

# **Unitarian Universalist Identity**

## **Renaissance Module**

### **LEADER'S GUIDE**

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## About the Author

Michelle Richards is a Unitarian Universalist religious educator credentialed at the Master level and the author of [\*Come into the Circle: Worshiping with Children\*](#) and [\*Tending the Flame: The Art of Unitarian Universalist Parenting\*](#). She wrote and developed the popular [\*Popcorn Theology\*](#) curriculum series and co-authored the middle school curriculum [\*Compass Points\*](#) and the *Tapestry of Faith* program [\*Love Connects Us\*](#), which is available online from the Unitarian Universalist Association. She previously served the Central Midwest District of the Unitarian Universalist Association as a small congregation religious education program consultant and facilitator for *Covenanting for RE Excellence*. Along with serving the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Elkhart as Acting Director of Religious Enrichment, she also organizes training events for religious educators.

Hannah Roberts Villnave is a candidate for Unitarian Universalist ministerial fellowship and an Urban Ministry Fellow at Wesley Theological Seminary, where she is pursuing her Masters of Divinity. She is a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, and her experience as a participant and leader in religious education classrooms has profoundly influenced her faith identity. Prior to pursuing ordained ministry, Hannah taught English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the Baltimore City public schools. During her time as a teacher, she wrote and led professional development workshops for other ESOL teachers, with a particular focus on teaching students with limited formal education. She also gave a presentation on the intersection of national identity and race in urban ESOL classrooms at the 2012 Maryland TESOL Conference.

## Introduction

This module presents Unitarian Universalist identity development as a process unfolding throughout the lifespan. This unfolding occurs through the interplay of heritage, culture, and lived experience, both of the individual and of the institution. This process of developing a Unitarian Universalist identity is not static; it continuously evolves. Our Unitarian and Universalist heritages both contribute to our modern idea of what it means to be Unitarian Universalist. Yet elements of this identity that may once have been considered essential may now not seem important, and new possibilities are developing all the time.

Added to this complexity is the fact that there is not a single UU identity that can be taught, and there is no single ideal UU identity to strive for. UU identity is manifold and multiple, and this multiplicity affects the faith formation of children, youth, and adults who struggle to understand what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist in today's world.

This module addresses this complexity, the importance of sending consistent messages about UU identity, and best practices for honoring historical Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists. It presents a great deal of material, along with activities designed to promote reflection and discernment in the contemplation of real-life situations faced by religious professionals, faith development volunteers, lay leaders, and others. All of these may be well positioned to recognize teachable moments that arise in the wake of events that may affect the identity formation of the children, youth, and adults in our congregations. The module culminates with groups of participants developing projects that are presented to the other participants for feedback and suggestions.

As a leader, you are encouraged to think in advance about how you might adapt activities for people who need auditory, visual, or mobility accommodations. For instance, if any participants have visual disabilities or difficulty reading projected UU Identity Module – Leader's Guide

text, designate someone to read the text on slides aloud and describe any pictures. Also, do your best to be aware of “invisible” disabilities such as dyslexia or ADHD, and encourage participants to let you know if there are any accommodations that would allow them to engage more fully with the module.

## **Goals**

The overall goals of this module are:

- 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.

## **Leader Preparation**

A team of two should facilitate this program. Leaders should be:

- Knowledgeable about Unitarian Universalism, religious education, and faith development over the lifespan
- Committed to Unitarian Universalism and to the professional development of religious educators
- Effective at facilitating group process
- Able to thoroughly prepare for each session, including becoming comfortable with the technology used
- Willing to offer honest feedback on and suggestions regarding the participants’ final projects

Slides for Renaissance module session breaks are available on the UUA website. If you wish, [download this optional PowerPoint](#) to incorporate one or more break slides into your module PowerPoint.

Although not required, a computer, projector, and internet access are strongly recommended. Power Point slides are included to eliminate much of the preparation of newsprint. Not only does this save preparation time for the leaders during the module, it also allows leaders to email the presentation to participants so that they can use it to help prepare written reflections or reports after the module. Encourage working groups to prepare reports electronically rather than on paper, and to distribute their work to the large group at the end of the module

**Final Projects.** Working in groups of three or four, participants will develop a final project that synthesizes their understanding of the material in the module. Groups will be given a choice of four projects, or they may come up with one of their own if all members of the group are in agreement and the module leaders have approved it. These projects are:

- Design a month-long celebration of Unitarian Universalism, culminating in a multigenerational worship service
- Design a training session for volunteer RE teachers, youth advisors, membership coordinators, etc. that focuses on fostering and promoting UU identity
- Design a workshop for parents and other adults that focuses on fostering and promoting UU identity beyond the congregation—at home, at school, and in the workplace
- Design a multigenerational service project or other activity that will promote and foster UU identity development in people of all ages

Group members will have 70 minutes in Session 4 to work together on the project. They may also work on it outside of module time, if they wish. They will have ten minutes to present their project in the final session, followed by

feedback, comments, and suggestions from the group..Projects will be shared with all participants and the Renaissance Office.

**Exploring Our Growing Edges.** Session 4 includes an activity titled “Exploring Our Growing Edges.” Leaders have two options for conducting this activity. One option requires providing four or more laptops or tablets so that participants can access websites to create word clouds. If this is not possible, participants may be provided with art materials to create a mural.

**Reader for the Module.** Leaders or the module coordinator should provide participants with information about the reader as soon as they register for the module, so that they have ample time to complete the reading before the module begins. See Leader Resource 1 for a sample welcome letter. The reader for this module is a collection of short texts, available on the [UUA website](#). The link to this collection needs to be provided to participants well ahead of time.

**Shared Folder.** Many leaders are now creating a shared folder, using Dropbox or a similar tool, in which participants can access the handouts and reader before the module begins. After it ends, the final projects, photos taken during the module, and other shared resources can be stored there.

## Supplies

- Chalice
- Candle and matches, or electric candle
- Conventional or electric tea light candles, one for each participant
- Centering table and cloth
- Name tags
- Lined and unlined paper
- Newsprint, self-sticking if possible
- Sticky notes, 3x5-inch or larger
- Masking tape
- Pens and pencils
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Laptop or other computer, preferably with Internet access
- Computer, projector, and screen to display the module slides
- Module reader
- Module handouts
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey* for all participants
- Chime or bell
- “Fidget basket” with items such as pipe cleaners and play dough or modeling clay
- Optional: Three or more additional laptops or tablets
- Optional: Speakers for the laptop, or another way of playing music



## List of Handouts

### Session 1

- 1 Covenant
- 2 Goals and Schedule of Sessions
- 3 Introduction to Renaissance and RE Credentialing Programs
- 4 Preparation for Module Evaluation
- 5 Being a Vibes-Watcher
- 6 Reflection Questions for Session 1
- 7 A Wide and Generous Faith
- 8 Abbreviated Summary: Child Development
- 9 Abbreviated Summary: Adolescent Development
- 10 Examples for Facilitating UU Identity Development

### Session 2

- 11 Brief Overview of UU History Resources
- 12 Reflection Questions for Session 2

### Session 3

- 13 Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources
- 14 Elevator Speeches
- 15 Guidelines for Group Projects
- 16 Reflection Questions for Session 3

### Session 4

- 17 Growing Edges in Unitarian Universalism
- 18 Reflection Questions for Session 4

### Session 5

- 19 Living Our UU Identities and Values
- 20 Reflection Questions for Session 5
- 21 Selected Resources

## List of PowerPoint Slides

### Session 1

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Come, Come, Whoever You Are
- 3 Find Out More about This Hymn
- 4 Introductions
- 5 Covenant
- 6 Goals of the Module
- 7 A Wide and Generous Faith
- 8 Creating Your River Journeys
- 9 River Journey Questions
- 10 Some Developmental Theories
- 11 Ages and Stages
- 12 Faith Development
- 13 Session 1 Reflection Questions

### Session 2

- 14 Welcome
- 15 Growing a UU Identity: Saplings
- 16 Growing a UU Identity: Growing
- 17 Growing a UU Identity: Old Growth
- 18 Discussion Questions
- 19 Reflection on Congregations
- 20 Remember Age Does Not Necessarily Equal Old Growth
- 21 Learning Types and Their Needs
- 22 Discussion Questions
- 23 Is There One Unitarian Universalist Identity?
- 24 Is There One UU Identity?
- 25 Unitarians and Universalists
- 26 Themes in North American UU History
- 27 Questions for Sharing

- 28 Scenario Reflection Questions
- 29 Session 2 Reflection Questions

**Session 3**

- 30 Welcome
- 31 Principles Taboo
- 32 Taboo Words
- 33 Envisioning an Alternate Reality
- 34 Envisioning an Alternate Reality
- 35 First and Last Principles
- 36 Social Media and UU Identity Development
- 37 Social Media and UU Identity Development
- 38 Social Media and UU Identity Development
- 39 Social Media and UU Identity Development
- 40 Social Media and UU Identity Development
- 41 Social Media and UU Identity Development
- 42 Social Media and UU Identity Development
- 43 Social Media and UU Identity Development
- 44 Social Media and UU Identity Development
- 45 Six-Word Stories
- 46 Group Projects
- 47 Session 3 Reflection Questions

