



Boston Pilgrimages with Youth

**Suggestions on where to stay, what to see
and do, how to plan it all, and more.**

For more information, please contact youth@uaa.org

Revised January 2017

Boston Pilgrimages with Youth

Organized trips to Boston are a tradition for youth groups in many of our congregations. While there are many other valuable destinations, the Boston area's concentration of Unitarian Universalist (UU) points of interest makes it one of the top destinations for UU pilgrimages.

If a pilgrimage to Boston is in your youth group's future, the following pages offer some valuable planning tips. Although this document is geared toward the needs of youth groups, the information should also be helpful to any UUs visiting Boston, regardless of age or intent.

WHY PLAN A PILGRIMAGE?	2
EARLY PLANNING	3
UU PREPARATION: HISTORY AND ACTIVITIES	4
WHERE TO STAY	5
WHAT TO SEE AND DO	7
LOGISTICS FOR YOUTH GROUPS	12
COMMENTS AND OTHER HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS	16
TAKING IT HOME.....	18

WHY PLAN A PILGRIMAGE?

A youth pilgrimage can be a great learning experience for all involved, help in building community, and be fun. A trip to Boston can help to make our liberal heritage a real part of the lives of our youth. They can visit the churches where important events occurred, see the public statues of our heroes, the graves of our forebears, and the office of our presidents. They can also meet the staff at the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), ask questions, and realize that real people are working on behalf of all of us to make Unitarian Universalism a force for good in our society today.

Tours and historical sites are not the only ways they will learn on the trip. Experiencing the excitement of new places, talking with friends, learning to respect the boundaries of others when all are tired and hungry, making decisions as a group, and figuring out how to handle yourself away from home are all valuable learning opportunities.

This resource contains information that should ease your trip planning. If you need more help or would like to schedule a tour of the UUA, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Information and Public Witness (IPW) at 617-948-4652 or info@uua.org. To schedule a constituent meeting with a UUA staff member, please contact the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries directly at 617-948-4350 or youth@uua.org. It is a pleasure to share the UUA and the Boston area with you and the UUA is here to help make your trip a success.

EARLY PLANNING

When do you want to go?

Many groups choose to visit Boston in April and May because the weather is generally pleasant, the youth have a year of bonding and learning behind them, and trip planners have some flexibility in working around spring vacations. As a consequence, the UUA receives a high volume of visitors during these months. If you plan to visit in the spring and wish to include a tour of the UUA in your visit, make sure to schedule your tour as soon as possible.

A few other considerations about visiting the UUA headquarters while in Boston include being sure to come during business hours and to avoid visiting in June, if at all possible. The UUA is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm from September to June and 9:00 am to 4:00 pm in July and August. In June, tours and constituent meetings are challenging to schedule due to preparations for General Assembly. Visit www.uua.org/headquarters/visiting for details on getting to our headquarters building.

In general, different times of year offer different opportunities to experience Boston in a new way. In April, Boston celebrates Patriot's Day, in remembrance of the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Many local communities have parades, battle re-enactments and other festivities. This is also the weekend of the Boston Marathon, an exciting event and honored Boston tradition. Fall is another popular time to visit Boston. You can enjoy the gorgeous fall foliage on your visits to the historic towns surrounding Boston, take a witch tour in Salem at Halloween, or ice skate on the Boston Common.

Although these are all great times to visit, they also bring their own travel considerations and constraints. Major events like the Boston Marathon can make it difficult to find lodging, and the UUA and other venues may be closed on holidays. Visit www.uua.org/headquarters for a list of UUA holidays. You may also contact the Office of Information and Public Witness (IPW) at 617-948-4652 or info@uua.org to discuss possible options or issues.

Transportation

How you get to the Boston area will depend on how much time and money you want to spend. Anything is possible. Groups arrive by plane, train, bus (both regularly scheduled and rented), van, and car. If you plan to visit sights in the South Shore, North Shore, or Lexington-Concord areas you will need a car or van. If you are staying at a suburban church, however, you may want to park your vehicles and ride the MBTA public transportation into town. Parking in the city is difficult and expensive, while the "T" will take you very close to most of Boston's highlights. For a map of the public transportation system, see www.mbta.com.

Other transportation links that might be helpful:

- Logan Airport website: <http://www.massport.com/logan-airport/>
- Map sites for driving directions include <http://www.mapquest.com/directions>, <http://maps.google.com>, and <http://maps.yahoo.com>.

You can find more information about transportation and parking in Boston, as well as detailed instructions on getting to the UUA, on our website at www.uua.org/headquarters/visiting.

UU PREPARATION: HISTORY AND ACTIVITIES

Youth get a lot more from their Boston pilgrimage if they have had an introduction to UU history and if they have engaging UU activities to do while here. There are so many different ways to make our history interesting and fun. Here is a list of some of the ways that trip leaders prepare and engage youth.

