

# **Unitarian Universalist Theology**

## **Renaissance Module**

### **ONLINE VERSION LEADER GUIDE**

By Lynn Ungar and Sara Lewis



UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
ASSOCIATION

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## About the Authors

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**Sara Lewis**, unchurched in her early years, found Unitarian Universalism in her teen years and has served as Director of Religious Education at the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Olympia, Washington since 2008. Sara earned a Masters in Teaching from The Evergreen State College and very briefly taught high school chemistry before realizing that was not the right fit for her. Fortunately, religious education was the perfect fit. She earned her RE Credential at the Master Level in 2014 and has served in chapter leadership and on various committees for LREDA. Sara joined the UUA's RE Credentialing Committee in June 2017.

### Acknowledgement

We are grateful for the technical and editorial assistance of Alicia LeBlanc, Ministerial Credentialing Administrator, both in the module documents and especially the online presence!

## Overview of Sessions

### Session 1: What Is Theology?

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Introductions	20 minutes
Activity 3: Covenant	5 minutes
Activity 4: Orientation	10 minutes
Activity 5: What is Theology?	25 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 6: Our Theological Diversity	20 minutes
Activity 7: Our Theological House	20 minutes
Activity 8: Closing	10 minutes
<b>Total Time:</b>	<b>2 hours</b>

### Session 2: Early Unitarianism and Universalism

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	25 minutes
Activity 3: Early Unitarianism	25 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 4: Early Universalism	25 minutes
Activity 5: On Religious Instruction	25 minutes
Activity 6: Closing	10 minutes
<b>Total Time:</b>	<b>2 hours</b>

### Session 3: Expanding Beyond Christian Roots

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	15 minutes
Activity 3: Transcendentalism	35 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 4: Introduction to Humanism	35 minutes
Activity 5: Fahs as Theologian	15 minutes
Activity 6: Closing	10 minutes
<b>Total Time:</b>	<b>2 hours</b>

### Session 4: More 20th Century Influences

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	15 minutes
Activity 3: James Luther Adams	15 minutes
Activity 4: Clarence Skinner and Forrest Church	15 minutes

<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 5: Process Theology	15 minutes
Activity 6: Liberation Theology	25 minutes
Activity 7: Paolo Freire	15 minutes
Activity 8: Closing	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2 hours</b>

### **Session 5: 21st Century UU Theology**

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	20 minutes
Activity 3: 21st Century Theologies	25 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 4: The Prophetic Church	30 minutes
Activity 5: Where Are We Headed?	15 minutes
Activity 6: Final Projects	10 minutes
Activity 7: Closing	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2 hours</b>

### **Session 6: Closing Session**

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	10 minutes
Activity 3: Final Projects Part 1	35 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 4: Final Projects Part 2	35 minutes
Activity 5: Next Steps	20 minutes
Activity 6: Closing	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2 hours</b>

## Introduction to the Module

Welcome to the [Unitarian Universalist Theology Renaissance module](#). Theology is traditionally thought of as the study of the nature of God and religious truth, and in this program, we consider theology broadly to include the study of belief and meaning. A central task of any Unitarian Universalist religious education program is to help people of all ages develop their own understanding of central human questions such as *What am I called to do with my life? What is evil and how do I respond? What is the biggest thing to which I belong?* The answers a person gives to any of these big questions may change over time, and will be based not only in that person's experience, but also in wisdom gathered through the ages.

In this module, religious educators explore a number of key theologies and theologians from our Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist heritages, as well as influences from other traditions. It asks participants to engage with the views presented and offer their own considered viewpoints. This program, then, invites religious educators into both a deeper knowledge of our liberal religious heritage and a more profound understanding of their own beliefs, thereby equipping them to help others on their theological journeys.

## Module Leaders

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

- Knowledgeable about Unitarian Universalism and religious education
- Committed to Unitarian Universalism and to the professional development of religious educators
- Approved as a module leader by the UUA's Renaissance Office
- Effective at facilitating group process, especially in an online setting
- Able to thoroughly prepare for each session, including becoming comfortable with the technology used
- Willing to track participant participation in sessions and assignments

- Willing to review and approve final project plans two weeks prior to the final session
- Willing to offer honest feedback and suggestions.

While extensive knowledge of Unitarian Universalist history or theology is helpful, it is not a requirement for effectively leading this program. Willingness and ability to adequately prepare for each session, to research answers to questions raised by participants, and to encourage participants' own research is far more valuable for creating a good learning experience than is extensive knowledge of the various strains of Unitarian Universalist theology.

Leader Resource 2, Leading an Online Renaissance Module, provides detailed information. After you have reviewed it, contact the Renaissance Office with any additional questions you have.

Prior to each session, leaders should:

- Email participants with information about the meeting login, shared documents folder, and any other necessary information. Leader Resource 1 provides a sample welcome letter.
- Edit the Appendix to this Leader Guide to include links to online material you may wish to provide while leading online discussion. The Appendix is designed to guide you in leading the online sessions.
- Read the designated selections from the readings. Review suggested Reflection Questions. Choose which are most appropriate for the group and context, or create your own questions.
- Test the technology for online sessions and prepare to offer guidance to participants. It is very helpful for leaders to schedule a brief run-through before the first session so they will be able to help everyone feel comfortable with the

technology and to address any problems. Plan to be online at least 15 minutes prior to the start of each webinar to ensure time for troubleshooting.

- Decide which leader will be responsible for sending reminders to participants before each session, recording the session, and tracking/responding to participant posts to the session's discussion forum and or shared folder.
- Review the slides for each session. Make any adjustments needed for the group.

## Participant Requirements

This module is an online learning experience comprised of six two-hour webinars (sessions) with reading and assignments for each. Credit will be offered for full participation in the module. Full participation includes:

- Online attendance at all webinars
- Reading, reflection, and activities to prepare for each session, which will require about two or three hours' time per session. Participants will need to purchase or borrow the book [\*A People So Bold\*](#), edited by John Gibb Millspaugh, available from the UUA Bookstore (also as an e-book).
- Discussion. Each session includes questions for reflection on the readings which will form the basis for discussion in each session. Participants are expected to be fully prepared to participate in online discussions after reflecting on the questions, perhaps in a journal.
- Written assignments. After each webinar, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions and think of a way they might share in their professional work what they have learned. They need not actually do a project that shares their learning before the next session, but are asked to propose it to the group in written form (roughly 250 words) in the session's online discussion forum. Assuming two weeks between webinars, the written sharing should be posted in the week after the webinar so that the following week can be devoted to the reading and preparation for the next session.



