

Philosophy of Religious Education Renaissance Module

HANDOUTS



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Handout 1: Introduction to Renaissance and RE Credentialing

The Renaissance Program has a distinguished history of providing standardized training in a specific topic useful to religious educators (as well as parish ministers, seminarians and lay leaders). The Renaissance program is a major component of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Religious Education (RE) Credentialing program. These modules are offered twice a year online by the UUA Faith Development office or could be “face to face” gatherings of 15 hours:

- Administration as Leadership
- Curriculum Planning
- Philosophy of Religious Education
- Teacher Development
- Unitarian Universalist Identity

These are offered only as "face to face" gatherings:

- Adult Faith Development and Programming
- Multicultural Religious Education
- Worship for All Ages

Other modules are designed as distance learning modules of 30-35 hours:

- Unitarian Universalist History
- Unitarian Universalist Theology

For more information, visit the Renaissance program page of the UUA website:

<http://www.uua.org/careers/re/renaissance/index.shtml>

The Religious Education Credentialing Program is a program for religious education professionals intended to nurture the call to religious education as a profession, to provide a comprehensive path for professional development, and to articulate and uphold professional standards and guidelines in religious education leadership. For more information, visit the RE Credentialing page of the UUA website:

<http://www.uua.org/careers/re/index.shtml>

Handout 2: Preparation for Module Evaluation

Locate the [Renaissance Program Participant Online Evaluation Form](#).

Please complete and submit it within one week of completion of this Module. The official Renaissance Certificate will be sent to you within ten days of receipt of evaluation. All feedback is confidential and is seen only by Renaissance staff; feedback to leaders is shared only in the aggregate. Your candid comments are very helpful in developing strong leaders and a strong Renaissance program.

There are three areas on which you will be asked to provide feedback:

I. Module Leadership – consider each leader separately

Group Facilitation Skills

Knowledge of Content Area

Sensitivity to Different Learning Styles

Teamwork with Other Leader

Organization/Communication

Other Comments or Suggestions for Leaders

II. The Learning Experience

What was most valuable for you?

Please share at least five significant learnings from the module:

What expectations did you bring to the module? Did the module meet your expectations?

Please explain.

In what ways will you use the learnings from this module?

How will you share your learnings in the congregation or with peers?

Other comments or suggestions about the learning experience

III. The Reader

I read: all/most/some/none of the reader

I found the reader: very useful/somewhat useful/not useful

Comments on the reader.

Handout 3: Group Covenant

FIRST READER:

We need to know that what we share will be held within the group.

ALL: Request confidentiality

SECOND READER:

There will be many opinions, ways of relating and learning in the group.

ALL: Assume diversity and respect differences.

THIRD READER:

When we choose to pass, no explanation is expected or needs to be given.

ALL: Respect personal boundaries.

FOURTH READER:

We will follow the schedule, arrive promptly and remain together until we have agreed to end.

ALL: Show respect for the group

FIFTH READER:

Our time together is limited. All are encouraged to participate fully without dominating the conversation either in large or small groups.

ALL: Share the stage, yield the floor, speak your own story, not that of others.

SIXTH READER:

It is important that the contributions of each person be heard and understood.

ALL: We will remember to speak loudly and clearly.

SEVENTH READER:

During all sessions, we will try to avoid the distraction of electronic devices.

ALL: We agree to honor this covenant while we are together. So may it be for all of us.

Handout 4: The Religious Education Philosophy Module

Rationale

Unitarian Universalist religious education needs to be re-invented afresh for every era. This workshop is based on the belief that we need to re-examine the philosophies that served us well in the past and incorporate new research and new philosophies of religious education that expand and deepen our understandings.

A changing world affects the lives of all of us, especially our children and youth. Changing theories of human development suggest that there may be new considerations and ways of meeting spiritual, ethical, and educational needs.

Philosophizing about religious education is something that needs to be done, not just by a few experts, but by everyone who wishes to participate in religious education. Each person operates on some de facto religious education philosophy. By becoming aware of it and examining it in light of others' views the hope is that we will become empowered to do the kind of thinking that leads to an intentional philosophy of religious education.

This workshop will provide some experiences in thinking about basic questions that are posed by theologians and educators. But it is just a beginning and leaders and participants are invited to return often to the basic philosophical questions and to re-examine and revision their individual and our collective philosophy of Unitarian Universalist religious education.

Learning Objectives:

- Increased ability in articulating one's own religious education philosophy
- Increased clarity about the purposes of lifespan religious education
- Increased comfort and competence in sharing a philosophy of religious education
- Increased understanding of learning and faith development theories.

Handout 5: Session Topics

Session 1: The Congregation as a Learning Community (2 hours)

How do the terms we use affect our philosophies of religious education? What makes a religious community a learning community? How important is relationship building for religious education?

Session 2: Learning Theories & Faith Development (2 hours)

How do people learn? What can learning theories tell us about our philosophies of religious education? Who is Fowler and what is his theory of faith development? What are the criticisms of his theory?

Session 3: Our Philosophical Roots (2 hours)

Who are the people that have been influential in religious education philosophies of the past? What aspects of past education philosophies are still alive today? Who is Freire and what influence has his Pedagogy of the Oppressed had on Unitarian Universalist religious education philosophy?