Before coming to Boston:

- Explore your congregation's history, famous people and points of interest.
- Go on a local pilgrimage to important sites within your city or town. Explore Unitarian, Universalist, and UU history within your area.
- Talk about the meaning of pilgrimages, their history, and what one can take away from a pilgrimage.
- Talk about UU historic figures and watch movies that involve them. Some examples might include: Louisa May Alcott and the movie *Little Women* or Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and *Glory*.
- Host a UU historic figure dinner party and have each youth present a short intro to their historic character.
- After a few lessons on UU history, play a game show (Jeopardy or Family Feud style) with the youth to test their knowledge.
- Read a famous Unitarian or Universalist author and then discuss the text and their role in UU history. Some examples might include: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, e.e. cummings, or Charles Dickens.
- Have youth tell a story about a famous Unitarian, Universalist, or Unitarian Universalist during worship.
- Create a "Boston UU Bingo" card for them to use on the trip. Give out small prizes for those that complete their card.
- Have a "101 Famous UUs" poster? Have the youth "Find the Fake Ones!"
- Create a UU timeline and decorate it.

WHERE TO STAY

Hostels

Hostels are a popular housing option for visiting groups. They are usually very basic dorm-style housing, with rooms separated by sex. Because of this, make sure to have both male and female chaperones along to supervise. The hostels also sometimes have common rooms for eating and recreation. Boston hostels average \$40-50 a night for individuals staying in the dorms. Group discounts and private rooms are sometimes available. For general information on the Boston-area hostels, see www.hostels.com.

The **Hostels International Boston** (www.bostonhostel.org) has recently undergone an extensive renovation and is a reasonably priced option for youth groups. Its new location at 19 Stuart Street is centrally located in the Theatre District. From there it is a short walk to Arlington Street Church, King's Chapel, and several stations providing access to three different subway lines. It is also about a 20-minute walk to the new UUA headquarters location.

Cathie Brown of the UU Society of Northampton and Florence, MA, highly recommends the hostels: *"We stayed at the [Hostelling International] youth hostel which is a great bargain and the kids were able to hang out with multi-cultural folks and another UU Coming of Age class from Ohio. The hostel has a living room on each floor and bunk style beds as well as a kitchen, TV room and computers the kids can use. For \$35 per person per night (includes breakfast) it can't be beat."*

Hotels

Boston is a popular tourist destination, and the cost of living here is among the highest in the nation. You will have difficulty finding a suitable hotel or motel room for less than \$200.00 a night.

To help with this, the UUA has developed a relationship with **Club Quarters**, a chain of business-class membership hotels, and can offer visiting groups access to the UUA's discounted rate. **Club Quarters Boston** (www.clubquarters.com/boston) is located in the Financial District at 161 Devonshire Street, about a 15-minute walk from 24 Farnsworth Street. You can check availability and rates and make reservations directly at www.clubquarters.com/unitarian-universalist or call 203-905-2100.

If you make reservations, are blocked from doing so due to unavailability, or have feedback (good or bad), please let us know at conferenceservices@uaa.org so that the UUA can track this activity for fulfillment of the UUA/Club Quarters contract. Lastly, do bear in mind that Club Quarters fills up quickly, so you will need to book reservations far in advance.

Ecumenical Centers

Many UU groups visiting Boston stay at the **Walker Center for Ecumenical Exchange** (www.walkerctr.org) located in Auburndale, MA. The Walker Center offers lodging, meals, meeting space and parking at an affordable cost. It is located on the public transportation system, within walking distance of the Riverside Station on the MBTA's Green line (about a 45-minute ride into Boston). The Walker Center also fills up quickly, so be sure to book reservations far in advance.

Staying in a UU congregation's building

Staying overnight in a Boston area UU congregation's worship or religious education space is another possible housing alternative. There are over 60 congregations within very easy commuting distance of Boston. Many of them are gracious enough to offer floor space to visiting youth groups. Some will offer kitchen facilities; others cannot. Very few have showers or bathtubs, which can be frustrating for people who are accustomed to washing daily. Youth or adults with accessibility issues or allergies may also have difficulty with sleeping on the floor.

All members of your group should learn, understand and abide by your host congregation's "**Safe Congregations**" (www.uua.org/safe) policies, practices and procedures.

The UUA has collaborated with local congregations to compile a list of those which are willing and able to arrange for visiting youth groups to stay with them, either at the church building (if they have appropriate facilities) or through home-stays with the families of their youth group members. Please email youth@uua.org or call 617-948-4350 to receive this list.

Home Hospitality

Occasionally it is possible for visitors to arrange to be housed in the homes of local UUs. There is no formal way the UUA can help with this. Such arrangements are made between leaders of the visiting group and religious educators and other congregational leaders they may know in the Boston area. Since a great deal of organizing is required to set up home hospitality, it is frequently done on a reciprocal basis.

Although it is a lot of work, home hospitality has several advantages. The visitors get a chance to meet and know other UU families, sometimes forming relationships that last a lifetime. Also, home hospitality is financially beneficial for the traveling group, as it is not traditional for host families to charge anything for bed, breakfast, or transportation to and from the church. If you are lucky enough to be able to negotiate a home hospitality arrangement with a congregation in the area, be sure you and your local contact are clear about what is expected from host families.

A resource that can be helpful in finding UUs willing to open their homes to guests is the membership-based online listing site www.uurehome.com.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

There is more to see and do in Boston and its surrounding communities than can possibly fit in one visit. As you consider what your group would like to do, it may be helpful to know that one one-way trip on the “T” (the subway) costs \$2.00-\$2.50, trains from the suburbs run \$2.00-\$11.00 each way, and local busses are about \$1.50-\$2.00 per ride. If you are eating out at inexpensive restaurants for your meals, expect to pay about \$5.00 for breakfast, \$6.00-10.00 for lunch, and \$12.00-18.00 for dinner. Following are a few suggestions, arranged geographically, of places you may want to consider as you plan:

Boston/Cambridge

Visit the new UUA Headquarters at 24 Farnsworth Street.

