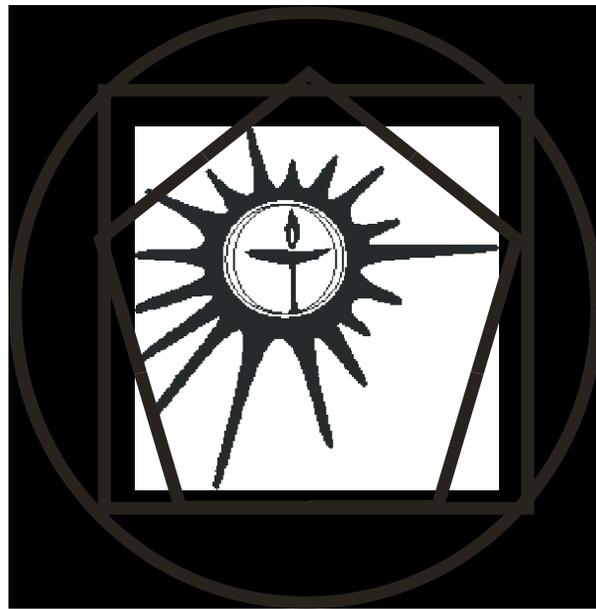


# ENGAGING OUR THEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:

*the Curriculum Guide*



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*Created for use by the Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship*

2005-2006

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## How to Use this Guide

This guide has been designed to include a short introduction to each session, a welcome activity, worship elements and discussion starting questions or activities. Each session is based on a section or chapter of the book "Engaging Our Theological Diversity," which was created by the Commission on Appraisal.

## Purpose of Class

The purpose of this class is to help this congregation look at the issues outlined in the book within the church and in the larger community and the universe. Another purpose is to explore these issues as a way of looking inward and experience growth as part of the process.

This class, like many other courses and workshops presented here at the Greenville UU Fellowship, is part of our Adult Religious Education: Exploring Life.

## Commission on Appraisal

What Is the Commission on Appraisal and How Does *Engaging Our Theological Diversity* Fit into their Mission? The Commission is charged to "review any function or activity of the Association which in its judgment will benefit from an independent review and report its conclusions to a regular General Assembly." The Commission meets four times a year--once at General Assembly, and three working meetings held in Boston and other locations throughout the continent. During most of their meetings, they hold open hearings to which they invite local UUs so the commission can hear as many of the different voices of our movement as possible.

**THE COMMISSION ON APPRAISAL: PRESENTATION TO  
THE 2005 GENERAL ASSEMBLY (SOURCE: UUA -  
WWW.UUA.COM)**

The presentation began with a short video introduction.

Voice 1 (singing): Where do we come from? Where are we? Where are we going?

Voice 2: I have a vision of the UU movement as inter-religious dialogue.

Voice 3: We offer the hope of a spiritual journey, but we offer no tools to do it with.

Voice 4: I'm scared to death that there's nothing, and honestly I'd rather believe in God and heaven and die believing I'm going somewhere than just dying and saying, "I'm going nowhere." Sometimes I really wish I were Christian just so that I'm not scared at night.

Voice 5: It's the care and respect and compassion that we all have for each other, it's the support network for all these people who may not get that hammock of caring and of love that they need.

Voice 6: We tell the story of the increasing tolerance always, but we don't say, "And people lost their church."

Voice 7: I think that's part of the pain of talking about trying to find a center, because we're all so terribly worried that we're going to find a center that excludes somebody.

#### **FIRST SPEAKER: REV. EARL HOLT**

One of our fine younger scholars, Ken Oliff, citing a series of observations from manifold sources, including the 1997 Report of the Commission on Appraisal, drew the following conclusion: "The most conspicuous element identified in these quotes is the absence of a principle of union in religious liberalism. This is variously expressed as a theological center, a common faith, a common story, or a shared system of beliefs. Most importantly, a principle of union is a shared understanding of what a church means theologically that moves beyond rejection and reactivity as a basis for religious liberalism."

It was a similar concern about the conspicuous absence of a shared and articulated understanding of what Unitarian Universalism means theologically that motivated the Commission on Appraisal to choose the topic of the study we formally present to you tonight, originally formulated around the question: "Where is the Unity in our Theological Diversity?"

The importance of this issue has been attested by the extraordinary amount of interest it has generated. We have been encouraged by this response, and we are grateful to the large numbers of you and others around the country who have participated in our workshops, hearings, and focus groups, and otherwise communicated with us on this topic. We have read with interest the many sermons that have been written and papers that have been published. We are particularly grateful for the response to our worship practices survey, to which more than a third of our congregations responded.

The word, "Diversity", both cultural and religious, has been the watchword of our recent past, and insofar as it indicates our sincere desire institutionally to be truly open and welcoming of people of all sorts and conditions into our fellowship that emphasis is all to the good. The world today, as perhaps never before, urgently needs communities of faith, indeed communities of all kinds, which are models of inclusion and pluralism, where human differences do not divide. But diversity by itself, important as it is, is an insufficient institutional goal. More pressing is the question of what we are calling people into community for? If we are a "comm-unity", what are the common unities that bind us together? And if we are a religious community, shouldn't we be able to articulate theologically, religiously, what it is that unites us?

As we have wrestled with these questions, we have differed among ourselves even about how best to ask them. Initially, we encountered some suspicion of a hidden agenda, fear that we intended to create or promote a common creed or its equivalent. Others even suspected us of ulterior motives including the desire to exclude, on theological grounds, one or another of the

expressions of religious thought current among us. But our desire from the beginning has been to articulate what we hold in common, and there is virtually no principle or value more widely shared among us than that of individual freedom of belief. With Ken Oliff, we affirm that, "The strength of the contemporary liberal church lies in its openness, its respect for difference, and in the value that the church places on the sanctity of individual conscience." But we also agree with his observation that, "Where the church falls short is in its lack of clarity regarding an explicit theological vision, and an ensuing ambiguity regarding mission, purpose and commitment."

Such ambiguity and a concomitant tentativeness in articulating what we are about religiously is presently perhaps our greatest liability and the greatest obstacle to Unitarian Universalism achieving the fulfillment of its potential as an empowering and liberating faith for the twenty-first century. The fear that any such articulation somehow threatens the integrity or right of conscience of any individual is institutionally disabling and must be overcome by mutual trust and a sense of common purpose, the belief that we are joined together in religious association for more than merely instrumental reasons.

There are also those who have argued that in the Purposes and Principles, we already have an adequate statement of our unity. And it is true that in many places and in many ways this section of the UUA Bylaws has been adopted for use as the common expression of a common faith, recited in worship, printed on orders of worship, adapted in the place of individual congregational covenants, prominently placed at the head of the hymnal, even reformulated as a series of "Unitarian Universalist believe" statements for children in religious education classes.

The Principles began with a much more modest intention, to replace the statement adopted at the time of merger, which had come to be seen by many as dated in terms of language and otherwise. But the process of amendment soon took on an energetic life of its own, rivaling only merger itself in focusing and rallying denomination-wide interest and attention. And as it turned out

their adoption was only the beginning of their influence. As Warren Ross comments in his history of the UUA, "To an astonishing extent today's Purposes and Principles... have won a lasting place in UU hearts and been woven intimately into the fabric of our denominational life." We posit that all this energy and effort was inspired in part by a widely felt desire for religious definition, for a statement of our common identity as Unitarian Universalists.

It is actually somewhat ironical that the Principles have emerged as a symbol of unity. The irony is that they were intended primarily to be a statement of broad inclusiveness, that is, of a wide, even all-embracing, diversity -- appropriate to the bylaws of a religiously heterodox movement but designed to the greatest extent possible, to be theologically neutral, and in regard to the sources of our tradition, religiously eclectic. In the words of the Committee chair, Walter Royal Jones, Jr., "We really wanted to assure everyone that no point of view was going to be left out. We wanted to say to everyone, 'You belong.'" In that intent they notably succeeded. The Hymnbook Resources Commission, in the Preface to the new UUA hymnal in 1993, acknowledged the importance of the Principles and Purposes "as the touchstones of our decision to proclaim our diversity."

The penultimate sentence of the "Principles" reads as follows: "Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision." This statement, however, begs the question, which is the subject of this report: what is the substance of "our faith"? The Purposes and Principles were built upon the presumption of our theological diversity; we suggest that our priority now should be to engage our diversity, by asking such questions as these: Just what is the faith that is enriched and ennobled by the religious pluralism for which we are grateful? How do we deepen our religious understanding and expand our theological vision? And, if we mean to say to everyone, "you belong", just what is it that we are inviting them to belong to?

## **SECOND SPEAKER: DR. JIM CASEBOLT**

In the course of our project, one of the ways we gathered information was through a survey of worship practices sent to every congregation in the UUA. We found that announcements, for good or bad, are the most commonly included service element. Given this result, it seems only fitting that, following Rev. Holt's opening words and before we get to the "sermon" of our presentation, we should make our own announcements.

A free copy of our report, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*, will be arriving at every congregation in the UUA by the first week of July. For those of you who just can't wait, or would like to have your own personal copy, they are available at the UUA Bookstore booth in the exhibit hall.

If what you are about to hear this evening makes you want to learn more-- and we hope it will-- then we invite you to attend our workshop and hearing during this General Assembly [video to PowerPoint slide]. It will be held on Monday morning at 10:15 in room 204B. In addition to further discussion about our newly published report, you will also be invited to share your feelings about the UUA and Unitarian Universalism in general, with an eye toward other issues and areas of concern the Commission may study in the future. This workshop is not in your program book, regretfully, so we will give you another reminder about it at the end of this plenary presentation.

