of who belongs “in” and who the group might define as “out.” These creeds take many forms and sometimes change over the years. Often they include statements about what a given faith tradition says about God, the afterlife, and human nature.

Unitarian Universalism draws from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love. Across congregations and communities, we make supportive promises to ourselves and to one another. One manifestation of those shared promises is our Unitarian Universalist Association.

Pluralism

When it comes to the most important questions, the people in our congregations and communities generally do not believe one single thing, but many. We find that this pluralism—the presence of many beliefs about God and about ourselves—brings richness to our lives together instead of discord. When we can let go of the idea that any one belief system is 100-percent “right,” we can allow authenticity and commitment to flourish in the spaces between us.

Kindred Spirits

In this way, our Unitarian Universalist shared values work very differently than a traditional creed or a statement of belief. There is no test to take to belong among Unitarian Universalists, no proof required, no grand sweeping statement to make about what you believe or do not believe. Instead, our communities are formed by the promises we make to each other and the values that underlie those promises.

Historical Foundation

Drawing from a rich heritage in the Universalist tradition, our historical faith has long taught that love is the purest expression of that which is holy. For our forebears, love was the most essential aspect of God. Importantly, that love was never reserved for just a few special people, but for everyone.

*We are one,
A diverse group
Of proudly kindred spirits
Here, not by coincidence—
But because we choose to journey—together.*

*We are active and proactive
We care, deeply
We live our love, as best we can.*

*We ARE one
Working, Eating, Laughing,
Playing, Singing, Storytelling, Sharing and Rejoicing.
Getting to know each other.*

*Taking risks
Opening up.
Questioning, Seeking, Searching . . .
Trying to understand . . .
Struggling . . .*

*Making Mistakes
Paying Attention . . .*

*Asking Questions
Listening . . .*

*Living our Answers
Learning to love our neighbors
Learning to love ourselves.*

*Apologizing and forgiving with humility
Being forgiven, through Grace.*

*Creating the Beloved Community—Together
We are ONE.*

—Rev. Dr. Hope Johnson

We also draw from the deep social consciousness and intellectual inquiry of the Unitarian tradition, which holds that both reason and reverence are part and parcel of our spiritual toolkit. We are people who both think and feel our way through our spiritual lives. We make room for what we can know and for all that we cannot yet know, for science and reason along with mystery and wonder.

Living Tradition

Even now, with many different understandings of God and a strong tradition of non-theistic commitment, love remains at the center of our lives together. For some among us, perhaps this is God's love, shared non-selectively with each and every person. For some of us, it is the love of a people who keep on choosing one another, even and especially when we do not all agree. In the middle of it all, we share a commitment to expanding our sense of how to love more deeply at all levels—how to love ourselves, one another, and the interdependent web of life of which we are a part.

In this way, love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. The values we share include all the following, which we hold as inseparable and deeply interconnected:

- **Interdependence:** We honor the interdependent web of all existence and acknowledge our place in it.
- **Pluralism:** We are all sacred beings, diverse in culture, experience, and theology.
- **Justice:** We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all feel welcome and can thrive.
- **Transformation:** A living tradition adapts to changing world and supports individuals in their growth and the deepening of their understanding.
- **Generosity:** We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.
- **Equity:** We declare that every person is inherently worthy and has the right to flourish with dignity, love, and compassion.

We understand that people of goodwill and graciousness across a great many faith traditions join us in affirming some or all of these essential shared values. Because we truly do not believe that we Unitarian Universalists have cornered the market on truth and spiritual depth, we find power in shared meaning-making, even and especially when we believe different things.

We're good at remembering that it's better to be interconnected than to be right, though we also know that these core values we affirm can be threatened in very real ways in a variety of settings, from the religious to the political and beyond. Our social justice work aims to uplift those values in places across society where they might be threatened, all while making space for each other and our partners in faith across a variety of identities and social locations. Forces of racism, marginalization, and bigotry work in direct opposition to the pluralism, justice, and equity we preach about, so we work to offer a meaningful counterpoint to such systems of oppression.

Because we do not believe in just one single unchanging creed, the ways that we express our values and the words that we use to describe them change over time. We are, as we say, "a living tradition." This means that we change as we connect and respond to each other and the world. For UUs, living faithfully means adapting and evolving our understanding of ourselves and our work in relationship to those ever-changing expressions of our values.

Interdependence, pluralism, justice, transformation, generosity, and equity, centered around a lasting commitment to love: Our shared values are a collective reflection of the truths we hold sacred. The promises they inspire are powerful tools for nurturing one another and equipping us for faithful work in a hurting world.

For Further Reading

Love at the Center: Unitarian Universalist Theologies, edited by Sofía Betancourt (Skinner House, 2024).

Testimony: The Transformative Power of Unitarian Universalism, edited by Meg Riley (Skinner House, 2017).



24 Farnsworth St., Boston, MA 02210-1409
uua.org

© Unitarian Universalist Association
Cover graphic by Tanya Webster(chalicedays.org)