- A final project and presentation that shows a way to use in their professional work what they have learned about Unitarian Universalist theology.
- Submission of a [final module evaluation](#) within a week after the module ends.

## Module Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Develop a sense of the broad scope of Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist theology and become familiar with some of the theologians and thought leaders, historical and modern, who have contributed to Unitarian Universalist thought
- Understand some of both Unitarian and Universalist theological foundations of Unitarian Universalism
- Understand significant theological movements such as Transcendentalism, Humanism, Process Theology, and Liberation Theology that have shaped our contemporary religious movement
- Develop and articulate their own point of view on key theological questions
- Apply theological understandings to real-life liturgical and educational forums to help people of all ages explore theological questions
- Nurture a theology of justice and service in individuals and congregations.

## Reading

Each session features four or more substantial readings, as well as a variety of brief quotations. Most readings for this module are included in the Participant Guide ([PDF](#), 60 pages), but for Session 5, participants are asked to read essays found in [A People So Bold](#) edited by John Gibb Millspaugh available from the UUA Bookstore (also available as an e-book). It is the responsibility of the participant to obtain a copy of the book.

Note: [Video](#) excerpts from the *A People So Bold* conference are available on YouTube and a study guide is available [here](#) .

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Use these reflection questions to guide your reading. They will provide the basis for the session discussions.

### **Session 1: What is Theology?**

#### **Reading 1: What is Theology?**

- What is your most important theological question right now? Has it been different at other times in your life?
- Discuss the theological statements shared in the discussion forum.
- What are some instances in which you have engaged children and youth in theological learning?
- What are some instances in which you have engaged in theological learning with adults?

#### **Reading 2: Our Theological Diversity**

- A common fallacy about Unitarian Universalism is that “we can believe anything we want to”. What theologies do you think are incompatible with Unitarian Universalism? (e.g., would a sign saying “God hates fags” be compatible?)
- Which do you think is most vital to Unitarian Universalism: our differences or our similarities? Why?

#### **Reading 3: Our Theological House**

- Rebecca Parker first introduced the metaphor of the theological house at the October 2003 Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) Fall Conference “The Theology of Religious Education”. How does this “hope-filled religious framework” resonate in today’s political and cultural climate?

### **Session 2: Early Unitarianism and Universalism**

#### **Reading 1: Unitarianism**

- Who is your role model as the highest example of human morality?

- How does your theological understanding of the nature of humans (good/bad/nature/nurture/flawed/perfectible) ground your vision of religious education?
- What is the social and theological context in which you are leading religious education?

### **Reading 2: Universalism**

- How would you define “salvation”? What are we saved *for* or *from*? Does the notion of salvation hold any theological weight for you? Do you see salvation as something that people create for themselves, something that people create for one another, or something that is granted by God?
- What is your definition of evil? What does universal love mean to you? Are these concepts related to our seven Principles?

### **Reading 3: On Religious Instruction**

- How would you describe the “chief end of religious instruction?” What, at heart, do you think religious education should do?
- Compare and contrast Channing’s and Sargent Murray’s methods of religious instruction. What might it reveal about their theology?

## **Session 3: Expanding Beyond Christian Roots**

### **Reading 1: Transcendentalism – Margaret Fuller**

- With whom do you have conversations that expand your thinking?
- What is an example of an educational moment that you have shared with students in which everyone present learned through conversation and exploration, rather than a teacher dispensing knowledge?

### **Reading 2: Transcendentalism – Theodore Parker**

- In his time, Parker was “shunned” by most Unitarians. How might contemporary UU’s respond to his theology?
- To what present-day issues and concerns might Parker’s ideas apply? Can you imagine sermon topics that would draw thousands?

### **Reading 3: UU Spirituality by Barry Andrews**

- How would you say that Transcendentalism connects with contemporary Unitarian Universalism? Do you think there are ways in which Transcendentalist spirituality does not mesh with contemporary experience? What, if anything, is lacking, or off the mark?

#### **Reading 4: Humanism**

- What do you think is lost or gained when God is removed from religion?
- How do these readings resonate with you in the context of your own congregation? Your own beliefs?
- What impels you to do good? What is the theological or philosophical grounding that pushes you to work for justice and to care for others?
- How would you describe human nature? Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the ability and desire of human beings to create a better world?
- How would you define humanism? What resonates within humanism for you? Your congregation?

#### **Reading 5: Fahs as Theologian**

- In what ways do you see the influence of Fahs' *theology* at work in faith development in your setting?
- What aspects of Fahs educational philosophy are still relevant today? Are there ways in which liberal religious education has moved beyond the ideas Fahs espoused?
- In her article about Fahs, Lucinda Nolan described reaction to Fahs as "prophetic theology politely ignored" because she was a woman and she worked with children. Does this have any resonance today?

### **Session 4: More 20th Century Influences**

#### **Reading 1: James Luther Adams**

- Do you think that Adams's criticism of liberal religion is justified? Thinking of James Luther Adams' experience in Nazi Germany as described in the UU World article, does Unitarian Universalism do an adequate job of standing up to evil and injustice? Does your congregation? How does your religious education program

lead children, youth and adults, in the words of our second Source, “to confront powers and structures of evil”?

- What five characteristics do you think best define religious liberalism? What differences do you see between the five smooth stones and the UUA’s Principles and Sources?
- Are individualism and communal responsibility opposite poles? What is the proper relationship between the two? How does this tension between individualism and community play out in your congregation? In your religious education classrooms?

### **Reading 2: Clarence Skinner and Forrest Church**

- According to Rev. Taves, for Clarence Skinner, what Rebecca Parker calls “love first” was city infrastructure, labor legislation, birth control, and building codes. What is “love first” for you? What is “love first” in your setting?
- In what ways do you engage children, youth and adults in creating the “kingdom on earth?”
- Forrest Church uses the image of the “Cathedral of the World” to describe his understanding of how universal truth is expressed through different religious points of view. What image or metaphor would you use to describe your own understanding of how diverse people find religious truth?
- Church says that: “Religion is our human response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die.” What does that statement mean to you? How does the knowledge that you will one day be gone affect how you live your life? How does it affect the religious beliefs that matter to you?

### **Reading 3: Process Theology**

- Whitehead was a mathematician, other process thinkers were scientists – how does this theology agree with what you understand of the scientific worldview, and how does it differ from it?
- What do you think of this conception of God? Is this understanding of God reflected in our humanist/atheist vs. theist debates? Would lifting up this understanding be of benefit to Unitarian Universalism, and why?