**Session 4**

- 48 Welcome
- 49 Historical Unitarians, Universalists, and UUs
- 50 An Important First Question
- 51 Guiding Questions
- 52 Guiding Questions
- 53 Guiding Questions
- 54 Guiding Questions
- 55 Scenario 1: Susan B. Anthony's Birthday
- 56 Scenario 2: Thomas Jefferson in History Class

- 57 Scenario 3: P.T. Barnum and the New Member
- 58 Scenario 4: Channing and the Church Elder
- 59 Discussion Questions
- 60 Growing Edges
- 61 Growing Edges
- 62 Growing Edges
- 63 Sai Baba quote
- 64 Group Projects
- 65 Session 4 Reflection Questions

### **Session 5**

- 66 Welcome
- 67 Group Project One
- 68 Group Project Two
- 69 Group Project Three
- 70 Group Project Four
- 71 Living Our UU Identities and Values
- 72 Parking Lot
- 73 Session 5 Reflection Questions
- 74 Song: Dear Friends

Note: If you decide to insert optional "[break slides](#)" into your PowerPoint," the number sequence of your Renaissance module slides will shift.

### **List of Leader Resources**

- 1 Sample Welcome Letter
- 2 Energizers
- 3 Sample River Journey
- 4 Scenarios for Honoring Unitarian and Universalist History
- 5 History Gone Awry Scenarios

## Leader Resource 1: Sample Welcome Letter

*To be sent either by the leaders or by the module organizer to participants as their registrations are received (so they have ample time to prepare).*

Dear UU Identity Module Participant,

We look forward to gathering at *[location]* for the UU Identity Renaissance Module on *[dates]*. This letter will let you know how to prepare, in order to make the most of our time together.

The reader for this module is The UU Identity Reader, a collection of readings available on the Renaissance module resources web page:

<http://www.uua.org/careers/re/renaissance/module-resources>. This web page also offers copies of the module's handouts. It will be very helpful to read through both the reader and the handouts before the module begins. **Please print or save your own copy of all handouts.** Also, come prepared to take notes and to journal; whether you use paper or something electronic is up to you.

*[If you have created a shared folder, put a copy of the reader and the handouts in the folder and provide the link.]*

If you have a musical instrument and would like to accompany our singing, please bring it! And feel free to bring resources related to UU identity to share with colleagues.

Please note that we will be starting promptly at *[time]* and will conclude each session at *[time]*. Attendance for the full fifteen hours of the module and completion of the module evaluation are necessary for credit.

With anticipation,  
UU Identity Module – Leader's Guide

[Co-leader name and email]

[Co-leader name and email]

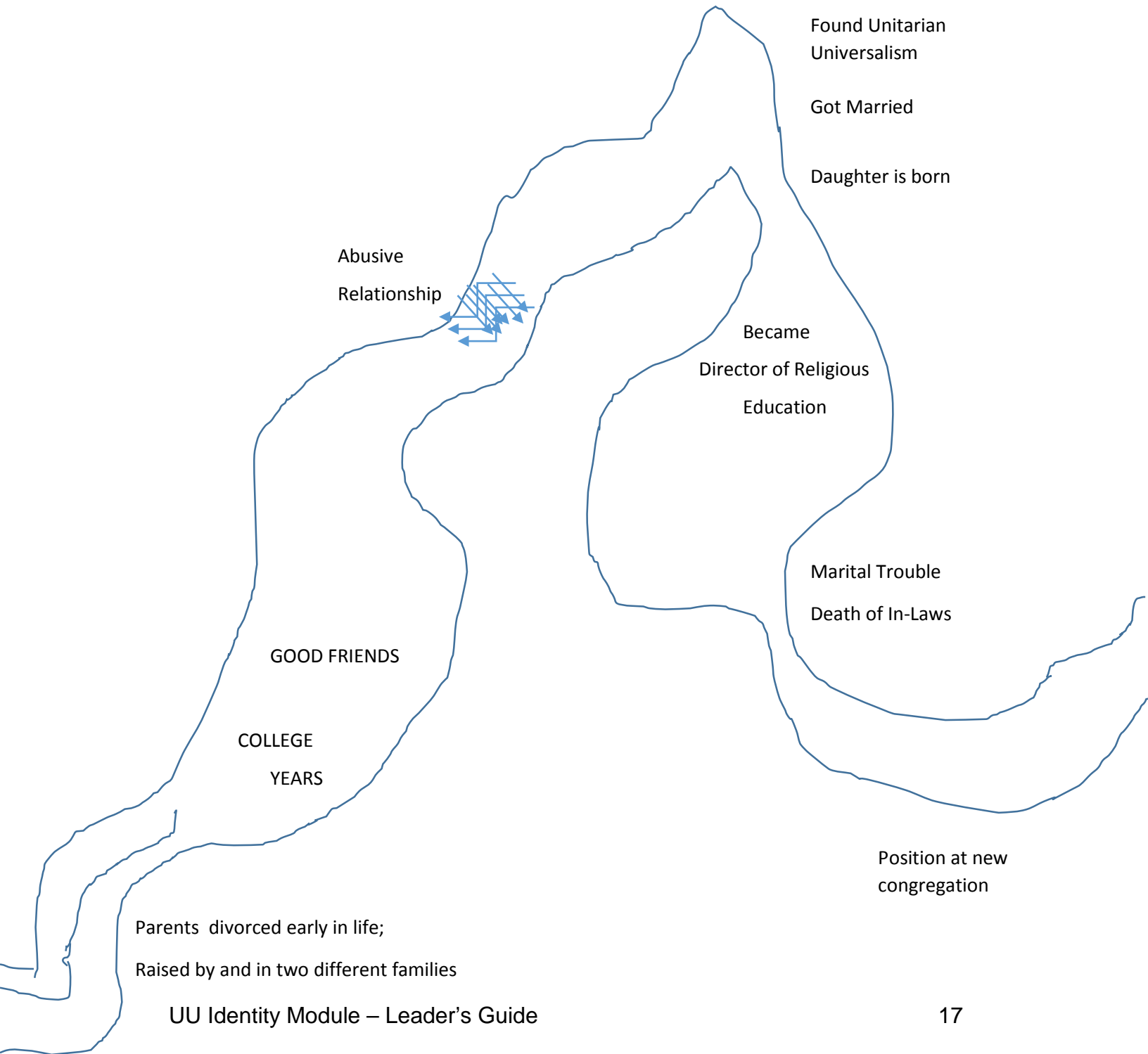
## Leader Resource 2: Energizers

<b>JUMPING JACKS</b>	<b>THE HOKEY POKEY</b>	<b>THE WAVE</b>
<b>TOE TOUCHES</b>	<b>DEEP BREATHING</b>	<b>TELL A JOKE</b>
<b>ARM CIRCLES</b>	<b>CREATIVE HANDSHAKING</b>	<b>LEAD A SONG</b>
<b>THE ITSY BITSY SPIDER</b>	<b>STRETCHING</b>	<b>CHORUS LINE</b>

<b>SHOULDER RUBS</b>	<b>LEAD A DANCE</b>	<b>YMCA IN BODY LANGUAGE</b>
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# Leader Resource 3: Sample River Journey



## **Leader Resource 4: Scenarios for Honoring Unitarian and Universalist History**

1. It has been suggested that the congregation honor both its Unitarian and Universalist heritage by adding a segment to the worship service that speaks about different people who shaped Unitarian or Universalist history. Who are some people you might highlight, and how would you incorporate this segment into a worship service?
2. Many adults in the congregation keep referring to themselves just as Unitarians and don't seem to know anything about the Universalist movement. How might you help them become more aware of Universalism?
3. Some parents are upset that the fourth-grade curriculum for this year is about the life and teachings of Jesus. They complain, "I don't bring my child to a UU church to learn about Christianity. I come here because it's not Christian!" How might you respond? How could you increase your congregation's understanding of Unitarian Universalism's Christian roots (and awareness of the many UU Christians who are in congregations today) while honoring the experiences of those in the congregation who have felt wounded by Christianity?

4. During a Coming of Age class, one of the youth asks, “Why do we call ourselves Universalists if lots of us don’t believe in an afterlife?” How would you facilitate a conversation with the class about the legacies of Universalist heritage? What aspects of Unitarian Universalism would you point to?
  
5. In a discussion of UU heritage during youth group one night, one of the youth says, “So, I get that it was important for people back then to be called Unitarians because they believed in one God. But I don’t believe in any God. Why should I call myself a Unitarian if I’m an atheist?” How would you facilitate a conversation with the group about the legacies of Unitarian heritage? What aspects of Unitarian Universalism would you point to?

