

**Leader Guide for  
Unitarian Universalist Identity  
Renaissance Module  
Online Version**



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## Leading an Online (or Hybrid) Renaissance Module

1. The [Renaissance program](#) has expanded opportunities for online learning in several ways; providing a learning platform on [private pages on the UUA website](#) for both 100% online modules as well as the online portion of hybrid modules (a series of webinars culminating in an in-person gathering). Some topics require more than the typical 15-hour in person format of a Renaissance module, such as UU History and UU Theology. These modules are comprised of six two-hour webinars with reading and other assignments for each session, along with a final project. Read more about the first online module in this Call and Response blog post: [“Who Said UU History Can’t be Fun?”](#)
2. The Renaissance Office is also adapting existing in-person modules to an online format. These adapted modules follow the outline of the in-person module, with five two-hour webinars and at least five hours of work between sessions. In addition, some modules have been adapted as a combination of online and inperson learning, known as hybrid modules. Read more about hybrid modules in this Call and Response blog post [“Hybrid Renaissance modules: Survey Says Yes!”](#).
3. Online and hybrid modules can be sponsored by a group, just as in-person modules are; regions, LREDA chapters, local cluster groups or individual congregations can sponsor modules. And just as with in-person modules, the Renaissance Office provides leaders with the all the resources needed to lead a module. Two leaders are required and are drawn from the leader lists maintained by the UUA’s Renaissance office, which also includes Leaders-in-Training. The minimum honorarium per leader is \$600, whether the format is in-person, online or hybrid.

### Creating a UUA Profile

4. In order to access online or hybrid modules, leaders and participants must have a UUA profile name. Leaders need to send this information out as early as possible so that participants can access the module and do the necessary preparation.
5. Go to [UUA.org](#) and click on “create account” at the top right and follow instructions on the page. Once you’ve gotten the confirmation, email the Renaissance Office at [renaissance@uua.org](mailto:renaissance@uua.org) with your profile name (not email address) to be added to the group. The recommended format is Firstname.Lastname. If you've previously taken an online or hybrid Renaissance module, you are already in the system and should use the profile name already set up.

6. To access the module online, log in with your UUA profile, and follow the link provided. You can also locate the module by logging in to your account and clicking on your user name at the top of the page. This takes you to your bio page and lists all the groups to which you have access (GROUPS.) Click the link to the module and it will take you to the module landing page with the sessions and forum access in the left side menu. Or log in and go to the [Online Modules page](#) and select from the left side menu.
7. On the Discussion forum page, subscribe to comments. To post on the forum, click on the post and add your comments. Please do NOT “add a new post”. If you’d like to respond to a particular comment, look for the “reply” link below that comment (there’s also a like button and other options). Be sure to save!

### Module Pages

All online modules follow a similar format and are housed in private pages on UUA.org that are only accessible to those who are in the module group. Module pages include:

- a welcome page that includes the requirements of the module, goals of the module and information on accessing the private pages
- a Background and Preparation page for each session (webinar) that includes required reading, other assignments to be done before the webinar, and links to the Discussion Forum for each session. There are usually things to post before the webinar and reflections or assignments to post after the webinar. This page also includes the webinar information or the recording as well as the agenda for the webinar (“Session at a Glance”).
- a group administration page. The Renaissance Office adds leaders and participants to the group, but leaders are granted administrative access to manage the group “just in case.”
- a shared folder to post documents and other module assignments, as well as webinar recordings. This is set up by leaders, typically using google drive or Dropbox (or any other shared folder resource of the leaders’ choosing). Leaders should forward the link to [renaissance@uua.org](mailto:renaissance@uua.org) so that it can be posted on the module pages.

### Webinars

Webinars are a key component of online and hybrid modules. Leaders can choose to use any webinar platform, however [Zoom](#) allows the most flexibility, especially the use of breakout rooms. The [Zoom Help Center](#) has many articles and videos available.

Leaders follow these steps to prepare for the module:

1. **Determine Zoom Account to be used.** It must be a “Pro” pro account in order to support two-hour meetings and use of the breakout rooms feature. Check with

Regional staff or LREDA chapters if you do not have access to a Zoom Pro account. If using someone else's Zoom account, be sure to check the meeting settings to allow for breakout rooms and co-hosts. Also, check settings for the location of recordings (see #5 below). Find more information about [co-hosts](#) in the Zoom Help Center.

2. **Create the Zoom meetings.** At least two weeks before the module begins, email the meeting links to [renaissance@uua.org](mailto:renaissance@uua.org) to be posted to the module pages on UUA.org. It's also helpful to email all participants the same information prior to the start of the module (and a reminder the day before each webinar).
3. **Create a shared folder** and send link to [renaissance@uua.org](mailto:renaissance@uua.org) to be posted on each session page. Webinar recordings are posted in the shared folder as well as documents and final projects.
4. **Practice leading meetings.** Leaders should set up a "training" meeting well before the first webinar to practice starting the meeting, sharing screen, creating breakout rooms, etc. Review "[How to Manage Breakout Rooms](#)" in the Zoom Help Center.
5. **Review the Optional Slides.** Slides are included in the online materials for leaders and can be used at the leaders' discretion. Slides include text, images, chalice lightings, etc. but do limit facetime due to screen sharing.
6. **Remember to record all webinars.** The recording will likely be saved on the computer of the person signing in ("local recording"). Designate one leader to start the recording each time (and the other leader should remind them!). After each webinar, upload the recording as well as the **saved chat box** (optional but recommended) to the folder so that participants have immediate access. Review the "[how to record](#)" information in the Zoom Help Center.

### Discussion Forum

Each session includes a discussion forum in which participants are asked to post both before and after each webinar. Participants (and leaders!) should subscribe to comments in the Discussion Forum in each session. To post on the forum, click on the post and add your comments (do NOT add a new post). If you'd like to respond to a particular comment, look for the "reply" link below that comment (there's also a "like" button and other options). Be sure to save!

The posts are set up by the Renaissance office; if leaders would like to add posts during the module, contact the Renaissance Office at [renaissance@uua.org](mailto:renaissance@uua.org). Leaders have administrative rights and can add posts themselves, but the Renaissance office is happy to do this. Leaders should post their own introductions before the first webinar and should also review/respond as needed to posts from participants.

## **Leader Responsibilities**

- Meet in advance with co-leader to plan and practice using the webinar features
- Provide links for Zoom meetings and the shared folder to [renaissance@uua.org](mailto:renaissance@uua.org) at least two weeks before the start of the module
- Download leader guide and all related materials from the Leader Materials section of the private module pages.
- Send welcome email at least two weeks in advance to participants (see sample below)
- Respond to questions and posts in the Discussion forum as needed. Monitor that participants are posting on a timely basis; participants will not get credit for the module if they do not post in the forum. Leaders can alternate responsibility for responding to posts, or they can respond. Decide ahead of time how to handle this.
- Submit the [online leader evaluation form](#) within one week in order to receive credit for leading the module and remind participants to submit their [evaluation](#).
- If applicable, supervising/coaching the Leader in Training and completing [Leader in Training evaluation form](#)

## **Sample Welcome Letter for Online or Hybrid modules**

Date:

Dear Friends:

We, [names of leaders], are really looking forward to leading the Online [name of module] Renaissance Module which begins very soon. We look forward to getting to know you as we explore [something about the module topic].

### **Webinar Dates**

We will gather from [start/end time with time zone] for [number of] online sessions on these dates: [list dates].

On [date and time set by team], we will host a Zoom 101 session so that we can all become familiar with the Zoom format that will be used during all of our online sessions. Attendance is expected for all sessions. An occasional session may be rescheduled as the will of the group dictates. Sessions will be recorded for later viewing.

### **To get access to module materials and Webinar links online:**

You will have access to a private section of UUA.org for the module. There you will find all the required course materials, meetings links for each session and access to a closed

forum for use by participants to post responses. In order to access these pages, you need a UUA.org account username.

If you don't already have a **UUA.org account**, please go to [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org), click "Create Account" in the upper right corner, and create an account. We recommend using something like firstname.lastname instead of "1<sup>st</sup> Parish DRE" so that the group can easily identify you (and in case you move to another congregation!).

Please email your username to [renaissance@uua.org](mailto:renaissance@uua.org); include the name of the module in the subject line. You will be added to the group membership list and be able to access the module pages. Remember to login each time.

**Module Welcome Page:** [[module home page URL](#)]

Everything you need for Session One can be found at this link:  
[Session 1 link]

#### **Participant preparation prior to first webinar:**

- Use Handout 1 (2 pages including the sample) to create your own River Journey.
- Upload your River Journey document here: [Afternoon: Evening](#)
- Introduce yourself on the Session 1 Discussion forum.
- Once you set up your UUA account you will have access to the pre-session work, including reading the *entire* Reader prior to the first session.