## **Reading 4: Liberation Theology**

- In what ways do you find your personal theology to be in sympathy with liberation theology?
- In what ways do you find liberation theology compatible with Unitarian Universalism?
- What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of liberal theology? Where might it fall short?
- How can Unitarian Universalists engage authentically with Liberation Theology? Are there systemic or cultural norms within Unitarian Universalism that would have to change if we took Liberation Theology seriously?
- Can you point to examples of Freire's influence on Unitarian Universalist religious education? How are we engaged in a pedagogy of the oppressed or a pedagogy of hope? And, if you don't think we are engaged in such a pedagogy, what would we need to change in order to be so?

## **Session 5: 21st Century UU Theology**

### **Reading 1: 21st Century Theologies**

- Thandeka describes Unitarian Universalists as having a common emotional experience with the mental space to explain it in different ways theologically. What have you found to be a common emotional experience in Unitarian Universalism?
- Thandeka says we "love beyond belief", but Rebecca Parker identifies limits to what we can believe as UU's. Are the limits described by Parker true for you, and do you see any other limits to belief besides those she describes?
- How do you answer the question "What do UU's believe, anyway?" How would you explain UU belief/theology to children? Youth? Adults?
- How could the work of religious educators promote an ethic of risk in our Unitarian Universalist communities? How can we work toward becoming communities of resistance?

- Welch states, “we cannot be moral alone.” How do you react to that statement, and how might it ground your work as a religious educator?

### **Reading 2: The Prophetic Church**

- What theology grounds the justice work of your congregation? What theology grounds your own work for justice?
- How does your congregation embody radical caring? What makes those acts of caring radical?
- How is your congregation oriented toward the future? How does it serve those you hope to have as part of your community and not just those who have participated in the past?
- How is your congregation engaged in “facing the truth” about racism?
- Do you agree with Rasor’s principles? Are there others you would add?
- How do you provide opportunities for participants in your religious education program to unlearn limiting assumptions and world views?
- How do you stay engaged in social change efforts?
- Describe an environment that you have experienced as teacher and/or learner that promoted engagement in a cultural shift.

### **Assignments**

In addition to the assigned reading before each session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions after each webinar and think of a plan to share in their professional work what they have learned. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to share it with the group in written form (roughly 250 words) in the session’s discussion forum. Assuming two weeks between webinars, the written sharing should be posted in the week after a webinar so that the following week can be devoted to the reading and preparation for the next session. Let participants know your expectations. At the end of the module, each participant will have access to a wide variety of ideas for sharing UU theology in their work.

## **Find Out More**

Each session concludes with a list of books, articles, and websites for further exploration. Let participants know that these resources may be particularly helpful in developing a final project.

## **Final Project**

Participants will prepare a final project that shows a way to use what they have learned about Unitarian Universalist theology in their professional work, working alone or as a group of up to four people. An individual project should take eight to ten minutes to present; a group project should take 15-20 minutes.

To seek ideas for the final project, participants may review ideas for applying learning that have been shared over the course of the module and review the resources in each session's "Find Out More" section. The project can be a development of an idea from the group's collection or something entirely new. Any electronic format may be used in presentation, for example, a slide show/PowerPoint; uploaded or screen-shared documents or flyers; video; audio; and shares from Pinterest, Tumblr, or a blog site are all possibilities. Participants should submit a project proposal to the module leaders for approval two weeks before the final session. Leaders may offer suggestions or request revisions in your plan. Participants will be asked to post their final projects in a shared folder by a date before the start of the final session.



## Leader Resource 1: Sample Welcome Letter

Dear Friends:

We, [names of leaders], are really looking forward to leading the Online [name of module] Renaissance Module which begins [date]. We look forward to getting to know you as we explore [from module goals].

### **Webinar Dates**

We will gather for [# of webinars] online sessions according to the following schedule: [list date, time and log in info if available].

Attendance is expected for all sessions.

You will need access to a private section of UUA.org for the [name of module] where you will find required course materials, meetings links for each webinar, and access to a closed forum for use by participants to post reflections. In order to access these pages and to be added to the group, you need a UUA.org account and username.

To create your UUA.org account:

1. Go to [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org), click "Create Account" in the upper right corner, and create an account. You can enter a username and password or log in using Facebook or Google.
2. Email the Renaissance Office ([renaissance@uua.org](mailto:renaissance@uua.org)) and provide your username. You'll receive an email confirmation that you've been added to the group.
3. Once you have been added to the group, access the module materials by logging in and going to the Online Modules page: <http://www.uua.org/careers/re/renaissance/online>. Your module will appear in the left side menu. **Do not wait until the last minute to access the materials online!**

### **Technical requirements**

We strongly suggest use of a web camera and headset for audio; being able to see one another is critical to building a sense of community. A headset minimizes your ambient noise, which can be distracting to other participants.

The webinar platform is Zoom, which you can download from [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us). The meeting link for each webinar is posted on each Session's page.

Previous participants have reported technical challenges when using a tablet or iPad so a laptop or desktop is encouraged. You may also want to have a phone handy in case you need to call in instead of using computer audio.

### **Participant preparation**

Online modules require advance preparation; you will do some reading, activities, and reflection before each webinar as described on each session web page.

Completion of this module entitles you to the same credit as an in-person module and counts towards your Renaissance certification or RE Credentialing portfolio. The expectation is that you will attend all of the online sessions. We understand that you all have busy lives and an unavoidable absence may occur. Each session will be recorded and the recording will be posted in the shared folder. Participants will be expected to view the recording as soon as possible as well as complete all required forum posts for the missed session.