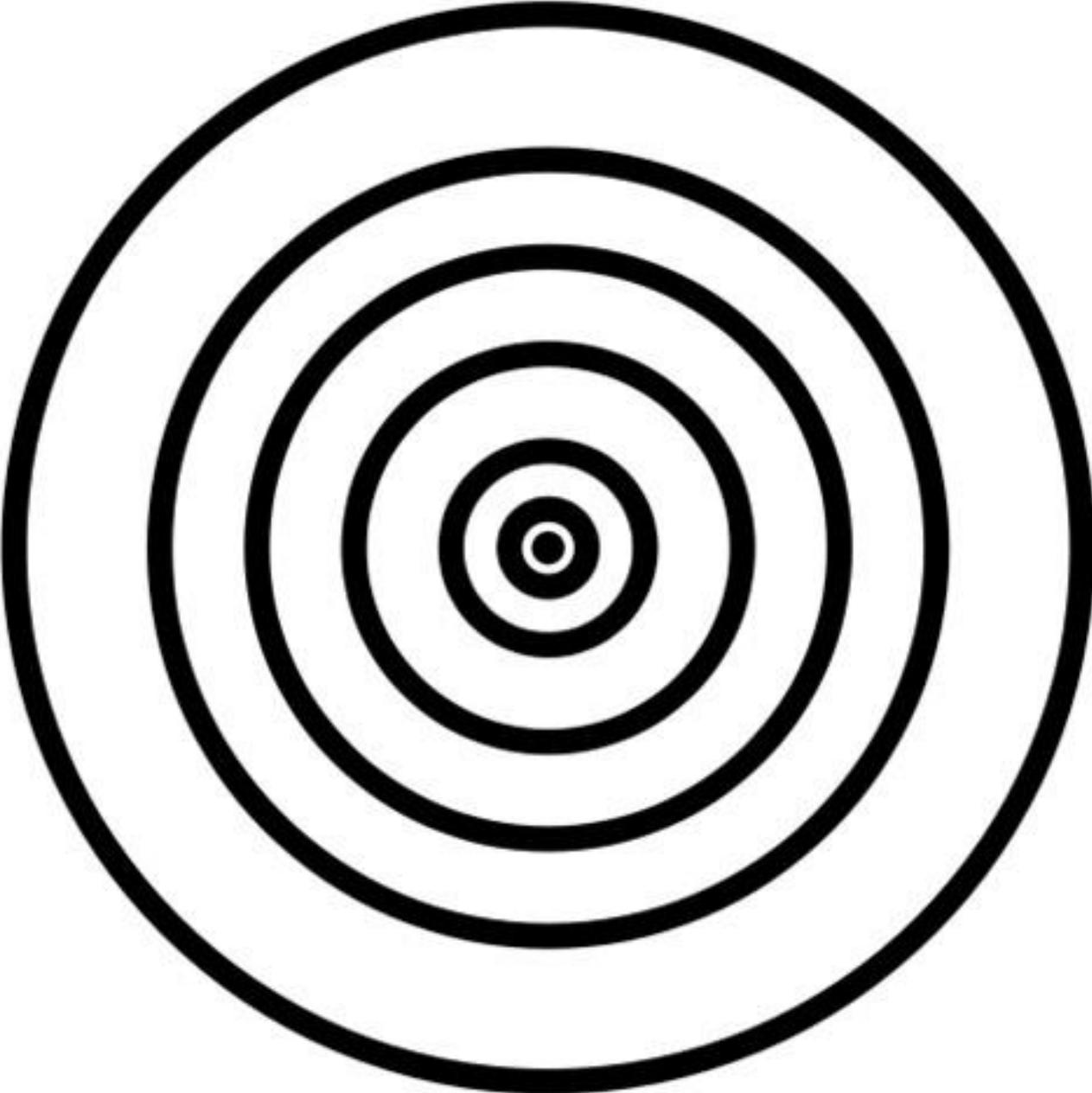
Session 4: Doing the Hard Work

Why do Unitarian Universalists still struggle with religious language and how does this affect our religious education philosophy? How do we create religious education philosophies that build strong and radical communities working toward wholeness and liberation?

Session 5: Creating a Philosophy of Religious Education

What are some ways we can use technology and social media in religious education? How do we create a religious education philosophy with all the people who are invested in the process?

Handout 6 Religious Education as Relationship Building



Handout 7 Constructivist Learning Theories

- People learn about the world by acting within their environment
- People are active participants in their learning
- People are active in constructing their own learning

Jean Piaget

- Focused primarily on internal influences
- Language as means of disrupting equilibrium for reconstruction of thought
- Involves series of stages people must progress through in order
- Ignores cultural influences on development and learning

Lev Vygotsky

- Emphasized how external forces shape learning
- Language as means of establishing social relationships conducive for learning
- Continuous and lifelong
- Emphasizes cultural differences

Kurt Fischer

- Lifelong and multidimensional
- Learning and development involve the entire brain
- Learning happens through levels and tiers
- Learning happens through a slow and variable process
- Context is important
- Support is essential

Limitations of Piaget's Theory

- Research methods
- Stage theories approach not supported by brain research
- Modern research has proven that children possess many of the abilities at an earlier age than predicted by his theories

Handout 8: Faith Stages According to Fowler

Paraphrased by Rev. Lindsay Bates and Cynthia Wade

Pre-stage: Primal Faith - birth to about age 4

For the youngest ones, there is no "other" or external world. "I'm It." This child is his or her feelings, both physical and emotional, and that's the world; other people are not understood as "other people." What the youngest children are going to retain from this time in their lives is how they have felt.

The youngest ones don't have any understanding of religious symbols, whether it's of God or Jesus or Torah or Santa Claus. Their experiences at this stage, especially of the nurturing/lack thereof provided by primal others, are apt to surface later in the images of God that begin appearing by about age 4 or 5.

Infants form their initial impressions of the world and experience sensations of love, trust and courage (or lack of these) on a body level. The spiritual virtue being instilled is HOPE; the ability is trust through times when that trust is challenged.

Stage One: Intuitive/Projective Faith – approximately ages 4 – 8

They're learning about how words and symbols work yet their "cause-and-effect" thinking is still often magical. These children can easily believe, for example, that they are responsible for bad things happening.

Under the best of circumstances, a child at this stage is able to trust in the security and "rightness" of the family, and "Because my mommy says so" is an adequate squasher for all challenges. It's important for parents and other authority figures in the child's life to be willing to say that they believe certain definite things, such as that God does not send people to hell, or NO, the baby did NOT die because you were bad or because she was bad.

That parental authority can do a lot to ease the fears that arise when their little friends start sharing their Sunday School stories about going to hell if you aren't right with Jesus. A UU parent or RE teacher who will not express a definite opinion at this point in the child's religious growth is not doing the child a favor. The authoritative role of the family and the family's chosen circle (which includes the church) explain why at this stage we talk about our children's religion being

"**CAUGHT.**" It's what's around them; it's what the people they trust and care about are doing so they do it too.

Spiritually, they're working on the meaning of "Free Will," the inherent worth of each individual, including themselves. They need a lot of encouragement and positive reinforcement for the things they do well and the things they try to do well. They need to know that they are accepted and cared about and loved. This is when our church home needs to be a place of safety and fun and love.

Stage Two: Mythic/Literal Faith – ages 6-8 through ages 10-12

Thought is more complex now, and cause-and-effect thinking passes from the magical to the scientific. Discussion of ideas and of one's own thoughts becomes important. These children are beginning to recognize that they do have their own thoughts, and that other people have other thoughts. How their trusted authority figures handle these differences in thoughts is very important. These children do not want to be thought of as "different." If they know that in their own group different ideas are good, they will be comfortable having ideas that are different. If they are taught that there are absolutely right ideas and absolutely wrong ones, they will feel guilty, inferior, or "sinful," if their ideas are not like everybody else's.

Children tend at this age to be very concerned with absolute fairness. Morally ambiguous issues are very hard for them. They're often described at this stage as "legalistic." In this stage, the conviction that if you are good, you will be safe and successful and happy, and if you are bad, you will be punished, is normal. But alongside that is the growing awareness of how unfair the real world can be.

The messages within stories become very important. These children want to know the stories that everyone else knows, Bible stories, stories about their own church, stories within the family. Those shared stories are part of what creates the group to which these children belong. That's why we often speak of religious at this stage being "**TAUGHT.**" These children want to be told what the trusted adults around them know and value.

