

**John Freund**

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***Service Descriptions:***

## I am a "Pulpiteer".

That's a tongue-in-cheek way of describing what I do. I am not an ordained minister, and/but I do enjoy creating a cohesive worship experience - verses, readings, music, sermon. Of course, any service can be adapted to accommodate your service structure. I'm a musician - I'm a songwriter and vocalist, and I play piano, Hammond organ, guitar, bass and drums. If you have house musicians, I love to collaborate. Or - I can just give you a sermon. :)



My mission is not to tell us things we don't know, but to remind us of things we may have forgotten, or to give us another way of looking at something to allow us to see a different context or perspective; to shake up our assumptions and grab a chance to re-examine them. It's so easy to talk of that which divides us; so much so that we often talk of promoting or fostering diversity. This is well intentioned, but diversity is NOT aspirational. In fact, diversity exists all around us - we just need to embrace it! It is by finding new ways to talk about things that SEEM to divide us that permit us to see how connected we already are. And in turn, this gives us opportunities to strengthen those bonds to each other as individuals, as communities, and within ourselves.

I use the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism as a touchstone to explore themes like Emergence and Truth, the Wheel of the Year, Grace, Understanding, Justice, Community, and Conscience.

Beginning on the next page, you will find synopses for several services, links to a sample OS for each, and there is also a sermon MP3.

Here is a link to a video Andrea Lerner shot at UUMNY2014 of me with the Central Unitarian Church Band (my home congregation) playing my hymn, "To Be Together":



<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10152006327952385&set=vb.693927384&type=2&theater>

## **"Who Knows? - The Truth Emerges"**

Who knows "The Truth"? Emergence is "the process whereby larger entities, patterns, and regularities arise through interactions among smaller or simpler entities that themselves do not exhibit such properties." Unitarian Universalism has come to aspire to be a religion of Emergence; where differing theologies existing together lead to a larger truth.

I use Malaysian fireflies, Sir Francis Galton's visit to a country fair, and my experiences as a musician and computer programmer to illustrate that if we rely on each other to share our perspectives, then the range of wisdom we can experience is as wide as we are generous; generous with our minds, our words, our hearts and our ears. It's a bigger picture. Bonus - The congregation gets to determine (not guess!) my weight.

UU Principles: The fourth (free and responsible search) and seventh (interconnected web).

[Click here for a sample Order of Service](#)

## **"The Spiritual Harvest: Collect, Collate, Cast-off, and Carry On"**

Time is frustratingly indefinable. But as nebulous and fleeting as it is, it IS really the only constant we have.

We cannot comprehend what is happening to us or the significance of any moment - until we take a moment to reflect. The moments we choose to pause and reflect may be planned well in advance, or they may come as they present themselves. But in either case, these moments become rites of passage; rituals of change.

The word "ritual" may be weighed down by baggage about the use of that word and the images it conjures. But whether we realize it or not, we ALL use ritual as way to understand the past, ground our present, and imagine a future.

This service features a story I wrote called, "*The Trees and The Sun*", and it is about the Wheel of The Year. It can be done any time where reflection or assessment of transition or the passage of time is appropriate.

Indeed, it's been done at several points on the Wheel, including:

- At Star Island in August; to recognize the changes we see in ourselves and each other from one summer to the next; called "How You Doin'?"
- As a Winter Solstice service called: "How Are 'Yule' Doing?: Using Ritual To Mark Time and Move On". This included a Yule Log ritual.
- Mid-Autumn - "The Spiritual Harvest"

[Click here for a sample Order of Service](#)

[Click here to listen to the Winter Solstice version of this sermon \("How Are Yule Doing?"\)](#)

## **"Harry Nilsson's 'The Point': The Responsibility of Conscience."**

"The play's the thing - wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King." - Hamlet (Shakespeare)

In 1971, songwriter/singer Harry Nilsson released an album called "The Point". It is the story of a boy named Oblio who had the misfortune to be born in a town where everyone and everything had a point - except him.