[anything else you want to say about the module]

[leader names, email, and phone #]

## Leader Resource 2: List of [Slides](#)

### Session 1

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Session at a Glance
- 3 Reminder!
- 4 Chalice
- 5 Introductions
- 6 Covenant
- 7 Covenant
- 8 Covenant
- 9 Covenant
- 10 Covenant
- 11 Covenant
- 12 Orientation
- 13 Renaissance Program
- 14 Renaissance Modules
- 15 What Is Theology?
- 16 Break
- 17 Our Theological Diversity
- 18 Our Theological Diversity
- 19 Our Theological House
- 20 Before Next Time
- 21 Closing Words

### Session 2

- 22 (2.1) Welcome
- 23 (2.2) Session at a Glance
- 24 (2.3) Reminder!
- 25 (2.4) Chalice
- 26 (2.5) Sharing
- 27 (2.6) Early Unitarianism
- 28 (2.7) Break
- 29 (2.8) Early Universalism
- 30 (2.9) On Religious Instruction
- 31 (2.10) Before Next Time
- 32 (2.11) Closing Words

### Session 3

- 33 (3.1) Welcome
- 34 (3.2) Session at a Glance
- 35 (3.3) Reminder!
- 36 (3.4) Chalice
- 37 (3.5) Sharing

38 (3.6)	Transcendentalism
39 (3.7)	Transcendentalism
40 (3.8)	Transcendentalism
41 (3.9)	Break
42 (3.10)	Humanism
43 (3.11)	Humanism
44 (3.12)	Fahs as Theologian
45 (3.13)	Before Next Time
46 (3.14)	Closing Words

#### **Session 4**

47 (4.1)	Welcome
48 (4.2)	Session at a Glance
49 (4.3)	Reminder!
50 (4.4)	Chalice
51 (4.5)	Sharing
52 (4.6)	James Luther Adams
53 (4.7)	James Luther Adams
54 (4.8)	Clarence Skinner
55 (4.9)	Forrest Church
56 (4.10)	Forrest Church
57 (4.11)	Break
58 (4.12)	Process Theology
59 (4.13)	Liberation Theology
60 (4.14)	Liberation Theology
61(4.15)	Paulo Freire
62 (4.16)	Before Next Time
63 (4.17)	Before Next Time
64 (4.18)	Closing Words

#### **Session 5**

65 (5.1)	Welcome
66 (5.2)	Session at a Glance
67 (5.3)	Reminder!
68 (5.4)	Chalice
69 (5.5)	Sharing
70 (5.6)	21st Century Theologies
71 (5.7)	21st Century Theologies
72 (5.8)	Break
73 (5.9)	The Prophetic Church
74 (5.10)	The Prophetic Church
75 (5.11)	Where Are We Headed?
76 (5.12)	Final Projects
77 (5.13)	Before Next Time
78 (5.14)	Closing Words

**Session 6**

79 (6.1)	Welcome
80 (6.2)	Session at a Glance
81 (6.3)	Reminder!
82 (6.4)	Chalice
83 (6.5)	Sharing
84 (6.6)	Presentations
85 (6.7)	Break
86 (6.8)	Presentations
87 (6.9)	Next Steps
88 (6.10)	Evaluation
89 (6.11)	Closing Words

## Pre-Module Assignments

To access the module pages online, each leader and participant must have a UUA login. Instructions are included in the welcome letter (Leader Resource 1) which leaders should send to participants at least two weeks in advance:

*To create your UUA profile: Go to [UUA.org](http://www.uua.org) and click on “create account” at the top right and follow instructions on the page.*

*Once you’ve gotten the confirmation, email [renaissance@uua.org](mailto:renaissance@uua.org) with your profile name so that you can be added to the group.*

*To access the module online, log in with your UUA profile and go to the Online Modules page: <http://www.uua.org/careers/re/renaissance/online> Your module will appear in the left side menu.*

### Post an Introduction

A week before the first meeting, leaders should post an introduction in the Session 1 Discussion Forum and invite participants to introduce themselves, as well. Ask (and model) that participants include their current involvement with religious education, their location, and anything else that would help the group to get to know them better, along with a brief statement of their own (current) theology. You may use these words, or your own:

*“We arrive out of many singular rooms,” writes Unitarian Universalist minister Kenneth Patton in a frequently used responsive reading, Reading 443 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Each person in this group brings a unique set of experiences, skills and interests to our common endeavor.*

### Opening and Closing Words

Leaders will select opening and closing words for Sessions 1 and 6. Before or during Session 1, invite participants to volunteer to share opening or closing words of their choosing, preferably related to session themes, for Sessions 2-5. Prior to the first session, post a sign-up in the folder designated for shared documents.

# SESSION 1: What Is Theology?

## SESSION GOALS

- Answer the question, “What is theology?”
- Explore and share resources
- Engage in articulating one’s personal theology and understanding one’s role in the evolution of UU theology
- Identify the theological questions involved in the faith development of children, youth and adults

## SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Introductions	20 minutes
Activity 3: Covenant	5 minutes
Activity 4: Orientation	10 minutes
Activity 5: What Is Theology?	25 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 6: Our Theological Diversity	20 minutes
Activity 7: Our Theological House	20 minutes
Activity 8: Closing	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2 hours</b>

## PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated readings.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Decide if you will use the slides for this session and prepare.
- Select opening and closing words to be shared by leaders. You may browse the UUA [Worship Web](#) or look in [Lifting Our Voices: Readings in the Living Tradition](#).
- Set up a shared folder for final projects and provide link to participants and UUA Renaissance Office.

- In the shared folder, create a document where participants can sign up to contribute opening and closing words in Sessions 2-5.
- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance and troubleshooting to participants.
- Remember to record the webinar! After the webinar, post the recording in the shared folder on the session page.

## **ACTIVITY 1: Opening (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 1, Slides 1-4

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Welcome participants and invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space. Share the opening words you have selected.

## **ACTIVITY 2: Introductions (20 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 1, Slide 5

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Leaders should introduce themselves, and then ask participants to introduce themselves. Ask participants whether they wish to add anything to the introductions they posted prior to the webinar.

## **ACTIVITY 3: Covenant (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**



- Session 1, Slides 6-11

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Invite participants to create a covenant for how they will work together in this group.

Suggest these agreements:

- Arrive on time to module sessions. Test equipment and gather materials before the appointed gathering time.
- Read the materials in advance of the session. Take notes that will be helpful to you in the discussion.
- Post completed assignments to the session discussion forum at least \_\_\_\_ days ahead of the sessions.
- As time allows, read other participants' posts before the next session.
- Be aware of your participation in discussions, and make every effort to share the floor.

Propose a process for making sure that all have a chance to share during discussions. Invite suggestions for making the process smoother. This process will vary according to the technology being used. For example, will the leader call on people to speak or will participants just “jump in”? How will you use the chat box in discussion? Will the software platform allow people to “raise hands”? Make sure all understand the agreed-upon process. Post the covenant in the folder designated for shared documents.

## **ACTIVITY 4: Orientation (10 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 1, Slides 12-14

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

If you haven't done so before the webinar, give a short tour of the features of the chosen platform, such as how to mute/unmute, location and use of chat box, etc. Share your screen and review the module web pages, pointing out the readings, assignments, discussion forums, and shared folder.