#### **Weekly Expectations**

- Post your responses to the Reflection Questions in the Forum
- Read and respond to the Forum posts written by your colleagues
- Review articles for the Reader
- Preview handouts
- Communicate with the leaders about any questions or concerns you may have

#### **Webinar software & Technical requirements:**

You will need a webcam and headset for audio; being able to see each other is critical to building sense of community and a headset minimizes the ambient noise which can be distracting to other participants. Previous participants have reported technical challenges when using a tablet or iPad, so a laptop or desktop is encouraged. You may also want to have a phone handy in case you need to call in instead of using computer audio.



The webinar platform is Zoom, which you can download from [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us). Please be sure to test your technology in advance of each session. There will be a practice session one week before class starts for 30 minutes. It will begin at the regular time of class and allow anyone who wants to test their equipment to try it out with one of the facilitators.

**Finally:**

Completion of this module entitles you to the same “credit” as an in-person module and counts towards your Renaissance certification or RE Credentialing portfolio. The expectation is that you will attend all of the online sessions, complete all Discussion Forum postings, do the reading, participate in the webinars, and submit an [evaluation](#) within one week after the module ends.

We look forward to “seeing” you on [date] as we embark on this great learning journey together!

[Leader Names, email addresses and cell phone numbers]

# Session 1: Identity as a Process

## Session-at-a-Glance

Welcome	5 minutes
Introductions	15 minutes
Covenant	5 minutes
Orientation	10 minutes
Our Personal Journeys	35 minutes
Break	5 minutes
Growing a UU Identity	40 minutes
Closing and Reflection	5 minutes

**Total Time: 2 hours**

## Goals **Put in Chat Box** This session will:

- Orient the group to the module and share a covenant
- Examine how our own unfolding identity journeys can help us understand the identity journey of others
- Deepen our understanding of what it means to have a UU Identity
- Recognize that we are at different stages of UU Identity development

## Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Feel encouraged to engage fully in the module
- Know what content to expect in the module
- Establish a group covenant
- See identity as a process of development that unfolds over the life of an individual through an interplay of heritage, culture, and lived experiences

## Welcome (5 minutes)

### Materials

- Chalice, matches and candle or battery-operated candle
- Optional slide 4 with chalice image
- Optional slide 5 with song lyrics

### Preparation

- None

### Description

Welcome participants. While lighting the chalice, share the words to Hymn #188, “Come, Come, Whoever You Are” by cutting and pasting them into the **chat box** (or use slide) before reading the words of Rumi’s poem slowly and dramatically to help the words sink in:

*Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving.*

*Ours is no caravan of despair.*

*Come, yet again, come.*

Then say something like:

*This call for seekers of truth has attracted people from almost every religion -- and although it was written as a poem 800 years ago by the Islamic mystic, Rumi, these words of welcoming adapted into a hymn by Unitarian Universalist minister Lynn Ungar speak strongly to those who claim a Unitarian Universalist identity.*

Tell participants that according to [Between the Lines](#), this Sufi poet was born in Afghanistan into a long line of scholars, jurists and theologians. When he was 37, he met a wandering holy man, Shams al-Din of Tabriz. It was with Shams that Rumi discovered the inner Friend, the soul, the Beloved, a constant reminder of God’s presence, thus the reference to the wanderer. Then say:

*Many who found Unitarian Universalism as an adult have a story of wandering and leaving – and Unitarian Universalists of all ages can relate to the message of seeking and welcoming within it. Seeking and welcoming. That is the essence of this poem and many believe to be the essence of Unitarian Universalism. In recent years, an accompaniment, or ostinato line, has been added when sung as a round.*

*The repeated line, “though you’ve broken your vows a thousand times,” also from Rumi’s poem, speaks to the covenantal relationships we share with one another.*

Share the links to “Between the Lines,” which has corresponding information for *Singing the Journey* and the *Tapestry of Faith Signs of Our Faith* Session 10. Tell participants that if they would like more background on this hymn, [Between the Lines](#)

[https://books.google.com/books?id=7HLHhelxGAC&pg=PA3&dq=between+the+lines&source=qbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q=b](https://books.google.com/books?id=7HLHhelxGAC&pg=PA3&dq=between+the+lines&source=qbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q=between%20the%20lines&f=false)

[etween%20the%20lines&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=7HLHhelxGAC&pg=PA3&dq=between+the+lines&source=qbs_toc_r&hl=en#v=onepage&q=between%20the%20lines&f=false) is a great resource, and the Tapestry of Faith program

for children has a session on the meaning of this song within the program, *Signs of Our Faith: Being UU Every Day*. Post links

([https://books.google.com/books?id=7HLHhelxGAC&pg=PA3&dq=between+the+lines&source=qbs\\_toc\\_r&hl=en#v=onepage&q=between%20the%20lines&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=7HLHhelxGAC&pg=PA3&dq=between+the+lines&source=qbs_toc_r&hl=en#v=onepage&q=between%20the%20lines&f=false)) in the chat

box and Discussion Forum.

Invite participants to consider that while some participants in this module may be friends or acquaintances, others are brand new to each other. Say:

*This group will become a learning community during this module as we share wisdom and reflections with one another, and together enhance the knowledge and skill we each have for growing and building Unitarian Universalist identities. And today we begin at the very beginning: with who we are.*

## Introductions (15 minutes)

### Materials •

none

### Preparation •

none

### Description

Introduce yourselves as leaders and explain why you are enthusiastic about leading this Renaissance module. Thank the participants for taking time out of their busy lives to attend because making time for professional development is so important for ourselves and our congregations.

Leaders can model the sharing by saying aloud their name, congregation or community, their role, and why it is important for them to be here. Remember that by going first,

you set the tone and example for length of time and depth of disclosure. Cut and paste the following into the **chat box** to support people as they introduce themselves:

- Name
- Congregation
- Size of congregation
- Your role
- What are you most looking forward to during this module?

## Covenant (5 minutes)

### Materials

- Handout 2: Covenant

### Preparation

- Review Handout 2: Covenant and reflect on whether or not there is anything you would like to suggest be added, deleted or changed to the covenant.

### Description

*Our Unitarian Universalist tradition is covenantal, meaning that what holds us together are the promises we make to one another. Unitarian Universalist lay leader Walter Herz offers this definition of covenant: “the common understanding, agreements, and promises made, one to another, that define our mutual obligations and commitments to each other as we try to live our faith and vision.”*

*As our understanding deepens around what it means to live into an anti-racist, antioppressive and multicultural community, we are called to examine the covenants we make with one another with an eye to inclusivity. How are our requests or expectations of one another in our covenants part of the dominant culture? Examples of the influence of dominant culture can include rigor around starting and ending times and also having only one person speak at a time. How might we make room for a variety of values and lived experiences as we do our work together? (Invite responses from participants.) As we form our Unitarian Universalist learning community for this Renaissance Module, let us establish our covenant with one another.*

Ask participants to take out their copy of **Handout 2: “Covenant.”** Ask participants to review Handout 2 to see if there is anything they would add, delete or change; if so, **record additions in the chat box.**

End by asking for volunteers to read the covenant aloud (inserting any additions between the sixth and seventh readers.)

## Orientation (10 minutes)

### Materials

- Handout 3 “Goals & Schedule of Sessions,” Handout 4 “Introduction to Renaissance and RE Credentialing Programs,” Handout 5 “Preparing for Module Evaluation,” and Handout 6 “Reflection Questions for Session One” • Optional Slide 6

### Preparation

- Create shared Google folder to hold River Journeys and upload the leader’s River Journeys as models.

### Description

Explain that any immediate Zoom issues should be sent to the facilitators through the Chat Box so that they can be addressed as soon as possible.

Introduce the module by sharing the overall goals on **Handout 3** (also on Slide 6):

- To gain an understanding of identity as a process of development across the lifespan which unfolds through an interplay of heritage, culture, and lived experiences
- To learn how this process unfolds in youth raised as Unitarian Universalists and persons who came to the faith later in life
- To identify ways to foster the process, specifically among Religious Education participants and generally among congregants
- To explore the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources as part of identity development
- to develop the capacity to grow and nurture lifelong Unitarian Universalists

Review the schedule of sessions.

Ask the participants for a raise of hands to show their Renaissance Module experience. Is this module their first? Fifth? Tenth? Referring to **Handout 4**, briefly describe the Renaissance program and the credentialing process. Then ask participants to look at **Handout 5** as you explain that Renaissance Module evaluations, for participants as well

as leaders, are online and it is the responsibility of the participant to submit the evaluation within **one week** after the module concludes. Make it clear that Renaissance and Credentialing credit for module is dependent upon timely submission of the evaluation.

**Handout 5** may be used to take notes as the module progresses.

Explain that should any participants perceive a problem with facilitation or group dynamics, encourage them to speak to one of the leaders as soon as possible so that the situation can be addressed.

Review **Handout 6:** Reflection Questions and say something like:

*Whether or not you are enrolled in the RE Credentialing Program, it is a good practice to write a brief reflection shortly after attending any learning experience. The facilitators will stay online for ten minutes after the end of each session to be available to discuss issues or questions that come up for you.*

Encourage participants to use their reflections for:

- A newsletter article (to keep their congregation informed about their professional development),
- A report to the Board (to ensure their congregation's leadership knows that they are putting their professional expense line to good use), and/or
- Their credentialing portfolio (to keep a record of learnings from the module and provide a short reflection to show how the module influenced their work).

