

# **Unitarian Universalist History**

## **Renaissance Module**

### **PARTICIPANT GUIDE**

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Developmental Editor, Pat Kahn



UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
ASSOCIATION

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## About the Author

Gail Forsyth-Vail served as the Director of Adult Programs at the Unitarian Universalist Association before becoming the Interim Director of UUA Faith Development Office in 2018. A Credentialed Religious Educator, Master Level, she served congregations for twenty-two years before joining the UUA staff. She is the author of *Stories in Faith: Exploring Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources Through Wisdom Tales* and co-author of *Harvest the Power: Developing Lay Leadership*, *Bridging: A Handbook for Congregations*, and *Wisdom from the Hebrew Scriptures*. Editor of the UUA blog, *Cooking Together: Recipes for Immigration Justice Work*, Gail was the 2007 recipient of the Angus MacLean Award for Excellence in Religious Education.

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the technical and editorial assistance of Alicia LeBlanc, Administrative and Editorial Assistant in the UUA Faith Development Office, in publishing the module documents and especially the online presence of Renaissance modules!

## Introduction and Requirements

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist History Renaissance module, an online learning experience comprised of six two-hour webinars with reading and other assignments for each session. Credit will be offered for full participation in the module. Full participation includes:

- On-line attendance at six two-hour sessions
- [Reading and reflection](#) to prepare for each session, which will require about two or three hours
- Submission of a 250-word post on the [Discussion Forum](#) after each session with an idea for application of your learning in your professional work. Note: The Discussion Forum will remain active until two weeks after the module closes.
- Preparation of a [final project and presentation](#), working by oneself, with a partner, or with a small group.
- Submission of the [evaluation form for online Renaissance modules](#) within one week of the end of the module.

### Required Reading

You will read selections from Tapestry of Faith programs and other online resources, and selections from three required books:

- *Stirring the Nation's Heart* by Polly Peterson (UUA, 2010 – no longer available through the InSpirit Bookstore, but can be found online)
- [Missionaries, Builders and Pathfinders](#) by Polly Peterson and Gail Forsyth-Vail (UUA, 2014)
- [Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism](#) by Mark Morrison-Read (Skinner House, 2011)

You'll also need access to a copy of the hymnal [Singing the Living Tradition](#) (Unitarian Universalist Association, 1994).

### Goal and Learning Objectives

The goal of this module is to give participants a sense of the broad scope of Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist history and some of the key stories that are part of that history, so that participants are able to:

- Understand context for historical stories they tell in worship, small group, classroom, social media, and other settings
- Explain the history of our movement to lay people, to youth, and to children in age-appropriate ways
- Understand and explain how the history of their own congregation or geographical area fits in with the history of the broader movement
- Understand and articulate the history behind some of the theology and traditions that are important to contemporary Unitarian Universalism
- Understand how we came to be who we are as a movement- and what strengths and challenges our history offers.

Religious educators are often called upon to share our history, and this approach provides a method of sharing history that allows engagement with that history. Because religious education is the vehicle by which we guide children, youth, and adults to live their faith in the world, this module offers a glimpse of how our faith has called people to action in their times and places.

This module also includes a guided tour of some of the worship and faith development resources that religious educators might use in the course of their work. Tapestry of Faith stories from a number of programs for children, youth, and adults are included in the readings. Hymns and readings from *Singing the Living Tradition* are placed in their historical context, both to increase participants' familiarity with worship resources and to give them a sense of how the theology of each era is reflected in the hymns and readings we still use today. The online "classroom" includes session-by-session background information and reading assignments. You will also find timelines to help you locate events and understand some of the relationships between people and events (please note that the scale of the timelines varies to accommodate the information pertinent to each session). Additionally, links to interactive timelines will be reviewed during each webinar. These interactive timelines were created as the final project by two participants in the field test of this module, Sadie Kahn Greene and Mr.

Barb Greve. While the program used to develop these no longer allows for editing or adding to them, the timelines are still quite helpful and may serve as inspiration for a new generation of timelines as someone's final project. If this is of interest, check out the article [Top Ten Free Timeline Tools for Teachers](#).

### **Technical Considerations**

The preferred webinar platform is Zoom, which you can download from [Zoom](#).

Use laptop or computer; have phone handy in case you need to call in instead of using computer audio.

If you have not yet listed your UUA profile name in your registration, create your UUA profile name: Go to [UUA.org](#) and click on "create account" at the top right and follow instructions on the page. Once you've gotten the confirmation, email the module facilitators with your profile name to be added to the group. To access the module online, log in with your UUA profile, and use the link provided.

**NOTE:** Until you have registered for this module and created your account on UUA.org, you will not be able to access the private web pages that comprise this module.

Subscribe to comments in the Discussion Forum in each session. To post on the forum, click on the post and add your comments. If you'd like to respond to a particular comment, look for the "reply" link below that comment (there's also a "Like" button and other options). Be sure to save your work!

### **Written Sharing**

In addition to the assigned reading for next session, participants are to reflect on the readings and discussions from each session, and think of a way you might share what you learned in your professional work. You 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) posted in the discussion forum for the appropriate session. At the end of the module, each participant will have a wide variety of ideas for sharing history in their work.

Assuming that there are at least two weeks between webinars, plan to complete the written sharing within a week after the webinar, and then do the reading to prepare for the next session the second week.

### **Final Project**

You are asked to prepare a final project that shows a way to use what you have learned about our Unitarian Universalist history in your professional work. As you prepare for your final

project, look back over the application ideas you and others have created over the course of this module. As you read them, select any that you would especially like to develop further or put into practice. Add any new ideas you have to the collection. The project can show documentation of something you have already done or a plan for something you will do. It can be the development of one of the ideas in the group's collection or something entirely new. You can work alone or with a small group. You may use any electronic format that works to present your project- a slide show, documents or flyers, video, audio, Pinterest, Tumblr, and a blog are all possibilities. Your project should take about three hours to prepare and should require about 15 minutes to present. All projects will be posted in the shared folder set up by the leaders. *You must submit a statement via email of what you plan to do and with whom you will be working to the leaders for approval by the start of Session 5. The leader may offer suggestions or request revisions in your plan.*

Projects should be posted in the shared folder set up by the leaders.