Invite participants to sign up to share opening and closing words for Sessions 2-5. Direct them to the sign-up document in the shared folder. Make sure they know how to access two helpful resources, the UUA [Worship Web](#) and [Lifting Our Voices: Readings in the Living Tradition](#), published in 2015.

## **ACTIVITY 5: What Is Theology? (25 min)**

### **READING**

- Session 1, Introduction
- Session 1, Reading 1: Understanding Theology

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 1, Slide 15

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using these guiding questions or questions of your own:

- What is your most important theological question right now? Has it been different at other times in your life?
- Discuss the theological statements shared in the discussion forum.
- What are some instances in which you have engaged children and youth in theological learning?

- What are some instances in which you have engaged in theological learning with adults?

## **BREAK (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 1, Slide 16

## **ACTIVITY 6: Our Theological Diversity (20 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 1, Reading 2: Our Theological Diversity

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 1, Slides 17-18

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using these guiding questions or questions of your own:

- A common fallacy about Unitarian Universalism is that “we can believe anything we want to.” What theologies do you think are incompatible with Unitarian Universalism? (e.g., would a sign saying “God hates fags” be compatible?)
- Which do you think is more vital to Unitarian Universalism, our differences or our similarities? Why?

## **ACTIVITY 7: Our Theological House (20 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 1, Reading 3: Our Theological House

## **MATERIALS**

- Session 1, Slide 19

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using this guiding question or a question of your own:

- Rebecca Parker first introduced the metaphor of the theological house at the October 2003 Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) Fall Conference “The Theology of Religious Education.” How does this “hope-filled religious framework” resonate in today’s political and cultural climate?

## **ACTIVITY 8: Closing (10 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 1, Slides 20-21

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from Session 1 and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to share it with the group in written form (roughly 250 words) in the session’s discussion forum. At the end of the module, each participant will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing UU theology in their work. Assuming two weeks between webinars, the written sharing should be posted in the week after the webinar so that the following week can be devoted to the reading and preparation for the next session.

Ask for volunteers to do the [opening and closing words](#) for the next session and remind participants of the date of the next webinar. Also point out the Find Out More section in the Participant Guide.

Share the closing words.

## SESSION 2: Early Unitarianism and Universalism

### SESSION GOALS

- Briefly explore the early beginnings of Unitarian and Universalist theology in Europe
- Understand the context out of which American Unitarianism and American Universalism developed
- Understand the core theological principles of historical Unitarianism and Universalism
- Explore some of the foundational works of William Ellery Channing and understand the continuing influence of Channing on faith development today

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	25 minutes
Activity 3: Early Unitarianism	25 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 4: Early Universalism	25 minutes
Activity 5: On Religious Instruction	25 minutes
Activity 6: Closing	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2 hours</b>

### PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated readings.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Decide if you will use the slides for this session and prepare.
- Remember to record the webinar! After the webinar, post the recording in the shared folder on the session page.

## **ACTIVITY 1: Opening (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 2, Slides 1-4

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Welcome participants and invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space. Ask the designated volunteer to share the opening words. Remind participants of the covenant posted in the shared documents folder.

## **ACTIVITY 2: Sharing (25 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 2, Slide 5

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another's writings. Affirm everyone's good work.

## **ACTIVITY 3: Early Unitarianism (25 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 2, Introduction
- Session 2, Reading 1 Unitarianism

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 2, Slide 6

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Channing indicates that the proper role of humanity is to pursue “likeness to God.” He believed that the crucial purpose of our relationship with Jesus is to follow Jesus’ example as a model of the highest moral life humans can achieve so we can become ever more imbued with the virtues that are perfected in God. Lead a discussion using these guiding questions or questions of your own:

- Who is your role model as the highest example of human morality?
- How does your theological understanding of the nature of humans (good/bad/nature/nurture/flawed/perfectible) ground your vision of religious education?
- What is the social and theological context in which you are leading religious education?

### **BREAK (5 minutes)**

#### **MATERIALS**

- Session 2, Slide 7

### **ACTIVITY 4: Early Universalism (25 minutes)**

#### **READING**

- Session 2, Reading 2: Universalism

#### **MATERIALS**

- Session 2, Slide 8

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**



Lead a discussion using these guiding questions, or questions of your own:

- How would you define “salvation”? What are we saved *for* or *from*? Does the notion of salvation hold any theological weight for you? Do you see salvation as something that people create for themselves, something that people create for one another, or something that is granted by God?
- What is your definition of evil? What does universal love mean to you? Are these concepts related to our seven Principles?

## **ACTIVITY 5: On Religious Instruction (25 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 2, Reading 3: On Religious Instruction

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 2, Slide 9

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using these guiding questions or questions of your own:

- How would you describe the “chief end of religious instruction?” What, at heart, do you think religious education should do?
- Compare and contrast Channing’s and Sargent Murray’s methods of religious instruction. What might it reveal about their theology?

## **ACTIVITY 6: Closing (15 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 2, Slides 10-11

## DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from Session 2 and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to communicate it to the group in written form (roughly 250 words) in this session's discussion forum. Say that at the end of the module, each participant will have access to a wide variety of ideas for sharing UU theology in their work. Assuming two weeks between webinars, the written sharing should be posted in the week after the webinar so that the following week can be devoted to the reading and preparation for the next session; let participants know your expectations.

Ask for volunteers to do the [opening and closing words](#) for the next session and remind participants of the date of the next webinar. Also point out the Find Out More section in the Participant Guide. Ask the designated volunteer to share the closing words and extinguish the chalice.

# SESSION 3: Expanding Beyond Christian Roots

## SESSION GOALS

- Trace the theological strand of Transcendentalism
- Understand the context out of which Transcendentalism developed
- Explore contemporary expressions of Transcendentalism in Unitarian Universalism
- Trace the theological strand of humanism
- Explore a humanist understanding of spirituality
- Consider the impact of humanism on UU engagement in social justice

## SESSION AT A GLANCE

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	15 minutes
Activity 3: Transcendentalism	35 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 4: Introduction to Humanism	35 minutes
Activity 5: Fahs as Theologian	15 minutes
Activity 6: Closing	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2 hours</b>

## PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated selections from the readers.
- Decide if you will use the slides for this session and prepare.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Remember to record the webinar! After the webinar, post the recording in the shared folder on the session page.

## **ACTIVITY 1: Opening (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 3, Slides 1-4

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Welcome participants and invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space. Ask the designated volunteer to share the opening words. Remind participants of the covenant posted in the shared documents folder.