Stage Three: Synthetic/Conventional Faith - approximately from ages 10-12 through adulthood, but not all adults

This stage is one of transition. Many children decide that they are atheists at this point. If there were a God, then things would be fair, but things are not fair, and therefore there can be not God. Many adults also hold this position.

Adults in many faith communities, including ours, settle quite happily into this stage. We usually enter it (if we enter it at all) when we begin to recognize how complicated and illogical and unfair life can be. We can't count on "ultimate fairness," so we rearrange our framework of understanding value and worth, and we seek meaning within our own group (realizing that there are others but not necessarily being convinced that those other ways might be as valid as ours). Our group's certainties provide our spiritual and psychological foundations.

During this time of life, metacognition (or "thinking about thinking") develops which allows us to begin understanding how one develops one's beliefs, how to construct and test hypotheses, and how to take another person's perspective while not necessarily agreeing with it. This is a highly relational way of being, and being part of a group is very important. When God is discussed, it's apt to be in relational terms -- "God is Love," which makes God a little bit like us, or us a little bit like God, or perhaps in a relationship with God. Important questions become "Who am I?" and "Who are you?" Issues of what we believe and why we believe it become interesting and important. The ideal of relatedness, of belonging, can also create a strong idealism as a member of a group. Ways of being of service to others becomes important, in part because of how one is regarded by those who are important to us matters a lot.

Identity becomes of paramount importance in the face of the many possible conflicting roles they are being invited to fill. Sexual and gender identity are important issues.

The spiritual issue is faithfulness -- being true to the values, the commitments, and the ideals of one's community. This is what we refer to as faith that is "**BOUGHT**." The young person wants to be able to buy into what the trusted group values and believes. And it's the task of the adult community to share our beliefs and values with our young people, to be clear about why we believe certain things are right and others are wrong without being wishy-washy or apologetic about it.

Stage Four: Individuative/Reflexive Faith - mid-to-late adolescence through adulthood, but not all adults

This stage is reached as the discovery is made that there really are all sorts of people out there who are not like the folks I grew up with. And they have claims to be taken seriously, which can be perceived as very threatening. This is sometimes a retrenching time. Earlier values are clung to with an almost desperate need for that security. At the same time many presuppositions are being challenged. Early in this stage, one tends to see everything in terms of either/or. Such as: "Either I'm right or you're right, and if I'm right, you're wrong, and if you're right, I'm wrong."

There tends to be a loss of patience with lack of clarity or ambiguity, and a strong need for an identity that one can indeed defend as valid against those who are different. There is often a tendency to caricature, discount, or not take seriously the experiences and differences of members of other groups while being in relation with individual members. One does not yet see that your insistence upon being who you are does not diminish who I am, no matter how different we may be.

This is a time of intense seeking, which is why this faith is no longer caught, taught, or bought. Now it is actively "SOUGHT." The challenge is to learn to deal with radical differences and ambiguities, to move beyond what's been called a "class-based universalism," in which issues of right and wrong, good and evil are resolved with the conviction that what's right for me and my group is right for everyone.

Stage Five: Conjunctive/Paradoxical/Consolidative Faith (may begin as early as late teens or early twenties, but usually mid to late adulthood)

Fowler suggests that the transition to this stage is apt to be brought about by experiences in adulthood of deep pain, grief, or awareness of the reality of death. It is in this stage that we begin to learn to move away from "either/or" and begin living with "both/and." Concepts and experiences of paradox, of multiple layers of meaning and understanding and experience, are now enriching rather than frightening. Truth is understood to be paradoxical, complex, beyond absolute understanding. Symbols become symbols again, vehicles for

experiencing and expressing those things for which exact, scientific explanations can never be adequate.

Authority is found in the dialectic of critically self-chosen beliefs, norms, and values with those maintained in the reflective claims of other persons and groups and in various expressions of cumulative human wisdom. One becomes deeply appreciative of the stories, myths, rituals, etc., of other groups, coming to see them as being equally legitimate vehicles of truth.

In moral judgment, there tends to be an appeal to a principled "Higher Law." Integrating conflicts of law with morality can be a struggle. In this stage, one is apt to be strongly loyal to society and its values while seeing clearly the injustices, pain, etc. within it. One realizes that "seeing what justice requires means doing what justice requires." This is often painful.

Stage Six: Universalizing Faith - very few people achieve this level

In reaching this level, one has truly transcended one's own particulars (while still valuing them) and become a full member of the "Commonwealth of ALL Being." Authority is built upon all previous sources, now located in the individual judgment purified of egoistic striving, attentive to the requirements of pure Being.

Morally, loyalty to Being transcends any and all laws or societal norms. Spiritually, if you get this far, you have achieved Buddhahood. But I do think, while few of us honestly get here, it is a vision of faith and of being to which we aspire -- so maybe it's not as far beyond our reach as Fowler often seems to insist.

Handout 9: Criticisms of Fowler's Theory

Fowler's theory is based upon the work of Kohlberg and Piaget, who both characterize development as happening in stags which are always experienced in the same order. However, lifespan development is now recognized as complex and uneven, and heavily influenced by a person's culture and environment. Even Piaget himself in later life moved away from his conception of a rigid, hierarchical structure and considered development more in terms of a spiral than a series of ordered stages.

Fowler's theory carries a definite gender bias. Fowler himself admitted that there was an element of under-scoring for women and over-scoring for men and suggested that there might be an inclusion of "relational knowing" in the fourth stage. Feminist work on faith development has viewed the stages as more fluid, dynamic, non-hierarchical phases or steps shaped by emotion, imagination and relationship as well as by cognition.

Fowler's Faith Development theory is culturally specific. His theory was developed within the context of late twentieth century Euro-American intellectual culture. From a Vygotskian perspective, this theory fails to consider the role of engagement in cultural life in forging development. Modern psychology which recognizes the validity and value of a plurality of viewpoints is in conflict with any theory which does not reflect cultural diversity. Furthermore, faith is shaped by the interactions with people and the building of relationships, suggesting a theory that is vertical as well as horizontal in its perspective.

Fowler's theory is hierarchical in that higher stages are preferential to lower ones, the stages and claims some people never progress to higher levels, implying inferiority. While the earlier stages address advances in children's thinking and characterize many of their evolving needs for faith development, stages 3, 4 and 5 may be considered instead as different directions as opposed to stages. Since Fowler claims that adults can get "stuck" in any one of these stages, perhaps a view that is less judgmental and recognizes the influences of culture, gender, socio-economic status and a person's family environment would see these as equal paths to follow or pass into via a sideways motion rather than upwards.

Fowler's theory overemphasizes cognition and does not address emotional/affective issues such as transition and transformation. Faith development is more than cognitive development, it is full of emotions, pain, healing, fear, courage, rage, as well as love and becoming our best selves. All those aspects of faith formation are absent from this theory.