## **Leader Resource 5: History Gone Awry Scenarios**

### **SCENARIO 1: SUSAN B. ANTHONY’S BIRTHDAY**

Early in February, your third- and fourth-grade Sunday School teacher comes to you with some concerns. According to her curriculum, she is supposed to celebrate Susan B. Anthony’s birthday with her class in a few weeks. The teacher recently researched Anthony and saw some comments of hers about African Americans that make her uncomfortable. She also learned that Anthony called herself a Quaker.

- Should she celebrate Anthony’s birthday and teach the class about her? Why or why not?
- How will you guide the teacher—and by extension the third and fourth graders—through the issue?
- How might this conversation influence the students’ and the teacher’s UU identity development?

### **SCENARIO 2: THOMAS JEFFERSON IN HISTORY CLASS**

One Sunday, a 14-year old in your congregation asks to talk to you. He has been in your community since he was a small child. He is concerned because, growing up in your Sunday school, he learned that Thomas Jefferson was a great thinker and a famous Unitarian. In history class this week, though, he learned that Jefferson owned slaves and had sexual relationships with some of his female slaves. He wants to know how Jefferson could have been a Unitarian and done those things.

- What would you say to this youth?
- What resources might you use to engage him on the topic?
- How might this conversation influence the youth’s UU identity development?

### **SCENARIO 3: P. T. BARNUM AND THE NEW MEMBER**

In your New Members class this past week, you displayed a PowerPoint slide with a list of famous Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists. P. T. Barnum was on the list. Tonight you have received a very distressed email from one of the people in your class. He expresses concern that you listed Barnum and asks if all UUs supported the exploitation of marginalized people and cruelty to animals that Barnum pioneered in the circus.

- How would you respond to this new member?
- What might you do differently next time in your presentation to new members?
- How might this conversation influence the new member's UU identity development?

### **SCENARIO 4: WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING AND THE CHURCH ELDER**

This morning a guest preacher came to your congregation. In her sermon, she referenced Channing's views on the inferiority of people of African descent. After the service, a long-time member of the church comes up to you and expresses concern that she treated Channing unfairly, because he was "just a man of his era."

- How would you respond to this member?
- What resources or approaches might be useful?
- How might this conversation affect the member's UU identity?

# SESSION 1: Identity as a Process

## Session-at-a-Glance

<b>Welcome</b>	5 minutes
<b>Introductions</b>	20 minutes
<b>Covenant</b>	10 minutes
<b>Orientation</b>	15 minutes
<b>Our Personal Journeys</b>	60 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
<b>Unitarian Universalist Identities across the Lifespan</b>	55 minutes
<b>Closing and Reflection</b>	10 minutes

**Total Time: 3 hours**

## Goals

This session will:

- Orient the group to the module and share a covenant
- Introduce participants to theories of faith and identity development
- Examine how our own unfolding identity journeys can help us understand the identity journey of others.

## Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Feel prepared 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

- Name tags
- Chalice
- Candle and matches, or electric candle
- Centering table and cloth
- Slide 1, Welcome
- Slide 2, Come, Come, Whoever You Are
- Slide 3, Find Out More about This Hymn

### Preparation

- Arrange chairs, chalice, and worship resources.
- Have Slide 1 already displayed when the session begins.
- Optional: Arrange to play recorded music or to have a participant lead the singing.

### Description

Welcome participants and invite them to put on name tags. When everyone has done so, display Slide 2, which has the words to “Come, Come, Whoever You Are,” Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite participants to rise in body or spirit to sing together.

Light the chalice, and follow up the song by 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 eight hundred years ago by the Islamic mystic Rumi, these words of welcome, 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](#), a book that describes the sources of the songs in *Singing the Living Tradition*, 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 in the poem and the song. Seeking and welcoming are the essence of this poem, and many believe them to be the essence of Unitarian Universalism.*

*In recent years, an accompaniment, or ostinato line, has been added to the song when it's sung as a round. The line, "though you've broken your vows a thousand times," is also from Rumi's poem, and it is repeated over and over as the song is sung. It speaks to the covenantal relationships we share with one another.*



Display Slide 3 and tell the participants that if they would like some more background on this hymn, *Between the Lines* 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*. If Internet access is available, click on the links to show each resource.

Invite participants to remember that while some participants in this module may be friends or acquaintances, others are unknown 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 (20 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Slide 4, Introductions

### **Preparation**

- Check that everyone is wearing a name tag.

### **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.

Display Slide 4 and ask all participants to introduce themselves. Leaders can model the sharing by going first, saying aloud their name, their congregation or

community, their role in it, and why it is important for them to be here. Remember that by going first, you set the tone and model an appropriate length of time and depth of disclosure.

## **Covenant (10 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, Covenant
- Slide 5, Covenant

### **Preparation**

- Review the activity's description, handout, and slide.

### **Description**

Ask participants to take out their copy of Handout 1, Covenant as you advance to Slide 5. Explain that the practice of establishing a covenant is essential for groups that come together for a limited time. Ask participants to review the covenant in Handout 1 to see if they would like to add anything to it; if so, record additions on a posted piece of newsprint.

End by reading the covenant responsively, including any additions on the newsprint. Do this by going around the circle; each person reads one line and the whole group reads the response.

## **Orientation (15 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Sticky notes for Parking Lot
- Basket for Energizers

- Fidget Basket
- Leader Resource 2, Energizers
- Handout 2, Goals and Schedule of Sessions
- Handout 3, Introduction to Renaissance and RE Credentialing Programs
- Handout 4, Preparation for Module Evaluation
- Handout 5, Being a Vibes-Watcher
- Handout 6, Reflection Questions for Session 1
- Slide 6, Goals of the Module

### **Preparation**

- Display Slide 6, Goals of the Module.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint titled “Parking Lot” and one titled “Volunteer Sign-ups for Openings and Closings.”
- Optional: Copy Leader Resource 2 on colored card stock, cut the squares apart, and place them in a basket. Ideally, a volunteer would do this before the module begins.
- Gather items for the Fidget Basket, such as pipe cleaners, modeling clay, etc.
- Optional: Create and post an information sheet describing housekeeping details.
- Optional: Create a shared folder, using a utility such as Dropbox, in which documents and photos can be stored.

### **Description**

Introduce the local coordinator and invite them to go over housekeeping details such as the location of restrooms, areas that are available during breaks, arrangements for home hospitality, Internet access, etc. If this information is posted, refer participants to the posted sign.

Introduce the module by sharing the overall goals shown on Slide 6 and on

Handout 2, which are:

- 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

Review the schedule of sessions, adding specific times for breaks and meals if desired.

Ask the participants about their Renaissance Module experience. Is this module their first? Fifth? Tenth? Referring to Handout 3, briefly describe the Renaissance program and the credentialing process. Then ask participants to look at Handout 4 as you explain that Renaissance Module evaluation forms, for participants as well as leaders, are online, and it is the responsibility of each participant to submit an evaluation within one week after the module concludes. Make it clear that credit for the module is dependent upon timely submission of the evaluation. The handout may be used to take notes as the module progresses.

Remind participants that feedback about the site, lodging, or food arrangements should be communicated to the module coordinator or the on-site contact. Tell participants that if they perceive a problem with facilitation or group dynamics, they should speak to one of the leaders as soon as possible so that the situation can be remedied.

Then ask for a volunteer to serve as a “vibes-watcher” for this session. Ask participants to refer to Handout 5, Being a Vibes-Watcher as you explain that this

person will mindfully consider the dynamics of the group as participants work together, converse, and otherwise interact. At the end of each session, the vibes-watcher will report on their perception of group dynamics and how members may have been included or excluded.

Review Handout 6, Reflection Questions for Session 1 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. Time is allotted at the end of each session for you to get started on the reflection questions and to address other issues or questions that come up for you during the session.*

Encourage participants to use their reflections for such things as:

- 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 expenses budget to good use)
- Their credentialing portfolio (to keep a record of learnings from the module and reflect how the module influenced their work)

Identify other resources for this module, including:

- The "Parking Lot" (sometimes referred to as the "Bike Rack"). Explain that this is where questions or issues not directly related to the session topic should be written. At the end of each session, the leaders will check the Parking Lot and decide whether, how, and when to address the questions.
- Resource tables. Invite people to peruse these tables in their free time and to add any brochures, programs, or other materials they have brought to share.
- Newsprint for volunteers to sign up to light or extinguish the chalice, offer chalice lighting words, and lead songs at the beginning or end of each session. Remind volunteers that, if they have Internet access, [Worship](#)

[Web](#) and the mobile app [Illuminations](#) are great resources for chalice lighting words and other texts.

- The Fidget Basket. Invite participants to use these items whenever they wish.
- The basket of Energizers. Invite participants to offer “energy breaks” as needed. They might lead a song or a short time of moving or stretching.
- Optional: A shared folder that you have created using a tool such as Dropbox.