Here are some ideas for final projects to get you started:

- Find a local story (person, congregation, region), exploring how that story fits with the broad scope of Unitarian Universalist history and share through a blog post, or a story for all ages, or another kind of presentation.
- Create a video that tells a historical story or “markets” a Unitarian Universalist history program for a particular age group or for a multigenerational group. Examples of such programs include Faith Like a River, Resistance and Transformation, and A Place of Wholeness.
- Write a skit or song to teach some aspect of Unitarian Universalist history to a particular audience.
- Create a Pinterest board or a Tumblr blog to select and present (curate) themes from Unitarian Universalist history.
- Explore the history behind a contemporary challenge or stance in today's Unitarian Universalism, and design a way to offer this history to help clarify the challenge or stance, perhaps through a congregational or district workshop, or at a LREDA cluster or small group gathering

- Create plans for a discussion group that explores more deeply some of the topics in *Stirring the Nation's Heart; Darkening the Doorways; Missionaries, Builders and Pathfinders* or one of the Find Out More resources, such as *Elite: Uncovering Classism in Unitarian Universalist History*. (Note: there is a small group discussion guide for [Darkening the Doorways](#) and one for [Elite](#).) Find an exciting and engaging way to market your plans.
- The interactive timelines in each session were created as the final project by two participants, Sadie Kahn Greene and Mr. Barb Greve, for the field test of this module. While the program used to develop these no longer allows for editing or adding to them, the timelines are still quite helpful and may serve as inspiration for a new generation of timelines as someone's final project. If this is of interest, check out the article [Top Ten Free Timeline Tools for Teachers](#).

Here are the criteria module leaders will use to evaluate your plan:

- Does the project plan offer a practical application of something the participant(s) has learned about Unitarian Universalist history?
- Does it fulfill one or more of the goals of the program (see Introduction)?
- Are there clear presentation plans? What form will the presentation take?
- Is it possible for the participant(s) to complete this project in three hours and to present it in the allotted time?



## List of Timelines

- Timeline 1a Heresy
- Timeline 1b Founders
- Timeline 2 Reformers
- Timeline 3 Missionaries and Builders
- Timeline 4 Humanists
- Timeline 5 Making Life Religious

### Interactive Timelines

#### Session 1A Heresy Timeline

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1gWS96tIOVqEDRC4gpXkO V8b6fMIRGMJdei3lHps-Rnw&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1gWS96tIOVqEDRC4gpXkO V8b6fMIRGMJdei3lHps-Rnw&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

#### Session 1B Founders Timeline

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=16k4\\_CzJS3yHRpCLwia\\_YV coYJ5PJCe-DMjeXZIY\\_Efg&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=16k4_CzJS3yHRpCLwia_YV coYJ5PJCe-DMjeXZIY_Efg&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

#### Session 2 Timeline Reformers

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1PNHNXaZJpwStvohdlyKKq 5pS2o\\_xovq71ZhMakMvbn4&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1PNHNXaZJpwStvohdlyKKq 5pS2o_xovq71ZhMakMvbn4&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

#### Session 3 Mission Builders

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1AzdF7G8NC6BnFgbVR9\\_qr 5YTz2Yf6HnMogrzKdGITtc&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1AzdF7G8NC6BnFgbVR9_qr 5YTz2Yf6HnMogrzKdGITtc&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

#### Session 4 Humanists Timeline

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1IBxcCh8jYHaE9nUVNTc32 d-zJGgwOhq9mnuugOWM7o&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1IBxcCh8jYHaE9nUVNTc32 d-zJGgwOhq9mnuugOWM7o&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

#### Session 5a Making Life Religious Timeline

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1GFFnDIFGtVGm8anZTgah6 NAY15VD40BdeBhw31i-K4E&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1GFFnDIFGtVGm8anZTgah6 NAY15VD40BdeBhw31i-K4E&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

#### Session 5B The Living Tradition Timeline

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1rTw0u4SGgRSwjZlI VgDZi5Ovkfb8roDkF4HqgY6zb8&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1rTw0u4SGgRSwjZlI VgDZi5Ovkfb8roDkF4HqgY6zb8&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

## Suggested Opening and Closing Words

### Session 2

Opening: “The Oversoul” by Emerson, Reading 531 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

Closing: Theodore Parker, Reading 683, in *Singing the Living Tradition*

### Session 3

Opening: “Stand by this Faith” by Olympia Brown, Reading 569 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

Closing: Words of Hymn 187, “It Sounds Along the Ages” in *Singing the Living Tradition*

### Session 4

Opening: “Unto the Church Universal” Reading 474 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

Closing: Excerpt from a speech by Fannie Barrier Williams, a Black woman and a Unitarian, addressing the World’s Parliament of Religions in 1893:

*What can religion further do to advance the condition of the colored people? More religion and less church. . . . Less theology and more of human brotherhood, less declamation and more common sense and love for truth. . . . The tendency of creeds and doctrine to obscure religion, to make complex that which is elemental and simple, to suggest partisanship and doubt in that which is universal and certain, has seriously hindered the moral progress of the colored people of this country...It should be the province of religion, to unite, and not to separate, men and women according to the superficial differences of race lines.*

### Session 5

Opening: “It Matters What We Believe,” Reading 658 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

Closing: Reading 466, “Religion,” by Vincent B. Silliman in *Singing the Living Tradition*

### Session 6

Opening: “Principles and Purposes for All of Us,” Reading 594 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

Closing: Reading 459, “This is the mission of our faith,” by William F. Schulz in *Singing the Living Tradition*