## **THIRD SPEAKER: REV. DR. LINDA WEAVER HORTON**

Just what is the faith that is enriched and ennobled by the religious pluralism for which we are grateful?

Our self-definition, while lifting up freedom of conscience from the beginning, began to focus upon pluralism more explicitly in the past century. There has never been a wider spectrum than there is at this moment in our history. Yet the Commission's explorations suggest that theological tensions, such as the venerable "humanist-theist" debate, have become much less important in defining many peoples' religious positions. We were struck by the large number

of people who, when asked to describe themselves, reached for bridging language - such as mystical humanist, or even "a Christian who does not believe in God." There is for many a growing desire to transcend categories.

Many people at our hearings indicated interest in tools of dialogue that can help us to engage our pluralism respectfully, as well as surfacing underlying attitudes and ways of seeing the world that cut across the traditionally defined theological boxes. Definition has become for many less an objective description of specific convictions than a subjective statement about growing edges, dancing edges, even fighting edges. Our self-naming lifts up ways that we frame our worlds to evoke meaning, acknowledges spiritual disciplines that work for us, and honors what has given depth to our lives and even transformed us. Such naming has come to be more about meaning than truth for many. The post-modern spirit is alive and well in our midst, especially among younger generations and women.

Whether we choose to name ourselves pagans, humanists, Christians, Buddhist UUs, mystics, feminists or any combination of these and many others, there are ways we frame our worlds similarly. The cosmos of the interdependent web is forever in process and dynamically related. It is home to humans who are regarded with chastened optimism, and to myriad other living beings that have as much right to be here as we do. Personal experience, reflected upon with inquiring minds and in the context of community through time and space, tends to be our source of religious conviction. Religious naturalism and process philosophy appear to form warp strands upon which the diverse colors of our chosen spiritual disciplines and sources of wisdom can be woven together into a strong and supportive cable.

When we understand the interaction of the polarities within our movement as a dance, rather than a confrontation, we all move towards greater wholeness. Each strand has attended to some aspects of human experience more closely than others. We have much to learn from one another if we listen from the heart, with humility and a genuine desire to understand what has given meaning

and sparked transformation in the lives of others in our beloved communities.

#### **FOURTH SPEAKER: JOYCE GILBERT**

One of the questions we used to shape this report was, "Who are we?" A simple answer is that contemporary Unitarian Universalists are people from a liberal religious tradition, living in a time of religious and social conservatism, a time of "church-shopping consumerism" and "personally-defined spirituality." We are also residents of a country which is becoming increasingly diverse racially and religiously, putting the American pluralist experiment to truly challenging tests.

If we believe what we say about ourselves and our congregations,

- ❖ we're theologically eclectic
- ❖ we have a message that the world needs (but we're not sure what it is, exactly)
- ❖ we tend to be more liberal in a number of ways than is the general population
- ❖ we avoid conflict about matters theological
- ❖ we're economically and educationally above average
- ❖ we have sought a congregation as part of a search for community
- ❖ we believe that as religious people, we should be involved both personally and congregationally in efforts to make our world a safe, sustainable, and beautiful place.

#### ***What do others say about us?***

We're small in a time of "bigger is better," and growing smaller as a percentage of the US population.

We may tend to practice "overweening individualism" at the expense of "community," in the words of sociologist of religion Robert Bellah at the UUA GA of 1998.

Two-thirds of people who call themselves UU do NOT join our congregations.

We're from the "emergent" middle class, and many of us are "at ease in Babylon."

A number of observers have said we're in a "post-denominational" period. Others have pointed out for years that generations reflect their time, place, and world. We're inundated with information through a wide range of media.

Another question: how do denominations function in such a setting?

An answer: we need clarity about the undergirding religious values that inform our actions and beliefs. Further, this must be expressed in language which communicates effectively both within and beyond our congregations.

#### **FIFTH SPEAKER: MANISH MISHRA**

In undertaking our study of Unitarian Universalism and theology another of the questions we examined was how, exactly, Unitarian Universalists frame the world. What are the lenses through which we understand the world and make meaning? There were several clear trends we observed and have noted in our report.

Our Principles and Sources indicate that we are a pluralistic faith, one that is open to "wisdom from the world's religions..." Yet this sense of pluralism that many of us care about so deeply is frequently incomplete. We UUs tend to exhibit a sense of exuberance for some religious traditions while being highly wary and critical of others.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Native American spiritualities, and earth-centered spiritualities, for example, are generally embraced by UUs; there is a sense that there is wisdom in these traditions, that

there is something which we can learn and take-away. It is therefore not uncommon or surprising to hear theological terms such as "moksha," "dharma," "nirvana," or "gaia" used in UU circles.

However, the use of similar theological terms rooted in the English language (and therefore rooted in the Judeo-Christian traditions) elicits intense scrutiny, even criticism. It is PC in UU circles to talk about dharma and gaia, but it is not PC to talk about salvation, redemption, or grace. Attempts to draw on, and reinterpret, Judeo-Christian theological language and metaphor frequently results in skepticism or downright hostility.

Our UU espousal of religious pluralism, thus, winds up remaining a goal not always reflected in practice. Hyper-criticalness is frequently directed towards the Jewish and Christian traditions, while religions that are more exotic, or more "fashionable," are less critically examined and embraced with open arms.

Our research over the past four years has lifted up the fact that we UUs have work to do in thinking about how we approach the religions of the world. Are we aware of the assumptions we bring with us as we encounter Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and the other world religions? How do we react and why do we react differently to the various faiths we encounter?

Is it the case that some of those who come to UUism from earlier Christian backgrounds carry unresolved wounds from their religious past? Is it the pain of these wounds that we are confronted with when we hear, in our churches, hyper-criticalness directed towards Christianity? If so, can we tend to these wounds, these unresolved theological hurts, so that a more holistic pluralism is genuinely possible?

We additionally have work to do in terms of thinking about the knee-jerk exuberance many of us feel towards religions that are considered exotic or trendy. Are we UUs bringing an adequately critical eye to those traditions? We need also to think about what it means to appropriate, to make and use as our own, the symbols, rituals, and stories of various peoples who may not be American or Caucasian in origin. When do we cross the line from genuine

appreciation of something very different and move into the realm of cultural misappropriation or tokenism?

These are among the questions our report examines, and we hope you will examine them with us.

### **SIXTH SPEAKER: REV. EARL HOLT**

Some will remember a religious education curriculum authored by the Rev. David Johnson entitled, "The Disagreements that Unite Us." Among other things, this phrase describes the theological history of American Unitarianism. Almost immediately upon their formal organization in 1825 the Unitarians found themselves divided theologically between the liberal Christianity of Channing and the Transcendentalism of Emerson and Parker. Though it is undoubtedly true that over time Transcendentalist sentiments largely prevailed, there are a fair number of us today whose religious beliefs remain closer to those of Channing than of Emerson. And much the same result has come from the other theological controversies that have followed in the ensuing years. Generally speaking, given a theological either/or, the Unitarians have chosen both/and. We have agreed both to disagree and to stay together. Or, in a quatrain familiar to several generations of both Universalists and Unitarians by Edwin Markham:

- ❖ He drew a circle that shut me out
- ❖ Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
- ❖ But love and I had the wit to win,
- ❖ We made a circle that drew him in.

Historically, the Universalists dealt with the conundrum of unity in diversity differently. They upheld a single theological doctrine as paramount -- universal salvation -- at the same time allowing for the widest diversity in regard to all other beliefs. So, individual freedom of conscience, freedom of belief, was the common ground on which the two bodies united at the time of denominational consolidation, in 1961, a merger which largely avoided theological

issues. But freedom alone is a centrifugal force; religious community longs for a common unity.

And if that unity cannot be found in common doctrine, it can begin at least with a common commitment to an ordinary but important discipline, the discipline of conversation. Simply put, in community we agree not only to disagree but to speak with those with whom we disagree, and to stay together. The discipline of conversation is the discipline of encounter, not out of counterfeit politeness to seek to escape or evade addressing our differences of religious belief, which may be profound -- the issues that matter most to us both personally and as communities of faith -- but to be, as church, the place where we can safely share them with one another, in conversation disciplined by a common commitment that our differences need not -- and must not -- divide us. To find unity in our diversity.

**SEVENTH SPEAKER: REV. DR. TOM OWEN-TOWLE**

We, the Commission on Appraisal, have produced several recommendations: some are intended for the Association as a whole, some for congregations or other bodies within our Association, and some for individual Unitarian Universalists.

I start with one that focuses upon theology. We commissioners recommend that our Association as a whole mobilize a denomination-wide effort, building upon the findings of our report, to develop and articulate a deeper understanding of who Unitarian Universalists are as a religious people.

At a minimum, we recommend that at least one *General Assembly* in the near future be devoted to a theme such as "Theology and the Unitarian Universalist Mission", or alternatively, that an intentional focus on theology become a regular feature of *GA* programming. We urge the UUA Board of Trustees and administration to consider giving highest priority to this proposed process and endeavor.

**EIGHTH SPEAKER: REV. ORLANDA BRUGNOLA**

The challenge of our theological diversity and our acknowledgement of that challenge places our planning of worship in a new context. The custom of reaching for culturally diverse worship elements that somehow speak to a theme in hopes of a cohesive, non-offensive and fulfilling worship experience is not the answer to our challenge.

To avoid cultural appropriation and shallowness, the Commission suggests, not the revival of a worship arts clearinghouse, but rather, a collection of materials that demonstrate so-called 'best practices' in creating "worship that is theologically inclusive, appealing across differences of generation, personality, learning style..." and temperament.

We believe that "...the Unitarian Universalist Association...the Canadian Unitarian Council and the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists [have] adequate resources to develop and administer such a collection."