## **Our Personal Journeys (30 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Handout 7: "A Wide and Generous Faith"
- Handout 8: "River Journey Questions"
- Handout 1: "River Journey Exercise Instructions"
- Timer
- Bell or chime
- Optional slides 7, 8, and 9

## Preparation

- Practice reading the quote from William Schultz on Handout 7: “A Wide and Generous Faith,” so you are comfortable with the words and the flow of the sentences
- Review River Journey instructions and the sample River Journey diagram
- Ensure that participants have posted their river journeys in the shared folder

## Description

(5 minutes) Ask participants to locate **Handout 7**. Introduce this activity by reading aloud the quote “A Wide and Generous Faith.”

Then say:

*Bill Schulz speaks of the richness and confusion that our mix of religious ideas brings to our chosen faith. He also speaks to our faith’s call to that which is best in us. Identification as part of the Unitarian Universalist movement is a choice, not an obligation. Let’s reflect now upon the life choices that brought us here by creating our personal timelines. But like our own personal stories of growing as Unitarian Universalists, these timelines may not be linear as in solid progress from point A to point B. Instead, consider the metaphor of the river of life – with its twists and bends, its widening and narrowing as the water which flows through it dictates.*

Invite the participants to each take out the previously created depiction of their life journey as a river.

(20 minutes) **Divide the group into two groups using breakout groups** and tell the participants they will each have about 5 minutes to share their river journey before the chime lets them know it’s time to move on to the next person’s story. Remind them that they should feel comfortable in their sharing and that they need not disclose any information which is uncomfortable or too personal – and remind participants that in listening to another person’s sharing, we should be respectful. (Optional slide 8)

Ask participants to turn to **Handout 8** (also Slide 9) with these questions for the river journeys visible, and tell the participants to use these questions as a framework for discussion:

- **Looking back, what event(s) or life choices (if any) set you on the path toward Unitarian Universalism (or your faith)?**



- How does your race, ethnicity, and culture influence your religious journey?
- Who are the people that were influential in your religious journey?
- When did you first feel that you were a Unitarian Universalist (or Christian, Buddhist, etc.)? What did that feel like?
- What did internalizing this feeling of being Unitarian Universalist (Christian, Buddhist, etc.) look or feel like? How do you express your UU (or your faith) identity outwardly? Have you made any changes in your life based on your UU (or your faith) identity?

(5 minutes) Gather the group together as a whole. Invite individuals to share some similarities they noted within their group or any stories which really stand out.

Ask participants to find a blank sheet of paper and something colorful to write with...crayons, markers, etc for the activity after the break.

**Break (5 minutes)** (optional Slide 10)

## **Growing a Unitarian Universalist Identity (35 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Optional slide 12 and 13

### **Preparation**

- Decide how to divide the group into pairs
- Paper and crayons or markers

### **Description**

Introduce this activity by saying something like:

*The growth of a person's identity as Unitarian Universalists does not end with the journey that brings them through the congregation's doors for the first time or the hundredth time. Rather, it's a process that continues throughout the rest of our lives. Like a tree, it is always growing, branching out, putting down deeper roots.*

*A person who identifies their Unitarian Universalist faith in terms of what they don't believe rather than what they do believe is like a "sapling." This person may be a new member to the congregation or a member for more than 20 years. This*

*person may find it difficult to describe themselves as a religious person if they need to use theological language to do so.*

Encourage participants to mute their audio and turn off their video for a guided meditation. Ask the participants to imagine a sapling...next to a growing tree...next to an old growth tree.

*A person who is able to define their beliefs in positive terms may be said to be a “growing” tree. Length of time in the congregation is not a reliable indicator of this or any stage. This person may have been a member for a relatively short time. They are likely to be serving on committees, teaching in the RE program (whether they have children in the program or not), and actively supporting the church.*

*A person who is accepting of all these stages of growth, who recognizes that the boundaries of each are contained in the other, may be described as an “old growth” tree. These people come to church, give generously, and support the religious education program and other congregational activities. They are there for the duration and have weathered many storms. They are aware that Unitarian Universalism is much more than what they personally experience.*

*Now using this metaphor, reflect upon where you are in your own process of deepening your identity as a Unitarian Universalist. To facilitate this process, I will offer a guided imagery.*

Invite participants to settle themselves into a comfortable sitting position. Ask them to close their eyes, if they are comfortable doing so... to breathe slowly and gently... to let go of doing...and thinking...and just be here, breathing...

Then say something like this, speaking fairly slowly, and with pauses between the phrases:

*See in your mind’s eye a tree... a tree that is who you are as a religious person, as a Unitarian Universalist (or however you identify) ... looking at the tree from a distance, from far enough away that you can see the whole tree, from top to bottom... notice where it is, what’s around it... whether it’s in a field, a forest, a park... alone or surrounded by other trees, other plants, buildings...*

*As you notice these things, begin to walk closer, noticing as you do the shape and size of the tree...whether is large or small... young or old... straight or gnarled... look at it carefully and notice whatever you see...*

*When you have come quite close to the tree, notice the bark on its trunk, how smooth or rough it is... how tough...how tender... and now imagine that you enter into the tree, that you become the tree... stretching yourself downward, feel your roots going into the ground... what are those roots like?... is there one long tap root, or many branches?...how deep do they go?...*

*Let your mind travel down through the roots, noticing what the ground is like as you push your way through it... noticing what obstacles are in your way, and how you have grown around them or turned aside... feel how your roots are drawing up moisture and nutrients from the soil and carrying them upward to nourish the tree... then, when you are ready, let yourself move upward into the rest of the tree,*

*Explore it the same way... the trunk... the branches... the leaves...fruit or flowers? Birds or animals in its branches?... [allow a few minutes of silence for exploration] and now, as you are ready, gently begin to withdraw yourself from the tree... until you are once more seeing it from outside... and then, gently, return to this body, this chair, this room...*

Following the guided imagery, ask the participants to remain silent and take a piece of drawing paper and markers or crayons and draw the tree they have just envisioned.

Emphasize that the picture will not be judged on artistic merit but is just a way to try to capture what they just experienced. Point out that they may learn more about their trees as they draw them; and if they find themselves drawing details they did not see in the guided imagery, that's fine.

Let the participants know they will have five minutes for this activity.

When time is up, create breakout rooms for pairs and tell them they have five minutes to share their drawings with one another. Copy the questions below into the chat box and verbally offer the following questions to the pairs as a guide for discussion. Make sure everyone is clear about the questions before you move to breakout rooms.

*How does your drawing reflect where you are now in the process of growing your faith identity? Did you learn anything new about yourself during the meditation and drawing?*

After the five minutes, create new breakout rooms for groups of four to reflect together on the tree metaphor as it applies to their congregations. Reflection on Congregations and offer the following questions as a guide, as found on **Handout 9 “Trees as Metaphor”**:

*Who are three people in your congregation whom you would identify as being “saplings,” “growing trees,” or “old growth” trees? Does thinking about them in this way help you to see UU identity within your congregation as an ongoing process? What are some of the gifts of each stage? What are some of the dangers? What are some of the gifts and dangers of having people at many different stages in one congregation?*

After eight minutes, have participants share: (Optional slide 12)

*What are the gifts of each stage? What are the “dangers” of each stage? What are some of the gifts and dangers of having people at many different stages in one congregation?*

Add any of the following points if they do not emerge in the group discussion:

- *People in the early, or sapling, stage are vulnerable to disappointment and unrealized expectations. They may not be sure this is really where they want to transplant themselves or where they really want to be. In the metaphor, you could say that if the tree is not tended by the rest of the congregation it could die—small saplings are very frail.*
- *In the growing stage, people can experience burnout (the metaphor might style it a forest fire!) From doing too much, or trying to make sure all tasks get done, or not knowing when to say no. In addition, people in this growing stage may identify Unitarian Universalism too closely with one minister or congregation and may not “survive” transition when the minister leaves or if they move to another area with a different church.*
- *There are some great strengths in the old growth stage. These people have weathered many personal and institutional crises and have developed resistance to them. A serious danger, however, can be an unwillingness to allow for change or to make room for the newer members (in the terms of our metaphor, sharing the light with and nurturing the younger trees). How is*

*the mix in your congregation's "forest"? How does that affect congregational life?*

Reflect with the group on these questions: (Optional slide 13)

- How might you foster religious identity growth in youth when some of the members of your congregation's youth group might be considered new youth, while others are long-term youth?
- What possibilities for identity development exist for long-term adults when so many of the adults in our congregations are new adults?

## **Closing (5 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Handout 6: "Reflection Questions for Session One"
- Optional slide 14

### **Preparation**

- none

### **Description**

Ask if there are any closing thoughts about this session.