Handout 10:

The Great End in Religious Instruction by William Ellery Channing

The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds on the young, but to stir up their own;

Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;

Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;

Not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs;

Not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect or peculiar notions,

But to prepare them for impartial, conscientious judging of whatever subjects may be offered to their decision;

Not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought;

Not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment.

In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul; to bring understanding, conscience, and heart into earnest, vigorous action on religious and moral truth, to excite and cherish spiritual life.

Handout 11: Dewey and Progressive Education

Dewey, a prolific author whose writings spanned many years, does not readily yield to summary. Yet in possibly his best known work, *The School and Society*, three lectures delivered in 1899, one can see a reflection, a criticism, and a synthesis of American educational thought at the turn of the century.

Dewey's thinking evidences the democratic faith in common schools as the instrument of reform. According to Dewey what the best and wisest parents want for their children: "Any other ideal for our school is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy." He envisions schools as the lever of society wherein students are saturated with a spirit of service and provided with the instruments of effective self-direction. Thus he was critical of the standard way of educating, since schools were isolated from the struggle for a better life and dominated by a medieval conception of learning. Instead, he argued, schools should be a genuine form of active community life, not a place set apart of the learning of lessons. To teach merely for the acquisition of information fostered individualism; Dewey passionately believed that schools must be social in orientation so as to teach students the process necessary for the workings of democracy. Schools should not merely reflect society, but improve it. As embryonic forms of community life, they should be permeated with the spirit of art, of history, and of science. If the school were related to life, all of its studies would necessarily be correlated.

Dewey devoted himself to fashioning an alternative form of schooling, one in which passivity, mechanical massing of children, and uniformity of curriculum and method were replaced by activity, group participation, and adaptation to the needs of the student. He acknowledged that his cause was revolutionary—not unlike the case of Copernicus. Only, as Dewey saw it, "the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he [she] is the center about which they are organized." Yet Dewey's methodology also simply recognized what already existed in the child— interest in conversation, inquiry, construction, and artistic expression:

If we seek the kingdom of heaven, educationally, all other things shall be added unto us—which, being interpreted, is that if we identify ourselves with the real instincts and needs of childhood, and ask only after its fullest assertion and growth, the discipline and information and culture of adult life shall all come in their due season.

“My Pedagogic Creed,” written in 1897, encapsulates the principles to which Dewey devoted his education vocation; its very title suggests the religious character education held for Dewey. Education, conceived of as a “continuing reconstruction of experience,” was religious insofar as it provided the “fundamental method of social progress and reform,” the “most perfect and intimate union of science and art conceivable in human experience.” Because it shaped human powers and adapted them to social service, education was the “supreme art.”

Education was the supreme art because Dewey believed that the potential of societal reconstruction made the teacher the “prophet of the true God and usherer in of the kingdom of God.” His view of the exalted vocation of the teacher rested upon a perspective shared with certain other liberals of his time, a naturalistic philosophy that regarded belief in the supernatural as a remnant of a more primitive outlook. His objections to supernaturalism rested on numerous grounds. It ruined religion, since it made religion an absolute in which people settled for security in fixed doctrines rather than risked discovery of truth by way of experimental methods. It distracted people from the realities of life, since it focused on ideal existence; it led to the false dualism of sacred and secular and was all too often grounded in crass ignorance. Moreover, supernaturalism was incompatible with democracy, because it too often legitimized the authoritarian rule of an elite.

Whether or not Dewey was a theist himself is debated. Certainly his 1934 Terry Lectures at Yale, published as *A Common Faith*, do not reflect traditional theism. Here Dewey used the term God to denote “the unity of all ideal ends arousing us to desire and actions” and ultimately defined God as “this active relation between ideal and actual.” Enamored as he

Philosophy of RE Module – Handouts was of scientific method, Dewey could not assent to a transcendent God who could not be empirically verified. Though he continued to use the term

and to make frequent reference to the “divine,” his usage evoked images not of a personal Creator, but of the point at which the ideal became present. His profound commitment to education was a religious act, though not in the theistic sense.

Progressivism’s Contribution to Religious Education

Perhaps the contribution of Dewey and other progressives to religious education can be summarized in three points. First, their insistence upon the interrelatedness of doing and knowing engendered a new enthusiasm for “learning by doing,” what a later age has termed “hands-on” education. This recognition of the power of experiential learning was formalized in Dewey’s laboratory school at the University of Chicago and has continued to challenge succeeding generations of educators. Second, their articulation of a child-centered curriculum considerably influenced religious educators who accordingly reworked creed-centered curricula. The assumption that teaching begins with the situation and needs of the learner rather than the content is rooted in the progressive outlook. Third, the progressivist emphasis on the “whole child” and on formation rather than conversion harmonized with Bushnell’s notion of nurture. It provided religious educators with an impetus to use the social sciences and to incorporate psychology into their considerations; it legitimized their awakening sense of the dual character of education as both a political activity and a religious act.

Source: Mary C. Boys. *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1989)

Handout 12: Fahs and MacLean

Fulfilling Channing's Challenge by

Jeanne Nieuwejaar

INTRODUCTION

William Ellery Channing, in his 1837 address to the Unitarian Sunday School Society, outlined much of the essential and enduring philosophy of liberal religious education, and presaged the shift from a didactic methodology to a progressive one. His philosophy and methodology, however, were not implemented in our churches until a full century later, when they flowered in the work of Sophia Fahs and of Angus H. MacLean, among others. David Parke has written, "Whereas Channing only announced a revolution, Mrs. Fahs effected one." (Parke, 1965, p. 381)

Both MacLean and Fahs were exposed to many of the same educational theorists while working and studying at Teachers College, Columbia, through the 1920's. The influence of John Dewey, Horace Bushnell, George Coe, Harrison Elliott, and Hugh Hartshorne were important, and led each of these two religious educators to base their work on children's natural capacities for religious and ethical growth and on the pedagogical principle of experiential learning.

FAHS: FOUNDATIONS OF HER PHILOSOPHY

Through her years at Teachers College and the Sunday School there, Fahs underwent a "profound intellectual and religious transformation. . . toward progressive education, and away from a Biblical world view," writes David Parke. "Her world view shifted from Christ to the child, her premise from conversion to growth, her community from the Church to the family of man [sic]. In short, she became a religious liberal." (Parke, 1965, p.267). She continued to teach at the Sunday School even after receiving her degree, and in her own intense and thorough fashion, she continued her own education to continually improve her skills as a religious educator.

This self-education was intensified over the next twenty years as Fahs's energies were directed primarily to the task of mothering. Through this task, to which she dedicated herself most seriously, she learned much about the nature of childhood, the needs and capacities of children, and the impact of traditional religious education upon them.

Over the years another significant influence on Fahs's developing theory had been the work of G. Stanley Hall, an educational philosopher and experimental psychologist who also had an interest in religious education. It was through his work that the principle of natural growth, a central concept in Fahs's enduring philosophy, received experimental verification and scientific status. It was his theory of recapitulation, however, that found its way into Fahs's thesis work. This theory stated that the development of the individual organism repeats or recapitulates the evolution of the human race. In religious education this would imply that children should be exposed to -- should re- experience, in a sense -- a little bit of every religious expression in the history of humankind, in order to develop naturally to religious maturity.