Please consider beginning your visit to Boston with a stop by the Heritage and Vision Center and Bookstore of the new UUA Headquarters building at 24 Farnsworth Street. The UUA has taken great care in the design of their new building to make it welcoming and fully accessible to all visitors. They are open weekdays 9:00 am – 5:00 pm during September – June and 9:00 am – 4:00 pm during July – August. The UUA is closed on weekends and many holidays. For a list of UUA-observed holidays, please visit www.uua.org/headquarters.

Group tours of the UUA Headquarters building may be scheduled in advance for any weekday, depending on staff availability. Tours will be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. To request a tour, or for more information about UU sites in Boston, please contact the UUA Office of Information and Public Witness (IPW) at (617) 948-4652 or info@uua.org. They are happy to provide you with more information about the UUA, free souvenirs, and guidance on visiting nearby UU sites.

It is recommended to bring your group to the UUA early on in your trip. It gives them a good jumping-off point for Boston and their UU heritage exploration.

Meet with a staff member from the UUA Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

The UUA Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries also invites you to schedule a constituent meeting with one of their staff members to discuss how youth ministry and our faith community can be strengthened and deepened in partnership and to share your thoughts and hopes with UUA staff. For more information, go to [Youth Groups Visiting the UUA](http://www.uua.org/headquarters/visiting/22034.shtml) (<http://www.uua.org/headquarters/visiting/22034.shtml>).

Schedule your constituent meeting directly with the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries after you have scheduled your tour, so that the timing can be coordinated. They can be reached at (617) 948-4350 or youth@uua.org.

If there are other particular people or offices you want to see while at the UUA, call them directly ahead of time to see if they will be available. Direct contact information for UUA staff can be found at www.uua.org/directory/staff.

Visit our downtown churches.

Call ahead to see if someone can show you around First Church (www.firstchurchboston.org), Arlington Street Church (www.ascboston.org), and King's Chapel (www.kings-chapel.org). They are very different from one another and each one has a fascinating story to share. All are within easy walking distance of one another and the UUA.

Barry Andrews brings a COA group to Boston from UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, NY: *“When we go to Arlington Street Church someone tells us about the historic role of the church and William Ellery Channing. Then they get to go ring the bells in the belfry which is always a highlight.”*

Visit The Sanctuary Boston service.

The Sanctuary (www.thesanctuaryboston.org) is a community of vibrant worship and real connection to seekers and worshippers of all kinds, rooted in Unitarian Universalism. Worship is held twice a month – once at First Church in Boston and once at First Parish in Cambridge (check their calendar (<https://thesanctuaryboston.org/calendar>) for exact dates and locations). Their unique worship style

(<https://thesanctuaryboston.org/worship>) is similar to youth worship structure and easily resonates with younger UUs. After experiencing a service, we frequently hear: "I didn't know church could be like this!"

Visit the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC).

Just across the river from the UUA in Cambridge, accessible by a 15-minute subway ride, the UUSC gives an exciting glimpse into the immediate and physical changes that UU values can have on the world. Past groups have participated in lobbying and other campaigns during their visits to the UUSC offices. For more about the UUSC, please visit them at www.uusc.org.

Visit the UU Urban Ministry.

The Urban Ministry is committed to empowering Boston's most underprivileged citizens and transforming the spiritual consciousness of its most privileged residents. Over its 180-year history, the Urban Ministry has created many channels to address social issues, including settlement houses and chapels, affordable housing, community centers and service programs. Today, approximately 50 UU congregations provide both financial and volunteer support, viewing this ministry as one of their social action arms in Boston. More information is at www.uuum.org.

Visit the Lucy Stone Housing Cooperative.

UU youth appreciate seeing different ways that UU young adults live their faith; take a tour and share a meal or worship with the Lucy Stone Co-op members and residents who are creating a new kind of UU community through cooperative living, shared resources and community engagement. For more information, go to <https://sites.google.com/a/lucystonecoop.org/lsc/>. For a tour, email info@lucystonecoop.org.

Visit the Harvard Divinity School.

Not far from the UUSC in Cambridge is the Harvard Divinity School. Learn about the historic connections between Harvard University and Unitarianism. For tours call (617) 495-5761. More information can be found at <http://www.hds.harvard.edu>.

Take a walking tour with a member of Harvard Divinity School Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Students (HUUMS).

Harvard Divinity School seminarians offer two-hour historic walking tours of important UU heritage sites in Boston and it is highly recommended. More information is at <http://huumsblog.wordpress.com/walking-tours/>.

Follow the Freedom Trail.

The trail begins at the Massachusetts State House and is an ideal way to get to know Boston in the course of two or three hours. The 21 historic buildings, sites and monuments on the Trail include many sights of particular UU interest. For a map of the trail, visit the Boston Visitor Information Center on the Boston Common near the Park Street "T" station. More information is at www.cityofboston.gov/freedomtrail.