Remind participants to post their responses to the reflection questions in the Discussion Forum after the session ends (the questions are also found on [Handout 6.](#))

Suggest that participants make notes about the session to prepare for the online evaluation. Give the group any important reminders such as the start time and material from the Reader to review before the next session such as reviewing Handout 10: "Brief Overview of UU History Resources", Handout 11: "Themes from North American UU History," Handout 12: "Scenarios for Reflecting on Unitarian and Universalist History," Handout 13 "Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources," and Handout 14 "Elevator Speeches: To the Point," and Handout 15 "Reflecting on First and Last Principle."

Please review "Themes from North American UU History," and the essay "First and Last Principles" both found in the Reader. Point out that Handout 10 asks them to familiarize

themselves with several of the adult Tapestry of Faith programs that focus on UU history. Ask for volunteers to prepare opening words for the next session.

Thank the participants for their participation and extinguish the chalice after you share these closing words from UU minister Barbara Pescan, Reading 680 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

*Because of those who came before, we are  
In spite of their failings, we believe  
Because of, and in spite of their vision, we, too dream.*

*Let us go remembering to praise,  
To live in the moment,  
To love mightily To  
bow to the mystery.*

## Session 2: Developing Unitarian Universalist Identities

### Session-at-a-Glance

Opening	5 minutes
Is There One UU Identity?	20 minutes
Honoring Both Universalist and Unitarian Roots	35 minutes
Break	5 minutes
How the Principles and Sources Became Part of UU Identity	25 minutes
UU Principles & Sources in UU Identity Formation	25 minutes
Closing and Reflection	5 minutes

**Total Time: 2 hours**

### Goals

This session will:

- Present the idea that our Principles and Sources help shape and form the core of our Unitarian Universalist identities
- Consider how our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources became an essential part of our collective identities
- Discover there is more than one way to develop a UU identity

## **Learning Objectives**

Participants will:

- Recognize how honoring both our Unitarian and our Universalist heritage helps shape our identity formation
- Understand how the Principles became integral to a Unitarian Universalist identity
- Learn to use the Principles as a tool for forming Unitarian Universalist identity

## **Opening (5 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chalice, matches and candle or battery operated candle
- Optional slide 3

### **Preparation**

- Remind the designated volunteer to prepare opening words

### **Description**

Welcome everyone and ask the designated volunteer to read the opening words as you light the chalice. If they forgot to prepare, there are opening words on slide 5 available.

Check in to see if anyone needs to lift up anything from the covenant or has any group process requests or observations they want to share.

Ask the participants to unmute themselves, one at a time, to share something they do which identifies them as a Unitarian Universalist (or as a person of faith). Encourage them to briefly name something other than attending worship services, attending this module, or doing UU professional work of any kind. Model the sharing as you go first, and remind all participants that it is okay to pass.

When the last person has shared, thank everyone for naming some of the ways they reveal they have a UU Identity (or are a person of faith). Share with the participants that

during today's session, we will be exploring the many different ways that people develop Unitarian Universalist identities.

## Is there One Unitarian Universalist Identity? (20 minutes)

### Materials

- Timer
- Bell or chime
- Optional slides 6 & 7

### Preparation

- none

### Description

Share the following words:

*Many of us claim a Unitarian Universalist identity. Yet, how we understand this identity and what it looks like in practice is different for each of us.*

*There is no **one way** to be a Unitarian Universalist.*

It is important for us to reflect on these words at this time in our own religious journeys, as well as in life of our denomination, as we work to decenter whiteness and live into a more anti-racist, anti-oppressive and multicultural world (ARAOMC.)

Create two breakout rooms. Ask a scribe in each group to take notes of their groups' responses. Ask, if they were explaining Unitarian Universalism to someone unfamiliar with it, what are the core traits that might identify someone as a Unitarian Universalist? Each group will develop a written list of these traits, using a two-column table in a word document with column titles: (1) core qualities (meaning shared by most or all Unitarian Universalists) and (2) tangential qualities (meaning shared by only some Unitarian Universalists). Create and share this table with both groups for them to use during breakout groups. Put them in breakout rooms for 5 minutes to discuss and agree on the placement of their lists.

Once back in the large group, ask the groups to report on how and why they organized the qualities on the lists the way they did. For instance:

*Were there any qualities that the group agreed were essential to being Unitarian Universalist? Why or why not?*



*Was there any disagreement within the group as to the placement of any items?  
Why or why not?*

*Did the group feel there were any qualities missing from the list they started  
with? Did they add any qualities to the list? If yes, what were they?*

When both groups have reported and if there is time, invite the group as a whole to comment on the process, any areas of consensus and any disagreements. Upload the chart to the shared folder.

## **Honoring Both Unitarian & Universalist Roots of Identity (35 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Handout 10: “Brief Overview of UU History Resources”
- Handout 11: “Themes from North American UU History”
- Handout 12: “Scenarios for Reflecting on Unitarian and Universalist History”
- Optional slides 8 and 9

### **Preparation**

- Decide how you will divide participants into groups for the scenarios from Handout 12 and which scenario each group will discuss
- Review “Themes from North American UU History,” found in the Reader

### **Description**

(15 minutes) This activity provides an opportunity for participants to engage the ways in which aspects of historical Unitarianism and Universalism have impacted the lived identity of Unitarian Universalists today.

Say something like:

*In considering the variety of Unitarian Universalist identities that exist, it is important to remember that we are honoring both our Unitarian and Universalist heritage. While there is a whole separate Renaissance Module for Unitarian Universalist history, we thought it would be good to take a quick look at some highlights, and how they help shape our UU identity today.*

**Handout 11:** Review each of the four themes. Divide into groups of three and ask participants to take 8-10 minutes to share how they see the theme showing up (or not) in their congregation or community today:

- Freedom of thought, or non-creedalism
  - How are early Unitarian and Universalist ideas reflected in your Unitarian Universalist congregation or community?
- Ongoing revelation
  - Can you see ways that openness to different expressions of religion has shaped Unitarian Universalism?"
- The power of Nature
  - Have you noticed any focus on Nature or environmental concerns in your congregation?
- Building the Beloved Community
  - Can you think of examples of this from your experience?
- What additional questions do you have about Unitarian Universalist history?

Bring the groups back together. Direct participants to **Handout 10**, "Brief Overview of UU History Resources." This handout reviews several adult Tapestry of Faith programs that explore UU history that participants should be familiar with for their own education and also to use in their congregations. Also direct participants to **Handout 30**, "Selected Resources." This handout contains additional resources for each session of this module.

SCENARIOS (20 minutes) Say something like:

*In order to practice how it is that we value both of these strains of our heritage, we're going to work through some scenarios in dyads. Please locate **Handout 12**. I will assign each pair a scenario from **Handout 12**. Read your scenario and discuss what each of you would do in your specific UU context. After 10 minutes we'll share some highlights from our conversations.*

Create breakout rooms for dyads.

After 10 minutes, bring the group back together and have participants share some highlights of their conversations.

Close this activity by saying something like:

*As you can see, both our Unitarian and Universalist heritages impact who Unitarian Universalists are today. Going forward, we hope that we are all increasingly aware of and amazed by the rich conversations that can happen when we engage both branches of this Unitarian Universalist heritage.*

**Break (5 minutes)** optional slide 10

## **How the Principles and Sources Became Part of Unitarian Universalist Identity (25 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Timer
- Chime or bell
- Handout 13 “Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources”
- Handout 14 “Elevator Speeches: To the Point”
- Optional slide 11

### **Preparation**

- Review the Handouts
- Ask participants to have to have paper and pencil or crayons/colored pencils on hand

### **Description**

(10 minutes) “Principles Taboo.” Ask participants to look at **Handout 13** “UU Principles and Sources” and note that the handout includes the adult version of the principles and sources as well as the Principles and Sources in children’s language. In religious education settings, many congregations refer to the “Rainbow Principles” or “Rainbow Chalice,” using the ROYGBIV acronym. Make sure participants know about the idea of the 8th principle, “journeying toward spiritual wholeness by building a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions,” which is in the process of being adopted by the UUA General Assembly.

Referring to first page of **Handout 13**, say something like:

*The seven principles are a covenant that member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association agree to affirm and promote. Note that we are saying “member congregations.” The Principles and Purposes do not say anything specifically about a relationship with individual UUs. But often, when we’re asked to describe what it is that makes our identity particularly UU, we’ll name the seven Principles and use their language to describe who UUs are as a people of faith. So today we’re going to challenge ourselves to think beyond the current language of our Principles in describing Unitarian Universalism. We will use the*

*chat box to share with everyone our description of Unitarian Universalism in thirty seconds without using any of the words directly from the Principles. If anyone is uncomfortable responding to the group, they can respond to just one of the leaders.*

Use a timer for 30 seconds. Have everyone look at their own first to see if they used any taboo words (Words from the seven Principles). Give people a few minutes to read through others.