# Outline of Webinars

## Session 1: Heretics and Founders

Activity 1 Introductions	15 minutes
Activity 2 Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting	5 minutes
Activity 3 Covenant	5 minutes
Activity 4 Opening Discussion	15 minutes
Activity 5 Going Deeper - Heretics	20 minutes
Activity 6 Partner Church	10 minutes
Activity 7 Break	10 minutes
Activity 8 Going Deeper - Founders	20 minutes
Activity 9 Singing the Living Tradition	10 minutes
Activity 10 Closing	10 minutes
Total Time: 2 hours	

## Session 2: Reformers

Activity 1 Gathering	5 minutes
Activity 2 Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting	5 minutes
Activity 3 Sharing	20 minutes
Activity 4 Opening Discussion	20 minutes
Activity 5 Break	10 minutes
Activity 6 Lifting Up Voices from the Margins	20 minutes
Activity 7 Going Deeper	30 minutes
Activity 8 Closing	10 minutes
Total Time: 2 hours	

## Session 3: Missionaries and Builders

Activity 1 Gathering	5 minutes
Activity 2 Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting	5 minutes
Activity 3 Sharing	20 minutes
Activity 4 Opening Discussion	20 minutes
Activity 5 Break	10 minutes
Activity 6 Going Deeper	30 minutes
Activity 7 Lifting Up Voices from the Margins	20 minutes
Activity 8 Closing	10 minutes

Total Time: 2 hours

#### **Session 4: Humanists**

Activity 1 Gathering	5 minutes
Activity 2 Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting	5 minutes
Activity 3 Sharing	20 minutes
Activity 4 Opening Discussion	20 minutes
Activity 5 Break	10 minutes
Activity 6 What Might Have Been	20 minutes
Activity 7 Facing a New Age	30 minutes
Activity 8 Closing	10 minutes

Total Time: 2 hours

#### **Session 5: Making Life Religious**

Activity 1 Gathering	5 minutes
Activity 2 Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting	5 minutes
Activity 3 Sharing	10 minutes
Activity 4 Making Life Religious	20 minutes
Activity 5 Origin Stories	20 minutes
Activity 6 Break	10 minutes
Activity 7 Sharing History in Our Work	15 minutes
Activity 8 Continuing Stories	20 minutes
Activity 9 Closing	15 minutes

Total Time: 2 hours

#### **Session 6: Final Projects**

Activity 1 Gathering	5 minutes
Activity 2 Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting	5 minutes
Activity 3 Final Projects Part 1	40 minutes
Activity 4 Break	10 minutes
Activity 5 Final Projects Part 2	40 minutes
Activity 6 Closing	20 minutes

Total Time: 2 hours

## Session 1: Heretics and Founders - Background and Preparation

### Heresy in Early Christianity

Please refer to [Timeline1a, Heresy](#) as you complete your reading and/or viewing assignments.

Note: Some of this material is adapted from Workshop 2 and Workshop 7 of Faith Like a River: Themes in Unitarian Universalist History.

After the death of Jesus of Nazareth, his message began to spread throughout the Roman Empire, to Jews and Gentiles alike. It was a time of terrible violence, as Roman authorities brutally persecuted those who were seen as “other,” including both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus. In the year 70, the Romans laid siege to the city of Jerusalem, destroying the Temple, the seat of Jewish religious life. Jews throughout the Roman world, devastated by the destruction of the Temple, sought a new understanding of what it meant to be faithful. In this time of great trauma, there arose many different and competing understandings of the figure of Jesus of Nazareth. Any number of “Gospels,” or accounts of the story of Jesus, were written, among them the four that eventually became part of the Christian scriptures. Both orthodoxy [adhering to accepted or established beliefs and practices] and heresy [belief or practice contrary to orthodox, especially orthodox Christian, doctrine] were foreign ideas to the earliest Christians, who lived with a variety of interpretations of the Gospels and church practices depending on local teaching. In this fertile religious ground, there began discussions, even heated arguments, over theology. By the late 4th century, Constantine united the Roman Empire, and Christianity became the state religion. Searching for uniformity of belief and practice as a way to unify the empire politically, Constantine and those who followed him sponsored a series of ecumenical councils to set out a consistent doctrine for the church, a creed for all. Ideas which did not conform were declared heretical, and those who espoused them were subject to persecution, excommunication, imprisonment, and even death. The spiritual and theological roots of both Universalism and Unitarianism can be found in ideas declared heretical in the early centuries of Christianity.

*Origen of Alexandria* (c. 185-250 CE) was an early Christian theologian who articulated ideas of universal salvation in ways that led his critics to charge him with heresy centuries after his death. From all accounts, Origen was a brilliant, gifted, and prolific scholar who studied science, philosophy, and theology and created the first systematic theology of Christianity, *De Principiis*, or On First Principles. This great work survived in its original Greek only in

fragments; in the year 543, the emperor Justinian issued an edict condemning Origen's writings, and ordered them destroyed.

While all of Origen's ideas were important in the development of Christian theology, of particular interest to Unitarian Universalists is Origen's "major heresy," that because Christ redeemed all humans, all would be saved in eternity. Origen did not believe in eternal suffering, and theorized that souls are re-born, over and over again, to experience the educative powers of God until they finally and eventually achieve salvation.

Origen died c. 250 CE, from wounds he received from torture for expressing and spreading his ideas through his nearly 2,000 separate written works.

*Arius*, a Libyan priest, lived in the 4th century, a time when the leaders of the Christian church, freed from persecution by the Edict of Milan in 312, were engaging in debates about the nature of humanity and the nature of Jesus. The Roman Empire was in crisis, pressured on many fronts by those who threatened to overrun it. There was a strong need to unify the Christian Church under the sovereignty of a protective savior. The Emperor Constantine viewed uniting the Christian Church as a way to strengthen and unify the Roman Empire and to bring order to the outlying areas. The endless religious debates, often leading to violence between partisans and riots in the street, were a source of significant annoyance to Constantine. In 325 he convened a council at his summer residence at Nicaea, in what is now Turkey, insisting that the bishops agree on a creed that would bring unity to the church. By the close of the Council of Nicaea, the Roman state and the Christian Church had reached a mutual understanding, with the emperor playing a significant role in the church and the church a significant role in the empire.