There is also a UU Walking Tour of Boston available online at <http://tinyurl.com/uuwalkingtour>. Some sites overlap with Freedom Trail sites.

The Black Heritage Trail

The Black Heritage Trail explores the history and lives of African-Americans in 19th century Boston, when Unitarianism was a significant presence on Beacon Hill. Both self-guided and led tours are available. The trail begins across from the Massachusetts State House, making it a convenient addition to your itinerary. For more information on the trail or to schedule a guided tour, please see <http://maah.org/trail.htm> or www.nps.gov/boaf.

If you plan on taking this tour, you may be interested in the book *Sarah's Long Walk*, published by Beacon Press. This book relates the true story of an African-American child who lived on Beacon Hill in the 19th century, whose struggle for integrated schools changed America. It can be purchased at the UUA Bookstore at www.uua.org/bookstore.

Stroll through the Boston Public Garden.

The Public Garden is a lovely park with flowers, a lagoon, and statues. On one corner of the Garden, across the street from Arlington Street Church, is a statue of William Ellery Channing, as well as statues of other Unitarians and Universalists. If you come when the weather is warm, the swan boats will be paddling up

and down the lagoon. Anyone who fondly remembers *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey will want to see the duck family statues nearby. More information can be found at www.swanboats.com.

Go for a boat ride in Boston Harbor.

Sightseeing cruises explore Boston's harbors and outlying islands, with narration provided by the captain. Whale-watching expeditions sail between April 15 and November 1. Harbor tours last 45 minutes; plan on 3-4 hours for a whale watch.

You could also take a "Duck Tour," of downtown Boston and the harbor in an amphibious vehicle (on land and in the water). These tours can be expensive, but for those who have done enough fundraising, they can be a memorable experience. Check before you book any boat tours to make sure that none of the members of your group get seasick. More information is at <http://www.bostonharborcruises.com> or www.bostonducktours.com.

"Most... loved the Duck Tour," says Kathleen Carpenter. "We always get our own vehicle and the kids have a grand time -and it's a great overview of Boston and its history. Sometimes the tour speech is better than others."

Eat lunch and shop at Quincy Market.

Anyone who likes shopping, eating, and people watching will love Quincy Market. The center building, Faneuil Hall, is devoted exclusively to foods. For lunch you can get anything from pizza to raw oysters just by walking up to one of the booths. The surrounding buildings are a shopper's paradise. More information is at www.faneuilhall.com.

Other places to eat near UUA headquarters may include the following:

Fort Point Channel District – The new UUA headquarters is located in this neighborhood, a burgeoning spot for innovation and entrepreneurial businesses. There are lots of lunch options within a radius of a few blocks, though most tend to be crowded during lunchtime on weekdays; in this area it usually runs \$8-12.

Seaport District - It is also right next to the Seaport District, running from the Congress Street Bridge all the way down Seaport Boulevard, that boasts fine restaurants and nightlife.

Legal Seafood is a gigantic seafood restaurant right in front of the New England Aquarium (Aquarium stop on the Blue T Line) on the docks of Boston Harbor. For a more "in the rough" experience, just up the block is **The Barking Crab**.

The entire North End—about a half-hour walk from UUA headquarters, this section of Boston is famous for its Italian food. There is fresh pasta and pizza everywhere, finished by famed cannolis from Mike's Pastry shop. A great stop if you are doing the Freedom Trail.

Near the Boston Common, there are:

Chinatown—either walk across the Common, or take the T to the Orange Line Chinatown stop, the Green Line Boylston T stop and the Red Line South Station stop for great Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Malaysian, and 'vegetarian Buddhist' restaurants. If you have some time, are feeling adventurous, and aren't strictly vegetarian, order dim sum, a meal of unusual appetizers.

The **Corner Mall food court**—on the corner of Winter and Washington Streets, a block from both Park Street and Downtown Crossing T stops. You can find here perfectly acceptable Indian, Thai, Japanese, Greek, Cajun, Italian, and American (Subway, McDonalds) foods, and convenient seating for large groups.

And anything else your heart could desire—if there is a particular type of food you would like, chances are it is available in Boston. Everything from Moroccan grills to smoothie stands to Ethiopian restaurants to Irish pub grub to raw oyster bars are here.

Other entertainment:

- New England Aquarium: (www.neaq.org)

- Museum of Science: (www.mos.org) They have a laser show recommended by Cathie Brown of the UU Society of Northampton and Florence, MA
- USS Constitution, also known as “Old Ironsides” (www.ussconstitutionmuseum.org)
- Paul Revere House Tour and tour of Boston (www.paulreverehouse.org)
- Visit the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (MFA) (www.mfa.org)
- The movies: (<http://movies.yahoo.com/showtimes/?z=02210>). Boston hosts some of the largest cinema screens in the country.
- The theater: (www.theatermania.com/boston-theater/). The most popular show for youth groups recently has been Blue Man Group. It is highly recommended to get tickets ahead of time to save a lot of hassle. However, you can sometimes buy discounted tickets at a booth in Copley Square (Green Line) for performances that evening.

Other resources:

Check out [Visiting Boston and the UUA](http://www.uua.org/headquarters/visiting) (www.uua.org/headquarters/visiting) for directions to the UUA and other helpful information.