## **Our Personal Journeys (60 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint and unlined paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Chime or bell
- Leader Resource 3, Sample River Journey
- Handout 7, A Wide and Generous Faith
- Slide 7, A Wide and Generous Faith quote
- Slide 8, Creating Your River Journeys
- Slide 9, River Journey Questions
- Optional: Soft music or sounds of flowing water, and a way to play them

### **Preparation**

- Practice reading (or ask a volunteer to 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.
- Display Slide 7.
- Create two sample river journeys (see Leader Resource 3) so participants have examples to work from. Consider depicting your lives as leaders or creating two fictional lives, one of a person who rejected their childhood

faith to find Unitarian Universalism as an adult, and one of a person who was raised in the Unitarian Universalist faith.

- If you wish to use music or the sound of water, you can stream or download some of these selections:
  - Peter Mayer's "[God Is a River](#)" music video
  - This "[Relaxing Stream](#)" sound from SoothingVideo.com
  - "[Relaxation Radio](#)" at Pandora.com

## **Description**

(25 minutes) Introduce this activity by reading aloud, or asking a volunteer to read, the quote on Handout 7, A Wide and Generous Faith (which is also on the slide).

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. Identifying 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 stories of growing as Unitarian Universalists, these timelines may not be linear, showing a straightforward progression from point A to point B. Instead, consider the metaphor of the river of life, with its twists and bends, its widening and narrowing according to the topography and geology of the land it flows through.*

Invite the participants to each take a piece of unlined paper or newsprint and some markers to depict their life journey as a river. Display Slide 8 and show the sample river journeys you created, so the participants can use them as models. Explain that instead of marking a timeline with events, they will draw how the water may have flowed in their river over time: uniformly and steadily, or like rapids churning over large stones, or calmly, in a wide, scarcely moving expanse.

Encourage them to place pictures, words, or symbols along the flow of their river which explore the life choices they have made and their understanding of identity, particularly as it pertains to their faith. Suggest that they include people, places, and events which influenced their journey of identity to the present, and that they indicate significant life events by using a different color or drawing a bend in the river. Let the participants know that they will be invited to share their rivers with the group, and remind them that it is all right to pass and that they should share only what is appropriate to reveal to this group. If anyone wants to depict something meaningful and important but doesn't want it to be apparent to others, they can use a symbol or color which only they will understand.

Allow a full 20 minutes for the participants to create their river journeys. You may wish to play music or water sounds during this time. If some participants would like to go to a more private place to create their rivers, let them know if any such place is available. Ring the chime to let all the participants (including any who have left the room) know when they have only five minutes left, and again when they have only one minute left.

When time is up, ring the chime to regather the participants, remind them that they will share their river journeys with the group, and add that there will be opportunities to add to them if they feel that the project is not complete. Remind them that they should feel comfortable in their sharing and that they need not disclose any information which is uncomfortable or too personal. Remind everyone to respectfully listen to each other's sharing.

(20 minutes) Display Slide 9. Have the participants count off by threes or fours (depending upon their total number) to form small groups. Encourage them to share their river journeys in their small groups as they are comfortable, and to use these questions as discussion starters:



- What event(s) or life choices (if any) set you on the path toward Unitarian Universalism (or your faith)?
- 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.) encourage you to do? Did you make any changes in your life on the basis of this realization?

(15 minutes) Gather the group together as a whole. Invite individuals to share some similarities they noted within their group or any stories they found especially notable.

## **Break (5 minutes)**

## **Unitarian Universalist Identities across the Lifespan (55 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Participants' river journeys from the previous activity
- Markers or pens
- Chime or bell
- Handout 8, Abbreviated Summary: Child Development
- Handout 9, Abbreviated Summary: Adolescent Development
- Handout 10, Examples for Facilitating UU Identity Development
- Slide 10, Some Developmental Theories
- Slide 11, Ages and Stages
- Slide 12, Faith Development

## Preparation

- Review “Overview of Developmental Theories” in the reader.
- Label six sheets of newsprint with the six developmental stages and post them around the meeting space.
- Optional: List the corresponding suggestion from Handout 10 with each stage.

## Description

(5 minutes) After gathering the group back together, say something like:

*People’s religious education needs vary according to a number of factors, but we want to home in on two that play a large role: age and level of faith development. We’ll briefly review the information from the reader pertaining to religious identity development.*

Display Slide 10 and say something like:

*The four developmental theories in the reader are 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, which draw on Erikson, Kohlberg, and Fowler in addition to her own experience as a developmental psychologist and former staff member in the UUA’s Department of Faith Development.*

*Like any framework, theories of development can be biased. Critics have claimed that Kohlberg’s methodology was flawed, and that his use of only males in his samples skewed his understanding of morality. His model has also been criticized for being strongly Western and not accounting for philosophical traditions from other cultures. Fowler’s theory of the stages of faith development is also limited in some ways. However, these frameworks can still be useful tools for reflection in the work of religious identity development.*

*Tracey Hurd's work integrates aspects of the previous three frameworks of development. She particularly focuses on the development of children and adolescents, which she divides into six stages. Within each stage, she considers physical, cognitive and intellectual, social and affective, moral, and spiritual and faith development.*

(35 minutes) Ask participants to look at Handouts 8 and 9, which provide a useful summary of these six stages of development. Explain to participants that they will break into six groups and do a “moving brainstorm” to share ideas about curricula, programs, rituals, and other activities that would be appropriate for facilitating UU identity development at each stage. Show Slide 11, give each group some markers, and have each group start at one of the posted sheets of newsprint listing the stages of development. Tell them that they will have about five minutes per stage to come up with ideas, write them on the newsprint, and briefly discuss how each of their suggestions fits the stage of development they are considering. Tell participants that Handout 10 provides some suggestions to get them started.

Give groups five minutes per stage, ringing the chime to alert them when it is time to move to the next one. When they have visited all six stages, gather the larger group back together. Ask for a volunteer to take a photo of the ideas generated for each stage and share the photos with the group via email (or the shared folder).

(5 minutes) Once the group has regathered, show Slide 12 and 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 and then share your thoughts in small groups with those nearby:*

- *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?*
- *How might our heritage, culture, and lived experiences expand our faith development? In particular, think about your own faith development. How have heritage, culture, and lived experiences worked to build your religious identity?*

(10 minutes) Distribute markers and pens, and ensure that participants have their river journeys. Say something like:

*With these thoughts in mind, we'll now add to our river journeys. 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 experiences? Take about eight minutes to add to your timeline, noting the things that are bubbling to the surface as we discuss identity development.*

## **Closing and Reflection (10 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chime or bell
- Slide 13, Session 1 Reflection Questions
- Handout 6, Reflection Questions for Session 1

### **Description**

Display Slide 13, refer participants to Handout 6, and ring the chime three times. After each chime, pause and allow the sound to slowly fade; then read one of the reflection questions. Pause another moment before ringing the chime again.

Invite the group to take a few minutes to reflect privately on this session of the module, and if they wish, jot down their thoughts on the Preparation for Module Evaluation or Reflection Questions handouts.

Ring the chime once again to signal the end of time for personal reflection. Ask the vibes-watcher to give a one-minute report on group dynamics in this session.

Remind the group of important information for the next session, such as the start time and what material they should review in the reader. For Session 2, this is “Learning Types and Their Needs” and “Themes in North American UU History.”

Thank everyone for their participation and share these closing words from UU minister Barbara Pescan, part of which is given as 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 the horizons 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.*

Extinguish the chalice.

# SESSION 2: Developing Unitarian Universalist Identities

## Session-at-a-Glance

Opening	5 minutes
Growing a Unitarian Universalist Identity	50 minutes
Learning Types and Their Needs	15 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Is There One Unitarian Universalist Identity?	30 minutes
Honoring Both Universalist and Unitarian Roots of Identity	60 minutes
Closing and Reflection	10 minutes

**Total Time: 3 hours**

## Goals

This session will:

- Explore how a distinct Unitarian Universalist identity is formed, which we share despite our different theological beliefs
- Examine how a distinct Unitarian Universalist identity can manifest itself in a multitude of ways
- Present the idea that our Principles and Sources help to shape, and form the core of, our various Unitarian Universalist identities.

## **Learning Objectives**

Participants will:

- Explore identity growth through the metaphor of trees
- Discover that there is more than one way to develop a UU identity
- 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
- Recognize how honoring both parts of our heritage (both Unitarian and Universalist) shapes identity formation.

## **Opening (5 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chalice
- Candle and matches, or electric candle
- Centering table and cloth
- Clear glass vase or bowl filled with water
- Selection of smooth stones
- Slide 14, Welcome

### **Preparation**

- Arrange chairs, chalice, and resources on UU identity.
- If someone has volunteered to read opening words, remind that person to prepare them. If no one has volunteered, one of the module leaders may prepare and offer the opening words.

### **Description**

Display Slide 14 and invite the person who has volunteered to read the opening words to come forward and read their selection as you light the chalice.