Say something like:

*Excellent work! Having to work within such strict boundaries can be difficult. How was that for you?*

Lead participants in a brief discussion of what they noticed was most difficult to express and what was easiest to express in the exercise. Direct participants to **Handout 14** “Elevator Speeches: To the Point.” This UUA pamphlet shares some “elevator speeches” from Unitarian Universalists. Say something like:

*The Principles and Sources that we have today can feel like they are an integral and irreplaceable part of UU identity. However, they only came into their present form in 1984 and were approved as part of the UUA’s bylaws in 1985, as you read in the story as told by Rev. Frances Manly.*

(15 minutes) Referring to “A Free and Responsible Search: The Story” from the Reader, ask:

*Was there anything in that story that surprised you? Or that struck a chord with you?*

After 2-3 participants have finished sharing, ask:

*What if, instead of adopting new Principles, the UUA had decided to get rid of unified principles?*

Say something like:

*We’re going to spend a few minutes thinking about how Unitarian Universalism— and particularly UU religious education—might have turned out differently.*

Copy the following guiding questions into the chat box or use slide 11:

Three Big Questions:

1. How might UU identity be different?
2. How might it be the same?
3. What would we teach our congregations about what is at the core of a UU identity?

Ask participants:

*We will now respond to each question using the chat box. Again, if you are uncomfortable responding to the group, you can respond to just one of the leaders. Let's take about five minutes to answer these questions by yourself in writing—not necessarily in paragraph form, but in silent individual reflection.*

Allow five minutes for individual reflection. If it seems like people are finishing early, feel free to cut the time a bit short. After announcing the end of time, allow participants to share their thoughts. End this activity by saying something like:

*Thank you for sharing. These questions get to the very core of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist and how we engage our communities in UU identity development. We'll copy the chat box and upload it to the shared folder. Next we'll be exploring more deeply how the Principles play a role in identity development.*

## **The Principles and Sources In Unitarian Universalist Identity Formation (25 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Handout 15 “Reflecting on First and Last Principle”
- Optional slide 12

### **Preparation**

- Review the essay “First and Last Principles” from the Reader
- Ask participants to bring paper, colored pencils or crayons for today's session.

### **Description**

Create 3-4 breakout rooms. Provide the following questions on Handout 15 and invite participants to discuss them in small groups for 6 minutes:

*What are some of the relationships Frances Manly draws between the Principles? How do our Principles affect our perspectives and individual or collective searches for meaning?*

*What is the relationship of the Sources to the Principles?*

Next, ask the groups:

*How might you symbolically depict the relationship between the Principles and/or the relationship between the Principles and Sources? How could these relationships be expressed without words?*

Encourage each group to take some time to consider how these relationships could be expressed without words. Choose one person to share their idea of how they might express these relationships.

Allow 10 minutes for the groups to create the relationships symbolically, then have each group make a brief presentation sharing what they have drawn, imagined or made. They can hold items up to the camera to display if it is a visual art.

## **Closing and Reflection (5 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chalice
- Chime or bell
- Handout 16: “Reflection Questions for Session Two”
- Optional slide 13

### **Preparation**

- none

### **Description**

Ring the chime, allowing the sound of the chime to slowly fade before you speak.

Remind participants to post their responses to the reflection questions after the session ends. Use the questions found on **Handout 16**.

Suggest that participants make notes about the session to prepare for the online evaluation. Give the group any important reminders such as start time and material from the Reader to review before the next session including: Handout 17: “Abbreviated Summary: Child Development,” Handout 18: “Abbreviated Summary: Adolescent Development,” Handout 19: “Wrought Faith (Fahs Collaborative),” Handout 20 “Examples for Facilitating UU Identity Development,” and Handout 21: “Learning Needs.”

Review “Learning Types & Their Needs” from *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education* (Boston: Skinner House, 2001), and “Six-Word Stories of Faith” found in the Reader.

Tell them they will need their River Journey from Session 1 and writing materials.

Ask for volunteers to prepare opening words for the next session.

Stay online for 10 minutes to answer Parking Lot questions or other concerns.

Thank the participants for their participation and extinguish the chalice after you share these closing words [from Worship Web](#) by religious educator the Rev. Dr. Elizabeth 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.*

## Session 3: Unitarian Universalist Identities – Then & Now

### Session-at-a-Glance

Opening	5 minutes
Unitarian Universalists Identities Across the Lifespan	35 minutes
Learning Types and Their Needs	15 minutes
Break	5 minutes
Social Media & UU Identity Formation	20 minutes
Six Word Stories	25 minutes
Group Project Intro	10 minutes
Closing and Reflection	5 minutes

**Total Time: 2 hours**

### Goals **Put in Chat Box**

This session will:

- Introduce participants to theories of faith and identity development
- Explore how the process of developing a Unitarian Universalist identity has changed over the years and continues to evolve

### Learning objectives

Participants will:

- Understand how the process of identity development unfolds differently in children and youth raised as Unitarian Universalists and persons who chose this religion for themselves
- Imagine how social media can be an effective tool for fostering Unitarian Universalist identity across the lifespan
- Become familiar with ways in which social media can be used for religious identity formation



## Opening (5 minutes)

### Materials

- Chalice, matches and candle or battery operated candle
- Optional slide 4, 5 and 6

### Preparation

- Identify the designated volunteer offering opening words

### Description

Welcome everyone back to your time together and go over any additional details that may be necessary.

Have the volunteer share the opening words as you light the chalice. There is an opening on slide 5 if needed.

Check in to see if anyone needs to lift up anything from the covenant or has any group process requests or observations they want to share.

Ask the participants to unmute themselves and complete the sentence frame, “As a person of faith, I used to \_\_\_\_\_, but now I \_\_\_\_\_.” Remind participants that they are free to pass, and one of the leaders should go first to model. (Optional slide 6)

When the last person has shared, thank everyone for naming some of the ways their faith identity has changed over their lifetime. Share with the participants that during today’s session, we will be exploring how UU identity has changed (and continues to change) over time.

## Unitarian Universalist Identities Across the Lifespan (35 minutes)

### Materials

- Participant “River Journeys” from Session One
- Handout 17: “Abbreviated Summary: Child Development”
- Handout 18: “Abbreviated Summary: Adolescent Development”
- Handout 19: “Wrought Faith (Fahs Collaborative)”
- Handout 20: “Examples for Facilitating UU Identity Development”
- Timer
- Bell or chime
- Optional slides 7, 8, 9, and 10

## Preparation

- Decide which stages of development to assign to each group

## Description

(8 minutes) Say something like:

*People's religious education needs vary based on a number of factors, but we want to hone in on two that play a large role – age and level of faith development.*

*We're doing to do a brief review of the information from the Reader pertaining to religious identity development but we will largely focus on Tracy Hurd's work.*

Ask participants to locate **Handouts 17, 18, 19 and 20** on developmental theories and say something like:

*The four developmental theories in the Reader include Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development, James Fowler's stages of faith development and Tracey Hurd's stages of development that draw on Erikson, Kohlberg and Fowler in addition to her own experience as a developmental psychologist and former staff member in the UUA's Faith Development department. (Optional slide 7)*

*As with any framework, theories of development can be biased. Critics have claimed that Kohlberg's methodology was flawed, and that his use of a male sample created a skewed understanding of morality. There have also been critiques that this model is heavily Western, and does not account for philosophical traditions from other cultures. Likewise, Fowler's stages of faith development are limited in some ways. However, the framework can still be a useful tool for reflection in the work of religious identity development. Recent work by Joy Berry at the Fahs Collaborative has added to a "missing piece" to Fowler's theory and added the idea "Wrought Faith" to his model with the supposition that this occurs throughout the lifespan and is faith created together collaboratively as a faith that is actively being worked on and foundational to our being. **Look at Handout 19 or see slide 8.** Like wrought iron, wrought faith is strengthened and made real as it is worked and this worked faith is what allows us to create a covenantal shared faith.*

*Much has been written about Erikson, Kohlberg and Fowler's work and we don't have time today for more than a brief mention of their theories but you are encouraged to learn more about their work on your own.*

*Tracey Hurd's work (see slide 9) integrates aspects of the previous three frameworks for development. She particularly focuses on the development of children and adolescents, offering six stages of development, which are each broken down into physical, cognitive/intellectual, social/affective, moral, and spiritual/faith development. Tracy is actively revising and updating her work based on new understandings she has gained in recent years about human and faith developmental theories.*

(15 minutes) Ask participants to look at **Handouts 17 and 18**, which provide a useful summary of these combined stages of development. Explain to participants that they will break into working groups of three. Each group should identify a stage from **Handout 20** that they want to focus on in terms of helping that age group internalize a UU identity.

Groups should identify a scribe who can post their project to the shared folder at the end of this activity. Small groups should focus on these questions (*post in chat box*):

**What would your RE volunteers need to understand about this age group in order to provide a loving, supportive and inspiring learning experience? What would the volunteers need to understand about the typical strengths and challenges of this age group? What might volunteers expect from this age group?**

*Design the outline of an activity (curricula, programs, rituals, or other) that would facilitate UU identity development at this age. Be sure to briefly discuss how each component of your activity fits this particular stage of development. You may not have enough time today to fully detail your activity--but at least capture the major pieces. You can always come back and more fully develop this idea at a later date.*  
*(break into groups of 3 for 15 minutes)*

(10 minutes) Gather the larger group back together and ask each group to take three minutes to name what they created and ask them upload their activity to the shared folder.