For professional travel guides to the area, see:

- *Rough Guide to Boston* (www.roughguides.com)
- *Lonely Planet Guide to Boston* (www.lonelyplanet.com)
- *Let’s Go* travel guides (www.lets-go.com) - Let’s Go is entirely written and staffed by Harvard students, so provides invaluable local insight.

If you are a member of AAA (www.aaa.com), your local AAA office will give you maps and excellent inexpensive travel guides. They will also gladly help you plan your trip Northwest of Boston.

Other locations outside of Boston:

The **Lexington-Concord** area has many interesting links for Unitarian Universalists. This area is where the first battles of the Revolutionary War took place and is widely believed to have been where Paul Revere ended his ride. It is also home to the Unitarian transcendentalist philosophers, most notably Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, as well as the Alcott family. Not only historically very Unitarian, it remains a hotbed of Unitarian Universalism today.

Stop by the UU churches in Lexington: **First Parish in Lexington** on the Lexington Green (<http://fpc.lexington.ma.us>) (Unitarian minister Theodore Parker was born in Lexington); and **Follen Church Society** (www.follen.org), where Ralph Waldo Emerson was the minister for a short time. Follen Church was named for Charles Follen, a Unitarian minister renowned in his day who was also later credited with introducing the Christmas tree to America.

Get an overview of the events leading up to the Revolutionary War by stopping at the **Minute Man National Historical Park** on Rt. 2A between Lexington and Concord (<http://www.nps.gov/mima/index.htm>).

Go to Concord, and visit:

- First Parish Church (let them know when you want to stop by) (www.firstparish.org)
- Concord Center (www.concordma.com)
- The Thoreau Lyceum, 156 Belknap Street, Concord
- Old North Bridge (www.nps.gov/mima/north-bridge-questions.htm)
- Sleepy Hollow Cemetery (www.concordnet.org/317/Sleepy-Hollow)
- Orchard House (home of Louisa May Alcott) (www.louisamayalcott.org)
- Walden Pond (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-north/walden-pond-state-reservation.html>). Walden is great for a picnic lunch, a lovely walk, and a swim.

South Shore:

The **Plymouth-Duxbury** area is rich in history of the early American Pilgrims. You might want to start by visiting the UU First Parish Church in Plymouth (www.firstparishplymouth.org) where you can see interesting stained glass windows depicting much of the area’s history.

Visit the Plimoth Plantation. Located 35 miles south of Boston, this re-recreation of an early Pilgrim village is open daily from April through November (www.plimoth.org). Tour a model of the Mayflower and take a look at Plymouth Rock while at the shore. You may also want to indulge in some of the famous fried clams from one of the seaside seafood restaurants.

North Shore:

Approximately 19 miles north of Boston, Salem is the home of many unique sites:

Learn the history of **the Salem witch trials** and visit the museum (www.salemwitchmuseum.com), many historic cemeteries, homes, shops, tours, etc. (www.salemweb.com/guide/witches.shtml).

Visit the **Peabody-Essex Museum** (www.pem.org). This is a huge and fascinating museum, but not for the faint of heart or short of attention.

View **Nathaniel Hawthorne's House of the Seven Gables**, which has an interesting tour that comes highly recommended. (www.7gables.org).

Visit **Pickering Wharf** (www.facebook.com/PickeringWharf). This has a worthwhile show that depicts Salem in the days when it was a major seaport.

Take in **the town of Salem**. In addition to these sites, Salem also has several informative historical attractions, beautiful sea views, and great shopping. (www.salemweb.com).

Marblehead is a short drive from Salem and also worth seeing. Drive through the narrow old streets of Old Town, and on the way home, stop at Devereaux Beach for a swim. There are many good beaches in Marblehead, but this one is the biggest and easiest to find and has a good snack bar (www.marblehead.org).

LOGISTICS FOR YOUTH GROUPS

Leaders

When traveling with youth, make sure there are an adequate number of adult leaders. One adult for each 4-5 youth is a good ratio. At least two adults should accompany the youth, preferably of different genders, even if there are only three youth on the trip. The adults will have a more fun and relaxed time if they do not feel their resources are being stretched to the limit.

You might want to consider forming "touch groups" of young people who meet with an adult at specified times throughout the trip just to see how things are going. That adult can be the check-in person for the youth in this sub-group, rather than having to be always counting noses for the entire group.

You will probably find the most ready adult volunteers among the parents of the youth participants. Be aware that this does not always please the youth. Before agreeing to have a parent accompany the trip, be certain that it is okay with his or her child. There may be other adults in the congregation who would love the opportunity to visit Boston.

Before the trip, you should have a meeting with all the adults at which you talk about important issues and come to agreement about the adult's responsibilities and expectations. Some questions at such a meeting might be:

- Do any of the adults have First Aid training? If not, should you find someone with First Aid training to come along, or should one of the adults get trained?
- Do any of the adults have health issues?
- Do the adults have former experience leading groups of teenagers?
- If you don't know any of the adults well, will you require a reference from a congregation member?
- Will you run a criminal background check on the adults?
- What are the rules for the trip? Who enforces them? Do the adults know that they should follow the same rules as the youth (no consuming alcohol, smoking, etc.)? What happens if an adult breaks these rules?

It is very important to clear up questions such as these ahead of time, so that there will not be any surprises or misunderstandings on the road.