**NINTH SPEAKER: JANICE MARIE JOHNSON**

We challenge our youth and young adults to step outside of themselves and try new ways of thinking, feeling, and being. Somehow we fail to invite them to conform to our ways of thinking, feeling, and being. Our work affirms that the stakes are high for them and for us.

During their late adolescent years we lose a higher percentage of youth than most any other religious collective. They serve, they engage, they grow and then they leave. Why?

It starts, perhaps, in our churches, where our young children live separate yet supposedly equal lives. It continues when our children grow up and dare to right the wrongs of their lives. We applaud them and their actions, yet we fail to nurture their souls. How can we let each other know that each of us is not only needed, but also loved and respected?

The Commission recommends engagement in a process by which youth and young adults can continue to further develop their religious understanding and practice.

Finally, the Commission recognizes and recommends that youth, young adults, and adults grow together, collaboratively, in true partnership.

The stakes are high - for all of us.

### **TENTH SPEAKER: MARK HAMILTON**

We recommend that individual UUs and congregations acknowledge and deal with theological diversity rather than avoiding it. Many adult UUs have told us that discussing theology and beliefs is not a frequent part of their congregational life, mostly in an attempt to avoid conflict and disagreement. A number of youth agreed with this assessment, adding that they felt that many adults do not like to talk about what they believe because they don't know what they believe, and are afraid of looking foolish.

Sweeping UU theological diversity under the rug by refusing to talk about it in community is not a healthy approach to the issue. Tolerance requires conversation, not avoidance. Talking about beliefs, learning from one another, and stimulating everyone's thinking through open and honest sharing of views should be encouraged in UU congregational life.

With a topic such as this, it is not surprising that there has been considerable difference of opinion -- even within the Commission, even about how to begin framing the question. One thing on which we are all in full agreement, however, is that this issue is vitally important for the health of our denomination. We have sometimes felt like we were breaking a taboo by raising the question. However, the tremendous response we have received over the course of doing this study suggests that this taboo is one that people are glad to see broken. It is like the story of the elephant in the living room: Everyone knows it is very large and very present, but there is an unspoken agreement to pretend it isn't there and to act as if nothing is wrong. The elephant for Unitarian

Universalists is our lack of articulation about who we are and what we have in common, and we believe the time is ripe to stop pretending it doesn't exist and actively confront it.

We do not see this report as the end of a process; rather, we hope it will be a beginning. We have raised the issue, and asked many questions, and advanced some tentative conclusions. Now it is time for us all to engage in the challenging process of searching for answers.

It is up to you; it is up to us all.

### ***More About the Commission and Engaging Our Theological Diversity***

The book is available from the UUA Bookstore (<http://www.uua.org/bookstore/index.php>) and there is an entire site on the Web devoted to this topic: <http://www.uua.org/coa/index.html>. There is also a free listserv, which you can join by going to: <http://www.uua.org/lists/listpolicies.html>.

## **Session1:**

### **Introduction: Statement of Agreement**

As a way of introducing ourselves to the book and this course, we will actually take a look at some of the areas and statements of agreements published on pages 156-158. It is not necessary that anyone has read this information beforehand. Since this would be the first class, we are working from the assumption that no one has their book ahead of time. Therefore, no one has read anything. So this lesson is given from this perspective.

### **Welcoming**

Because this is the first class, participants may not know each other and because they may not know each other, we need to break the ice and begin to form a bond. One way to help with this is to also provide nametags for everyone. Make sure as facilitators, you are wearing your nametag.

### ***Icebreaker***

#### **CANDY WELCOME**

Pass around a bowl of wrapped candy. Ask each person to take as many candies as they'd like, but not to eat them until they get instructions. After the candy bowl has been passed around, tell the group that they need to introduce themselves and for each candy, they must reveal something about themselves.

### ***Check-In Time***

Go around the room, giving each person an opportunity to discuss:

- ❖ What I Need Now (i.e. confidence, friends, a hug, etc.)
- ❖ What I Need to Give Away Before Beginning the Class (i.e. an argument with my spouse/child, worries about \_\_\_\_\_, etc.)

- ❖ Something I'd Like to Share with the Group (i.e. my wedding anniversary is today; my child took her/his first step, etc.

## Worship Time

### *Chalice Lighting:*

#### WORSHIP IN THE HERE AND NOW

*by Kenneth Patton*

Let us worship with our eyes and ears and fingertips;  
let us love the world through heart and mind and body.  
We feed our eyes upon the mystery and revelation  
in the faces of our brothers and sisters.  
We seek to know the wistfulness of the very young  
and the very old,  
the wistfulness of people in all times of life.  
We seek to understand the shyness behind arrogance,  
the fear behind pride,  
the tenderness behind clumsy strength,  
the anguish behind cruelty.

All life flows into a great common life,  
if we will only open our eyes to our companions.  
Let us worship, not in bowing down,  
not with closed eyes and stopped ears.  
Let us worship with the opening of all the windows of our beings,  
with the full outstretching of our spirits.  
Life comes with singing and laughter,  
with tears and confiding,  
with a rising wave too great to be held in the mind  
and heart and body,  
to those who have fallen in love with life.  
Let us worship, and let us learn to love.

## Lesson Activity

On pages 156-158, there are Statements of Agreement/Tension. There are 14 different categories. After we pass out the books, take notecard and pen and turn to these pages. Read through these statements and think about them.

On your card, write down your own statement of agreement - to one or all. Put the notecards into the envelopes and seal them. On the outside of your envelope, clearly write your own name and address. Later in the course, we will mail these to you and offer an opportunity to share if you would like at the time.

## Discussion Questions

On page 166, there is a working definition of theology, which states:

While the root words of the term *theology* refer to reason or discourse about *God*, these questions assume a much broader understanding of its meaning. In modern usage, the definition of theology is understood to include the full range of religious and philosophical beliefs (not just theistic one) and human's understanding of the meaning and purpose of life and of Ultimate Reality.

### Questions

- ❖ What do you think holds this congregation together? What do the members share or have in common that makes it a community?
- ❖ Is there a religious practice or ritual that this church does that you value highly? Why? or Why Not?
- ❖ Imagine that you filling out a form that asks this question *What five words would you use to describe your personal religious beliefs?*

- ❖ Think once again about the religious community you identified earlier and the diversity of religious beliefs held by members of this community. Imagine what it would be like if, through some sort of magical event, those people suddenly became much more similar in their religious beliefs. Let's start with the hard question first: How would that religious community be better if people become more similar in their beliefs? How would it be improved? What current problems would go away?
- ❖ Now think about the reverse side of this magical event: How would the community be worse off than it was with all its diversity intact? What good things would be lost? What new problems would arise?
- ❖ Pretend that you are placed in suspended animation for twenty years as part of a science experiment. When you wake up and learn about how the world has changed, you discover that Unitarian Universalism is now the perfect religious organization or movement, and that community you identified has become the perfect religious home from your point of view. How would it have changed? What would it be like in terms of theology or religious beliefs?

## Homework Assignment

Read pages 1-15 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. This is the first chapter entitled: Framing the Question: What Holds Us Together?.

### ***Suggestions:***

- ❖ While reading use a highlighter to make notes.
- ❖ Take notes in a separate notebook.
- ❖ Write notes in the margins of the pages.

## **Session 2:**

# **Framing the Question: What Holds Us Together**

This chapter sets some of the tone for the entire book. Its focus is to discuss what holds us together. Having a common belief would allow us to become more diverse. Having a one-size-fits-all sort of church limits the scope of vision. Recognizing what holds us together as family is often hard to do. We don't have a dogma that tells people what it is that they should believe.

To see the glue that binds us together, we first need to see what it is that we want to glue people together for. Our come-inners or newbies (new people) are not like the birthright UUs (Unitarian Universalists). The needs of each of these populations within any one church is better served by tackling these issues

## **Welcoming**

This is the second session, which corresponds to the first chapter of the book. The people in the class might know each other, but may not. Make sure you have name tags. Make sure not to skip the following bonding activity. It is fun and takes only a few minutes, but can make a difference in how the group works together.

### ***Bonding Activity***

Go around the circle and have everyone introduce themselves and tell the name of their favorite superhero. (NOTE: This is a fun activity. No one should be pressured to do this, but do encourage the adults to indulge you. They will be pleasantly surprised that they will enjoy themselves. How can you not smile when you find out that the person next to you likes "Captain Underpants." You may never look at each other the same.)

## ***Check-In Time***

Unlike the Bonding Activity, this is a time for participants to leave at the door all the things that would distract them from the class. Often giving space for this opens up people to accept information that is healing.

## **Worship**

### ***Chalice Lighting***

A MEDITATION

*by Jay E. Abernathy*

Let us join in a moment dedicated to that quiet power within us. It is within that we find the will to face the world; it is within that we find the love to embrace the world; it is within that we find our personal identity and know the world.

Yet, within us is also a great void. We feel this void at times of great loneliness, frustration, and despair. Sorrow, hatred, and greed, too, are within us.

Just as we need to be alone at times to put things right, so do we need to be with others to love and be loved. This great social urge also is within us as powerfully as that separateness -- that uniqueness -- that gives us identity.

Let us look within ourselves with honesty and trust. We shall find there a personal center important to who we are. We shall find there something held in common with those about us -- family, friends, neighbors -- and in ever-widening circles until we find that which we have in common with all people, something irreducibly human, something completely natural.

This is the center of all religion, all love, all concern for others; and it is the center of all personal growth. May these few moments be a personal time for you -- a time for that person within you who

feels at one with humanity, with nature, and with all the universe that was, is, and shall be. Amen.