(5 minutes) Once the group has re-gathered, say something like:

*With all of the grounding information about these different theories of development in mind, let's take our thinking about faith development and identity formation beyond the parameters of the four models we've explored today. Please take a moment to first reflect silently on these two questions (copy the following questions one at a time into the chat room or use slide 10) and then share your thoughts:*

- o **How might changes in life circumstances change your level of faith development? For example, how might the birth or adoption of a**

child, or a new partner, or the death of a parent change where you are in faith development?

o How might our heritage, culture, and lived experiences expand our faith development? Particularly, think about your own faith development. Where have heritage, culture, and lived experiences worked to build your religious identity?

(2 minute) Say something like:

*With these thoughts in mind, after this session, add to your personal timeline “river,” noting the things that are bubbling to the surface as we have been discussing identity development. Look at your rivers. Where were they shaped by a shift in life circumstances? Where was your river shaped by your heritage, culture, or lived religious experiences?*

## Learning Types & Their Needs (15 minutes)

### Materials

- Handout 21: “Learning Needs”
- Optional slide 11

### Preparation

- Review “Learning Types & Their Needs” from *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education* (Boston: Skinner House, 2001) found in the Reader

### Description

Age Does Not Necessarily Equal Old Growth (slide 11)

Remind participants that in our tree as metaphor for religious identity, being an old growth tree did not necessarily correspond with a person’s chronological age. Ask the participants to think about the youth in their congregation. Where do they think our youth would fall in our metaphorical forest?

### Learning Types & Their Needs

Briefly review material in the Reader by stating that Unitarian Universalist religious educator Dan Harper has identified several learning types and their needs. His stages might be another useful way to think about faith development. He concludes that:

*[The] developmental stage of the individual and socialization of the individual in the religious community do not necessarily have a strong correlation. For a given individual, the developmental stage may or may not predict relationship to and embedded-ness within a given religious community. Within the context of a living religious community, developmental stage alone is an insufficient description of a learner.*

*As new learners progress, Harper believes they face a number of discreet educational tasks as they become socialized into a UU community, and eventually they may progress into deep learners.*

Discussion Questions on Learning Types & Their Needs:

Divide group into triads in breakout rooms (with people they haven't talked with, if possible) and consider these questions found on the bottom of **Handout 21**:

*How can you foster religious identity growth in youth when some of the members of your congregation's youth group might be considered new youth, while others are long-term youth, and a few are deep youth?*

*What possibilities for identity development exist for long-term adults and deep adults when so many of the adults in our congregations are new adults?*

After five minutes, invite participants to share with the entire group what observations were made in their small groups.

**Break (5 minutes)** (slide 12)

## **Social Media and UU Identity Development (15 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Optional slides 13, 14

### **Preparation**

- None

### **Description**

Say something like:

*We're going to look at the relationship between social media and faith identity development. Rather than focusing solely on telling you what you should or shouldn't do with social media, we want to explore why and how it is that social media needs to be accounted for in our work of UU identity development. Regardless of individual opinions about the efficacy of social media as a platform for discussion, folks in our congregations and communities are using it and it is our responsibility to engage with it. Let's begin by just brainstorming a list of social media platforms in the chat box. Give us the name of the platform and a brief one-sentence description of what it is used for or how it works. For example, Instagram is an image sharing service.*

Write in the Chatbox: **"Instagram—Image Sharing"** as your example.

When participants are done sharing (limit the sharing to ~3 minutes), **Copy the following question into the chat box:**

**"How is social media developing UU identity already?" (slide 13)**

Say something like:

*We're going to look at three major ways that social media is already shaping UU identity, and a specific example of a platform or website that functions in that way.*

Read each of the following functions of social media and ask for examples of each. There are suggestions if the group is stuck:

1. *Maintaining connections to UUs who live in other places (UU Young Adult Connections page on Facebook)*
2. *Sharing UU identity with non-UU friends (Side with Love, UU World links of Facebook, Twitter)*
3. *Distributing resources more easily (Faithify crowdsourcing for UUs, Pinterest)*

(Slide 14) Then ask:

1. *"How do YOU see social media impacting religious identity development?"*
2. *"Do you see anything that you think is missing?"*

Encourage discussion and comments in the chat box.

## **Six-Word Stories (30 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- River Journeys from Session 1

- Optional Slide 15

### Preparation

- Create “6 Word Stories” folder in module folder for participants to put stories in.
- Review “Six-Word Stories of Faith” in the Reader.

### Description

(20 minutes) Introduce the next activity by summarizing the concept of the six-word story. Say something like:

*We’ve just talked about social media and UU identity development and you’ve read about “Six Word Stories of Faith” in the Reader. Now we’ll try our hand at our own six-word stories.*

Have participants refer to their River Journey drawing as a guide and ask them to take 10 minutes to create several six-word stories of faith showing the evolution of their UU (or faith) identity over time. Encourage people to mute and turn off their video while they write. When they are done, invite participants back to the group and ask for volunteers to share their six-word stories of faith, allowing about 10 minutes for sharing. Ask participants to write their most current six-word story of faith, as they are willing, on the Discussion Forum.

(10 minutes) **Create breakout rooms of 3-4 people.** Ask the groups to brainstorm ways they might use the six-word story of faith exercise in their own settings and ask one person from each group to scribe ideas. After five minutes, regather in the larger group and ask the scribes to briefly share. Ask the scribes to write the ideas in the Discussion Forum.

## Group Project and Teams (10 minutes)

### Materials

- Handout 22: “Guidelines for Group Project”
- Optional Slide 16

### Preparation

- Decide how you will split participants into small final project groups before the session begins. The size can vary from 3-4 depending on the size of your whole group. It is up to you if you want participants to form their own groups, be assigned by you, or randomly. Another possibility to consider is grouping people with similarly-sized congregations, or by another factor that

makes their professional situations similar; choose that which you think will be most helpful for participants.

### **Description**

Tell participants that there will be a group presentation during the closing session (length may be adjusted depending on how many groups you have). Encourage them to create presentations that are creative and that engage all of their group participants. To support their work, they will have a brief group time to brainstorm ideas of how they will work together (or separately) to complete their assigned project.

Ask participants to look at **Handout 22**: Guidelines for Group Projects. Explain that each group will be completing a project that will revolve around a practical application of some of our learning thus far in a UU congregation or community. Each group will complete the assigned project together or they may come up a proposal for a different group project if all within the group agree. The proposal must be submitted to, and ok'd by, both leaders before the start of Session 4.

Say something like:

*We have created groups based on ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) and here are the group members (share the groupings.) You will have 25 minutes during the next session to work with your group to plan your project. You will need to contact each other before our next session to pick which project you would like to complete together from the suggested projects listed on Handout 22. It is okay if more than one group chooses the same project. Or, your group can create and propose a different group project if all within the group agree. The proposal must be submitted to and ok'd by both Renaissance Module leaders before the start of Session 4. You will need to find time outside of the sessions to complete your presentation.*

Answer any questions that participants have about the group project. Post in the Discussion Forum the names of group members.

## **Closing and Reflection (5 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chalice
- Chime
- Handout 23: "Reflection Questions for Session Three"
- Optional slide 17

### **Preparation**



- none

## Description

Ring the chime, allowing the sound of the chime to slowly fade before you speak.

Remind the group to answer the questions from Handout 23 on the Discussion Forum.

Give the group any important reminders such as start time for the next session and material to review including: Handout 24: “Scenarios and Guiding Questions,” Handout 25: “Growing Edges in Unitarian Universalism,” Handout 26: “Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture,” and both “The Thomas Jefferson Ball: Reflections and Reconciliation” and “Two Faces of General Assembly” from the Reader. Ask for volunteers to prepare opening words for the next session.

Extinguish the chalice and share these adapted closing words [from Worship Web](#) by Ma Theresa Gustilo Gallardo who is listed on the UUA site as the first UU Lesbian minister in the Philippines.

*Some came here to be blessed with answers in a tumultuous world. Let us hope too, however, that many of us have been blessed with questions to direct us with a clarity of mind to steer our logic towards kindness and justice always.*

## Session 4: The Complexity of Unitarian Universalist Identity

### Session-at-a-Glance

Opening	5 minutes
Reflecting on UU Ancestors	35 minutes
Exploring Our Growing Edges	40 minutes
Break	5 minutes
Group Projects	25 minutes
Closing and Reflection	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2</b>
<b>hours</b>	

### Goals Put in Chat Box

This session will:

- Explore the tendency to lift up famous UUs from history and how this need complicates the development of identity over the lifespan
- Consider how to honor historical figures from our Unitarian, Universalist and Unitarian Universalist heritages
- Discover the Growing Edges of Unitarian Universalism today and how we are defining our Unitarian Universalist identity at this particular time in history

### Learning objectives

Participants will:

- Realize some of the considerations involved in ascribing our faith to historical figures
- Grapple with the complexity of dealing with historical Unitarians, Universalists or Unitarian Universalists in terms of justice.
- Consider the ways we are defining our Unitarian Universalist identity currently and what that means for the future

## Opening (5 minutes)

### Materials

- Chalice, matches and candle or battery-operated candle
- Optional slides 4, 5 and 6

### Preparation

- Identify the designated volunteer offering opening words

### Description

Welcome everyone back to your time together.