Registration form, medical release form, and other helpful forms

The registration form is an extremely important document. Design it well and you will save yourself many headaches. In addition to the usual information (name, address, dates of trip, parental permission to attend, etc.) you should consider including a Participant Covenant and a Medical/Media Release form as part of the registration form.

Sample Participant Covenant and Medical/Media Release forms are available to download on the UUA website at (http://rs1.uua.org/documents/yaya/participant_covenant.pdf) and (http://rs1.uua.org/documents/yaya/med_release_permission.pdf). Print them "as-is" or cut, paste, and cater them to your needs. These, like all examples provided in this resource, are samples only and the UUA assumes no liability for other groups or individuals using these forms. Nothing in these documents should be used as a substitute for the advice of competent legal counsel, which you should consult for your own congregation and situation before implementing any similar document.

You could also consider helping your youth group create their own code of ethics, with helpful adult input. This would be a much more meaningful document, and can be a powerful way to help the youth learn to take responsibility for their actions.

Of course it is helpful if adult attendees model the same behavior for the youth and sign a Participant Covenant and an emergency contact information form, as well as a media release. It is always a good idea to have consistent emergency contact information for all participants with you at all times on the trip.

Media releases and the “Anything else we need to know?” form

The Internet has heavily impacted the world of communications; it’s more important than ever to be sure that you have permission to post and share any photos taken of or by others. Make sure you include a media release (either as a separate form or as a clause in the parent permission form) that authorizes the use of any materials in any format, so you can clearly publicize your trip on the church’s website, post pictures on a Facebook page for folks at home to follow along, or publish a youth-written article in the bulletin or worship program. Please include the UUA in your media release and share copies of the signed forms with us. Make sure you tag the Unitarian Universalist Association when you post pictures to social media (the UUA is on Facebook and Twitter), as well as our office at UUYouthMinistry on FB and @YAYAUUA on Twitter. And remember that anyone under 18 years old must have their parent sign for them. A sample of the media release used by the UUA is available here (https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/media_waiver_yaya_legal.pdf).

Especially in the smaller, more intimate community that a congregation or its youth group can be, it’s likely that you already know about issues that could potentially influence the participation or emotional/psychological state of your trip participants, such as a family illness or death, recent surgery, social or behavioral differences, etc. It can still be helpful to inspire the parent/guardian to share this information by formalizing it with something like the sample UUA “Youth Needs” form (https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/generic_youth_needs_form.pdf).

Information for the family

Host an informational meeting for the parents of the youth who sign up for the trip. At this meeting, the youth and adults can outline the plans for the trip. Strongly encourage, if not require, attendance by all youth and adults signed up for the trip. In addition to the meeting, you will still need to write a confirmation letter in which all the information is sent to the family.

Parents and youth will be interested to know where you will be on each day, exactly when and from where you will be leaving and when you expect to return. Hand out an itinerary and contact information for the entire trip. If you will not be returning on a regularly scheduled plane, train or bus, think about setting up a phone tree that can be activated when you estimate you are half an hour from home so that the youth can be promptly picked up upon return. A phone tree is also useful in the event that something unexpected occurs.

Social media is a great tool to share learnings and photos with parents and congregants back home. Have youth tweet the things they learn and Instagram pictures of the sites they visit.

Make a list of items to bring on the trip. The youth themselves will have a good time brainstorming the list, which will probably get fairly detailed. You may want to break the list into two categories: a "mandatory" list (which should include comfortable walking shoes, a watch, clean socks and underwear, rain gear, etc.), and an "optional" list (with things on it like cameras, playing cards, stuffed animals).

Also include a list of things not to take (which is likely to include bulky items like stereos, heavily scented items, expensive items, things not conducive to group dynamics like iPods, Gameboys, etc., as well as obvious items like illegal substances and knives). At least one chaperone should pack a first-aid kit and know how to use it.

It is also helpful to give guidelines about luggage limits. Everyone will find it easier if each person is limited to one duffel bag or suitcase that can be stowed or checked and one carried bag for immediate necessities. Overpacking almost always makes for miserable traveling. Make sure all pieces of luggage are labeled with names and addresses. Consider a common identifier such as a unique cloth tied to all bags in the group, so that everyone can make sure that no bags get left behind or stolen.

Estimate how much spending money each person is likely to need. Make it clear if you are planning some kind of event for which cash or additional funds will be necessary. Also, if an expensive entertainment is planned, such as a night at the theater, make sure that everyone in the group can afford the tickets. If personal funds are an issue, try to raise enough money with the group fundraising to offset this need. (See “Finances” section for fundraising ideas.)

For planning purposes, it may be helpful to know that one one-way trip on the “T” (the subway) costs \$2.75, trains from the suburbs run \$6.25-\$12.50 each way, and local busses are \$2.00 per ride. If you are eating out at inexpensive restaurants for your meals, expect to pay about \$5.00-6.00 for breakfast, \$7.00-10.00 for lunch, and \$15.00-25.00 for dinner. Like any major city, it’s best to identify cheaper places to eat beforehand, then maybe make a reservation for one nicer meal.