The priest Arius believed that Jesus was divine but somewhat less so than God. He believed that Jesus' wisdom and teachings were more important than his death and resurrection. Arius believed that human beings could draw closer to God by following those teachings. As the Christian Church solidified and unified in the 4th century and adopted a Trinitarian theology, Arianism became the archetypal heresy for the orthodox.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Arius the Heretic](#), a story from Workshop 2 in Faith Like a River

## **Heresy in Renaissance Times**

The two major heresies that would eventually lead to Unitarianism and Universalism were among the ideas brutally suppressed, first by the Roman Empire, and then by the Catholic Church's centuries long Inquisition. When the Middle Ages gave way to the Renaissance, heretical ideas found voice once again and spread, aided by the invention of the printing press and the availability of the Gutenberg Bible. The Protestant Reformation began. Lutheranism brought about a reformation in doctrine, while Calvinism went further, reforming worship and church organization. Those with heretical ideas could get in trouble- deadly trouble- with any of the three major Christian groups in Europe, as the life and death of Michael Servetus demonstrates.

Sometimes heretical ideas flourished away from the centers of power, especially when the religious powers of the time were concerned with fighting one another. In Poland, anti-trinitarian ideas thrived for a time in the Racovian Community. After the death of their leader, Fautus Socinus, his followers published his writing, which has many theological ideas familiar to Unitarians. Unitarian ideas also took hold in Transylvania, a small kingdom that lay at a trade crossroads in Europe. Those ideas were advanced by the debating skills of Francis David. He was spiritual mentor to King John Sigismund, who became the first, and only, Unitarian king in Europe, declaring freedom of conscience for all in his kingdom with the Edict of Torda in 1568.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Francis David- Guilty of Innovation](#)

### **Heresy Moves from Europe to America**

Unitarianism was later coming to England than it was to other parts of Europe. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, there was considerable social unrest and fighting in England as the country's leadership shifted between Anglicans, Catholics, and Puritans. In 1662, 2,000 clergy in England refused to accept orthodox views and were ejected from their pulpits. Those Dissenters became the spiritual forebears of the Unitarians in England, who were to emerge as a movement a hundred years later. Among those Dissenters was Joseph Priestley, an Enlightenment thinker who believed in the humanity of Jesus, the unity of God, and scientific method. When his chapel, home, and laboratory were looted and burned in 1791 by a mob opposed to unorthodox theology, Priestley and his family escaped with their lives. Three years

later, in 1794, Priestley sailed for the United States, where he played a large role in the establishment of the First Unitarian Church in Philadelphia.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Discovering Truth Through Science and Religion](#), a story from Session 11 of Love Connects Us

## Founders

Please refer to [Timeline 1b, Founders](#) as you complete this portion of your reading.

While much of the initial readings concerned the origins and development of theological ideas-heresies- of which Unitarians and Universalists are the spiritual heirs, this section will focus on the ways in which those liberal theologies found institutional expression in the United States in the 17th and early part of the 18th centuries. Although both religious movements developed in opposition to the dominant New England religious beliefs, which were Calvinist, the development of Unitarianism moves along a separate path from the development of Universalism. The institutional expression of Unitarianism arose when Standing Order congregations in Massachusetts adopted more liberal theological positions. Universalist religious institutions arose as an alternative, and a challenge, to the Standing Order. Indeed, it was a famous case won by the Universalists in Gloucester that led ultimately to the disestablishment of the Standing Order and the separation of church and state in Massachusetts.

- Reading Assignment:
  - *Stirring the Nation's Heart*, pp. v-x of the Introduction

## Universalism

Universalism arose in several different places in the United States during the 18th century. The first organized Universalist church in America, the Independent Christian Church in Gloucester, MA was organized in 1779 with John Murray as pastor. Later Universalists would identify John Murray as the denomination's founder, although he was not considered so in his own time. Equally important to our history is his wife, Judith Sargent Murray, whose written work, including a groundbreaking catechism for children, offers great insight into Universalist thought of the time. She was also the author of some of the early feminist writings in the United States.

- Reading Assignment:



- *Stirring the Nation's Heart*, pp. 40-48, "Judith Sargent Murray and American Universalism"

Universalism as an idea and a theology spread rapidly and widely in the United States, but Universalist congregations were not initially organized as a denomination. Beginning at Oxford, MA in 1793, Universalists began organizing themselves into regional and state "conventions," which were the first denominational structures.

The story of Hosea Ballou reveals much about the early development of Universalism. Having had a conversion experience, Ballou became a Universalist preacher. After his own careful study of the Bible, Hosea Ballou published *A Treatise on Atonement* in 1805, taking the position that sin is punished on earth during one's lifetime, and that all are "saved," reconciled to God, as soon as they die. Other prominent Universalist preachers disagreed; to them, salvation came to all, but only after a period of education, purification, and spiritual penance after death. The argument, known as the "Restorationist Controversy," was a significant one, as the Universalists sought a common creed to unify their denomination. The readings concern the life and work of Ballou, as well as the battles over Universalist theology that transpired in his time.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Introducing Hosea Ballou](#), a handout from Workshop 3 of What Moves Us
  - [Hosea Ballou's Conversion](#), a story from Workshop 3 of What Moves Us

## Unitarianism

Although there were organized Unitarian congregations and clergy in England in the late 18th century, the term "Unitarian" was a pejorative one in the United States until William Ellery Channing embraced it in 1819, with his well-known Baltimore sermon. Channing's sermon, as well as the backlash against liberal theology from orthodox clergy, led to what is known as the Unitarian Controversy (1825-1835). During this one tumultuous decade, many Standing Order congregations in Massachusetts became Unitarian. Although Channing himself did not want to lead a religious denomination, Unitarian clergy formed the American Unitarian Association in 1825. The readings introduce some of the people and forces key to the religious shift in Massachusetts in the early 1800s, and explore the work and the thinking of William Ellery Channing, known as the "reluctant radical."