Fahs did not accept all the details of Hall's thinking. She did agree that every child must confront the same elemental forces of nature, of birth and death, of love and of conflict; that "modern children must make their peace with the same forces that early man [sic] reacted to in pre-rational and pre-scientific ways." (Hunter, 1966, p. 105)

Parke, in his thesis on "The Historical and Religious Antecedents of the New Beacon Series in Religious Education," suggests that Fahs's original contribution to the theory of religious education, was her blending of Dewey's principle, that learning consists in the reconstruction of experience, and Hall's principle, that individual experience recapitulates racial experience. "Her unique contribution to education, thus understood, is a religious dimension, which infuses the life situation approach of Dewey with drama and purpose, and which ingratiate the iron law of recapitulation of Hall with freedom and joy." (Parke, 1965, P. 282) We find this theory very much in effect in her later work on the New Beacon Series. Fahs's most comprehensive

statement of her philosophy of religious education, *Today's Children and Yesterday's Heritage*, was published in 1952~ after her formal retirement from editorship of Beacon materials.

In this work she defines religion as the "vital and healthy result of [the child's] own creative thought and feeling and experience as he responds to life in all its fullness. Influences from without and from the past affect the formation of such religion; but the life-giving element is within the child and in his/her present experiences." (Fahs, 1952, p. 16)

FULFILLING THE PHILOSOPHY

Fahs would make no clear division between secular and religious education and stressed close cooperation between the Sunday School and the Weekday Schools, hoping that weekday schools, too, would recognize and foster the religious dimensions of the children's experience. Religious experience had a special place in the church school curriculum, she claimed, but not an exclusive place, ". . . since it is the very nature of religious experiences that when they are set off by themselves apart from other experiences of life, they tend to lose their vitality." (Parke, 1965, p.274)

The individual's experiences are meaningless, however, until critically reflected upon, evaluated, and integrated into the whole of life. Teaching, thus, consists in enriching natural experiences, uncovering and interpreting meanings, and crystallizing learnings into guidelines for the future. The atmosphere and structure must always be democratic with children free to reach their own conclusions, and the particular developmental levels of the children must always be honored.

MACLEAN: EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

From among a choice of job offers, MacLean chose a professorship at the Theological School of St. Lawrence University, ". . . because of the intimacy, freedom, and natural surroundings promised." (Parke, 1965, p. 203) MacLean spent thirty-two years at this theological school, nine of them as Dean. Although his thinking was entirely compatible with that of the faculty and student body of St. Lawrence, he did not actively embrace Universalism until the 1940's.

MacLean's most comprehensive statement of his philosophy of religious education was published in 1934 as "The New Era in Religious Education." Parke says of it, "The New Era" was the most original work in its field produced by a Universalist or a Unitarian in the twentieth century, perhaps ever." (Parke, 1965, p. 205) In it MacLean affirms, "The good life is the human life." (MacLean, 1934, p. 6) The child's capacity for enjoying the world must be developed and can be more effectively developed by companions than by books.

The theory of progressive education is pervasive in this work. Children learn what they are ready to learn and what is relevant to their experience; education must begin with present, worthy experiences. "Life is the real school, in the sense that people change and grow where and when they live." (MacLean, 1934, p. 31) MacLean fully realized that learning by doing could easily be simplified into submissive performing of acts suggested by the teacher, and thus merely a gentle form of coercion. "The value of doing depends in part upon the degree of motivation behind it," he wrote. (MacLean, 1934, p. 66) Experiences designed to be educative would be effective only when the children's experiences were rich enough to absorb the learning and when their psychological stage enabled them to welcome and/or seek it.

An important dimension of the immediate experience of the children's education, says MacLean, is the modeling of the whole community. The adults, the teachers, must live out their religious ideals; or, as he would later phrase it, the method is the message.

Like Fahs, MacLean insists that one hour in church on Sunday mornings is inadequate for real religious growth. The time spent on religious education must be extended, but there must also be a rich communication and interchange between the religious education program, the church community, and the larger community beyond. In this work, as throughout his whole career, MacLean affirms that the home is the real base of religious growth, and thus must be an integral part of the religious education network. Because of his emphasis on the contextual nature of religious development, he stresses the responsibilities of church adults, especially teacher, to influence the larger communities. They should do everything possible as citizens to change their communities to make them more religiously nurturing. They should build in their

church a community within a community that would provide a place not only for worship and study, but also for "enterprise," the living out of the ideals of their religious convictions.

The children's own experiences are the center of the educational curriculum. Children are confronted with social conflicts, problems, and crises from their very early years, and must have a readiness to respond. Their education, particularly their religious education, should better prepare them for the social realities and ethical responsibilities that are thrust upon them. The personal, experiential approach is the best way to accomplish this preparedness.

The teacher's primary job, in MacLean's thinking, was to shape and supervise positive experiences, and above all else, to give assistance in integrating those experiences into the child's conceptual system and undergirding faith. Positive integration was dependent on the number and consistency of experiences of the good, on habits of mind, and on the opportunity to promote the good life, the opportunity to act upon the new value.

"Integration is not merely a gathering together of experiences: It is itself a creative' experience. Where integration is in process, conflicts arise, and conflict is an initial step in moral growth."
(MacLean, 1934, p. 253)

Faith, MacLean said, is the substance of things hoped for, and hope, in turn, was derived from the substance of experience. If the things hoped for were good, enriching ones, the faith also would be strong and positive. But, again, this faith is a function of experience. "Children cannot be talked into a beautiful faith," (MacLean, 1934, p. 247) he wrote.

"Whatever experience contributes to making one love life, anticipates and determines a faith that embodies that love." (MacLean, 1934, p. 251) The basic emphasis in education, therefore, must be on the process itself, on the environment of social harmony.

Source: Liberal Religious Education Journal (Number Four, Spring 1990) Fahs and MacLean: A Living Heritage, Excerpts from "Fulfilling Channing's Challenge" by Jeanne Nieuwejaar (pages 7-32)

Handout 13: Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire, like Channing, viewed the purpose of education in a humanistic way. "The purpose of education," says Freire, "is humanization. . . To be fully human is to be a subject who acts upon and transforms the world, and in so doing, moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively." In Freire's analysis, dehumanization is that which comes about through experiencing the world with conscious alertness and interacting in the world in a creative engaged way. For him, the oppressed are submerged in the world, passionately shaped, controlled, and determined by the world-used for the purpose of others, but they are not active in the world. To be oppressed, says Freire, is to not know that your life has value, that there is intrinsic value in your life has---apart from what it does for or gives to others. It is to lose knowledge of who you are; to live without social agency- to not know yourself apart from being at the service of others.