**Source:** 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection

## Lesson Activity

### CREATING FRAMES: A COLLAGE

This lesson is about seeing things through a frame or a certain lens. We form our opinions from these frames or lenses. Using construction paper and a stack of magazines, have the participants quickly thumb through the magazines and cut out things that catch their eye. Don't tarry over any of the items, pick the first thing that strikes you. Glue them to the pieces of construction paper to make a personal collage.

When the collage is done, think about what the collage means to you.

Offer a brief opportunity for people to share the collages, if they so choose.

## Discussion Questions

Understanding what holds us together as a denomination, a church, a family can be complicated. The questions below are intended to start the discussions about these complicated ideals. If you do not make it through each question, it is okay. Take the group through the most questions you can. If your group is excessively big, you can divide the group into small groups...and divide up questions, as well. Having two or three people in each group and giving them each two questions, can give the group a better opportunity to explore the topic to its fullest. Make sure you leave enough time to come back to the larger group for sharing some of the ah-hahs you discovered in your small groups.

## **Questions**

- ❖ People say in this survey that they rarely discuss theology in their churches. Why do you think this is?
- ❖ How does a "culture of niceness" inhibit these discussions? Have you experienced this here at the Greenville UU Fellowship?
- ❖ Do we support the notion that healthy diversity requires some common ground?
- ❖ What does language of reverence mean to you?
- ❖ Do we have a common reference point that we all agree on?
- ❖ If we have trouble defining our common threads is it because they don't exist or that it is hard to articulate in words we can all agree on?
- ❖ What features of UU, if you took them away, would leave us with something that is no longer UU?
- ❖ What features if you added....

## **Homework Assignment**

Read pages 17-29 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. This is the chapter entitled: History: Where Do We Come From?

## Session 3:

# History: Where Do we Come From?

Our Unitarian Universalist past comes from two historical paths: the Unitarians and the Universalists. Being aware of our denomination's past helps us understand what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. Understanding that our past is rooted in our American democracy from the time that the idea was conceived, reveals some of our history that we often do a poor job of sharing. When the Puritans came to America and started settling the area, their first task was to build a Meetinghouse, the next was to hire a preacher for it. Out of those original Meetinghouses, many became Unitarian or Universalists. The religious ideals of the Puritans were more strict than either the Unitarian or Universalists and our combined Unitarian Universalism has become, but at the heart of Puritanism came the democratic beginnings. Each person had a vote in the church. This eventually caused the people who settled in these to experience great divisions over theological ideology. Thus, the churches became two out of about three main choices: Unitarian, Universalist or Congregationalists. In the New England area, there is still one church on about every corner (an exaggeration, of course).

## Welcoming

Because this session is devoted to where we come from, the bonding exercise will help us see our differences. Diversity is a good thing, because life would be so boring if we were all the same. If we all drove the same sort of car, wore the same colored clothes, lived in communities where all the buildings were built alike and painted alike. Diversity is an important American value. While everyone on the planet would not agree, diversity is an important Human Value. A lot of our trouble with diversity is in defining the parameters.

### ***Bonding Activity***

Go around the circle. Have each person say their name and the religion/religions from where they have come from.

## ***Check-In Time***

Go around the circle again and allow people to discuss what they need to leave at the door. Like last session allow each participant to discuss all the things that would distract them from the class. This allows more full participation, allows the participant to be open to new ideas without the distraction.

## **Worship**

### ***Chalice Lighting***

#### **UU HERITAGE CHALICE LIGHTING**

*Elizabeth M. Strong*

Our Unitarian heritage bids us light our chalice  
In the name of freedom,  
In the light of reason,  
In actions of tolerance.  
We gather in community to celebrate a heritage of freedom,  
reason, and tolerance.

Our Universalist heritage bids us light our chalice  
In the name of faith,  
In the light of hope,  
In actions of love.  
We gather in community to celebrate a heritage of faith, hope, and  
love.

Let us bring this Unitarian Universalist heritage into our world and  
our lives today.

**Source:** Original

## **Lesson Activity**

This session deals with our history. To help give more information about our Unitarian Universalist history, a short video about our

beginnings should be shown here. Information can be augmented with additional facts, as needed.

## **Discussion Questions**

Make sure the Handouts are handy as you begin this part of the session.

### ***Questions***

- ❖ Would you add anything to the 4 valuations on p. 23 that characterize religious liberals?
- ❖ How important is knowing and understanding our roots to developing a strong identity?
- ❖ What are some ways we can strengthen our institutional identity?

## **Homework Assignment**

Read pages 31-41 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. This is the chapter entitled: Culture: Who Are We?

## ***Handout 1***

### **THE STORY OF UNITARIANISM AND HOW IT CAME TO AMERICA**

*by Connie Dunn*

Unitarianism belongs to the first U in Unitarian Universalism. A man named Joseph Priestly brought Unitarianism to America. Joseph, a warm-hearted, gentle person believed that science was a way to discover the connections between all living things. Among his most famous discoveries is that plants give off *good* air or oxygen and take in *bad* air or carbon dioxide.

Although he was a world-renowned scientist, his religious beliefs as a Unitarian made him different than many in England and unpopular. Since everyone had to give money to support the Church of England, Priestly tried to get the law changed to permit religious freedom. The leaders of the Church of England did not like that. Priestly had also spoken up about his belief in the equality of all people, an idea that had sparked the French Revolution. People began to say Priestly was a traitor and that he should be killed.

Priestly and his wife, Mary, ended up coming to America to avoid all the problems that had sprung up in England. No one in England wanted to have anything to do with him. So when he arrived in America, Priestly was surprised to get welcoming letters from George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. His fame as a scientist had spread to America.

Priestly started the first Unitarian Church in Pennsylvania, but it wasn't called Unitarian for more than a decade after Priestly established the church. And in 1825, Priestly organized the American Unitarian Association, which organized the individual churches into a denomination.

Unitarianism, who some believe was derived from the more ancient Arian Christianity, was probably first established in Transylvania by Francis David (pronounced Dah-veed) who managed to get King John Sigismund to convert to Unitarianism and declare religious freedom in the country. Unitarianism stood for *Unity of One* as opposed to Trinitarianism that stood for *Three in One*. This means that Unitarians believed in God as one rather than the Trinitarians that believed God was Father, Son and Holy Spirit or God, Jesus and Holy Spirit, the three in one. While religious freedom was short lived

followed by the death of King Sigismund, the ideas of Unitarianism spread throughout Eastern Europe and into the United Kingdom or England where Priestly learned about it.

Unitarianism was influenced by the Transcendentalists of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, which included such noted UUs and writers as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The Transcendental thought brought into Unitarianism the idea that God exists within the human being and in nature. Another influence in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century brought in the ideology of humanism, which focuses on the individualism of the human spirit and the importance of creating a world better for mankind. Since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, Unitarianism has included social justice and tolerance with its ideas of religious freedom. Therefore, when the Suffrage movement in the 1920s cropped up and civil rights movement came along in the 1960s and the more recent controversies over mixed race marriages and homosexual rights, it is not surprising to find that Unitarians have been at the forefront of these issues. UUs were the first to ordain openly homosexual men and women.

While we are now Unitarian Universalists, which combines our history of Unitarianism with Universalism, our roots extend back to the early days of Christianity in 325 AD when discussions about creedal statements began. It is interesting to note that we as UUs have no creed and, instead, have voted on a set of principles and purposes for which we each choose to live our lives.

## ***Handout 2***

### **THE STORY OF UNIVERSALISM AND HOW IT CAME TO AMERICA**

*by Connie Dunn*

Universalism belongs to the second U in being a UU or Unitarian Universalist. Universalism began its roots in England during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. While Christian Churches, including the Calvinists, were promoting God as a disciplinarian who would send people to hell if they did not live by God's rules, Universalists promoted Jesus as creating a unity with humanity and their view of God was a loving God. Universalism was about a loving God that saves all people not just a chosen few.

A man named John Murray brought Universalism to America. He had preached in England, but he had gone through great sorrow when his wife and child became ill and died. He had also spent all his money and owed money because of his family's illness. At that time in England, they put people in Debtor's Prison when they could not pay back money. His wife's brother paid his debts and John was released from prison, got a job and paid back his brother-in-law. But he decided to leave England and all his troubles. He traveled to America in hopes that he could lose himself in the wilderness.

An odd thing happened when his ship entered the harbor: it got stuck on a sand bar. John went to shore to find fresh food supplies for the ship. He walked into the woods and came to a log house. Beside the house was a church, which surprised John Murray. The church and the house belonged to Thomas Potter.

Thomas Potter told John that had grown up in the woods and could not read or write but had given a lot of thought about religion. However, Thomas had learned that his ideas were different than most of the preachers who traveled through the wooded areas preaching their messages. John Murray and Thomas Potter talked a lot about what they believed. Thomas learned that John believed as he did that God was a loving God, but John told Thomas he never intended to preach again.

Thomas persuaded John to return to preach in his church if the wind had not changed and allowed their ship to move off the sand bar. Whether

Thomas knew that the wind was not likely to change or whether it was pure luck, the winds did not change. And John did go to Potter's church to preach.

John worried about preaching his views, because he knew there were many in the New World (America) that believed in the Calvinist views that he had been taught in England. He worried that he would bring new trouble to himself, which was what he had hoped to escape in the new country. John longed for peace. But on Sunday when the wind did not change, John preached about a loving God instead of a punishing God and ended up founding the first Universalist church in America. There were many people who were grateful for the words of a loving God.

## **Session 4:**

# **Culture: Who Are We**

This session deals with the culture of who we are. We discussed in the last session where we each individually came from and what our Unitarian Universalist history consists of, but this session has us delve deeper into why we exist not as humans or as individuals but as an entity of our church community.