Ask the participants to come forward, one at a time, to drop a stone into the bowl of water, and as they do so, to share something they do which identifies them as a Unitarian Universalist (or as a person of faith). Encourage them to name something other than attending worship services, attending this module, or doing UU professional work of any kind. Model the sharing by going first, and remind participants that it is all right to pass.

When the last person has shared, thank everyone for naming some of the ways they reveal their UU identity (or their faith). Explain that during today's session, they will be exploring the many different ways that people develop Unitarian Universalist identities.

Welcome everyone back to your time together and go over any additional housekeeping details that may be necessary. Ask a volunteer to serve as vibes-watcher for this session.

## **Growing a Unitarian Universalist Identity (50 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Unlined paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Slides 15-17, Growing a UU Identity
- Slide 18, Discussion Questions
- Slide 19, Reflection on Congregations

### **Preparation**

- Review the activity's description and slides.
- Practice reading the guided imagery so you are comfortable with the words and the flow of the sentences, and can pace it appropriately.



## Description

Introduce this activity by saying something like:

*The growth of people'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 our lives. Like a tree, our UU identity is always growing, branching out, putting down deeper roots.*

Display Slide 15 and say something like:

*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 of the congregation or have been a member for more than 20 years. They may find it difficult to describe themselves as a religious person if they need to use theological language to do so.*

Display Slide 16 and say something like:

*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.*

Display Slide 17 and say something like:

*A person who is accepting of all these stages of growth, who recognizes that the boundaries of each are contained in the others, 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 some guided imagery.*

Invite participants to settle themselves in a comfortable sitting position. (If there is room, and some prefer to lie on their backs on the floor, you may invite them to do so.) 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 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)... Look 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, feeling your roots going into the ground...what are those roots*

*like?... Is there one long taproot, or do the roots divide?... 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...do they bear fruit or flowers? Are there birds or animals in the branches?...*

Allow a few minutes of silence for exploration. Then continue:

*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...*

To end the guided imagery, ask the participants to remain silent, but, as they are ready, to take a piece of unlined paper and one or more markers, crayons, or colored pencils and draw the tree they have just envisioned.

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

Let the participants know they will have ten minutes for this activity and that you will ring the chime when there is one minute left and then again when time is up.

When time is up, invite participants to pair up and share their drawings with each other. Display Slide 18 and offer the following questions as a guide for discussion:

*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 eight minutes, ask each pair to join another pair to reflect together on the tree metaphor as it applies to their congregations. Display Slide 19 and offer the following questions as a guide:

*Who are three people in your congregation whom you would identify as a sapling, a growing tree, and an old-growth tree? Does thinking about them in this way help you to see UU identity development 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 ten minutes, ask representatives from the groups of four to report to the whole group some of their answers to the last three questions above:

*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 be. In terms of 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 their Unitarian Universalist identity may not survive the transition if 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 resilience. But there is a serious danger that they may be unwilling to allow for change or to make room for newer members (in the terms of our metaphor, they may not share the light with or nurture the younger trees).
- How is the mix in your congregation’s “forest”? How does that affect congregational life?

## **Learning Types and Their Needs (15 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Slide 20, Remember Age Does Not Necessarily Equal Old Growth
- Slide 21, Learning Types and Their Needs
- Slide 22, Discussion Questions

### **Preparation**

- Review “Learning Types and Their Needs” in the reader.

### **Description**

Display Slide 20. Remind the participants that in our tree metaphor, being an old-growth tree does not necessarily mean that a person is in fact old. Then ask the participants to think about the youth in their congregation. Where do they think they would fall in our metaphorical forest?

Display Slide 21. Briefly review the material in the reader by explaining that Unitarian Universalist religious educator Dan Harper has identified several learning types and their needs, which are shown on Slide 8. These types, or 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 embeddedness within a given religious community. Within the context of a living religious community, developmental stage alone is an insufficient description of a learner.*

Harper believes that, as new learners progress and become socialized in a UU community, they face a number of discrete educational tasks. Eventually, they may develop into deep learners.

Display Slide 22 and invite participants to get together with two other people they haven't yet had a chance to be in a group with and consider these questions:

*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 (10 minutes)**

## **Is There One Unitarian Universalist Identity? (30 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Sticky notes
- Chime or bell
- Slides 23-24, Is There One Unitarian Universalist Identity?

### **Preparation**

- Post two pieces of newsprint on the wall, somewhat apart from each other, or clear two spaces on the wall where sticky notes can be posted.
- Display Slide 23.

### **Description**

Invite the participants to say “Yes, I am!” or “Yes, I do!” or to raise their hands in response to each statement that describes them. Read aloud the following statements:

You are a religious professional.

You are a religious educator.

You are a minister or student minister.

You are a membership professional.

You are a lay leader.

You belong to a church.

You belong to a congregation.

You are part of a fellowship.

You work with a minister.

You work with an administrator.

You work with a religious educator.  
You are from the [region you are holding the module in] region.  
You've been in your role for five years or longer.  
You're in your first year of serving the congregation in this role.  
You work full-time...  
...or half-time...  
...or quarter-time.  
You were raised as a Unitarian Universalist.  
You claim a Unitarian Universalist identity.

Finish this part of the activity by naming some of the diversity in the group, saying something like:

*So many of us claim a Unitarian Universalist identity. Yet, underlying that identity, there is much diversity. Many of us are religious professionals, but we serve our congregations in different ways. Some of us work with other staff, and some of us work alone.*

Advance to Slide 24 and then read this quote or paraphrase it:

*Just like there is no ONE WAY to be a religious professional or serve a Unitarian Universalist congregation, there is no ONE WAY to be a Unitarian Universalist.*

Divide participants into two groups for this activity, and have each person take some sticky notes and some markers or pens. Ask them to think about what core traits might identify someone as Unitarian Universalist. If they were explaining Unitarian Universalism to someone unfamiliar with it, what key elements of Unitarian Universalist faith or identity would they describe? Have each group write the answers they generate on sticky notes and post them on a piece of newsprint or at a designated spot on the wall. Allow five minutes for this part of the activity, then ring the chime to signal that time is up.



Tell the participants to look at the sticky notes. Invite a few volunteers from each group to read some of them aloud. Then instruct the groups to switch places. Invite each group to organize the sticky notes which were posted by the other, sorting them into core qualities (those that are shared by most or all Unitarian Universalists) and tangential qualities (those that are shared by a minority of Unitarian Universalists.) Core qualities should be placed near the center and tangential qualities further out.

Allow a full ten minutes for the groups to discuss and agree upon the placement of the sticky notes. Tell them that if they believe some important qualities are missing, they can add them on additional sticky notes.

Ring the chime when time is up. Then ask the groups to report on how and why they organized the qualities on the sticky notes.

- Did the group agree that certain qualities were essential to being Unitarian Universalist? Why or why not?
- Did the group disagree over where to place any of the sticky notes? Why or why not?
- Did the group feel there were any important qualities missing from the notes they started with? Did they add any? What were they?

When both groups have reported, invite all participants to comment on the process, any areas of consensus, and any disagreements. Ask for a volunteer to take photos of the two sets of sticky notes and email them to the group (or put them in the shared folder).

# Honoring Both Unitarian and Universalist Roots of Identity (60 minutes)

## Materials

- Leader Resource 4, Scenarios for Honoring Unitarian and Universalist History
- Handout 11, Brief Overview of UU History Resources
- Slide 25, Unitarians and Universalists
- Slide 26, Themes in North American UU History
- Slide 27, Questions for Sharing
- Slide 28, Scenario Reflection Questions

## Preparation

- Display Slide 25.
- Cut apart the scenarios in Leader Resource 4.
- Review “Themes in North American UU History” in the reader.

## Description

(20 minutes) This activity provides an opportunity for participants to engage with the ways in which aspects of historical Unitarianism and Universalism affect 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 heritages. 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 are shaping our UU identity today.*

Show Slide 26 and refer participants to “Themes in North American UU History” in the reader; mention that the text comes from the adult Tapestry of Faith program [The New UU](#). Ask:

- What did you read in the text that inspired you?
- What in it challenged you?
- What do you want to know more about?

Move to Slide 27 and review each of the four themes. Ask participants to share how each one is visible (or is not) in their congregation or community today:

- Freedom of thought, or noncreedalism
  - 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?

Refer participants to Handout 11 and remind them that several adult Tapestry of Faith programs explore UU history. They may want to explore these further.

Have participants divide into five small groups, joining others with whom they have not been in a small group before. Advance to Slide 28 and say something like:

*In order to practice how we value both of these strains of our heritage, we're going to work through some scenarios in small groups. Each group*

*will get a slip of paper with a scenario. Read your scenario and discuss what each of you would do in your specific UU context. Then we'll share some highlights of our conversations. You can use any or all of the questions on the slide to guide your conversation.*

Pass out one scenario to each group. After the groups have discussed them, bring everyone 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 affect who Unitarian Universalists are today. Going forward, we hope that we will all be increasingly aware of and amazed by the rich conversations that can happen when we engage with both branches of this Unitarian Universalist heritage.*

## **Closing and Reflection (10 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chime or bell
- Handout 12, Reflection Questions for Session 2
- Slide 29, Session 2 Reflection Questions

### **Preparation**

- If someone has volunteered to do the closing reading for this session, remind them to prepare it; the text is below. If no one has volunteered, one of the module leaders may read it.