Ask the volunteer to share opening words as you light the chalice. If they are not prepared, slide 5 has an opening reading.

Check in to see if anyone needs to name anything from the covenant or has any group process requests or observations they want to share. Go over any additional details that may be necessary.

Invite participants to unmute and complete the sentence “An area of UU Identity that I would like to explore further is...” (optional slide 6) Invite participants to share their thoughts and then call on someone who hasn’t shared yet.

When the last person has shared, thank everyone for naming some of the many ways that we approach history. Let participants know that during today’s session, you will be exploring UU identity through our Unitarian, our Universalist, and our Unitarian Universalist history, as well as through the complexity of some scenarios playing out in our faith communities today.

## Reflecting on UU Ancestors (40 minutes)

### Materials

- Handout 24: “Scenarios and Guiding Questions”
- Optional slide 7 and 8
- Chime
- Timer

### Preparation

- Review “The Thomas Jefferson Ball: Reflections and Reconciliation” from the Reader and “Two Faces of General Assembly”

- Ask participants to bring paper and a writing utensil for some reflection time today.

## Description

Historical Unitarians, Universalists, and UUs. Say something like:

*Not everyone in our congregations today experiences themselves directly reflected in UU ancestors we name or the pictures we often share of historical Unitarians and Universalists. This can be especially true for those of us who are Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color, as well as those of us with other marginalized identities, who have been a part of our tradition for hundreds of years but who have often been overlooked and left out. Moreover, the white ancestors we have historically named often have complex histories with racism and other morally implicating practices. It's essential that we know and critically examine the fullness of our history to interrogate the stories we have told and those we have left out, the life experiences we have imagined and those we have not, the honorable acts of our ancestors and those which may bring us embarrassment. We need to approach our history in a way that acknowledges the true complexity of our faith and its peoples so that we may more holistically come into right relationship with one another as we strive toward Beloved Community.*

Explain that the first step in engaging historical individuals is to understand why we engage them in the first place, including the complexity of those choices (slide 8.) Give participants about 30 seconds to one minute of silent thinking time and encourage them to jot down ideas of why we need to engage with historical UUs in the chat box. Then, ask participants to share in the chat box. After all who would like to have shared, give participants a moment to look over the responses. You might want to ask volunteers to read theirs aloud, or ask if you can read them aloud.

If not already named, say something like,

*It's important to examine our history and our ancestors, both to root ourselves in the long line of our faith, but to also be honest about the complex relationships our faith has had regarding privilege and racism. We cannot dismantle racism and oppression without first being honest about the events and people of our past.*

Ask participants if there are any clarifying questions or challenges that they have for the list. Facilitate participants' questions/concerns. Be sure to encourage the use of "I" statements and examining what was said rather than the intentions or integrity of the person who said it. Record any challenges or clarifications during the conversation.

After 7 minutes of discussion say something like:

*Thank you for that conversation. As you can tell, this is not a simple topic. However, it is one that we need to address in our faith communities. We're going to introduce a few guiding questions that can help you evaluate your own efforts to engage with historical Unitarians, Universalists, and UUs.*

Invite participants to locate **Handout 24** and/or post slide 9: Scenarios and Guiding Questions. Have a participant read each question aloud.

*Did this person actually identify themselves as a Unitarian, Universalist, or Unitarian Universalist?*

*How did this person talk about people who were different from them in all the ways people can be different from one another?*

*Were there any discrepancies between this person's values and their actions?*

*Are there any discrepancies between this person's actions and the UU Principles?*

At this point, acknowledge to the group

We recognize there are a multitude of identities in this group, some of which are surely not publicly known. This can include race, ethnic background, class differences, disabilities, and many other identities. These discussions about difference can be tender and always hold potential for harm. Should you start to experience harm in these conversations, we invite you to name the harm you're experiencing if you have such capacity, and if you need to remove yourself from the conversation, do that, checking in with the module facilitators about your experience.

After the group has read through the four questions, allow a few minutes for participants to ask any clarifying questions they might have about the guiding questions.

Create four breakout groups (you should caucus these groups if you have enough from marginalized identities for that) and ask the participants to use the Guiding Questions from **Handout 24** to discuss their assigned scenario. Tell participants that they will not be expected to have a polished plan at the end of their 7-minute discussion, but they will briefly report back to the group about their conversation. If participants need more information, encourage them to use a mobile device or laptop to look briefly for more information online.

After 7 minutes of discussion in groups, bring participants back together. Ask each group to briefly describe the contents of their discussion including anything that surprised or was new to them. Go through the scenarios one by one. After allowing about 6 minutes for sharing, say something like:

*Thank you for your conversation on these challenging topics. We know racism and white supremacy culture are deep veins running through UU history and we cannot build the beloved community and find liberation for all without first being honest about our past. We're going to end our time on this topic by looking at a piece of more recent UU history.*

Then ask participants to take out their Reader and open to “The Thomas Jefferson Ball: Reflections and Reconciliation.” and “Two Faces of General Assembly” Give a brief summary of the readings. Then say something like:

*These readings are a brief summary of a difficult point in UU history, but it is indicative of the complexity of UU history and identity. We're going to take some time for individual reflection on this reading, You'll have about 5 minutes to do some written reflection. When time's up, I'll separate you into pairs and invite you to share some of your reflections, as you are comfortable.*

After 5 minutes of written reflection, break into pairs for 5 minutes of sharing.

When participants return to the group, share that there was a program at the 2018 General Assembly marking the 25th anniversary of The Jefferson Ball. This program created opportunities for reflection, learning, repair and healing and offered hope for our shared future and mutual liberation. As a denomination we continue to struggle with issues of white supremacist structures and our current work to dismantle them. Ask participants to journal for 3 more minutes on how events at the UUA in recent months and years have affected their personal UU identity.

Thank participants for their thoughtful engagement on this complex topic. Ask if there are any lingering questions or thoughts and facilitate that discussion as time allows.

## **Exploring Our Growing Edges (40 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Handout 25: “Growing Edges in Unitarian Universalism”
- Handout 26: “Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture”
- Optional Slides 10, 11 and 12
- Word Cloud generating site (such as [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net), [www.tagxedo.com](http://www.tagxedo.com) or <https://tagul.com/> (allows word clouds in shapes, e.g. Flaming chalice) or whiteboard)

### **Preparation**

- Update or adapt Handout 25 as necessary

- Log on to your preferred word cloud generating site (see materials for activity).

## Description

Introduce this section by saying something like this:

*As we have seen, our Principles grew out of a communal sense of what it means to be Unitarian Universalist and can now help to define that identity for us, by naming the central values we hold in common. The Principles also call upon us to not just affirm these values, but also to work actively in the world to bring them into being. The various ways we do that, both individually and collectively, say something about how we are defining Unitarian Universalist Identity at this particular time in our history.*

**Note Handout 25:** *Growing edges are some of the initiatives, programs and issues that are shaping the present and future of Unitarian Universalism.*

*The growing edge of Unitarian Universalists is recognizing and dismantling racism within the denomination, our congregations and the world. As we explore our UU identities, it is challenging to recognize how our history and current structures exude white supremacy culture.*

*One resource that can help us identify what part of our identity harbors white supremacy culture is "White Supremacy Culture" from Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okum (ChangeWork, 2001). Antidotes are provided on the link on the handout. (Optional Slide 11.)*

If time permits, choose a few of the key points and discuss the antidotes.

The key points are found on **Handout 26** include:

- *Perfectionism*
- *Sense of Urgency*
- *Defensiveness*
- *Quantity Over Quality*
- *Worship of the Written Word*
- *Paternalism*
- *Either/Or Thinking*
- *Power Hoarding*
- *Fear of Open Conflict*
- *Individualism*
- *Progress is Bigger, More*

- *Objectivity*
- *Right to Comfort*

Using **Handout 26** as a reference, encourage participants to **use the chat box** to jot down **trends, movements, and programs within our association or their own congregations that are working to dismantle racism.** (Optional slide 12)

Allow 10 minutes for this brainstorming activity. One facilitator should then use the **chat box words to generate a word cloud** for each group and share them on screen. The other facilitator should take a few minutes to explore any of the programs and initiatives that participants are unfamiliar with.

Ask the participants to take a look at the current programs, movements and initiatives which address our current growing edges. Invite reflection on questions such as: *What does the number of current programs and movements say about our faith and our denomination as a living tradition?*

*Are there any growing edges that we should be working on as a faith tradition that are not part of the current programs, movements or initiatives? What does that omission say about Unitarian Universalism?*

Engage participants in discussion about word clouds and, as they look at the word lists in the chat box, consider:

*What do these programs/movements/initiatives say about how we are defining our Unitarian Universalist identity for this particular time in history? What will this identity we are creating mean for the future of Unitarian Universalism?*

When you have five minutes left in this section, ask if any participants would like to elaborate on or ask questions about any of the chatbox comments.