## **Welcoming**

Since we are focused on the church as a community culture, it seems fitting that we should expand our bonding into more of a stretching exercise. Stretching is good, because we often have the opportunity to grow. We don't want to grow too fast and we don't want anyone to be too uncomfortable.

### ***Check-In Time***

Go around the circle allow people to discuss what they need to leave at the door. Like last session allow each participant to discuss all the things that would distract them from the class. This allows more full participation, allows the participant to be open to new ideas without the distraction. Now, the group is ready to do the stretching exercise.

### ***Stretching Exercise***

1. Go around the circle asking each individual to say their name and:
2. What draws you to this community;
3. What is it that you were hoping to get from this community; and
4. How does your individual goal mesh with what your perceived culture within the community work.

# Worship

## *Chalice Lighting*

### LITANY

by *Jane Mauldin*

For our community gathered here, for the spirit that called us together and drew us to this place:

We give thanks this day.

For moments we have shared with others; for times when we have reached out across barriers of distance and fear; for times when others have reached out to us; for moments when we have discovered another along our path:

We give thanks this day.

For this community of celebration and growth, introspection and solitude, and for those moments of "that peace which passes all understanding":

We give thanks this day.

For our gathering together out of distant places; for our weaving together out of many separate selves this hour of celebration and worship:

We give thanks this day.

**Source:** 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection;  
adapted CLW

## Lesson Activity

### THE THEOLOGY HOUSE GAME

All peoples have a culture. UU's have a culture and need to make it visible in order to know ourselves as a people among peoples in a multi-cultural world. We have inherited and inhabit a theological house.

The House can be a metaphor for our faith. We will be using classical theological terms in this metaphor. In the words of one faculty member at Starr King, "we will be committing theological acts!"

*NOTE: Leaders should create the following on cards (Note: see Set1 and Set2 files):*

#### Set 1

Theology - "Theology" represents the ground of our being, our relationship with God (especially in other faiths).

Ecclesiology - "Ecclesiology" is the definition of our faith. Ecclesiology is concerned with the nature of community into which people are called by God. Regularly, primary issues in ecclesiology concern the relation of the community to God, the relation of members of the community to one another, and the commitment of people in the community to people in the world.

Soteriology - "Soteriology" represents what we need to be protected from and also represents our salvation. The term "soteriology" comes from two Greek terms, namely, soter meaning "savior" or "deliverer" and logos meaning "word," "matter," or "thing." In Christian theology it is used to refer to the study of the biblical doctrine of salvation. It is sometimes termed "Christology" as in Christ is our salvation and we need to be protected from ourselves.

Eschatology - "Eschatology," according to Webster's dictionary, comes from Greek eschatos meaning "last things" or "ultimate

analysis," and logos, and means "science of last things."  
"Eschatology" represents the thresholds, the passage of time, or the final end points of our faith.

Missiology - "Missiology" refers to our relation to others, our mission to and with our neighbors.

Pneumatology - "Pneumatology" refers to the elemental forces that permeate our lives. Pneuma as in "pneumonia" is Greek for "breath." It is translated in other faiths as "spirit."

## Set 2

UU Theology - Our UU theology has emerged out of a historical process. Our theology is not that "We can believe anything we want to." The early house of Calvinism in the 19th century had as its foundation that human power was in bondage to sin. In contrast, the American Unitarianism that emerged had as its foundation that humans have a power to choose. Humans had willpower, and the powers of the soul are good. Universalism gave us a foundation that God is good. Twentieth century humanism contributed to the foundation of our house by adding that we don't need a supernatural "God" but that goodness comes from within us as human beings. Thus, the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

UU Ecclesiology - Our UU ecclesiology began in the 16th century when the Protestant Reformation reconceptualized the church from the hierarchy of the Pope to being formed by free human beings who make a promise (a covenant) to each other. Our walls are characterized by a more democratic concept of the term "church." Our neighbors in this "free church" tradition are the Baptists, Disciples of Christ, and Quakers.

Another characteristic of our ecclesiology, our walls, is that we are profoundly distrustful of pronouncements from "on high."

UU Soteriology - Once again, in contrast to the predominant foundation of the theology of Calvinism, Universalism saved us all.

They said that what saves us is the power of creative love made viable to us in the person of Jesus.

Do we need to be saved from Hell? The Universalists said that we create heaven and hell on earth. We need to be saved from the Hells that we create.

UU Eschatology - UU's have a strong belief in progressive religion. We believe in progress towards goodness and enlightenment. The motto over our door might be "Onward and Upward Forever." Another way to look at our eschatology is that "Heaven is here and now." This idea, we have in common with Buddhism, Eastern Spirituality, Sufism and Judaism, often characterized as the "blessedness of life."

In this decade we are recognizing that "onward and upward forever" is not necessarily the case. In our anti-racism work, we recognize that some work has not been always progress but included oppression. Even the word, "enlightenment" is rooted in old colonialist assumptions of "light" (skinned, white, Western culture) over "dark" (skinned, colored, African, Asian, colonized peoples across the planet).

UU Missiology - We want to be a good neighbor, and take our children out to our neighbors' houses, with such programs as "Neighboring Faiths," in which they literally visit other churches, temples, and houses of faith. We teach "World Religions," and encourage our children to learn about Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity among others. We even bring decorations from our neighbors into our own house. In the 19th century, Theodore Parker described religiosity in everyone. We see our neighbor's houses as shared commonalities and a shared human need for some type of religious expression.

Do we look at the world with rose-colored glasses?

UU Pneumatology - For UU's, we might describe "spirit" as the immediate presence of the Spirit of Life that is in each of us and in all things. The 19th century Unitarians spoke of God as everpresent.

Emerson described the "over-soul" as a sense of God as all permeating as opposed to a sovereign king, punishing father, white, abled and old. Our pneumatology is described in the first source as "That which is directly experienced, transcendent, mysterious and wonderful, in all of us."

Do we cheat our pneumatology if we are afraid to use the word "God?"

### ***Directions***

Divide the group into two groups. Give each group a large paper, such as easel paper or a long run of butcher paper (such as used to make a mural). Give each group one set of cards. Give them 10 minutes to draw or create a house, placing these words in the best places, such as foundation, walls, etc.

Compare the two end results and allow a short discussion of 5 minutes.

## **Discussion Questions**

This session discusses what the community, the congregation needs from you. Make sure to have the handouts ready to give out.

### ***Questions***

- ❖ What needs does our congregation meet for you?
- ❖ What would you say the universal UU message is? Is there one or several?
- ❖ How do a group of individuals on different spiritual paths create a strong community?
- ❖ What is behind people claiming affiliation with UU but not actually joining as members? Is the institution of organized religion a turnoff?

- ❖ How do we communicate the importance of membership and are we clear about expectations of membership?

## **Homework Assignment**

Read pages 45-61 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. This is the chapter entitled: Values: To What Do We Aspire?

## **Handout 1**

### **HUMANIST MANIFESTO I**

The Manifesto is a product of many minds. It was designed to represent a developing point of view, not a new creed. The individuals whose signatures appear would, had they been writing individual statements, have stated the propositions in differing terms. The importance of the document is that more than thirty men have come to general agreement on matters of final concern and that these men are undoubtedly representative of a large number who are forging a new philosophy out of the materials of the modern world.

— Raymond B. Bragg (1933)

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The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience. In every field of human activity, the vital movement is now in the direction of a candid and explicit humanism. In order that religious humanism may be better understood we, the undersigned, desire to make certain affirmations which we believe the facts of our contemporary life demonstrate.

There is great danger of a final, and we believe fatal, identification of the word religion with doctrines and methods which have lost their significance and which are powerless to solve the problem of human living in the Twentieth Century. Religions have always been means for realizing the highest values of life. Their end has been accomplished through the interpretation of the total environing situation (theology or world view), the sense of values resulting therefrom (goal or ideal), and the technique (cult), established for realizing the satisfactory life. A change in any of these factors results in alteration of the outward forms of religion. This fact explains the changefulness of religions through the centuries. But through

all changes religion itself remains constant in its quest for abiding values, an inseparable feature of human life.

Today man's larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and deeper appreciation of brotherhood, have created a situation which requires a new statement of the means and purposes of religion. Such a vital, fearless, and frank religion capable of furnishing adequate social goals and personal satisfactions may appear to many people as a complete break with the past. While this age does owe a vast debt to the traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present. It is a responsibility which rests upon this generation. We therefore affirm the following:

**FIRST:** Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.

**SECOND:** Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a result of a continuous process.

**THIRD:** Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.

**FOURTH:** Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely molded by that culture.

**FIFTH:** Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values. Obviously humanism does not deny the possibility of realities as yet undiscovered, but it does insist that the way to determine the existence and value of any and all realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and by the assessment of their relations to human needs. Religion must formulate its hopes and plans in the light of the scientific spirit and method.

**SIXTH:** We are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism, modernism, and the several varieties of "new thought".

**SEVENTH:** Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to the religious. It includes labor, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation — all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living. The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.

**EIGHTH:** Religious Humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist's social passion.

**NINTH:** In the place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.

**TENTH:** It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.

**ELEVENTH:** Man will learn to face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom. We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene and discourage sentimental and unreal hopes and wishful thinking.

**TWELFTH:** Believing that religion must work increasingly for joy in living, religious humanists aim to foster the creative in man and to encourage achievements that add to the satisfactions of life.

**THIRTEENTH:** Religious humanism maintains that all associations and institutions exist for the fulfillment of human life. The intelligent evaluation, transformation, control, and direction of such associations and institutions with a view to the enhancement of human life is the purpose and program of humanism. Certainly religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows, in order to function effectively in the modern world.

