

Discussion Guide for Video

Long Strange Trip, Part 1: In the Beginning... (0:59:36)

Opening and Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice with these words by the Rev. Jay F. Abernathy, Jr., used with permission:

This is the flame of freedom.

The hope that glows through all darkness.

The light of truth.

It is our flame — the symbol that unites us with one another and with the heritage passed down the centuries — it is our flame.

A simple candle, humble light.

Known the world over and throughout the ages.

Kept aflame in the hearts and minds — the souls — of countless members of the human family.

It is our flame, it is their flame;

We shall continue to light it —

A free congregation of truth and hope.

Discussion Questions

Choose among these questions and lead a discussion:

- What events and stories highlighted in the video surprised you or struck you as important to describing Unitarian Universalism today? What stories might you share with others?
- Why does the early story of Christianity matter to us as Unitarian Universalists today?

- Why was it so important for the Christian Church to eliminate heresy? Why were heretical ideas so difficult to extinguish?
- Reforming or purifying Christianity by going back to original texts or original practices of early Christians was important to our theological forebears. In which ways do the writings and practices of early Christians matter to us today?
- How should we tell and honor the stories of martyrs such as Jan Hus and Michael Servetus today? In which ways were their words and deeds prophetic? Do they matter to us today?
- In what ways are we still heretics? In what ways are we not? How might claiming an identity of “heretic” be an asset to our faith? How might it be a hindrance?

Closing Reading

Share the poem “Outwitted” by American Universalist poet Edwin Markham (1852-1940):

He drew a circle that shut me out —

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But love and I had the wit to win:

We drew a circle that took him in

Extinguish the chalice.