Make a positive statement about behavioral expectations. Be very clear what the rules are and be clear about the consequences of breaking the rules. You might consider requiring all of the participants to sign a covenant outlining the behavioral expectations for the trip. This covenant is a good idea even if you know that all of the youth are mature and well-behaved. It does not have to be harshly worded, and can even be funny while still being an efficient way of ensuring that they know what is expected of them and what the consequences of bad behavior are. You might even consider having the youth help write this covenant. Every youth and parent should get a copy of these rules.

One suggestion for language to include in the statement is:

"No one is expecting any behavior problems on this trip. However, just so it is clear in advance what would happen if there were any problems, we want you to know there are a couple of things which would cause you to get sent home at your family's expense. One of them is using any illegal substance on the trip; another is fighting, bringing weapons, or physical violence of any kind; another is purposefully leaving the group. If any situation like that were to arise, we would get in touch with your family immediately and make arrangements for you to go home."

This will put things in perspective for the youth (and adults!).

Finances

Raising money as a group for a trip can be a challenging and fun activity. However, it can be no fun at all for anyone in the youth group who is not able to go on the trip. If anyone in your youth group is not going, it may be more appropriate to suggest ways that individuals can raise money outside the group setting. In any case, it is important to encourage the young people to invest some of their own time, energy and money in this experience.

Here are some ideas from the youth groups who have visited recently:

- Auction your skills to the congregation. (Such as: “will cook you dinner,” “will give you a lesson on how to pitch a baseball,” “will sketch your house.” Take advantage of the talents of your youth group members and willing congregation members. People will sometimes pay a surprising amount of money for these services.)
- Rake leaves, shovel driveways and sidewalks, or do other physical labor for community members.
- Run a tag sale.
- Host a pasta (or equivalent) dinner, or a congregation-wide talent show, for which you charge a small admission. (This has been VERY lucrative for some groups).
- Create a tempting commodity to sell, such as chalice crafts, jewelry, birdhouses, shrinky-dinks, etc. Bake sales are rarely cost-effective, but other made items can be good fundraisers.
- Set up a CafePress.com account for your congregation. The proceeds from this online store can go to your youth group’s trip—make sure the congregation knows about this!

Some recommendations from Kathleen Carpenter: *“Our largest fundraiser is our annual district youth con held at our church and attended by youth from around the district. Our parents send lots of food to help reduce costs. All proceeds go to the trip fund. Since the trip is every other year, the proceeds from two cons benefit each trip. Other fundraisers have included coffeehouses, brunches and lunches on Sundays, carwashes held Sunday mornings, raffles, all-age proms, a pie-in-the-face contest, youth services auctions, and the sale of poinsettias.”*

The free, downloadable PDF “Young Adult Service Trip Fundraising Manual”

(https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/yaya/srvc_trip_fundraising.pdf) can be used

as a guide for more great ideas. Much of the information can be applicable to youth with some changes to include developmentally appropriate adult partnership.

The possibilities for fundraising are endless - get creative! People in your congregations and communities will want to support the youths' trip; give them an opportunity to donate. Keeping this idea in mind, one group who came to Boston from the Midwest a few years ago was able to raise over \$10,000 for their trip in less than a year! While not every group will meet with this success, every little bit counts to make the trip possible.

Accessibility

Among our youth and adults, some are disabled or have special accessibility needs. Some disabilities may be invisible; chronic illness or a recent surgery can affect energy levels, which directly impacts mobility. Some disabilities consist of learning or sensory differences. Please consider these types of issues when planning how your group will navigate around Boston.

COMMENTS AND OTHER HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

Kathleen Carpenter, director of religious education (DRE) at the UU Church of Charlotte, North Carolina writes, *“Our biannual Boston youth trip has three major lessons to teach our youth. The first is about responsibility. With all the free time they are given, they are taught the challenges of time management and of freedom of action. They learn that they can use this time wisely or squander it and regret a wasted afternoon.*

“Second, they learn about inclusive and respectful behaviors. This means not breaking into cliques or excluding other youth during free time at the bed and breakfast or off on excursions. It also means showing respect to adults and to our host site.

“And finally, this trip is expected to provide our youth with experiences that help them find their place in our faith tradition -to help them understand what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist outside the comfort of their own youth group. They learn about their religious heritage as seekers of truth and meaning. They hear about famous UUs through their tour of the UUA headquarters and, unintentionally, through the public Duck Tour. And they learn firsthand about the UU commitment to justice work.”

Karen Lewis, DRE at First Unitarian Church, Dallas, Texas, wasn't in favor of a Boston trip when it was suggested a few years ago. But she's changed her mind after accompanying a youth group to Boston and the trips have become a tradition at Dallas. *“The trips really are amazing. We study a lot of UU history and it really does all come to life.”*

The UUA Office of Information and Public Witness has seen many groups come to visit the headquarters and surrounding Boston area. They offer the following advice for your visitors:

Don't drive in Boston. Make sure that everyone gets plenty of sleep and set curfews. Talk with the youth BEFORE the trip about the importance of not staying up late; they may roll their eyes, but they also may listen. Do homework/prep before your visit because it will help everyone get more out of it. The trip itself is not a good place to initially learn about our faith, history, and current activities because there is just too much going on. Also, the adults should consider planning the trip so they will have a good time too!

Avoid the temptation to over-plan to take maximum advantage of what for some is a “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity - don't pack too much into your day. It's better to have downtime for reflection and absorption, than to shut down because you're exhausted from too much running around, on top of travel and walking.