**Break (5 minutes)** (optional slide 13)

## **Group Projects (25 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Optional slide 14

### **Preparation**

- Post in the Discussion Forum the groups decided upon in Session 3 and the topic for each



## **Description**

Explain that there will now be a time for them to put into practice all that they have been learning, exploring and reflecting upon through group projects. announce the teams and projects decided upon in Session 3:

1. Design a month-long celebration of Unitarian Universalism, culminating in an intergenerational worship service
2. Design a teacher training session focused on fostering and promoting UU identity
3. Design a parent meeting focused on fostering and promoting UU identity
4. Design a multigenerational activity to promote and foster UU Identity development in people of all ages

Let the groups know that they will have 25 minutes to work on this project which they will present to the group in the closing session. They will need to find time outside the scheduled sessions to work as a group to complete the project. If they do not have a Zoom Pro Account, they can request using the account for this class from the facilitators. LREDA Chapters or individual group members may also have accounts. You can also use Zoom for free for 45 minutes. (optional slide 13)

Create breakout groups and place members in the correct group. Leaders should make themselves available to answer questions while the groups work. Encourage groups to use the available technology so that final projects may be shared electronically. Ask for a volunteer from each group to take responsibility for uploading the project to the shared folder ahead of the closing session so that slides and other graphics can be shared onscreen. Ask participants to include the last name of each participant in the title of the project. The projects will all be available for review in the shared folder for at least two weeks after the end of class.

After 20 minutes have passed, let each group know that they have five minutes remain in their group preparation time. Then let them know when time is up.

## **Closing and Reflection (5 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chalice
- Chime
- Handout 27: Reflection Questions for Session Four
- Optional slide 15

## Preparation

- none

## Description

Ring the chime allowing the sound of the chime to fade slowly before you speak.  
Ask for volunteers to prepare opening words for the last session.  
Remind participants that the Reflection Questions should be answered in the Discussion Forum.

Give the group any important reminders such as start time of the next sessions and any additional information about presentation of group projects. Thank the participants for their participation and extinguish the chalice after you share these closing [words from Worship Web](#) by Unitarian Universalist minister Andrew C. Kennedy (optional slide 15):

We come to love a church,  
The traditions, the history,  
And especially the people associated with it.

And through these people,  
Young and old,  
Known and unknown,  
We reach out—

Both backward into history  
And forward into the future—

To link together the generations In this  
imperfect, but blessed community Of  
memory and hope.

## Session 5: Living a Unitarian Universalist Identity

### Session-at-a-Glance

**Opening** 5 minutes

### Presenting Group Projects

(may need to be flexible based on number of groups) 60 minutes

<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
<b>Promoting UU Identities in Our Congregations</b>	30 minutes
<b>Parking Lot</b>	10 minutes
<b>Closing and Taking It Home Ritual</b>	10 minutes

**Total Time: 2 hours**

## **Goals** Put in Chat Box

This session will:

- Examine how Unitarian Universalist identities are nurtured in our congregations
- Explore teachable moments in UU identity formation
- Provide participants with experience in applying UU values and principles to their daily lives

## **Learning objectives**

Participants will:

- Feel better prepared when confronted with situations which provide teachable moments and opportunities for identity development
- Understand multiple ways in which Unitarian Universalist identity can be nurtured within the congregation
- Demonstrate understanding of Unitarian Universalist identity development through the presentation of a group project

## **Opening (5 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chalice, matches and candle or battery-operated candle
- Optional slide 4 and 5

### **Preparation**

- Determine if all presentations are in the shared folder and contact anyone who has a missing presentation.

## **Description**

Welcome everyone back to your time together and go over any additional details that may be necessary. Ask the volunteer to read the Opening Words as you light the chalice. If they are not prepared, an opening reading is on slide 5.

Check in to see if anyone needs to name anything from the covenant or has any group process requests or observations they want to share.

Invite participants into a space of quiet reflection and/or meditation, and to close their eyes if they feel comfortable doing so. Once participants are settled, say something like:

*We're going to take a few moments to reflect on the people that have formed us into who we are today as people of faith. In the next minute or two, I invite you to type into the chatbox the name of persons or communities that have shaped your faith identity. You can name as many or as few as you'd like. When everyone is finished typing, we'll each read aloud the names we each added.*

When it seems that participants have finished, thank them for sharing and invite them to open their eyes and return to being present with the group as they are ready.

## **Presenting Group Projects (60 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- none

### **Preparation**

- Create a list of participants and projects to make sure all are accounted for.

### **Description**

Ask each group to present their activity, reminding everyone of their scenario as they present. Allow 10 minutes for each presentation and 10 minutes for feedback time after each presentation. Timing may need to be adjusted with individual presentations.

Explain that feedback will consist of two types of feedback— first the presenting team will speak about what went well and what they would do differently. Then, other participants will offer what they liked and constructive feedback. Some considerations for questions:

- *How did you decide what to include?*
- *How much of your program focused on history/heritage and how much lived experience?*
- *Were you proactive in decentering whiteness?*

- *How does your project foster UU identity in children? Youth? Adults? All ages?*

Notes to Leaders:

- Be an enthusiastic supporter of each team’s presentation. Your support will inspire participants to do the same and inspire confidence in the presenters.

Respond to each presentation with applause and appreciation!

- Be mindful of time. Appoint one leader as timekeeper.
- Consider taking notes to help you remember your own thoughts about each program presentation, as well as questions that you want to ask the individual teams and to engage/educate the whole group.
- It is as important and perhaps more important that you allow the participants to do most of the evaluating of the presentations. Let participants give their feedback first. This is a time for leaders to step back, especially in the beginning of feedback time, to be there to clarify and to support the new insights and growth of the module’s participants.

**Break (5 minutes)** (optional slide 6)

**Promoting Unitarian Universalist Identities in Our Congregations (30 minutes)**

**Materials**

- Handout 28: “Living Our UU Identity and Values” (scenarios)
- Optional slide 7

**Preparation**

- None

**Description**

Introduce this activity by saying something like:

*As religious professionals and leaders, we provide information and direction, and others look to us as models for how to live a life according to UU values. Just as we identified our mentors and role models, so do others identify us as their mentors or role models.*

(slide 7)

*We are confronted daily with situations that test our values. How do we respond? How do we encourage others to act on the values that UUs hold dear? How do we encourage them to honor our Sources and Principles? The scenarios we will use in this session are based on real situations faced by UU religious educators and parents.*

Refer to **Handout 28:** “Living Our Identity and Values.” Divide group into triads for breakout rooms, assigning one scenario to each group. Ask members to discuss the ways they would respond to the scenario they are assigned. Let them know that they will be reporting back to the group what they chose to do and they should elect one member of their group as recorder to write down their responses to the scenario.

After the groups have had 10 minutes to process the scenario and come up with responses, bring the groups back together and ask a representative of each group to report on its scenario and alternate means of addressing the issues raised. Allow 1-2 others to offer suggestions or comments before moving on to the issue examined by another group.

Transition by telling the group something like:

*One way to build our UU Identity is to integrate reminders of our identity into our surroundings and programs: wearing chalice jewelry, having a special church school chalice, using UU notecards, referring to or using UU magazines and newsletters—such as UU World, Family pages and books)—and hanging banners and signs.*

Ask participants to reflect on the ways they promote UU identity in their physical setting and with identity-building items such as the chalice symbol. Participants are also welcome to share in the chatbox. They can also include how UU Identity is nurtured in their congregation through visual, verbal and physical ways.

### **Parking Lot (10 minutes)** (optional slide 8)

Review any questions that have come up over the course of the module. If no questions were in the “bike rack” or “parking lot,” ask if there are any questions that participants have now.

## Closing & Taking It Home Ritual (10 minutes)

### Materials •

- Chalice
- Chime
- Handout 29: “Session 5 Reflection Questions”
- Handout 30: “Selected Resources”
- Optional slide 9

### Preparation

- None

### Description

Ring the chime, allowing the sound of the chime to slowly fade before you speak.

**Point out Handout 29:** Reflection Questions for Session Five. Remind the group that the Discussion Forum will remain open for two weeks following today’s session. Draw participants’ attention to **Handout 30** which contains many resources to explore.

(Optional slide 9) Invite the group to share how they might take what they have learned and experienced with them by offering one way they could share their new knowledge with others in the congregation. Ring the chime after each person shares.

Some possible ideas for sharing (should your group not easily come up with ideas on their own):

- They might ask the minister to preach on a topic related to UU identity, with the help of participants
- They could create an information bulletin board in the coffee hour room to honor your “sapling” new members, as well as the “old growth,” lifelong UUs
- They could decide to pace themselves, and make a goal to incorporate one idea in the next six months to a year

Close this session by thanking the group for the energy and ideas they brought to the Module, then share this benediction:

*May you keep your light shining as you go your own way.*

*As you leave here, may you continue on your own faith journey.*

*And may you kindle the fire of others as they develop their Unitarian Universalist identities.*