This service can be presented in a few different ways:

- *The Full Version:* This requires a minimal OS, utilizing only the essential service elements. The story and music clock in at about 35 minutes. I usually work in the offertory and Joys and Sorrows (if your congregation does that) during the story.
  - My preferred approach is "semi-intergenerational": I perform the entire story including the songs for the whole congregation. The story touches on the first five of the Unitarian Universalist principles. After the story, the children and youth retire to R.E. for activities focusing on how the story illustrates the any of those five principles as your educators see fit. In this approach I give a sermon aimed at the adults that focuses on the fifth principle, "The Right of Conscience", and uses story of "The Point" to illustrate a failure to employ the RESPONSIBILITY of conscience. I also tell the story of Congresswoman Barbara Lee's vote of conscience as the only member of Congress to vote against the "Authorization for the Use of Military Force" on September 14, 2001.
  - The "intergenerational" approach: The story and songs are performed in their entirety. I give an intergenerational sermon that focuses on the first (Inherent Worth) and third (Acceptance) principles, designed to speak to both children and adults.
- *The Streamlined Versions:* (Obviously, versions 2 and three drastically reduce the impact of the story)
  1. Utilize just the narration and omit the songs (approximately 15 minutes) as a basis for the sermon
  2. Omit the songs and condense the story even further as "a story for all ages."
  3. Reduce the story to a synopsis as a reading to provide the basis for the sermon.

[Click here for a sample Order of Service](#)

## **"You Win Some, You Lose Some: Grace, Futility and Then Some"**

"Grace" is a word often used but usually misunderstood. Grace is not a one-sided gift from The Cosmos. The Cosmos hands us stuff, we pay attention, and we do something with it. Understanding the balance between what happens to us and what we make happen is the key to making Grace a spiritual practice. Belief or disbelief in a deity is irrelevant. Whether what we're given seems good or bad is secondary. What is important is existing fully in our physical and spiritual lives. We have been given Life, and it is ours to claim, no matter how it turns out.

As part of this service, I write a song with help from the congregation. You never know what you're gonna get...

Principle: The seventh: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

[Click here for a sample Order of Service](#)

## **"The Cosmic Mosh - Commitment, Community...and Justice For All"**

When we REALLY commit to our role in community, that commitment (and not the law) is the key to justice in that community.

This is not exactly a sermon. It's almost a parable. It's a story of how an evening in community at a Heavy Metal concert renewed my faith in humanity and inspired me to commit to other humans.

You don't have to like Heavy Metal music to enjoy this service. As a matter of fact, it's even better if you don't. The truth is, when I gave this service at my home congregation, it was the people who DIDN'T know anything about about Heavy Metal or The Mosh who seemed to enjoy it the most!

[Click here for a sample Order of Service](#)

## **"I Know What You Mean – Agreeing to Listen and Trying to Understand"**

Real listening is nearly impossible when we look at individuals through the filter of our perceptions and attitudes about race, gender, age, politics, religion or any other group classification we want to lump them into. Real listening is the only path to real understanding. The world will never come to full agreement. And because of this, agreement is not always a path to peace. Understanding is the path to lasting peace whether there is agreement or not.

I use some congregational interaction, along with musical and other analogies to peel back and explore the way our prejudices and even our best-intended words can block our meaning, and prevent understanding.

...and we get to sing "Enter Rejoice and Come In" in more musical styles than you have ever considered.

This service also features the hymn, "Come Be Free With Me", which I wrote for the fourth UU Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

[Click here for a sample Order of Service](#)

## **"One Is the Start of It All: Applying the Sixth Unitarian Universalist Principle of World Community"**

We are in community with each other and all people and things whether we like it or not. And the only way to keep our community from running off the rails, is for each of us to keep ourselves on a path that utilizes the liberty we have, while respecting the necessity of treating each other justly.

In this service I not only have the audacity to rewrite a principle of Unitarian Universalism, but I take on the foundational principle of ALL religions and ethical systems - The Golden Rule; and reduce it to four words.

This service features the hymn, "One Is The Start of It All", which I wrote for the Sixth UU Principle of World Community.

[Click here for a sample Order of Service](#)

## **"Just What We Need, Another White Guy Talking About Race (And Why That's Just What We Need"**

Say "white privilege" in a room full of white people and watch the temperature go up as everybody gets defensive. White people are not confronted with race every day in the same manner as people who are statistically underrepresented in the halls of power. And when confronted, there is often talk about "promoting diversity" and "reaching out". There is a rush to participate in marches and protests. But the first step white people need to take is to have an honest discussion with other white people...and with the person in the mirror, to bring into awareness the history, beliefs, attitudes and privilege that have always been part of our lives, regardless of our ethnicity or social class. The racism in the structure of American society seeps into us. In my sermon I call out the racism hiding in one particular white person: Me.

This service hits on ALL the UU Principles, but the 7th is in full effect, so it features the hymn, "The Threads of the Web", which I wrote for that principle.

A suggested option for this service is a moderated discussion following the service. Much gets brought out by this subject, and people seem to want to talk afterward.

[Click here for a sample Order of Service](#)