Carpenter says, *“We required several activities/tours a day as part of the group and provided free time for the rest of the day. Youth must always stay in groups of three or more except for approved situations. Every year, the youth tell us their favorite part of the trip was this freedom and responsibility. They really appreciate the trust and very rarely violate it.*

“...We toured the UU Service Committee office this year for the first time and they included a service (advocacy) project which was great. The kids liked it and I think it brought home the message of their personal power to affect change.”

Jamie Forbes, DRE at The Unitarian Church, Westport, CT, makes a point to bring appropriate quotes for youth to read when standing in the pulpits, at the gravesites, or the statues of famous UUs. *“The kids love this trip,”* she says. *“It's the high point of the year.”*

“Have multiple copies of medical permission slips as well as parental contact information,” says Ann D'Attilio, DRE at First UU Society of Albany, NY. Each adult should have a copy of each youth's information. Make sure the forms are kept secure at all times, because these forms usually contain sensitive personal information that falls under HIPAA laws and could be used for identity theft.

Gabrielle Farrell, religious educator at All Souls Unitarian, Washington, D.C. and formerly of First Unitarian, St. Louis, suggests that you shuffle youth frequently to avoid over-bonding; limit budget-sapping snacking; and choose chaperones carefully.

Lilli Rhodes of the UU Society: East in Manchester, CT recommends that the youth and their parents complete a post-trip evaluation, so that the trip can improve each year. She also notes that regular updates to the home church (via phone or email) help the entire congregation stay involved in the trip. This generates a lot of excitement about the trip at the church, and helps build intergenerational community. If the trip spans a weekend, it's great fun if someone reads an update to the congregation at the Sunday service. Even if updates during the trip aren't feasible, consider sharing your experiences with the congregation on your return, especially including any pictures taken on the trip.

Gaia Brown, formerly DRE at North Shore Unitarian, Deerfield, IL and now at UU Fellowship of Northern Nevada, Reno, NV, recommends a video, "Portrait of Boston and the Freedom Trail" (\$20.00, www.eparks.com), before going. Guard against those youth who will spend all their money on souvenirs and go without food. *"The trip really is a big deal,"* says Brown. *"The bonding that occurs is incredible."* Farrell adds. *"Kids who go on the Boston trip stay with the church in some capacity. Those who don't pretty much drift away."*

They may not say so at the time, but the experience is valuable to youth, says Lewis. *"The payoff is never immediate. They may roll their eyes and fidget while you're explaining something to them, but weeks later they'll bring up something at a worship service."*

Claudette Dirsmith of the Northshore UU Church of Fairfield, IL, says, *"I have done this trip for seven years and each year it gets better."*

"Let me finish by saying our kids absolutely love this trip," ends Carpenter. *"It is the highlight of high school for most of our youth - and they tell everyone that in their baccalaureate speeches. They always remark on the fun, the feeling of connectedness to UUism, and, most of all, to the appreciation for the trust we gave them by building free time into their schedules."*

TAKING IT HOME

Your youth's pilgrimage to Boston is just one step on a lifelong journey of faith formation. Bringing home what the youth learned and putting it into action is the challenge. Many of the activities from the previous section "UU Preparation: History and Activities" are adaptable for use after your trip to Boston. Please remember to share anything beautiful, inspiring, and thoughtful with the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at the UUA so that we may share it on our blog Blue Boat (<http://blueboat.blogs.uua.org/>) or with UU World (www.uuworld.org - especially photos and artwork!).

Some other useful activities to process your pilgrimage to Boston:

- Have a gratitude circle where each member shares gratitude and thanks for others on the trip. Recommended alternate activity: Have participants write their name on the top of a piece of paper, pass papers to the right and have folks finish the sentence "Dear X, thank you for..." When they've finished writing, have them fold the paper so their gratitude is hidden from the next person.
- Bring envelopes and stamps and have the youth write a letter to themselves. Mail the letters from Boston.
- Make thank you notes and send them to everyone!
- Have each youth make a small collage reflecting on three things they learned, two feelings they felt, and one thing that was awe-inspiring.
- Ask youth to journal about the experience and then create a group reflection to be shared in worship (and submit it to Blue Boat for posting).
- Go on a virtual pilgrimage in a different US city using Google Maps and Streetview.
- Does your congregation have a partner church? If yes, brainstorm and implement ways for your youth to participate. If no, join the UU Partner Church Council <http://www.uupcc.org/initiatives/partnership>.
- Ask youth leaders to lead a worship with the theme "Pilgrimages" and work in Unitarian, Universalist, transcendentalist, and Boston imagery.
- Have youth reflect on how their connection to Unitarian Universalism has been strengthened (or not) from this opportunity.
- Ask your youth to come up with something.

Remember, immersive experiences like pilgrimages and service trips are great at deepening faith, but youth need to be coached on processing the experience. Kenda Creasy Dean, in the book *Almost Christian*, defines one process of teaching reflexivity as involving four distinct moments: a disorienting dilemma, critical self-reflection on our prior assumptions, discourse that puts into words the insights derived from our critical reflection, and action.

We hope that you and your youth have a fantastic time in Boston. Please share any comments about this document and your Boston trip with youth@uua.org as this is a living document built from feedback and experience of the many religious educators and youth who have made pilgrimages to Boston.