- Reading Assignment:
  - *Stirring the Nation's Heart*, p. 10-18, "Unitarian Apostle William Ellery Channing"
  - [The Baltimore Sermon](#), a story from Workshop 9 of Faith Like a River
  - [Embracing the Religions of the World](#), an excerpt from Workshop 3 of Faith Like a River

## Readings and Hymns

Explore the materials in *Singing the Living Tradition* authored by those heretics and founders whose stories are in the first session of this module. Exploring this material in each session will give you a sense not only of the theology, worship practices, and concerns of the times they were written, but also of the theology, worship practices, and concerns that are still with us.

- How does knowing something of the context enhance your understanding of those materials?
- How might you use these materials in your work?

Reading 566 "God is One," by Francis David, adapted by Richard Fewkes

Reading 704 "Go out into the highways and byways," attributed to John Murray

Reading 705 "If we agree in love," by Hosea Ballou

Reading 592 "The Free Mind," by William Ellery Channing

Reading 652 "The Great End in Religious Instruction," by William Ellery Channing

## Guiding Questions (discussion takes place during webinar):

### Heretics

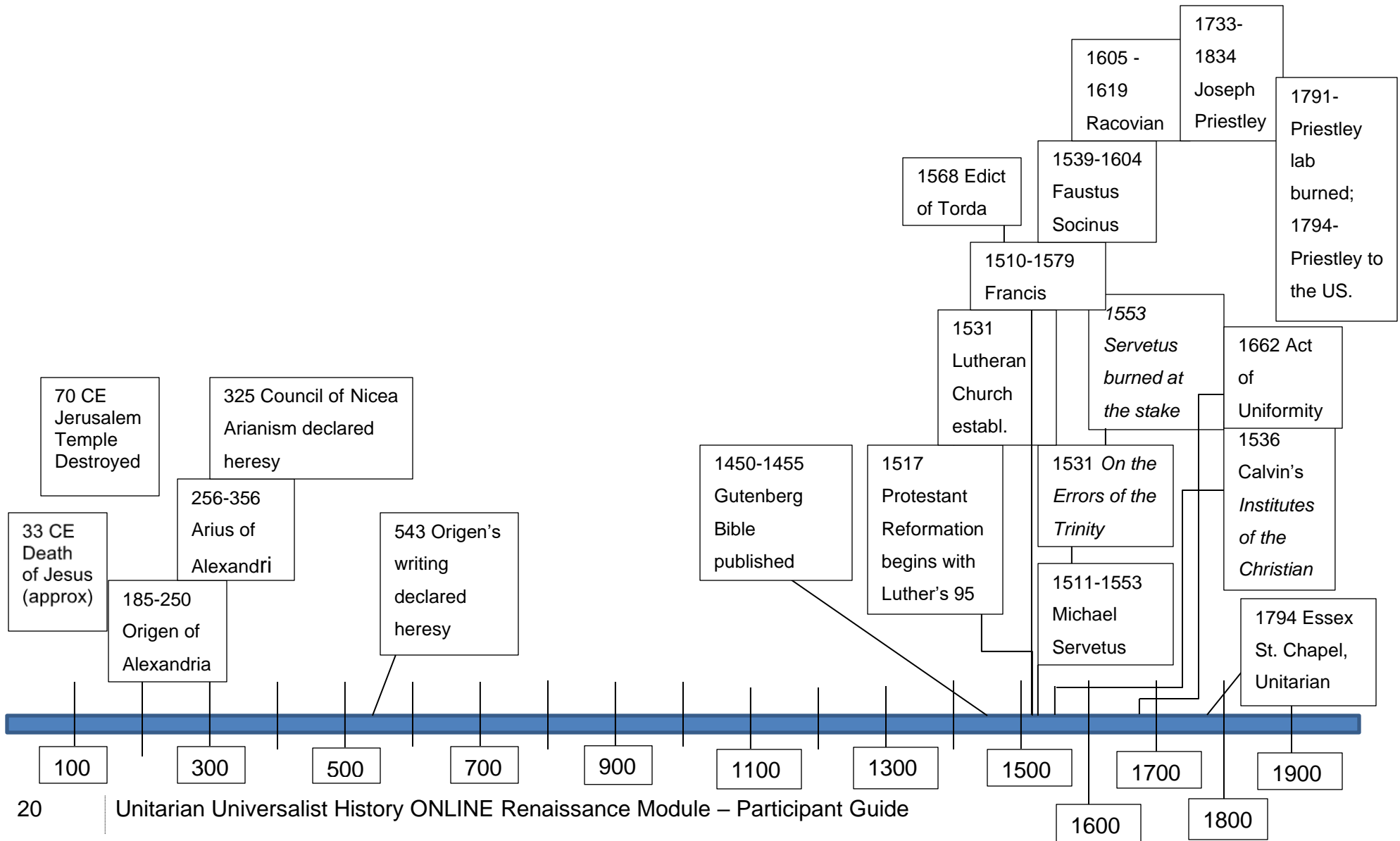
- What did you learn about Unitarianism or Universalism from your reading for this session? What interested or intrigued you?
- What about heretic stories is still relevant today? Are we still heretics?
- Our tradition has a legacy of defining itself as a counter to religious orthodoxies. What are the strengths and challenges of this legacy?

- What parts of the stories of heretics can we make relevant and interesting for UUs today? How can we simplify this information and not get bogged down in obscure theological arguments?