The purpose of education for Freire is to follow a practice in which human beings rediscover the capacity to "consciously and critically experience the world" (to "vividly experience the world with alertness") and to act in the world as historic agents who have the power to create culture and society-to have the capacity to imagine, create, and shape alternatives to oppression, and therefore, to change the world. To do this is to simultaneously recover "knowledge of the self as intrinsically valuable" and useful to others. So, "recovery from oppression is the liberation of both our relationality and our inherent worth; they are not in opposition." In summary, oppression results in the absence of self-knowledge. Liberation (or freedom) is the recovery of the knowledge of one's intrinsic value (inherent worth and dignity) as well as of relationality to others.

Freire's pedagogy is developed as an educational practice that restores soul. (His language is that education as praxis is a process that humanizes.) We could say that the purpose of education is the salvation of souls; but the salvation of souls is not the release of souls from this world---it is the release of souls in this world. ["The purpose of religion is to allow us to unmask all the false faces of the world. The purpose of education is salvation. It is the release of the soul in this world."]

Freire's concept of "education as the practice of freedom" always involves profound trust in human beings, in radical trust (as compared to despair). The first thing the educator does is

work hard to discover the "thematics of the situation" by which he means is to pay attention to what's going on. Paying attention to situations in which people find themselves begins with the process of dialogue.

The second step -- posing the question -- embodies the grasping of hope. The question cannot be arbitrary, but must be motivated by humanistic concerns and grasps a hope. For example, if you lose historical consciousness, you are losing part of your connectedness in the world; and if you lose this connection, you also lose body and human agency, which produces dehumanization. So, to lose historical consciousness is a loss of what it means to be human-to receive history in a conscious, critical, and responsive way-a way that connects human beings to their world. This is the humanistic concern. There is also a hope that comes in asking: what do we need to do to regain historical consciousness. The hope that is grasped is that it is possible to be restored to this dimension of the self and the pursuit of how the hope can be fulfilled.

The third step is student and teacher become co-investigators into the problem posed. This means that Freire understands that the teacher does not have the answer to the question, but that in helping to formulate the question in confidence that the answer can be found. The teacher is the educational leader, but one who works side-by-side with the student-mediated by the world as they confront it together. Teacher, student, and the community all bring resources to the gathering and investigating the problem and its solutions. In taking the actions, the "ongoingness" of this process, more awareness is developed and new questions arrive. The result is that participants in this process become more alive, more engaged with the world. This is what he means by education as the practice of freedom -- the transformation of culture in liberating and humanizing direction. In Freire's model then, educational practice is not preparation for, but is itself social engagement and humanization.

Freire's method in steps:

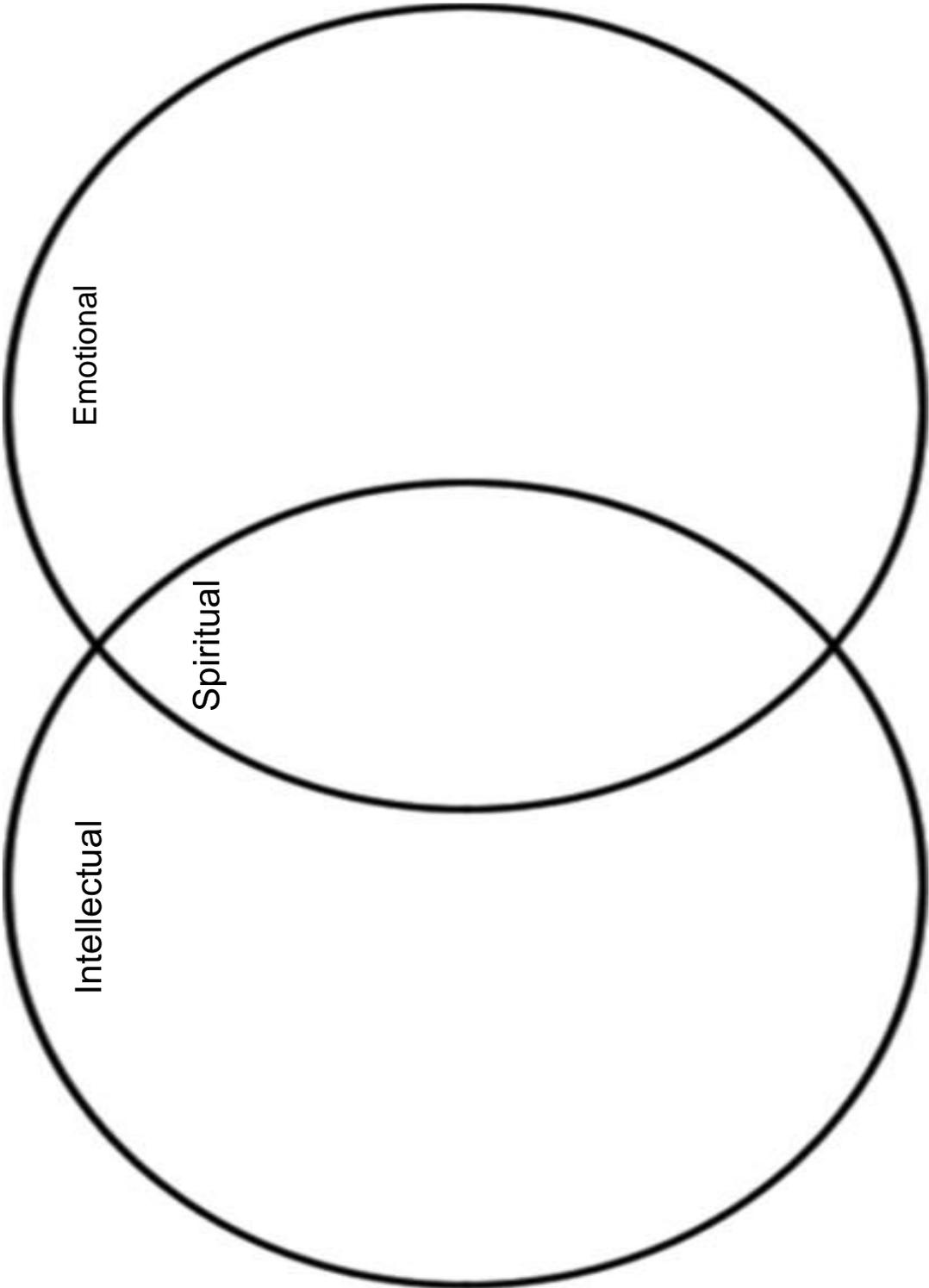
- Pay attention.
- Pose a question or problem.
- Investigate the question.
- Find the answer.
- Act on the answers.