## **ACTIVITY 2: Sharing (15 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 3, Slide 5

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another's writings. Affirm everyone's good work.

## **ACTIVITY 3: Transcendentalism Discussion (35 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 3, Introduction – Transcendentalism
- Session 3, Reading 1: Margaret Fuller
- Session 3, Reading 2: Theodore Parker
- Session 3, Reading 3: Roots of UU Spirituality

## **MATERIALS**

- Session 3, Slides 6-8

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion of the readings on Transcendentalism using the guiding questions or questions of your own:

**Reading 1:** Margaret Fuller was noted for the “Conversations” that she sponsored, and the intellectual friendship the Transcendentalists shared was crucial to Fuller, Emerson, Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, the Peabody sisters and other great minds of the day. The Socratic form of these conversations was a major departure from the educational style of the time, which was based in the assumption that a teacher with all the knowledge used lectures to transmit that knowledge to the student.

- With whom do you have conversations that expand your thinking?
- What is an example of an educational moment that you have shared with students in which everyone present learned through conversation and exploration, rather than a teacher dispensing knowledge?

### **Reading 2:**

- In his time, Parker was “shunned” by most Unitarians. How might contemporary UU’s respond to his theology?
- To what present-day issues and concerns might Parker’s ideas apply? Can you imagine sermon topics that would draw thousands?

### **Reading 3:**

- How would you say that Transcendentalism connects with contemporary Unitarian Universalism? Do you think there are ways in which Transcendentalist spirituality does not mesh with contemporary experience? What, if anything, is lacking, or off the mark?

## **BREAK (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 3, Slide 9

## **ACTIVITY 4: Humanism Discussion (15 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 3, Introduction – Humanism
- Session 3, Reading 4: Humanism

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 3, Slides 10-11

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion of the readings on Humanism using the guiding questions or questions of your own:

- What do you think is lost or gained when God is removed from religion?
- How do these readings resonate with you in the context of your own congregation? Your own beliefs?
- What impels you to do good? What is the theological or philosophical grounding that pushes you to work for justice and to care for others?
- How would you describe human nature? Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the ability and desire of human beings to create a better world?
- How would you define humanism? What resonates within humanism for you? Your congregation?

## **ACTIVITY 5: Fahs as Theologian**

### **READING**

- Session 3, Reading 5: Sophia Fahs

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 3, Slide 12

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion of the readings on Humanism using the guiding questions or questions of your own:

- In what ways do you see the influence of Fahs' *theology* at work in faith development in your setting?
- What aspects of Fahs educational philosophy are still relevant today? Are there ways in which liberal religious education has moved beyond the ideas Fahs espoused?
- In her article about Fahs, Lucinda Nolan described reaction to Fahs as "prophetic theology politely ignored" because she was a woman and she worked with children. Does this have resonance today?

## **ACTIVITY 6: Closing (10 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 3, Slides 13-14

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from Session 3 and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to share it with the group in written form (roughly 250 words) in the session's discussion forum. At the end of the module, each participant will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing UU theology in their work. Assuming two weeks between webinars, the written sharing should be posted in the week after the webinar so that the following week can be devoted to the reading and preparation for the next session.

Ask for volunteers to do the [opening and closing words](#) for the next session and remind participants of the date of the next webinar. Also point out the Find Out More section in the Participant Guide. Invite the designated volunteer to share the closing words and extinguish the chalice.



# SESSION 4: More 20th Century Influences

## SESSION GOALS

- Explore the impact of James Luther Adams, Clarence Skinner, and Forrest Church on contemporary Unitarian Universalism
- Understand the “Social Gospel” movement and its contemporary expression in Unitarian Universalism
- Explore a theology from outside our tradition, process theology, and compare its view of God to traditional theism
- Learn some of the history and expression of liberation theology and examine how this theology may speak to Unitarian Universalism
- Examine our religious education and faith formation programs in the context of a pedagogy and theology of the oppressed

## SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	15 minutes
Activity 3: James Luther Adams	15 minutes
Activity 4: Clarence Skinner and Forrest Church	15 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 5: Process Theology	15 minutes
Activity 6: Liberation Theology	25 minutes
Activity 7: Paolo Freire	15 minutes
Activity 8: Closing	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2 hours</b>

## PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated readings.
- Decide if you will use the slides for this session and prepare.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Set up shared folder for final projects and provide link to participants.

- Test the technology you will use for the session and prepare to offer guidance to participants.
- Remember to record the webinar! After the webinar, post the recording in the shared folder on the session page.

## **ACTIVITY 1: Opening (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 4, Slides 1-4

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Welcome participants and invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space. Ask the designated volunteer to share the opening words. Remind participants of the covenant posted in the shared documents folder.

## **ACTIVITY 2: Sharing (15 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 4, Slide 5

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another's writings. Affirm everyone's good work.

## **ACTIVITY 3: James Luther Adams (15 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 4, Introduction
- Session 4, Reading 1: James Luther Adams

## **MATERIALS**

- Session 4, Slides 6-7

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using the guiding questions or questions of your own:

- Do you think that Adams's criticism of liberal religion is justified? Thinking of James Luther Adams' experience in Nazi Germany as described in the UU World article, does Unitarian Universalism do an adequate job of standing up to evil and injustice? Does your congregation? How does your religious education program lead children, youth and adults, in the words of our second Source, "to confront powers and structures of evil"?
- What five characteristics do you think best define religious liberalism? What differences do you see between the five smooth stones and the UUA's principles and sources?
- Are individualism and communal responsibility opposite poles? What is the proper relationship between the two? How does this tension between individualism and community play out in your congregation? In your religious education classrooms?

## **ACTIVITY 4: Clarence Skinner and Forrest Church (15 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 4, Reading 2: Clarence Skinner and Forrest Church

## **MATERIALS**

- Session 4, Slides 8-10

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using the guiding questions or questions of your own:

- According to Rev. Taves, for Clarence Skinner, what Rebecca Parker calls “love first” was city infrastructure, labor legislation, birth control, and building codes. What is “love first” for you? What is “love first” in your setting?
- In what ways do you engage children, youth and adults in creating the “kingdom on earth?”
- Forrest Church uses the image of the “Cathedral of the World” to describe his understanding of how universal truth is expressed through different religious points of view. What image or metaphor would you use to describe your own understanding of how diverse people find religious truth?
- Church says that: “Religion is our human response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die.” What does that statement mean to you? How does the knowledge that you will one day be gone affect how you live your life? How does it affect the religious beliefs that matter to you?