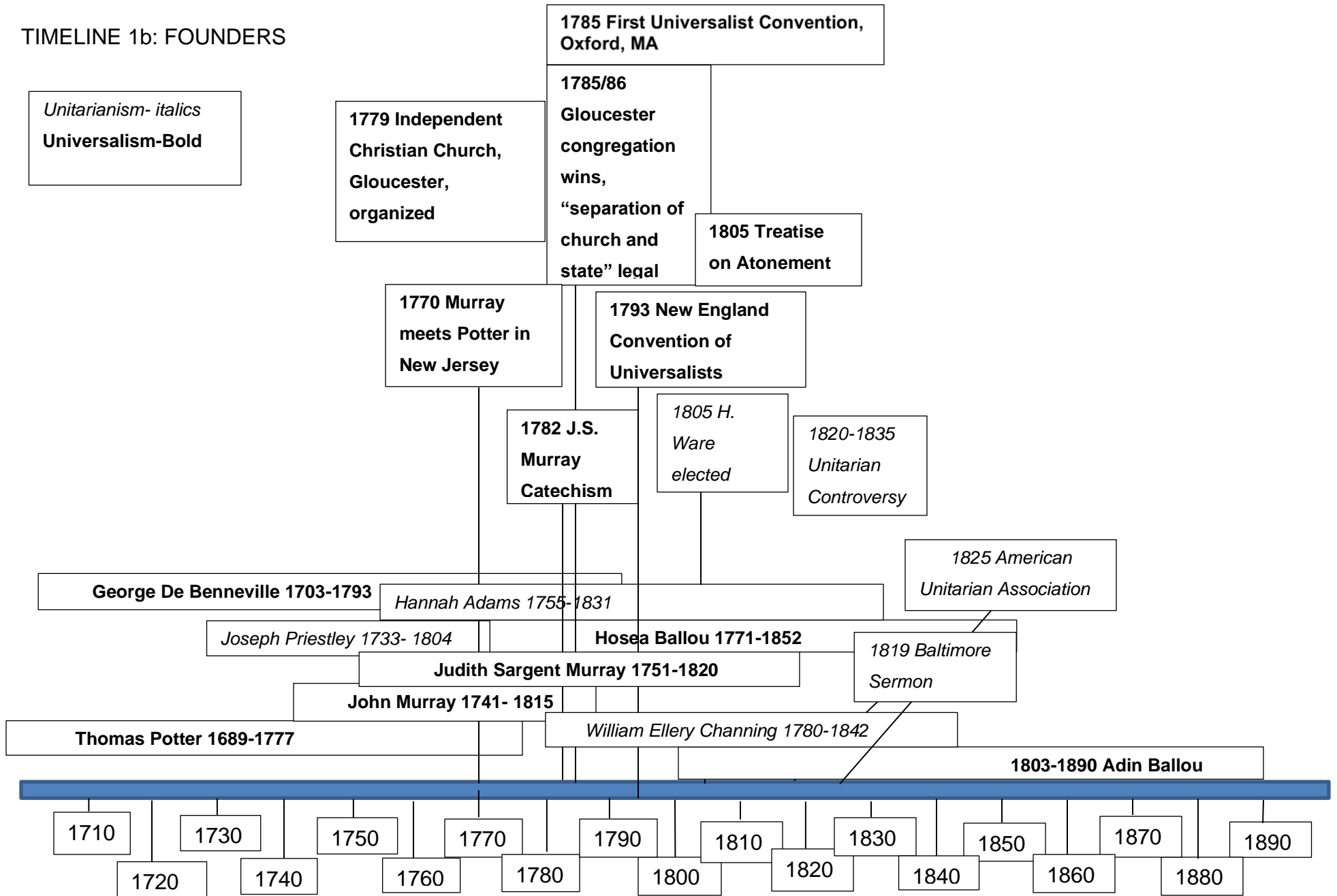
## **Founders**

- These stories and readings bring alive the role of women in helping to shape our faith in North America. What similarities do you see in the roles played by Judith Sargent Murray and Hannah Adams? What differences? How might we highlight the roles played by women in the way we talk about our history?
- Are the different origins of the two traditions from which Unitarian Universalism grew significant today? Does it matter today that Unitarianism came out of the Standing Order and that Universalism challenged the Standing Order? How does your congregation reflect the established social order and how does it challenge the established social order?

TIMELINE 1a: HERESY



TIMELINE 1b: FOUNDERS



## Session 2: Reformers - Background and Preparation

Please refer to [Timeline 2, Reformers](#) as you complete your reading and/or viewing assignments.

This session will focus on those that were inspired by the vision and ministry of William Ellery Channing, and, in many ways, moved beyond Channing's vision, both in reform of religion and reform of society. This was the time of the birth of Transcendentalism, a movement which began as a critique of Unitarianism and holds a strong place in our shared theology today. This was a time of eloquent words, when those who would reform the institutions of society took to the lecture circuit, or preached to large crowds, or published pamphlets and books that spread ideas far and wide. This was a time when Unitarians in Massachusetts and elsewhere in the Northeast sought to build all kinds of social institutions to help those on the margins of society, some leveraging positions of considerable social power or personal wealth. And although not all Unitarians (or Universalists, for that matter) were abolitionists, many of those we now remember in our pantheon of "famous Unitarian Universalists" took a strong moral stance in opposition to slavery.