Handout 14: John Westerhoff: Modes/Dimensions of Consciousness

Mode of Thinking	
Active-Intellectual	Responsive-Intuitive
Characterized by...	
Reflection	Experience
Order	Chaos
Prediction	Surrender
Logical Analysis	Mystery
Control	Imagination
	Surprise
Nurtured by...	
Sciences	Arts
Verbal Expression	Non-verbal activities
Expressed through...	
Signs	Symbols
Concepts	Myths
Reflective action	Rituals

Based on John Westerhoff, "Values for Today's Children," from an informal address delivered in 1979, and published in *Religious Education*, the REA journal, vol. 75, #3, May, June, 1980.

Handout 15: Head & Heart Activity



Handout 16: Tough Terms

FAITH

- Paul Tillich in his book *Dynamics of Faith* defines faith as “the state of being ultimately Concerned. The dynamics of faith are the dynamics of a [person’s] ultimate concern.”
- “Faith is often better understood as a verb than a noun, and as a process than as a possession.” — Frederick Buechner
- Faith development theorist James Fowler spoke of faith as a dynamic verb, as an active not static thing. He talked of “faithing”, something we do, a process of wrestling meaning from life and testing it through action and subjecting it again and again to the scrutiny of our minds, to the leap of our hearts, to the reality of action.
- Sam Keen in *Life Maps: Conversations on the Journey of Faith* looks at the developmental aspect of “faith as trust.”
- John Westerhoff defines faith as an expression of meaning revealed in a person’s life style, or the foundation upon which persons live their lives – that point of centeredness or ultimacy that underlies and is expressed abstractly in a world view and value system...in a person’s thought, feeling, and action.
- Thomas Groome suggests that faith is a lifelong developmental process involving the total person which addresses issues of ultimate concern, such as the meaning of life and death, the nature of being, the existence and nature of deity, and the like.
- Faith can be defined in a three-fold way – as including “belief”—the cognitive (best conclusions of our minds), as “feel—the affective (those allegiances of our hearts), or as “act”—the behavioral (those things we are willing to put our lives on the line for).
- One’s faith is extremely personal and individual, focusing not so much on creeds and doctrines per se, but more on those perceptions and values of an ultimate nature which are a part of that individual’s very being. Faith Development reflects the changing nature of one’s faith perceptions and understanding through the developmental journey of his or her life. It is through Faith Development that maturing adults function in increasingly complex and adequate responses to life’s ultimate questions and issues.

RELIGION

- “The religious way is the deep way, the way with a growing perspective and an expanding view. It is the way that dips into the heart of things, into personal feelings, yearnings, and hostilities that often must be buried and despised and left misunderstood... The religious way is the way that sees what physical eyes along fail to see, the intangibles at the heart of every phenomenon... The religious way is the way that touches universal relationships that goes high, wide and deep, that expands the feelings of kinship... And if God symbolizes or means these larger relationships, the religious way means finding God; but the work in itself is not too important. It is the enlarged and deepening experiences that bring the growing insights and that create the sustaining ambition ‘to find life and find it abundantly... When such a religious quality of exploration is the goal, any subject, any phenomenon, anything, animate or inanimate, human or animal, may be the starting point... Religion is the gestalt of all experiences.” — Sophia Lyon Fahs
- “Religion is that cluster of memories and myths, hopes and images, rites and customs that pulls together the life of a person or group into a meaningful whole... It lends coherence to life, furnishes a fund of meaning, gives unity to human events and guides people in making decisions. Religion, as its Latin root suggests, is what binds things together.” — Harvey Cox
- “Religion at its best is the distillation of images.” — Sharon Parks
- “Religion is the result of the tough and tender experiences of life...” — Richard Gilbert
- “Being religious means asking passionately the questions of the meaning of our existence and being willing to receive answers, even if the answers hurt. Such an idea of religion makes religion universally human, but it certainly differs from what is usually religion. It does not describe religion as the belief in the existence of gods or one God, and as a set of activities and institutions for the sake of relating oneself to these beings in thought, devotion, and obedience. No one can deny that the religions which have appeared in history are religious in this sense. Nevertheless, religion in its innermost nature is more than religion in this narrower sense. It is the state of being concerned about one’s one being and about being universally...Religion is the dimension of depth in all of life experiences...My religion is the answer to the question which I am.” — Paul Tillich

SPIRITUALITY

- Spirituality is the experience of a depth dimension to life, a dimension beyond the physical, the obvious, the provable, the universally shared.
- Spirituality is the inner quickening that comes with a sudden or long sought awareness which touches the core of one's existence.
- Spirituality is the heightened awareness of oneself in relationship to humankind and the universe.
- Spirituality is the relationship a person experiences with the universe and the meaning that relationship has for how that person orders and lives life. It includes personal experiences of insight and connection, interpretation and sharing of those experiences, and decisions to act in ways that bring one's life into harmony with the meanings those experiences have evoked.
- Spirituality is at the core of meaning-making—for those who experience it.
- Spirituality involves the relationship between one's consciousness and one's soul – and between one's being and the universe as a whole.
- Spirituality is an evocation of feelings that leads into the spiritual; extrasensory, transcendent experience.
- By spiritual, I mean the ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something larger and much more trust-worthy than our egos, with our own selves, with one another, with the worlds of history and nature, with the invisible winds of the spirit, and with the mystery of being alive. — Parker Palmer

ETHICS

- It's as basic as how people treat each other and it is the choices we make that can affect the course of our lives and the lives of others.
- Ethics refers to standards of conduct, standards that indicate how one should behave based on moral duties and values, which themselves are derived from principles of right and wrong. There are two aspects of ethics: The first involves the ability to discern right from wrong, good from evil, propriety from impropriety. The second involves the

commitment to do what is right, good, and proper. Ethics entails action; it is not just a topic to debate.

- There is the “Is” Ethics vs. “Ought” Ethics. Is ethics describes operational standards of behavior – that is, how an individual or group usually behaves, without reference to what should be. It is usually associated with cultural relativism. Ought ethics is prescriptive ethics; it is ethics concerned with discernment of and commitment to principles that establish “standards” of behavior to every person.
- “Ought” ethics prescribe how people should behave, prescribing standards for what “ought” to be without reference to how things actually are. The ideal behavior is based on specific values and principles, which define what is right, good, and proper.
- Ethical development concerns the principles and values about how people interact with other people. Our ethical development depends on our relationships – our relationships with our parents and family, our peer group and their values, and our faith community and living tradition, our world and planet.
- Our values are learned through experience. Our ethics are practiced in our living every day. Our ethical behavior grows out of our religious identity. From our core values and spirituality, we practice ethical decision-making, and our ethical behavior emerges. — Pat Hoertdoerfer