## **BREAK (5 minutes)**

## **MATERIALS**

- Session 4, Slide 11

## **ACTIVITY 5: Process Theology (15 minutes)**

## **READING**

- Session 4, Reading 5: Process Theology

## **MATERIALS**

- Session 4, Slide 12

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using the guiding questions or questions of your own:

- Whitehead was a mathematician, other process thinkers were scientists – how does this theology agree with what you understand of the scientific worldview, and how does it differ from it?
- What do you think of this conception of God? Is this understanding of God reflected in our humanist/atheist vs. theist debates? Would lifting up this understanding be of benefit to Unitarian Universalism, and why?

## **ACTIVITY 6: Liberation Theology (25 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 4, Reading 4: Liberation Theology A & B

## **MATERIALS**

- Session 4, Slides 13-14

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using the guiding questions or questions of your own:

**A:** Marian Hillar calls liberation theology “a manifestation of a new worldwide movement for human emancipation. It constitutes a new, timely phenomenon and strives to implement the full realization of a human being in harmony with the Nature and for the believer, in harmony with the original Christian message.”

- In what ways do you find your personal theology to be in sympathy with liberation theology?
- In what ways do you find liberation theology compatible with Unitarian Universalism?

**B:** In these readings Liberation Theology and liberation activism are contrasted with Liberalism, the basis for most Unitarian Universalist theology.

- What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of liberal theology? Where might it fall short?
- How can Unitarian Universalists engage authentically with Liberation Theology? Are there systemic or cultural norms within Unitarian Universalism that would have to change if we took Liberation Theology seriously?

## **ACTIVITY 7: Paolo Freire (15 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 4, Reading 4: Liberation Theology C

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 4, Slide 15

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using the guiding questions or questions of your own:

- Can you point to examples of Freire's influence on Unitarian Universalist religious education? How are we engaged in a pedagogy of the oppressed or a pedagogy of hope? And, if you don't think we are engaged in such a pedagogy, what would we need to change in order to be so?

## **ACTIVITY 8: Closing (10 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 4, Slides 16-18

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Explain that in addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from Session 4 and think of a way they might share what they learned in their professional work. Explain that they need not actually carry out this plan before the next session, but are asked to share it with the group in written form (roughly 250 words) in the session's discussion forum. At the end of the module, each participant will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing UU theology in their work. Assuming two weeks between webinars, the written sharing should be posted in the week after the webinar so that the following week can be devoted to the reading and preparation for the next session.

Remind participants to submit their final project proposals by email to leaders by the start of Session 5.

Ask for volunteers to do the [opening and closing words](#) for the next session and remind participants of the date of the next webinar. Also point out the Find Out More section in the Participant Guide. Ask the designated volunteer to share the closing words and extinguish the chalice.

# SESSION 5: 21st Century UU Theology

## SESSION GOALS

- Explore contemporary voices in Unitarian Universalist theology, including Rebecca Parker, Paul Razor, and Thandeka
- Understand the social justice basis of contemporary UU theology
- Explore how this theology of justice takes shape in our congregations
- Explore how a theology of justice can be incorporated in religious education for children, youth, and adults.

## SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	20 minutes
Activity 3: 21st Century Theologies	25 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 4: The Prophetic Church	30 minutes
Activity 5: Where Are We Headed?	15 minutes
Activity 6: Final Projects	10 minutes
Activity 7: Closing	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2 hours</b>

## PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated selections from the readers.
- Decide if you will use the slides for this session and prepare.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Review the final project proposals and provide feedback.
- Remember to record the webinar! After the webinar, post the recording in the shared folder on the session page.



## **ACTIVITY 1: Opening (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 5, Slides 1-4

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Welcome participants and invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space. Ask the designated volunteer to share the opening words. Remind participants of the covenant posted in the shared documents folder.

## **ACTIVITY 2: Sharing (20 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 5, Slide 5

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. If any participants implemented their ideas, invite them to report briefly on the results. Invite questions or comments participants about one another's writings. Affirm everyone's good work.

## **ACTIVITY 3: 21st Century UU Theology (30 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 5, Introduction
- Session 5, Reading 1 21st Century Voices

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 5, Slides 6-7

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Lead a discussion using the guiding questions or questions of your own:

- Thandeka describes Unitarian Universalists as having a common emotional experience with the mental space to explain it in different ways theologically. What have you found to be a common emotional experience in Unitarian Universalism?
- Thandeka says we “love beyond belief”, but Rebecca Parker identifies limits to what we can believe as UU’s. Are the limits described by Parker true for you, and do you see any other limits to belief besides those she describes?
- How do you answer the question “What do UU’s believe, anyway?” How would you explain UU belief/theology to children? Youth? Adults?
- How could the work of religious educators promote an ethic of risk in our Unitarian Universalist communities? How can we work toward becoming communities of resistance?
- Welch states that “we cannot be moral alone”. How do you react to that statement, and how might it ground your work as a religious educator?

## **BREAK (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 5, Slide 8

## **ACTIVITY 4: The Prophetic Church (30 minutes)**

### **READING**

- “Prophetic Congregations in the Twenty-First Century” by Meg Riley in *A People So Bold: Theology and Ministry for Unitarian Universalists*

- “Identity, Covenant, and Commitment” by Paul Razor in *A People So Bold: Theology and Ministry for Unitarian Universalists*
- “Growing Our Souls” by Paula Cole Jones in *A People So Bold: Theology and Ministry for Unitarian Universalists*
- “Educating for Social Change” by Mark Hicks in *A People So Bold: Theology and Ministry for Unitarian Universalists*

## **MATERIALS**

- Session 5, Slides 9-10

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

In her essay, Riley asserts that the three central characteristics of prophetic UU congregations are that they are grounded in the deepest parts of our UU theology, that they embody radical caring and that they orient themselves toward the future.

- What theology grounds the justice work of your congregation? What theology grounds your own work for justice?
- How does your congregation embody radical caring? What makes those acts of caring radical?
- How is your congregation oriented toward the future? How does it serve those you hope to have as part of your community and not just those who have participated in the past?

Paula Cole Jones says, “Until we face the truth about racism and about the social construction of identity – as well as systems that support social hierarchy and inequality – we will likely produce flawed social change that only reinforces white privilege.”

- How is your congregation engaged in “facing the truth” about racism?

Paul Razor says, “Reclaiming our religious identity requires recovering and naming the core theological principles that ground us as a movement.

- Do you agree with Rasor's principles? Are there others you would add?