Students of Unitarian Universalist history spend considerable time examining three key addresses/sermons that were formative for our liberal faith at the time they were delivered. The first was Channing's Baltimore sermon, "Unitarian Christianity," delivered in 1819, which embraced Unitarianism as a theological tradition of its own and set forth some of the key ideas still dear to Unitarian Universalists today. The second was Emerson's Divinity School Address, delivered nearly two decades later, in 1838, where Emerson spoke of the individual soul's intuitive relationship with God and with goodness, and decried traditional Christian doctrine. The third was Theodore Parker's sermon, *A Discourse of the Transient and Permanent in Christianity*, delivered in 1841. In this sermon, Parker talked about Absolute Religion and spiritual truths that would be true for all time, truths that were best exemplified by the life of Jesus. At the same time, he denied the validity and truth of the trappings of religion, including the Biblical miracle stories. Parker went on to take a strong abolitionist position and become a leader in the Boston anti-slavery movement. Channing, Emerson, and Parker all raised prophetic voices which caused shock waves in the established religion of their time and helped to define Unitarian Universalism as we know it today:

- Reading Assignment:
  - *Stirring the Nation’s Heart*, pp. 19-28, “Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Birth of Transcendentalism”
  - [“Theodore Parker, Radical Theologian,”](#) Fall 2010 *UU World*
  - *Stirring the Nation’s Heart*, pp. 113-123, “Theodore Parker and the Fugitive Slave Law”

Two other figures from that time period are very important to Unitarian Universalists today. Henry David Thoreau articulated a natural philosophy and connection with natural world that many Unitarian Universalists find meaningful today. Margaret Fuller, a member of the Transcendentalist circle at Concord, moved beyond the intellectual realm to embrace political engagement and work for social justice for those on the margins. Unitarian Universalists today find much to contemplate in her brilliant and beautiful writings and in her biography, which reflects enormous capacity for breaking through barriers to take on roles often closed to women.

- Reading/Listening Assignment:
  - *Stirring the Nation’s Heart*, pp. 65-76, “Margaret Fuller’s New View of Womanhood”
  - [“A Conversation with Margaret Fuller,”](#) sermon by Rev. Katie Lee Crane (audio also available)
  - *Stirring the Nation’s Heart*, pp. 29-39, “Henry David Thoreau’s Search for Higher Truth”

There are others from this time period whose stories bear reading and telling. Read the story of Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, a woman born in a slave state to free black parents, who went on to become a famous lecturer, novelist, and poet- and a member of the Unitarian Church in Philadelphia:

- *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 18-23, “Francis Ellen Watkins Harper”

As you have time, read **one** (or more) of these stories from *Stirring the Nation's Heart* to get a richer sense of this period of time:

- Julia Ward Howe's Liberal Faith, pp. 1-9.
- Bronson Alcott and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's Educational Reform, pp. 53-64
- Lydia Maria Child Battles Racism with her Pen, pp. 89-100
- Antislavery Poet and Reformer Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, pp. 101-112
- Minister-at-Large Joseph Tuckerman pp. 167-176. Dorothea Dix Fights for People with Mental Illness, pp. 187-199

### **Readings and Hymns**

Explore the selections in *Singing the Living Tradition* authored by people from this period of time. Note what is, and what is not, included in the hymnbook, which was published in 1994.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

- Hymn 44 "We Sing of Golden Mornings"
- Hymn 79 "No Number Tallies Nature Up"
- Reading 531 "The Oversoul"
- Reading 556 "These Roses"
- Reading 563 "A Person Will Worship Something"
- Reading 661 "The Heart Knoweth"

Julia Ward Howe

- Reading 573 "Mother's Day Proclamation"

Margaret Fuller

- Reading 575 "A New Manifestation"

Theodore Parker

- Reading 683 "Be ours a religion"

Henry David Thoreau

- Reading 660 "To Live Deliberately"

Frederick Douglass, although not a Unitarian or a Universalist, is an important figure in the history of this period, and is represented in the hymnbook, Reading 579, "The Limits of Tyrants."



- What do you notice about this list? Whose voices are represented? Whose are missing?
- Is the selection of readings and hymns representative of our history, based on your reading?
- If you were to re-create the hymnbook, what changes would you make, if any, to the list? Point out that there has been a great deal of attention paid to Margaret Fuller, for example, in recent years.