**FOURTEENTH:** The humanists are firmly convinced that existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A socialized and cooperative economic order must be established to the end that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible. The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good. Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world.

**FIFTEENTH AND LAST:** We assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from them; and (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few. By this positive morale and intention humanism will be guided, and from this perspective and alignment the techniques and efforts of humanism will flow.

So stand the theses of religious humanism. Though we consider the religious forms and ideas of our fathers no longer adequate, the quest for the good life is still the central task for mankind. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement. He must set intelligence and will to the task.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: There were 34 signers of this document, including Anton J. Carlson, John Dewey, John H. Dietrich, R. Lester Mondale, Charles Francis Potter, Curtis W. Reese, and Edwin H. Wilson.]

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## **Session 5:**

### **Values: To What Do We Aspire?**

When thinking of our values, our Unitarian Universalist (UU) Principles come to mind. Values are at the core of UUism. The Commission on Appraisal surveys and Robert L'H. Miller's studies confirm that we, Unitarian Universalists (UUs) believe values are at our core. Which values are primary may be in question, but many of these core values are reflected in the following covenant, which is often recited in UU churches across America. This version or another similar variation are commonly used:

Love is the doctrine of this church;  
The quest for Truth is its sacrament,  
And service is its prayer,  
To dwell together in peace,  
To seek knowledge in Freedom,  
To serve human need,  
To the end that all souls shall grow  
Into harmony with the Divine -  
Thus do we covenant with each other and with God.

Another affirmation of our faith values is reflected in the following doxology, which is also often sung in UU churches across America:

From all who dwell below the skies,  
Let faith and hope with love arise;  
Let Beauty, Truth and Good be sung  
In every land by every tongue.

Our value of diversity lies in our first Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every human. It is a tall order to fill. But it serves as a high value for which we can strive.

### **Welcoming and Check-In time**

Love, compassion, connection or community are words many people use in describing their own personal core values.

*As we go around the circle, say YOUR NAME, something you LOVE about this church. Also take this opportunity to express what you need to leave at the door to be able to fully participate in this session.*

## **Worship**

### ***Chalice Lighting***

Love is the doctrine of this church;  
The quest for Truth is its sacrament,  
And service is its prayer,  
To dwell together in peace,  
To seek knowledge in Freedom,  
To serve human need,  
To the end that all souls shall grow  
Into harmony with the Divine -  
Thus do we covenant with each other and with God.

## **Lesson Activity**

Since our session deals with values, we are going to play a game about values.

(See the Values Card file.)

### ***Directions***

Shuffle the cards, as best you can. Allow each person to draw a card(s) (With a small group, you can give out more cards.) from the stack.

Give each person a piece of paper and a writing utensil. Ask participants to draw a picture/symbol that goes with your value word.

Sharing time: Allow each person to share their picture/symbol and explain it.

## Discussion Questions

This session discusses what the community, the congregation needs from you. Make sure to have the handouts ready to give out.

### **Questions**

- ❖ What do you think of the characteristics that might serve as explanation about why UU's have chosen this faith tradition?
- ❖ How might feeling like an outsider instigate our involvement in UU churches?
- ❖ What is the difference between community and association?
- ❖ Review the values expressed:
  - Love
  - Service
  - Diversity
  - The Quest
  - Truth
  - Freedom
  - Human Worth
  - Goodness
  - Inner Harmony
  - Beauty and the Natural World

## Homework Assignment

Read pages 65-94 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. This is the chapter entitled: *Theology: How Do We Frame the World?*

## Session 6:

# Theology: How Do We Frame the World?

As UUs, we, too often, believe that we can believe anything, which is a fallacy. While our history clearly points to explicit expressions of theology rooted firmly in Protestant Reformation, we tend to down-play this common theological element. Religious narrative is part of every major world religion.

## Welcoming and Check-In Time

We are discussing theology in this session. During our welcome and check-in time, let's go around the circle, say YOUR NAME, what you need to leave at the door to be totally present for this session, and a short description of your theological belief.

## Worship

### *Chalice Lighting*

We Unitarian Universalists have inherited a magnificent theological legacy. In a sweeping answer to creeds that divide the human family, Unitarianism proclaims that we spring from a common source; Universalism, that we share a common destiny. That we are brothers and sisters by nature, our Unitarian and especially our Universalist forebears affirmed as a matter of faith: Unitarianism by positing a single God, Universalism by offering the promise of a shared salvation. - Rev. Forrest Church

## Lesson Activity

### WORLD FRAMES ACTIVITY

On each end of the room and the middle, hang signs: Agree, Undecided (middle), Not Agree. (See these signs following the questions for this session.)

When the following statements are made, vote your own ideas by standing in the correct place: agree, undecided or not agree. Then, when everyone has voted, ask participants to discuss their decisions. For example, if everyone is on one end and one person is at the other end. Ask the lone person to share their reason. You can ask just a couple of people or if you have a small group, you can take the time to do everyone...but time constraints will prevent allowing everyone to answer each of the following statements.

1. We are a grounded faith.
2. We are an ecological faith.
3. We are a profoundly human faith.
4. We are a responsible faith.
5. We are an experiential faith.
6. We are a free faith.
7. We are an imaginative faith.
8. We are a relational faith.
9. We are a covenantal faith.
10. We are a curious faith.
11. We are a responsible faith.
12. We are a hopeful faith.

## Discussion Questions

This session discusses theology. Our UU theological choices include our six sources. Hand out the UU Principles and Sources pamphlet. Make sure to have the handouts ready to give out.

## **Questions**

- ❖ What shapes our religious convictions?
- ❖ Where is our religious authority? Why does it matter?
- ❖ What are our theological challenges?
- ❖ What are our Spiritual Paths?
- ❖ What do we, as UUs, believe about sin and evil? Personally?
- ❖ What is our common ground?

## **Homework Assignment**

Read pages 97-107 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. This is the chapter entitled: *Worship: How Do We Celebrate?*

### ***HandOut 1***

UU Pamphlet: Principles and Sources

## **Session 7:**

### **Worship: How Do We Celebrate?**

As UUs, we enjoy Sunday Morning Services. Although we don't always embrace the term "worship," UUs experience theology during worship services or Sunday Services. Religious expression in the presence of diversity is often a common ground experienced in worship. Even our religious programming for Sunday mornings are generally diverse.

Exploring how we worship or celebrate will help us see how we make use of diversity and where we have some commonalities. Interactive portions of services help congregants feel like they are participating in the event rather than being "entertained" or witnessing the event.

### **Welcome and Check-In Time**

This session is about worship and celebration. Let's go around the circle, say YOUR NAME, what you need to LEAVE AT THE DOOR, and what your favorite worship style is.

### **Worship**

#### ***Chalice Lighting***

Love is the spirit of this church,  
And service is its law.  
This is our great covenant:  
To dwell together in peace,  
To seek the truth in love,  
And to help one another.

### **Lesson Activity**

#### ***Planning Worship***

Divide into small groups and plan a worship service, which will be presented at the end of this session. See common elements on page

98-101 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. Also give out Handout 1 to use for this activity. Worship Service presentations should be 5-10 minutes.

## Discussion Questions

This session discusses worship. Handouts should be given out during activity. Make sure to leave enough time for each group to present their worship.

### Questions

- ❖ How does worship engage you in theological exploration?
- ❖ What special services do you most enjoy?
- ❖ How do covenants and affirmations fit into your idea of a good worship service?
- ❖ How do rites of passages and special services fit into the schedule of your church's worship year? If this is important to you and you are not doing this, how might you help facilitate this change?
- ❖ What part of the worship service touches you most? Least? Why?

## Worship Presentations

Allow each group to present their worship service.

## Homework Assignment

Read pages 109-116 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. This is the chapter entitled: Justice Making: How Shall We Serve?

## **Handout 1**

### **COMMON PARTS OF A WORSHIP SERVICE**

There are some common part of a worship service that are essential to making it a complete experience.

- ❖ Prelude - sets tone of worship
- ❖ Opening Words - should be short, concise and help gain the interest of your participants
- ❖ Chalice Lighting - should be short and focused on lighting the chalice
- ❖ Readings - often are the entryway to the sermon and in some cases the readings are the main focus of the service rather than a sermon
- ❖ Sermon/Homily/Story - sermons are a religious address; homilies attempt to apply the message of the worship to participants' lives; stories used in worship generally impart some piece of wisdom or help make the overall theme more reachable (stories used for children should relate to the theme and help frame the message for everyone in the sanctuary)
- ❖ Closing - short words that act as a benediction or as a closure for the service
- ❖ Postludes - musical piece that follows the closing (normally is played while people leave the sanctuary)

### **COMMON WORSHIP AND WHY**

Von Ogden Vogt, for many years minister of the First Unitarian Society in Chicago, used the phrase "celebration of life" to describe the worship experience. Vogt was a liturgist who believed that form, far from restricting freedom in worship, actually made freedom

possible. For him, worship was celebration, essentially aesthetic experience, but with strong social and ethical overtones as well. He believed that both the religious and aesthetic consciousness of human beings alternate between inner and outer, a sense of the many and the one, the ideal and the actual.

Worship, to be true to human psychology, must touch the bases in a particular order. A worship service is an art form, a drama with a clear direction. Vogt found a scriptural precedent in the story of Isaiah's call to prophecy in Isaiah 6. Following the psychology behind this ancient story, Vogt held that worship begins with some commanding vision or ideal, before which the worshiper feels humble, awe-struck, or otherwise moved. The focus moves within as one relates oneself to the vision. Very quickly one is empowered and is ready to be challenged. The challenge having been given, the worshiper responds with new dedication and commitment.