Hicks says that "For hope-filled action to lead to a cultural shift, we must create environments that help advocates for change stay engaged."

- How do you provide opportunities for participants in your religious education program to unlearn limiting assumptions and world views?
- How do you stay engaged in social change efforts?
- Describe an environment that you have experienced as teacher and/or learner that promoted engagement in a cultural shift.

## **ACTIVITY 5: Where Are We Headed? (15 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 5, Slide 11

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Ask participants: *What are the pressing theological questions for our movement right now?*

Ask for a volunteer(s) to scribe the questions into the chat box and then to copy the questions from the chat box and distribute to participants after the webinar.

## **ACTIVITY 6: Final Projects (10 minutes)**

### **Materials**

- Session 5, Slide 12

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Briefly review the guidelines for final projects and share the topics with the group. Answer any questions that come up.

## **ACTIVITY 7: Closing (10 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 5, Slides 13-14

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Explain that because participants will be working on final projects, the usual posting of ways they might share what they learned this session is optional. Remind participants to post their final projects in the shared folder before the start of Session 6.

Remind participants of the date of the next webinar. Also point out the Find Out More section in the Participant Guide. Invite the designated volunteer to share the closing words and extinguish the chalice.

# SESSION 6: Closing Session

## SESSION GOALS

- Present final projects and give/receive feedback in the group
- Share closing thoughts about the module

## SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity 1: Opening	5 minutes
Activity 2: Sharing	10 minutes
Activity 3: Final Projects Part 1	35 minutes
<b>Break</b>	5 minutes
Activity 4: Final Projects Part 2	35 minutes
Activity 5: Next Steps	20 minutes
Activity 6: Closing	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time: 2 hours</b>

## PREPARATION FOR SESSION

- Review materials in the Participant Guide and read the designated selections from the readers.
- Decide if you will use the slides for this session and prepare.
- Review suggested discussion questions and choose which are most appropriate for the group and context.
- Select opening words for this session.
- Review “Benediction” by Louise Green. Assign sections to read beginning and ending with leaders; post in the shared folder.
- Remember to record the webinar! After the webinar, post the recording in the shared folder on the session page.

## **ACTIVITY 1: Opening (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 6, Slides 1-4

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Welcome participants and invite each participant to light a chalice or candle in their own space or use the [Illuminations app](#). Ask the designated volunteer to share the opening words. Remind participants of the covenant posted in the shared documents folder.

## **ACTIVITY 2: Sharing (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 6, Slide 5

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

If there are posts, invite participants into a conversation about their ideas to share the material from the last session. Affirm everyone's good work.

## **ACTIVITY 3: Presentation of Final Projects, Part 1 (35 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 6, Slide 6

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Invite groups or individuals to present their final projects for the group. Affirm the work after each presentation, then guide a short conversation, inviting participants to comment and ask questions of the presenters.

## **BREAK (5 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 6, Slide 7

## **ACTIVITY 4: Presentation of Final Projects, Part 2 (35 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 6, Slide 8

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Invite groups or individuals to present their final projects for the group. Affirm the work after each presentation, then guide a short conversation, inviting participants to comment and ask questions of the presenters.

## **ACTIVITY 5: Next Steps (20 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 6, Slide 9

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**



Ask participants to reflect back on their brief theological statements at the start of the module. Ask if their ideas have changed as the result of the readings and discussion they've done, and if so, in what ways?

Strongly encourage participants to continue to their exploration through continued reading and discussion, either as a group or as an individual. Introduce the 2017 Minns Lectures by the Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed and Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt.

“Historical and Future Trajectories of Black Lives Matter and Unitarian Universalism”

The video recordings can be found on the Minns Lecture website:

<https://vimeo.com/user9111141/spring2017minns>

Note: The lectures were given shortly after the former UUA President, Peter Morales, had announced his resignation.

Lecture 1, Mark Morrison-Reed 1:47:40

Lecture 2, Rosemary Bray McNatt 2:16:49

Morrison-Reed's *UU World* magazine article, “The Black Hole in the White UU Psyche,” is adapted from his Minns lecture: <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/black-hole-white-uu-psyche>

## **ACTIVITY 6: Closing (10 minutes)**

### **READING**

- Session 6, Closing Reading, “Benediction”

### **MATERIALS**

- Session 6, Slides 10-11

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

If there is time, solicit verbal feedback from participants about the format and content of the module. Explain that in order to receive credit for the module, they must fill in the [participant evaluation form](#) within one week. Encourage them to include some of the verbal feedback they have shared in the forms they will complete.

Close the session and the module by inviting everyone to read a section of “Benediction” by Louise Green from *A People So Bold* (used with permission):

### **Benediction**

Who is the prophet in these urgent times?

You are the prophet, for there may be no other who will speak and act now.

The prophet hears and responds to an insistent and urgent inner voice.

The prophet speaks from an internal fountain, giving voice to another’s silence.

The prophet sees and expresses in uncommon ways, upsetting the status quo.

The prophet sends the wake-up call in the present, to shape the future.

How do I develop a prophetic voice in these challenging times?

Observe nature and grow all parts of the tree: branches, trunk, and roots.

Branches are the many outspreading ways of acting on inner call.

Stay connected to the trunk, for fallen limbs are swept away by water or fire.

Be willing to pare away when too many branches grow.

Let leaves drop in their time, for the cycle will turn round.

Grow and let go to flourish, trusting other seasons will come.

The trunk is steady with circles of community, rings of support widening with age.

Witness strong branches supported by many layers.

Observe that when limbs are damaged, the trunk perseveres.

See small trunks grow light shoots, wisely testing support.

Believe that a trunk will mature over time, sending nourishment upward.

Roots are the grounding of the whole tree, the foundation for transformation.

Plant wisely in rich earth for substance.

Gather nutrients from a distance in unseen waters.

Sustain the roots through underground connections and keep the trunk standing.

Weather many seasons, drawing on multiple sources for food.

How will we hear the prophets in our complex era?

Follow the still, small voice, even when unpopular.

Offer inner knowing to the outer landscape.

Bear clear witness to the claims of many sacred traditions.

Cultivate strength and compassion.

Develop wisdom that is tenacious, and flexible when needed.

Watch, wait, and choose the strategic moment.

Disrupt or challenge when there is clarity of vision.

Send a startling message through crafted purpose.

Say what is not welcome, at the right time.

Speak boldly about what the majority wants to ignore.

Practice faithfulness, foresee consequences, make history.

Offer gratitude, for in oneness with other trees, a forest grows.