### **Description**

Display Slide 29, refer participants to Handout 12, and ring the chime three times. After each chime, pause and allow the sound to slowly fade; then read one

of the reflection questions. Pause another moment before ringing the chime again.

Invite the group to take a few minutes to reflect privately on this session of the module, and if they wish, jot down their thoughts on the Preparation for Module Evaluation or Reflection Questions handouts.

Ring the chime once again to signal the end of time for personal reflection. Ask the vibes-watcher to give a brief report on group dynamics in this session.

Remind the group of important information for the next session, such as the start time and what material they should review in the reader. For Session 3, this is “A Free and Responsible Search: The Story,” “First and Last Principles,” and “Six-Word Stories of Faith.”

Thank the participants for their participation and share, or have the person who volunteered share, these closing words from religious educator the Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Strong, which can be found on [Worship Web](#):

*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.*

Extinguish the chalice.

# **SESSION 3: Unitarian Universalist Identities, Then and Now**

## **Session-at-a-Glance**

<b>Opening</b>	5 minutes
<b>How the Principles and Sources Became Part of UU Identity</b>	35 minutes
<b>UU Principles and Sources in UU Identity Formation</b>	40 minutes
<b>Break</b>	10 minutes
<b>Social Media and UU Identity Development</b>	30 minutes
<b>Six-Word Stories</b>	40 minutes
<b>Group Project and Teams</b>	10 minutes
<b>Closing and Reflection</b>	10 minutes

**Total Time: 3 hours**

## **Goals**

This session will:

- Explore how the process of developing a Unitarian Universalist identity has changed over the years and continues to evolve
- Consider how our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources became an essential part of our collective identity

- Explore how social media can be an effective tool for fostering Unitarian Universalist identity across the lifespan.

## **Learning Objectives**

Participants will:

- Understand how the Principles became integral to a Unitarian Universalist identity
- Learn to use the Principles as a tool for forming Unitarian Universalist identity
- Become familiar with ways in which social media can be used for religious identity formation.

## **Opening (5 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chalice
- Candle and matches, or electric candle
- Centering table and cloth
- Slide 30, Welcome

### **Preparation**

- If someone has volunteered to read opening words, remind that person to prepare them. If no one has volunteered, one of the module leaders may prepare and offer the opening words.

### **Description**

Display Slide 30 and invite the person who has volunteered to read the opening words to come forward and read their selection as you light the chalice.

Ask the participants to go around the circle and complete the sentence “As a person of faith, I used to \_\_\_\_\_, but now I \_\_\_\_\_.” One of the



leaders should go first to provide a model. Remind participants that they are free to pass.

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

Welcome everyone back to your time together and go over any additional housekeeping details that may be necessary. Ask a volunteer to serve as vibes-watcher for this session.

## **How the Principles and Sources Became Part of UU Identity (35 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Pens and pencils
- Writing paper
- Handout 13, Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources
- Handout 14, Elevator Speeches
- Slide 31, Principles Taboo
- Slide 32, Taboo Words
- Slides 33-34, Envisioning an Alternate Reality

### **Preparation**

- Review the activity's description, handouts, and slides.
- Review "A Free and Responsible Search: The Story" in the reader.

## Description

(15 minutes) Display Slide 31. Have participants divide into pairs and look at Handout 13, Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources, noticing that it includes both the adult version of the principles and sources and a version in children’s language. It also includes the “Rainbow Principles,” a version used by many congregations in religious education settings that keys each principle to one of the colors of the rainbow. Referring to the first page of Handout 13, say something like:

*The seven principles are something that member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association have agreed, or covenanted, to affirm and promote. Notice that it is congregations that have made this covenant, not 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. Each of you will be given 30 seconds to describe Unitarian Universalism to your partner without using any of the central words in the Principles. Your partner can hold up a hand or make a noise if you use any of these taboo words.*

Ask the pairs to choose who will go first, and have that person turn their back to the slide. Wait until the pairs are ready before displaying the “taboo words” on Slide 32 and inviting the first person to begin. When time is up, invite the partners to change places and repeat the exercise.

When the second round is finished, call the group back together. Say something like:

*Excellent work! Having to work within such strict boundaries can be difficult, but I heard some great descriptions of Unitarian Universalism. How was that for you?*

Lead participants in a brief discussion of what they found most difficult to express and what was easiest to express in the exercise.

Refer participants to Handout 14, Elevator Speeches. This UUA pamphlet offers some brief comments from Unitarian Universalists. Take a minute or two to review the handout, and when discussion has wrapped up, say something like:

*The Principles 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 Rev. Frances Manly's "A Free and Responsible Search: The Story" in the reader.*

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

After participants have finished sharing, show Slide 33, and 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, if the UUA had decided to get rid of unified principles altogether.*

Display Slide 34, and ask participants to take a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil. Say something like:

*Let's take about five minutes to answer these questions by yourself in writing—not necessarily in organized paragraphs, but in some kind of silent individual reflection.*

Allow five minutes for individual reflection. If people seem to be finishing early, feel free to cut the time a bit short. Then invite participants to form groups of three or four and 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. Now we'll be exploring more deeply how the Principles play a role in identity development.*

## **UU Principles and Sources in UU Identity Formation (40 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Slide 35, First and Last Principles

### **Preparation**

- Review “First and Last Principles” in the reader.

### **Description**

Divide the participants into four groups. Display Slide 6 and invite the participants to discuss its questions within their small groups for ten 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 are the relationships between the Sources and the Principles?

Next, ask the groups to consider how they might visually depict the relationships among the Principles and the relationship between the Principles and the Sources. Allow 15 minutes for the groups to create drawings or symbols of these relationships, then have each group briefly present their creations to the others. Post the creations as they are presented, so they can be used as reference

points for the next activity. Ask for a volunteer to take pictures and share them with the group via email (or the shared folder).

## **Break (10 minutes)**

## **Social Media and UU Identity Development (30 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Slides 36-44, Social Media and UU Identity Development

### **Preparation**

- Review the activity's description and slides.

### **Description**

Display Slide 36 and say something like:

*We're going to look at the relationship between social media and faith identity development. Rather than just 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. 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 down the names of social media platforms that participants offer on a posted piece of newsprint, and note one or two keywords from their description. For your example, you might write: “Instagram—image sharing.”

Allow three or four minutes for this, and then advance to Slide 8 to display the question “How is social media developing UU identity already?” Say something like:

*We’re going to look at three major ways that social media is already shaping UU identity, and examples of platforms or websites that function in that way.*

Advance through Slides 37-44, having participants read each new function of social media and each example out loud. When you reach Slide 15, which asks, “How do you see social media influencing religious identity development?” say something like:

*These are three ways that social media is shaping UU identity development. Are there others?*

Add any suggestions to the newsprint. Ask for a volunteer to take a picture of the list and email it to participants (or put it in the shared folder).

## **Six-Word Stories (40 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Sticky notes
- Pens or pencils
- River journeys from Session 1
- Slide 45, Six-Word Stories

## Preparation

- Post a blank piece of newsprint, or clear a place on the wall where sticky notes can be posted.
- Review “Six-Word Stories of Faith” in the reader.

## Description

(25 minutes) Display Slide 45. Introduce the next activity by asking a volunteer to summarize 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 ten minutes to create several six-word stories of faith showing the evolution of their UU (or other faith) identity over time. When they are done, regather the group and ask for volunteers to share their six-word stories of faith, allowing about 15 minutes in all for sharing. Distribute sticky notes and pens or pencils, and ask participants to write their most current six-word story of faith on a note and, as they are willing, post these notes on a piece of newsprint or in a designated area of the meeting space.

(15 minutes) Ask participants to form small groups and give each group a piece of newsprint. Ask the groups to brainstorm ways they might use the six-word story of faith exercise in their own settings, and to have a volunteer in each group write down ideas. After five minutes, regather the larger group and ask for a volunteer from each group to briefly share their group’s ideas. Post the pieces of newsprint and ask for a volunteer to take pictures and share them with the group via email (or the shared folder).

## **Group Project and Teams (10 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Handout 15, Guidelines for Group Project
- Slide 46, Group Projects

### **Preparation**

- Decide how you will split participants into final project groups. Each group should have three or four members, depending on the number of participants. You might allow participants to form their own groups, or have them form random groups by counting off by threes or fours. You might also choose their groups for them, perhaps putting people together who are in similar professional positions or come from similar congregations. Choose whatever method of grouping you think will be most helpful to participants.