**Worship in five acts.** Vogt expressed this theory in a five-act drama. In his various books he differed slightly on what each act included, but the basic structure and direction of the service were the same:

**Act 1. Attention/Vision**

We state and affirm our ideals and aspirations.

**Act 2. Humility**

We are humbled by the realization that we fall short of our ideals.

**Act 3. Exaltation**

We regain our strength, feel empowered, give thanks.

**Act 4. Illumination**

We consider wisdom from the past and present.

**Act 5. Dedication**

We reaffirm our ideals, resolve to act responsibly

## **Session 8:**

# **Justice Making: How Shall We Serve?**

The idea of UUs making justice is not a new idea. The UUSC (Unitarian Universalist Service Committee) was originally formed in the 1930s as the Unitarian Service Committee to aid refugees from Spain during the Spanish Civil War. In 1963 the Universalist Service Committee and the Unitarian Service Committee merged to form the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). Social Justice, Social Action and Social Responsibility committees are common in most UU churches. The idea of community ministry, however, is quite new. The new Pathways Church started up in Northeast Tarrant County, Texas, has a goal for each member to have a ministry and volunteer for that ministry, which services inside or outside the church community.

## **Welcoming and Check-In Time**

This session is about justice making and personal ministry. Let's go around the circle, say *YOUR NAME*, what you need to *LEAVE AT THE DOOR*, and what ministry you would serve if it were available.

## **Worship**

### ***Chalice Lighting***

#### **MEDITATION - JAY E. ABERNATHY**

Let us join in a moment dedicated to that quiet power within us. It is within that we find the will to face the world; it is within that we find the love to embrace the world; it is within that we find our personal identity and know the world.

Yet, within us is also a great void. We feel this void at times of great loneliness, frustration, and despair. Sorrow, hatred, and greed, too, are within us.

Just as we need to be alone at times to put things right, so do we need to be with others to love and be loved. This great social urge also is within us as powerfully as that separateness -- that uniqueness -- that gives us identity.

Let us look within ourselves with honesty and trust. We shall find there a personal center important to who we are. We shall find there something held in common with those about us -- family, friends, neighbors -- and in ever-widening circles until we find that which we have in common with all people, something irreducibly human, something completely natural.

This is the center of all religion, all love, all concern for others; and it is the center of all personal growth. May these few moments be a personal time for you -- a time for that person within you who feels at one with humanity, with nature, and with all the universe that was, is, and shall be. Amen.

Source: 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection

## Lesson Activity

This session is about social justice, social action and the act of making justice central to our congregation and our lives.

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE AT WORK**

Put down 4 sheets of easel paper and four markers.

Ask the participants to pick up a sheet and write a topic for social justice on the page. Tell them there are only four sheets, so those who are most passionate about a topic should be quick about picking up a sheet.

After four people have written their topics, ask the participants who wants to discuss *whatever* topic, etc. If no one wants to discuss a topic, then the topic is dropped, otherwise all the topics should have people who really want to discuss that particular topic.

The groups are sent off to discuss and take notes on what they decide. Give approximately 10 minutes for this part of the activity.

When groups return to the larger group, have each smaller group report.

Spend a few more minutes discussing any conclusions you might need to make from this activity.

## Discussion Questions

This session discusses justice making. Make sure to have the handouts ready to give out.

### **Questions**

- ❖ How do you and this church challenge each other and the world to look for options other than violence to resolve differences?
- ❖ How do you and this church challenge each other and our world to build bridges of understanding and respect across differences?
- ❖ How are you and this church committed to the work of dismantling prejudice, racism, and all types of oppression?
- ❖ How do you and this church challenge each other to question values, such as consumerism and conformity, permeating our society?
- ❖ Right relationship with the natural world means cooperating and protecting, not controlling. What actions have you or your church taken to protect our environment around the church and in the larger community?
- ❖ Do you have a personal ministry? Does this church have a personal ministry program? Why or Why not?

- ❖ What is Community Ministry and how is it related to personal ministry?
- ❖ Does this church have a connection or ministry to an international cause or church? Why or Why not? How can you get involved to start one?

## **Homework Assignment**

Read pages 117-132 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. This is the chapter entitled: *Community: How Do We Come Together?*

### ***Handout 1***

Create this handout by listing out the social responsibility chairs or committee on ministry (if this committee focuses on the different ministries of the church) or other resources within the church.

## **Session 9:**

# **Community: How Do We Come Together?**

We are a faith given to engagement with our world, using the power of the institution to work for justice and freedom - religious or otherwise. The core of UU faith embraces our theological similarities and differences. Embracing community is a choice, an offering of heart and mind. Part of community is belonging to a group of people who strive to promote and sustain a healthy part of the individual and collective self. In community, we are offered opportunities to learn who we are; to recognize the permeable ways in which leadership is transmitted; and to be grateful for each other, for those on whose shoulders we stand and for those who will in turn stand on our shoulders.

Participating in foundation-building helps UU congregations embrace the unity inherent in our diversity. A prophetic challenge is to be welcoming of "the other" - the idea, belief, or person who is a stranger to us - even when, or especially when, we do not wish to do so. We will be powerful in expressing our unity within our congregations when individuals can embrace the person whose expression and practice of faith differs from theirs. Are we ready for the challenge?

## **Welcoming and Check-In Time**

This session is about community and coming together to create the community. Let's go around the circle, say YOUR NAME, what you need to LEAVE AT THE DOOR, and what community means to you.

## **Worship**

### ***Chalice Lighting***

**WORDS - KIRK LOADMAN-COPELAND**

We are called to gather in worship as a beloved community. We are called to set aside distractions and anxieties, that we might touch deeper springs and be renewed. We are called to seek and to share

comfort for the hurts that afflict. We are called to desire more love, more justice, and life more abundant. We are called to truth, to mercy, to humility, and to courage. Let us answer the call with the yes of our lives.

**Source:** 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection; altered

## **Lesson Activity**

### ***Let's Build a Community***

What does it take to build a community? How do these items stack up?

Use a Jenga knockoff (Jenga game costs too much, but the knockoffs, which are just wooden pieces, can usually be found at discount places like Big Lots) and permanent markers. Scatter the wood pieces and markers in the middle of your circle. Ask the participants to think of what needs to go into a community and write a word cue on a blank block and have them use the blocks to build their community. The blocks can be arranged and rearranged until everyone is satisfied. (NOTE: This is a community activity; therefore, a cooperative effort.)

NOTE: At the end of the session, have the participants deconstruct the community and take pieces with them as a reminder that each of them is part of a community but without all the pieces, they are individuals.

## **Discussion Questions**

This session discusses community. Make sure to have the handouts ready to give out.

## Questions

- ❖ What must you give up personally to build a better, stronger community?
- ❖ What unites the people in this church? Why do people keep coming to this community?
- ❖ What "other" do you need to embrace in order to meet the hospitality needs of the community?
- ❖ How can you incorporate hospitality into your religious practice?
- ❖ What needs to be done within this church, through using hospitality as a tool, to form a solid base of unity within the diversity of this church?
- ❖ What responsibility does this church take in retaining young people? What could be done better?
- ❖ How does a lack of clear theology make it more difficult for young people and others to remain a UU?
- ❖ What do youth communities do differently that help them find the depth, passion and intensity that so many others within the church find missing?
- ❖ How do our principles and sources provide unity?
- ❖ How do promises and covenants help us live relationally?

## Homework Assignment

Read pages 135-152 in *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*. This is the chapter entitled: *Conclusions and Recommendations* and pages 155-158 entitled *2004 Statement of Agreements and Tensions*.

## **Handout 1**

# **FIVE STEPS TO BUILDING COMMUNITY**

*Adapted by Jennifer Martin from Building Community in Youth Groups by Denny Rydberg*

## **Step One: Bond Building**

The first step in building community is to break down the cliques and barriers that exist, and to establish a trust relationship among the individuals. This is accomplished by giving the group members a problem solving task which requires them to work side by side with others in the group. As they discuss solutions and physically help one another accomplish the goal, bonds are built between people of diverse backgrounds. Cooperation is the main goal. As each person's input is accepted and welcomed by others, they begin to identify themselves as part of the group - part of the team.

## **Step Two: Opening Up**

When an individual can share non-threatening areas of his or her life, an exciting step in group building has taken place. People like to talk about themselves. If a person perceives that another person is genuinely interested in her or him, then telling one's peers about oneself provides an opportunity for trust to develop in the group. Unfortunately, the reverse is also true. If a person perceives that others don't care to listen, trust will not be built. The more empathetically a youth group listens, the more secure a person feels when sharing his or her personal struggles. The exercises done in this step should be generic enough so that people can share to whatever degree they feel comfortable. Participants go away from these activities enthusiastic about the deepening friendships they are developing in their group. They realize that their personal imperfections are not unique. When people discover they are normal they are able to accept and deal with their problems in a much more constructive way.

## **Step Three: Affirming**

Crucial to the growing process of a group is the act of encouraging each other through affirmation. When a young man hears his peers complementing him, he enjoys his participation in the group much more and is more likely to share deeper feelings. When a young woman is told by her friends that they appreciate her, her feeling of self-worth dramatically increases. Many reclusive youth become active members of the group when they realize others care about them. Participants who have been involved in affirming strategies leave the meeting feeling warm and fuzzy about the group and themselves. This feeling is especially crucial at this stage in the process of community building. After revealing their inner selves during the Opening Up stage, people need positive feedback to reassure them the other members of the group think they are still okay before they will consider sharing further. It is important to remember that adult leaders and advisors are an integral part of the community building process and need affirmation just like everyone else.