Handout 17: More Tough Terms

PRAYER

- Many of the past generation and many today have found three abiding values in prayer: The quiet meditation on life, The reaching out toward the universal and infinite, and The courageous facing of one's profoundest wishes. Let parents sense and share with their children the glory and mystery of everyday things. Let them look with sympathy upon humanity's age-long dilemmas. Let no question be taboo. The next generation can ill afford to have the deeper values deleted from the book of life. — Sophia Lyon Fahs
- Prayer ... is an effort to reach deep and to reach out and to become what we would like to be, and need to be, and ought to be. Proper prayer is not a petition to escape realities. It is an effort to face up to realities, to understand them, to deal with them. It is an expression of the desire to grow in spiritual stature, in courage, in strength, and in faith. The purpose of prayer is to transform those doing the praying, to lift them out of fear and selfishness into serenity, patience, determination, belonging. If we begin to approach prayer in this manner, it assumes an entirely new significance. — Rev. Jack Mendelsohn
- In rational prayer the soul may be said to accomplish three things important to its welfare: it withdraws within itself and defines its good, it accommodates itself to destiny, and it grows like the ideal which it conceives. — George Santayana
- The word prayer has almost as many meanings as there are people who pray. For some it is a conversation, a speaking to God; for others it is speaking to oneself; and for still others it is speaking aloud – to all who are gathered together, or to no one in particular. — Rev. Patricia Hoerdoerfer
- Prayers offer a skillful means for marrying an inner sense of peace with outer demands of the world. They help us to quiet and focus the agitated mind. They use the words to carry us beyond words...By silencing inner noise and distractions, prayer brings us into the presence of the moment. Its gift is an inner experience of prayerfulness in which the silent center of life's meaning is revealed. — from *Earth Prayers*

- The prayer of our souls is a petition for persistence; not for the one good deed, or single thought, but deed on deed, and thought on thought, until day calling unto day shall make a life worth living.

THEOLOGY

- Theology comes from two Greek words: theos, which is commonly interpreted as “God;” and logia, which means “sayings.” Based purely on a linguistic translation then, theology means “the sayings of God”—Who is God? Where is God? What is God? How one might come to know God? In more contemporary terms, we may speak of theology as being in dialogue about that to which we give ultimate value and meaning. Some would add that theology is rational discourse about God, but I would disagree since religion is itself non-rational. It is based strictly in faith.
- Daniel Migliore evokes the classical definition of St. Augustine defining theology as “faith seeking understanding: in relation to ourselves—acknowledging, of course, that we can never completely eliminate our own subjectivity. One would begin with faith statement and then continue to test their beliefs against other faith claims. That’s what theology really is—faith seeking understanding, seeking to understand our own beliefs in relation to other beliefs. It is also critical reflection on the meaning of whatever we understand as ultimate reality; which may or may not include a concept of the divine.
- Theology begins with a question (or more accurately, a series of questions) which we all come to ask at some point in life, even if we don’t articulate them. Theology tries to make sense of the world. The basic question it asks is: why? why? Unitarian Universalists tend to ask that “why” question a lot.
- Why am I here? Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? Is there something more—something beyond all the uncertainty that we feel and see? And when we explore it, we can go further. Why is there suffering? Why is there evil? What will happen to me when I die? — Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley

Handout 18: Unitarian Universalist Principles & Sources

WE, THE MEMBER CONGREGATIONS OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION, COVENANT TO AFFIRM AND PROMOTE:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

THE LIVING TRADITION WE SHARE DRAWS FROM MANY SOURCES:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

Handout 19

On-line Resources for Religious Education

Timelines:

www.timetoast.com – create timelines which can be shared via the internet site

www.tiki-toki.com – create timelines which can be shared and even created as a group project

Concept Mapping:

www.wordle.net – generates a “word cloud” from text you provide which you can then tweak with different fonts and graphic styles; the word cloud gives prominence to those words used most often in your text

www.tagxedo.com – also allows the creation of word clouds with different fonts and graphic designs

www.bubbl.us – colorful and easy to use concept mapping tool to organize concepts, reinforce information and process ideas through visual “bubbles”

Art/Animations/Video Projects:

<http://www.powtoon.com/> -- a Do-It-Yourself animated presentation tool for video presentations, social media clips, and more

www.doink.com – draw or use community-generated art or flash-style animations for presentations

www.makebeliefscomix.com – communicate through comic strip art, including choice of characters and different emotions including some characters with physical disabilities

Charts & Graphs:

www.chartle.net – create charts and graphs

www.popplet.com – collaborative way to explore ideas, record thoughts and collect inspiration from others plus synthesize information through creation of charts and graphs

Collaboration Tools:

www.wallwisher.com – for a different take on discussion boards, wallwisher offers the chance to have discussions via post-it notes on a “wall”

www.storybird.com – allows two (or more) people to create a story in round-robin fashion by writing their own text and inserting pictures; they then have the option of sharing their Storybird privately or publicly on the network

www.popplet.com – collaborative way to explore ideas, record thoughts and collect inspiration from others plus synthesize information through creation of charts and graphs

[Zoho Notebook](#) -- online interactive collaborative applications with both audio and video capabilities

Google docs -- online resource for sharing and collaborating on documents

[Penzu](#) – create personal journal, online diary or take notes on graphics that look like real notebook paper

[Scriblink](#) -- instant notebook for you to share with your friends at home and at school

[Webnote](#) -- create an instant web page for class notes. An RSS feed is provided for keeping track of updates. Share the url to allow others to add information and notes.

[Skrbl](#) -- instant collaboration through web whiteboard

[Notesake](#) – create individual and group notes to share which can be revised independently of your own notes

<http://www.collba.com/> -- chat with teammates in private rooms, share files, links + code snippets all in real time

www.moodle.com – open source software which allows for creating webinars, podcasts and more

www.pinterest.com – acts like a bulletin board in allowing you to pin items by topic

Interactive Assessments:

www.socrative.com -- smart student response system that empowers teachers to engage their classrooms through a series of educational exercises and games via smartphones, laptops, and tablets

www.jeopardylabs.com – create “Jeopardy” style games easily and share with participants

Videos & Documentaries:

www.snagfilms.com/films/browse -- access to thousands of documentaries and short features on a whole variety of topics

<http://documentaryheaven.com/> -- another great source for documentaries and short features on a variety of topics including history, science, politics and more

Educationally-Based Social Media Sites:

www.twiducate.com – a Twitter-style social media and sharing site designed for teachers sharing with their students and for students to share with one another

www.edmoto.com -- social media website for teachers and students that also allows the teacher to post assignments, special notifications, quizzes and polls

Reference Resources:

www.easybib.com – for information on the best way to list citations for different sources

www.creativecommons.org – resource for copyright-free multimedia

www.cooltoolsforschools.wikispaces.com -- links and information comparing different presentation, collaborative, teaching, mapping and audio/video tools available for teaching

www.freetech4teachers.com – an ongoing blog with information and links to free web 2.0 tools for teachers and the great ways to use them

Handout 20: For Further Reading

Class & Socioeconomic Justice

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Multiculturalism

Jones, Paula Cole, ed. *Encounters: Poems about Race, Ethnicity & Identity*. Boston, MA: Skinner House Books, 2011.

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Multiracial/Multi-ethnic Families

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