### **Description**

Divide participants into the groups you decided on. Display Slide 46 and ask them to look at Handout 15, Guidelines for Group Projects. Explain that each group will be completing a project and presenting it in the closing session of the module. The projects will involve a practical application, in a UU congregation or community, of some of what they have learned. Each group may choose one of the four projects now, or its members may come up with one of their own, if they agree on it and the module leaders approve it. Each group's project must be determined before the start of Session 4.

Tell participants that they will have time in the next session to work on their project, and encourage them to create presentations that are creative and that engage all members of the group with whom they are working—so that all partners' points of view are heard.



Answer any questions that participants have about the group projects.

## **Closing and Reflection (10 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chime or bell
- Handout 16, Reflection Questions for Session 3
- Slide 47, Session 3 Reflection Questions

### **Preparation**

- If someone has volunteered to do a closing reading for this session, remind them to prepare it; the text is below. If no one has volunteered, one of the module leaders may read it.

### **Description**

Display Slide 47, refer participants to Handout 16, and ring the chime three times. After each chime, pause and allow the sound to slowly fade; then read one of the reflection questions. Pause another moment before ringing the chime again.

Invite the group to take a few minutes to reflect privately on this session of the module, and if they wish, jot down their thoughts on the Preparation for Module Evaluation or Reflection Questions handouts.

Ring the chime once again to signal the end of time for personal reflection. Ask the vibes-watcher to give a brief report on group dynamics in this session.

Remind the group of important information for the next session, such as the start time and what material they should review in the reader. For Session 4, this is “The Thomas Jefferson Ball: Reflections and Reconciliation.”

Share, or have the person who volunteered share, these closing words by Ma Theresa Gustilo Gallardo, which can be found on [Worship Web](#):

*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.*

Extinguish the chalice.

# SESSION 4: The Complexity of Unitarian Universalist Identity

## Session-at-a-Glance

<b>Opening</b>	5 minutes
<b>Best Practices for Honoring UU Ancestors</b>	45 minutes
<b>Exploring Our Growing Edges</b>	35 minutes
<b>Break</b>	10 minutes
<b>Group Projects</b>	75 minutes
<b>Closing and Reflection</b>	10 minutes

**Total Time: 3 hours**

## Goals

This session will:

- Explore the tendency to lift up famous UUs from history and how this tendency complicates the development of identity over the lifespan
- Consider best practices for honoring historical figures from our Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist heritages
- Explore the growing edges of Unitarian Universalism today and how we are defining our Unitarian Universalist identity for 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, and Unitarian Universalists according to today's standards
- Consider the ways we are defining our Unitarian Universalist identity currently and what they mean for the future.

## Opening (5 minutes)

### Materials

- Chalice
- Candle and matches, or electric candle
- Centering table and cloth
- Slide 48, Welcome

### Preparation

- If someone has volunteered to read opening words, remind that person to prepare them. If no one has volunteered, one of the module leaders may prepare and offer the opening words.

### Description

Display Slide 48 and invite the person who has volunteered to read the opening words to come forward and read their selection as you light the chalice.

Invite participants to complete the sentence "History is \_\_\_\_\_." You might go around the room or invite participants to share their thoughts popcorn-style.

When the last person has shared, thank everyone for naming some of the many ways that we approach history. Share with the participants that in this session they will be exploring the complexities of UU identity, including how UUs treat Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist history, as well as some complex scenarios in our faith communities today.

Welcome everyone back to your time together and go over any additional housekeeping details that may be necessary. Ask a volunteer to serve as vibes-watcher for this session.

## **Best Practices for Honoring UU Ancestors (45 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- Chime or bell
- Leader Resource 5, History Gone Awry Scenarios
- Slide 49, Historical Unitarians, Universalists, and UUs
- Slide 50, An Important First Question
- Slides 51-54, Guiding Questions
- Slide 55, Scenario 1: Susan B. Anthony's Birthday
- Slide 56, Scenario 2: Thomas Jefferson in History Class
- Slide 57, Scenario 3: P. T. Barnum and the New Member
- Slide 58, Scenario 4: Channing and the Church Elder
- Slide 59, Discussion Questions

### **Preparation**

- Review "The Thomas Jefferson Ball: Reflections and Reconciliation" in the reader.

- Cut Leader Resource 5 into individual slips to be handed out to groups. Make two of each scenario if you have a large group.

## **Description**

Display Slide 49 and say something like:

*We're going to take some time to explore how the ways we relate to historical Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists affect UU identity today. First, let's take a look at this screen grab from the UUA's website. What do you notice about this gallery of historical Unitarians and Universalists?*

After participants offer observations, say something like:

*Not everybody in our congregations today might see themselves directly reflected in this gallery of historical Unitarians and Universalists. That doesn't mean that we should not examine our history. It does mean that we need to think about how to approach it in a way that nurtures the identity of all contemporary UUs.*

Advance to Slide 50 and distribute writing paper and pens or pencils. Explain that the first step in engaging with historical individuals is to understand why we engage with them in the first place. Encourage participants to jot down ideas about why we do so, and give them 30 seconds to a minute of silence in which to think and write. Then ask them to share their ideas, and record their responses on a posted piece of newsprint. After all who would like to have shared, give participants a moment to look over the responses, or have a participant read them aloud.

Ask participants if they have any questions or concerns about the responses that have been shared, and facilitate a discussion of these. Encourage everyone to use "I" statements and to examine what was said, without challenging or

disparaging the intentions or integrity of the person who said it. Record any challenges to and clarifications of the original responses on the newsprint.

After seven to ten 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.*

Display Slides 51-54, having a participant read each new bulleted question aloud as each new slide is displayed. After all four questions have been displayed and read, allow a few minutes for participants to ask any clarifying questions they may have about the guiding questions. Leave Slide 7 on display.

Next, tell participants that they are going to take scenarios of UU communities trying to engage with historical Unitarians, Universalists, or UUs. Split participants into groups of three or four and pass out a scenario from Leader Resource 5 to each group. Tell participants that they should discuss the scenario and work through its discussion questions. Remind them to use the guiding questions on the slide to help them evaluate the situation, and if they need more information they can use a laptop or mobile device to search briefly online. Tell participants that they will not be expected to have a polished plan at the end of their ten-minute discussion, but they will briefly report back to the group about their conversation.

After ten minutes, ring the chime to bring participants back together. Display Slides 55-58 in turn, asking the group that discussed each scenario to briefly describe their discussion, especially anything that surprised or was new to them. Allow about two minutes for each group. When each group has spoken, say something like:

*Thank you for your conversation on this difficult topic. There is no simple solution or quick fix for the difficulties inherent in engaging with history. We're going to end our time on this topic by looking at a piece of more recent UU history.*

Then ask participants to open their readers to "The Thomas Jefferson Ball: Reflections and Reconciliation." Ask a participant to give a brief summary of the reading. Then say something like:

*This reading is 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. I'll put some discussion questions up on the projector, and you'll have about seven minutes to do some written reflection. When the chime sounds, I invite you to turn to a neighbor and share some of your reflections, as you are comfortable.*

Display Slide 59 and allow seven minutes for reflection and writing. When time is up, ring the chime and invite participants to turn and share with a neighbor for three minutes. Ring the chime again when time is up. 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 (35 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Four or more laptop computers or tablets with Internet access; or one computer with Internet access, newsprint, and markers
- Handout 17, Growing Edges in Unitarian Universalism
- Slides 60-62, Growing Edges
- Slide 63, Sai Baba quote



## Preparation

- Update or adapt Handout 17 as necessary.
- Display the [UUA home page](#) on one of the laptop computers.
- On the other laptops or tablets, open a word cloud generating website such as [Wordle](#) or [Tagul](#). (Note that Tagul requires registering for an account, and Wordle requires Java to be activated in the browser. If possible, verify in advance that all devices can run the chosen website, or be prepared to offer support or to allow time for participants to create accounts.) If multiple devices are not available, or if participants are not comfortable with using them, set up newsprint and markers.
- Read [this blog post](#) by Stephen Hart and think about his comments on the apparent contradictions in the quote from Sai Baba that will close this activity.

## Description

Introduce this section by displaying Slide 60 and 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 not just to 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.*

Divide the participants into as many groups as you have computers or tablets able to create word clouds (or give each group newsprint and markers). Explain that the “growing edges” of Unitarian Universalism include the issues, initiatives, and programs that are shaping its present and future. Encourage groups to come up with words, terms, and phrases that represent these growing edges, by brainstorming and consulting the UUA website and Handout 17. They should

enter these terms into the word cloud generator, or draw a cloud or mural of them if they do not have Internet access.

Allow ten minutes for this brainstorming activity. Then ask the groups to generate their word clouds or finish their drawings, and invite them to share their work with the other groups. If the word clouds include the names of programs or initiatives that some participants are unfamiliar with, take a few minutes to explain them.