## **Step Four: Stretching**

Group members facing struggles together must actively care for each other. Individuals can not merely say they care for each other in a stretching exercise; they must actively show it. With most groups, difficult situations naturally arise if the group is together long enough; i.e... divorce, extreme illness, division of the church, etc. However, since many youth groups are together for only a short period you may not want to wait for a stretching experience to surface on its own. It is sometimes necessary to initiate one. Stretching experiences reap multi-faceted benefits. They create an atmosphere where people now feel comfortable enough to expose their imperfections to the group. For example, before the group travels to a hospital to visit terminally ill children, a popular member who appears to have his life together might admit his apprehensions about talking one on one with dying children. When he sees that the group still likes him, he realizes that his facade of perfection is unnecessary. And when the self-critical members of the group discover that even seemingly perfect people have struggles, they become free to love themselves. Suddenly, through a simple stretching exercise, individuals realize they can achieve much more as a group than they could as a collection of individuals. They realize the importance of each

member to the entire group. Stretching experiences can be a tremendous catalyst for personal growth. Facing and overcoming programmed difficulties give young people the confidence that they can cope with the everyday problems they face. They learn that they can accomplish more than they thought possible. They believe in themselves.

## **Step Five: Deeper Sharing and Goal Setting**

At this stage, individuals share deeply with one another and set goals. The youth group becomes the setting where young people can express their inner hurts, visions and struggles. People are not laughed at nor condemned for admitting they flunked a test, or that they dream of becoming a US senator, or that they have a drinking problem. When a group member shares a problem, the rest of the group is empathetic and gives support and encouragement. The group helps the individual talk through possible solutions and set goals. The group holds the individual accountable while giving him or her the freedom to fail. It is important to keep in mind that not all of a person's deep inner thoughts are appropriate to share in a group setting. Obviously, a person should be discouraged from telling the entire youth group the details of her or his struggles with a lover. Young people should be encouraged to share these struggles with one another or the advisor(s) on a one to one basis.

## **Action**

Taking a group through the five steps is essential and growth -producing, but accomplishes only the beginning of the exercises' benefits. Once a sense of community is built, participants are ready to risk sharing with their peers in a non-programmed way. They are also ready to move ahead in a united way to accomplish other goals; goals which include outreach to others, that the group may have set for itself.

## Session 10: Conclusion: Statement of Agreements

As individuals, we base our convictions upon our own experience of the depth dimensions of life, which is richer and more complex than any words or concepts we use to describe it. At the same time, we acknowledge a primary responsibility to value persons and to serve humankind—to affirm and promote “justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.” As communities, we claim a vision of religious community that protects and respects individual freedom, fosters acceptance (historically, “tolerance:), and supports an active quest for greater understanding and deeper meaning and purpose.

### Welcoming and Check-In Time

This is our last session together. Go around the circle say YOUR NAME, what you need to LEAVE at the door, and what you will TAKE from this class.

### Worship

#### WORSHIP IN THE HERE AND NOW

*by Kenneth Patton*

Let us worship with our eyes and ears and fingertips;  
let us love the world through heart and mind and body.  
We feed our eyes upon the mystery and revelation  
in the faces of our brothers and sisters.  
We seek to know the wistfulness of the very young  
and the very old,  
the wistfulness of people in all times of life.  
We seek to understand the shyness behind arrogance,  
the fear behind pride,  
the tenderness behind clumsy strength,  
the anguish behind cruelty.

All life flows into a great common life,

if we will only open our eyes to our companions.  
Let us worship, not in bowing down,  
not with closed eyes and stopped ears.  
Let us worship with the opening of all the windows of our beings,  
with the full outstretching of our spirits.  
Life comes with singing and laughter,  
with tears and confiding,  
with a rising wave too great to be held in the mind  
and heart and body,  
to those who have fallen in love with life.  
Let us worship, and let us learn to love.

## Lesson Activity

On pages 156-158, there are Statements of Agreement/Tension. There are 14 different categories. Take a notecard and pen and turn to these pages. Read through these statements and think about them.

On your card, write down your own statement of agreement - to one or all.

You should have received the cards that you wrote during your first session, so this way you can take these home and compare.

## Discussion Questions

This is the last session. Make sure that you hand out the evaluation sheets.

### *Questions*

- ❖ Where is the unity in our diversity?
- ❖ How do you describe what being a Unitarian Universalist is to visitors and other people in the community?
- ❖ How do you feel about your Religious Past? Religious Future?
- ❖ How do you affirm cultural diversity in this church?

# Evaluation Form

Please evaluate the course using the following scale.

*1 = Do Not Agree 2 = Somewhat Do Not Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Somewhat Agree 5 = Agree*

---

This course met or exceeded my needs. \_\_\_\_\_

This course was well put together. \_\_\_\_\_

The instructors were prepared. \_\_\_\_\_

I would take a similar course. \_\_\_\_\_

I would take courses from these  
instructors/facilitators again. \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

I have the following suggestions regarding this course:

I have the following suggestions regarding the  
facilitators/instructors:

OPTIONAL: Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Love**

**Harmony with the  
Divine**

**Community**

**Service**

**Search**

**Tolerance**

**Diversity**

**Transformation**

**Honesty**

**Quest**

**Growth**

**To Heal**

**Truth**

**Learning**

**To Repair**

**Freedom**

**Understanding**

**Covenant**

**Human Worth**

**Wisdom**

**Goodness**

**Curiosity**

**Integrity**

**Inner harmony**

**Compassion**

**Courage**

**Beauty and the  
natural World**

**Connection**

**Peaceful**

**Set 1**

Theology - "Theology" represents the ground of our being, our relationship with *God* (especially in other faiths).

**Set 1**

Ecclesiology - "Ecclesiology" is the definition of our faith. Ecclesiology is concerned with the nature of community into which people are called by *God*. Regularly, primary issues in ecclesiology concern the relation of the community to *God*, the relation of members of the community to one another, and the commitment of people in the community to people in the world.

### **Set 1**

Soteriology - "Soteriology" represents what we need to be protected from and also represents our salvation. The term "soteriology" comes from two Greek terms, namely, soter meaning "savior" or "deliverer" and logos meaning "word," "matter," or "thing." In Christian theology it is used to refer to the study of the biblical doctrine of salvation. It is sometimes termed "Christology" as in Christ is our salvation and we need to be protected from ourselves.

### **Set 1**

Eschatology - "Eschatology," according to Webster's dictionary, comes from Greek eschatos meaning "last things" or "ultimate analysis," and logos, and means "science of last things." "Eschatology" represents the thresholds, the passage of time, or the final end points of our faith.

**Set 1**

Missiology - "Missiology" refers to our relation to others, our mission to and with our neighbors.

**Set 1**

Pneumatology - Pneumatology" refers to the elemental forces that permeate our lives. Pneuma as in "pneumonia" is Greek for "breath." It is translated in other faiths as "spirit."

## **Set 2**

UU Theology - Our UU theology has emerged out of a historical process. Our theology is not that "We can believe anything we want to." The early house of Calvinism in the 19th century had as its foundation that human power was in bondage to sin. In contrast, the American Unitarianism that emerged had as its foundation that humans have a power to choose. Humans had willpower, and the powers of the soul are good. Universalism gave us a foundation that God is good. Twentieth century humanism contributed to the foundation of our house by adding that we don't need a supernatural "God" but that goodness comes from within us as human beings. Thus, the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

## **Set 2**

UU Ecclesiology - Our UU ecclesiology began in the 16th century when the Protestant Reformation reconceptualized the church from the hierarchy of the Pope to being formed by free human beings who make a promise (a covenant) to each other. Our walls are characterized by a more democratic concept of the term "church." Our neighbors in this "free church" tradition are the Baptists, Disciples of Christ, and Quakers.

Another characteristic of our ecclesiology, our walls, is that we are profoundly distrustful of pronouncements from "on high."

## **Set 2**

UU Soteriology - Once again, in contrast to the predominant foundation of the theology of Calvinism, Universalism saved us all. They said that what saves us is the power of creative love made viable to us in the person of Jesus.

Do we need to be saved from Hell? The Universalists said that we create heaven and hell on earth. We need to be saved from the Hells that we create.

## **Set 2**

UU Eschatology - UU's have a strong belief in progressive religion. We believe in progress towards goodness and enlightenment. The motto over our door might be "Onward and Upward Forever." Another way to look at our eschatology is that "Heaven is here and now." This idea, we have in common with Buddhism, Eastern Spirituality, Sufism and Judaism, often characterized as the "blessedness of life."

In this decade we are recognizing that "onward and upward forever" is not necessarily the case. In our anti-racism work, we recognize that some work has not been always progress but included oppression. Even the word, "enlightenment" is rooted in old colonialist assumptions of "light" (skinned, white, Western culture) over "dark" (skinned, colored, African, Asian, colonized peoples across the planet).

## Set 2

UU Missiology - We want to be a good neighbor, and take our children out to our neighbors' houses, with such programs as "Neighboring Faiths," in which they literally visit other churches, temples, and houses of faith. We teach "World Religions," and encourage our children to learn about Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity among others. We even bring decorations from our neighbors into our own house. In the 19th century, Theodore Parker described religiosity in everyone. We see our neighbor's houses as shared commonalities and a shared human need for some type of religious expression.

Do we look at the world with rose-colored glasses?

## Set 2

UU Pneumatology - For UU's, we might describe "spirit" as the immediate presence of the Spirit of Life that is in each of us and in all things. The 19th century Unitarians spoke of God as everpresent.

Emerson described the "over-soul" as a sense of God as all permeating as opposed to a sovereign king, punishing father, white, abled and old. Our pneumatology is described in the first source as "That which is directly experienced, transcendent, mysterious and wonderful, in all of us."

Do we cheat our pneumatology if we are afraid to use the word "God?"