Ask the participants to look at the UUA's programs, movements, and initiatives which represent or address our current growing edges. Display Slide 61 and invite reflection on the questions it asks:

*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?*

Advance to Slide 62. Divide the participants into groups of three, different from the earlier groupings. Invite them to look at the word clouds and consider the questions on the slide:

*What do these programs, movements, or 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 activity, regather everyone and ask if any participants would like to share some of their group's conversation. Point out any

common themes, and then display Slide 63 as you share this quote by Sai Baba (an Indian guru, spiritual leader, and philanthropist) in closing:

*It is your thoughts and acts of the moment that create your future. The outline of your future path already exists, for you created its pattern by your past.*

## **Break (10 minutes)**

## **Group Projects (75 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Chime or bell
- Slide 64, Group Projects

### **Preparation**

- List each group project on a piece of newsprint, together with the names of the participants in that group, and post them.
- If this session is at the end of the day, you may choose to do the closing first, followed by the group project work time.

### **Description**

Explain that participants will now have a chance to put into practice all that they have been learning, exploring, and reflecting upon, through group projects.

Display Slide 64 and refer participants to the posted lists of projects and group members.

Let the groups know that they will have 70 minutes to work on their project, which they will present to the group in the closing session. Leaders should make themselves available to answer questions while the groups work. Encourage groups to use the available technology (projector, laptops, slides, online

resources) so that final projects may be shared electronically. Ask for a volunteer from each group to take responsibility for emailing the project to participants and leaders (or putting it in the shared folder).

After 60 minutes have passed, ring the chime to indicate that only ten minutes remain. Ring it again when five minutes remain, and a final time when time is up.

## **Closing and Reflection (10 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Chime or bell
- Slide 65, Session 4 Reflection Questions
- Handout 18, Reflection Questions for Session 4

### **Preparation**

- If someone has volunteered to do a closing reading for this session, remind them to prepare it; the text is below. If no one has volunteered, one of the module leaders may read it.

### **Description**

Display Slide 65, refer participants to Handout 18, and ring the chime three times. After each chime, pause and allow the sound to slowly fade; then read one of the reflection questions. Pause another moment before ringing the chime again.

Invite the group to take a few minutes to reflect privately on this session of the module, and if they wish, jot down their thoughts on the Preparation for Module Evaluation or Reflection Questions handouts.

Ring the chime once again to signal the end of time for personal reflection. Ask the vibes-watcher to give a brief report on group dynamics in this session.

Remind the group of important information for the next session, such as the start time and information about presentation of group projects.

Thank the participants for their participation and share, or have the person who volunteered share, these closing words from Unitarian Universalist minister Andrew C. Kennedy, which can be found on [Worship Web](#):

*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.*

Extinguish the chalice.

# SESSION 5: Living a Unitarian Universalist Identity

## Session-at-a-Glance

<b>Opening</b>	5 minutes
<b>Presenting Group Projects</b>	80 minutes
<b>Break</b>	10 minutes
<b>Promoting UU Identities in Our Congregations</b>	50 minutes
<b>Parking Lot</b>	20 minutes
<b>Closing and Taking-It-Home Ritual</b>	15 minutes

**Total Time: 3 hours**

## Goals

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 prepared to take advantage of 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 by presenting a group project.

## Opening (5 minutes)

### Materials

- Chalice
- Candle and matches, or electric candle
- Centering table and cloth
- Slide 66, Welcome

### Preparation

- If someone has volunteered to read opening words, remind that person to prepare them. If no one has volunteered, one of the module leaders may prepare and offer the opening words.

### Description

Display Slide 66 and invite the person who has volunteered to read the opening words to come forward and read their selection as you light the chalice.

Invite participants to enter into a space of quiet reflection 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 speak aloud the names of persons or communities that have shaped your faith identity. It is okay if you overlap with another speaker, and you can name as many or as few as you'd like.*

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.

Welcome everyone back to your time together and go over any additional housekeeping details that may be necessary. Ask a volunteer to serve as vibes-watcher for this session.

## **Presenting Group Projects (80 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Slides 67-70, Group Projects

### **Preparation**

- Prepare a slide or piece of newsprint for any group that is not using one of the designated projects.

### **Description**

Ask each group to present their activity, displaying the slide with their project on it as they present. Tell participants that they will have ten minutes for each presentation and ten minutes for feedback after each. Explain that feedback will consist of two types. First the presenting group will speak about what went well and what they would do differently. Then other participants will say what they liked and offer constructive feedback.



Some considerations for questions:

- How did you decide what to include?
- How much of your program focused on history and heritage, and how much on lived experience?
- How does your project foster UU identity in children? Youth? Adults? People of 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 presentation, as well as questions that you want to ask the presenting group and ways to engage and educate all the participants.
- As important as your comments are, it is equally or 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. Your role is to clarify and to support the new insights and growth of the module's participants.

## **Break (10 minutes)**

## **Promoting UU Identities in Our Congregations (50 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Paper and pens or pencils
- Handout 19, Living Our UU Identities and Values

- Slide 71, Living Our UU Identities and Values

### **Preparation**

- Review the activity’s description, handout, and slide.
- Review the questions on the Parking Lot newsprint and decide whether you expect to need the full 20 minutes allotted later in this session to address them. If not, add the extra time either to this activity or to the closing and taking-it-home ritual.

### **Description**

Display Slide 71 and 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.*

*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.*

Divide participants into triads and refer them to Handout 19, Living Our UU Identities and Values. Assign one scenario to each group, and ask its members to discuss the ways they would respond. Let them know that they should choose one member of their group as recorder to write down their responses, so that they can share them with everyone.

After the groups have had 20 minutes to discuss their scenario and come up with responses, ask a representative of each group to describe the responses they

developed to the issues their scenario raised. Allow others to offer suggestions or comments before moving on to the next 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 books, magazines, and newsletters—such as UU World, especially its Family Pages—and hanging banners and signs.*

Divide the participants into small groups and ask them to reflect on the ways they promote UU identity in their physical setting and with identity-building items such as the chalice symbol. Pass out newsprint and markers, and ask the groups to list the ways that UU identity is nurtured in their congregation in visual, verbal, and physical ways. Ask a volunteer to take pictures of these lists and share them with the group via email (or the shared folder).

## **Parking Lot (20 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Parking Lot newsprint
- Slide 72, Parking Lot

### **Preparation**

- Review the questions on the Parking Lot newsprint and discuss with your co-leader some possible responses.
- If, in preparing for the previous activity, you decided that you would not need the full 20 minutes to address Parking Lot issues, confirm with your co-leader how much time you will use.

## **Description**

Display Slide 72 and refer participants to the Parking Lot newsprint. Name the concerns that have already been addressed. If any remain, ask for feedback on them. Have they also been addressed? Does the group wish to spend time discussing them? Are there any new concerns or questions?

## **Closing and Taking-It-Home Ritual (15 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Conventional or electric tea light candles, one for each participant (electric ones may be preferable, since they will be held in open palms)
- Matches or lighter, if using conventional tea light candles
- Chime or bell
- Handout 20, Reflection Questions for Session 5
- Handout 21, Selected Resources
- Slide 73, Session 5 Reflection Questions
- Slide 74, Song: Dear Friends

### **Preparation**

- Place a table in the meeting space where participants can gather in a circle around it, and place the tea light candles on it in a circle. As always, adapt this format and activity as needed to ensure that all participants will be comfortably able to participate.
- If someone has volunteered to do a closing reading for this session, remind them to prepare it; the text is below. If no one has volunteered, one of the module leaders may read it.
- Be prepared to teach the song “Dear Friends.”

## **Description**

Display Slide 73, refer participants to Handout 20, and ring the chime three times. After each chime, pause and allow the sound to slowly fade; then read one

of the reflection questions. Pause another moment before ringing the chime again.

Invite the group to take a few minutes to reflect privately on this session of the module, and if they wish, jot down their thoughts on the Preparation for Module Evaluation or Reflection Questions handouts. Draw their attention to Handout 21, which contains many resources to explore.

Ring the chime once again to signal the end of time for personal reflection. Ask the vibes-watcher to give a brief report on group dynamics in this session.

You may wish to darken the room at this point. Invite the group to gather in a circle around the table. Ask them, as part of the closing ritual, to come forward one at a time and identify a way they might “take this experience home” by sharing their new knowledge with others in their congregation. They should speak first, then take a tea light candle, light it, and hold it in their upraised open palms.

Go first to model the sharing, by speaking, lighting a candle, and lifting it up. If participants have difficulty coming up with ways to “take it home,” offer suggestions:

- They might ask the minister to preach on a topic related to UU identity, and offer to help.
- They could create an information bulletin board in the coffee hour room to honor “sapling” new members, as well as “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.

At the end, everyone should be in a circle with lighted candles resting on their upraised palms, creating a circle of chalices.

Display Slide 74 and invite the group to join you in singing the song “Dear Friends.” Be prepared to teach the song if participants are unfamiliar with it.

Close this session by letting the participants know they may keep their candle as a symbol of the ideas gained in the module, then share, or have the person who volunteered 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.*

Extinguish the chalice.