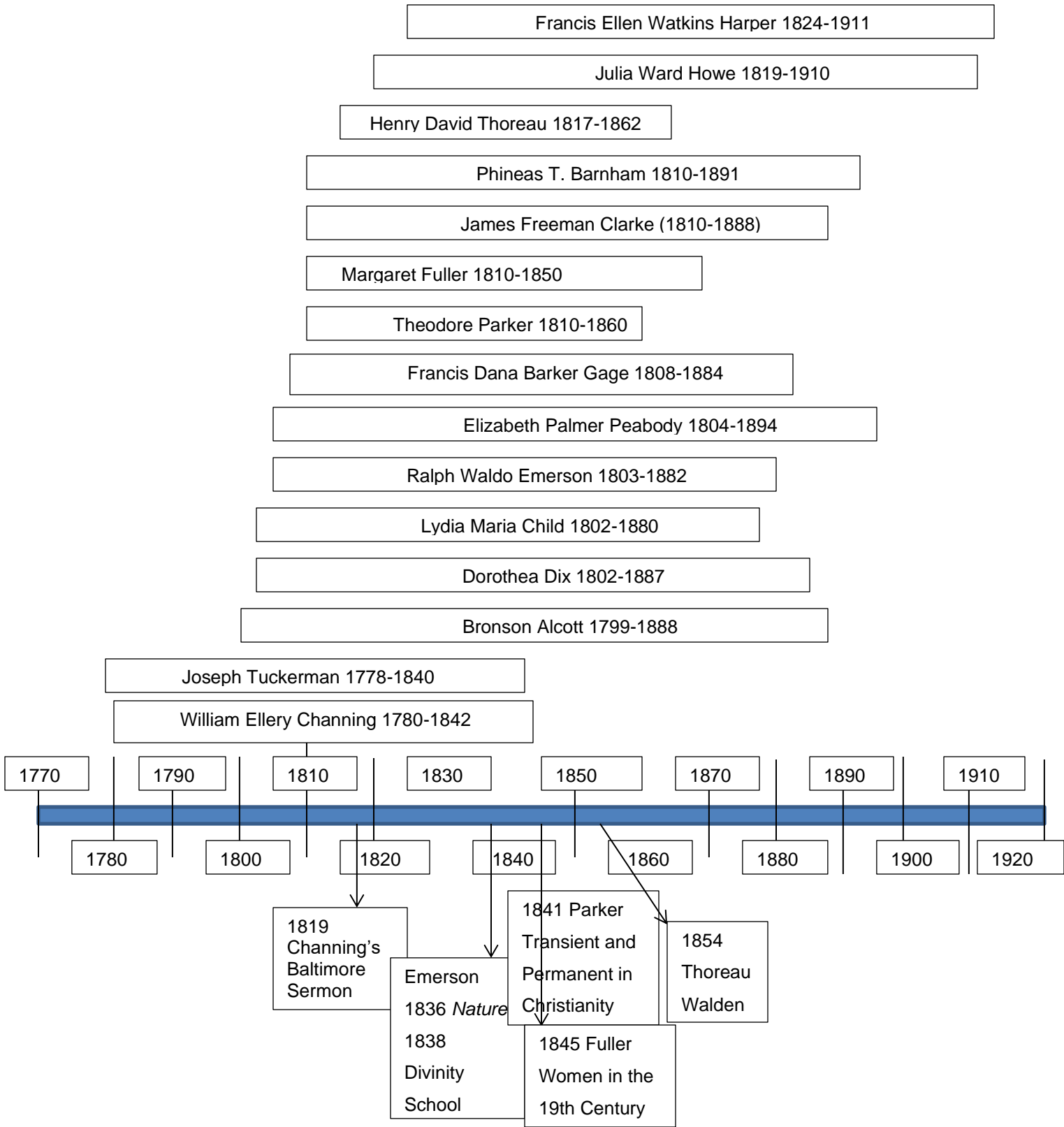
### **Optional Further Reading**

If you are interested in further readings from Thoreau, Emerson, or Fuller, Skinner House has published several helpful resources, all by [Barry Andrews](#): *Thoreau as Spiritual Guide: a Companion to Walden for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion*; *Emerson as Spiritual Guide: a Companion to Emerson's Essays for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion*; *True Harvest: Readings from Henry David Thoreau for Every Day of the Year*; *A Dream Too Wild: Emerson Meditations for Every Day of the Year*; and *The Spirit Leads: Margaret Fuller in her Own Words*. There is a *Tapestry of Faith* [discussion guide](#) for *The Spirit Leads*, written by Polly Peterson.

### **Guiding Questions (discussion takes place during webinar):**

- What did you learn about Unitarianism or Universalism from your reading for this session? What interested or intrigued you?
- Among the reformers whose work is highlighted in this set of readings, who most inspires you?
- What are the benefits to teaching history through stories of famous UUs? What are drawbacks to this approach?

## TIMELINE 2: REFORMERS



## Session 3: Missionaries and Builders - Background and Preparation

Please refer to [Timeline 3, Missionaries and Builders](#) as you complete your reading and/or viewing assignments.

This session tells the story of how Unitarians and Universalists worked to spread their faith into the Mid-west, West and South of the United States. The stories we tell are stories of missionaries and institution builders who sought to organize and strengthen churches to meet the spiritual needs of those who were moving westward into territories which had once belonged to First Nation people. While the Unitarians and the Universalists had quite different approaches to organizing churches, both approaches were dependent on financial support and donations from people “back East,” and missionaries from both faiths spent considerable time dealing with practical money issues.

Readings in this session will take a “pie slice” approach to the historical record, using particular stories to stand in for the larger story, just as a single piece of pie contains all the ingredients and flavor of the whole. These stories play out against a background of major events and movements in the nation as a whole—slavery and anti-slavery, civil war, debates over women’s rights and women’s suffrage, debates over scientific discoveries and scripture, and an unrelenting march of the United States westward, claiming discovery and settlement rights to what had formerly been native lands. They are stories of the resourcefulness of people of all genders, both individually and in partnership. They are stories that concern themselves heavily with the practical theology that helped lay people and their religious leaders to meet the challenges of day to day living, often in difficult circumstances. Because of the story-telling approach to history in this session, you may wish to refer to the timeline to get a clear sense of the chronology of events.

Begin your reading with the story of Thomas Starr King who was both Universalist and Unitarian and whose work was both political and religious:

- Reading Assignment:
  - *Missionaries, Builders, and Pathfinders*, pp. vii-xi, Introduction; pp. 1-4, The Midwest; pp. 95-97, The West Coast; pp. 141-145, The South.

- [Thomas Starr King](#), a story from Session 3 of Windows and Mirrors

The movement of the United States westward meant that there were plenty of opportunities for ministry for both Unitarians and Universalists, but those opportunities were in places that were neither comfortable nor prestigious. It took a special kind of person to undertake to start a church on the frontier. But those outposts of liberal faith offered opportunities previously unavailable to women who felt called to ministry or to public speaking, including Lydia Ann Jenkins, the first Universalist preacher, Olympia Brown, the first woman ordained by a denominational authority (Universalist), and Mary Rice Livermore, who was for a quarter century the most popular female lecturer in the United States. The women ministers on the frontier (most Universalist, some Unitarian), offered a comforting theology and a nurturing community for those who faced the difficulties of frontier life. They also worked hard to support one another in the difficult work they did; by 1875, women ministers had formed the Iowa Sisterhood for mutual support.

- Reading Assignment:
  - *Stirring the Nation's Heart*, pp. 156-166, "Olympia Brown Gets the Vote" OR watch the [video](#).
  - [Life-Changing Beliefs](#), a leader resource from Workshop 10 of Faith like a River
  - [The Iowa Sisterhood](#), a story from Workshop 9 of Faith Like a River

Unitarian missionaries in the Mid-west and West often arrived when a town itself was new, and were involved in the establishment of educational and other institutions. Many stories tell of the extraordinary partnerships between male ministers and their wives, who often bore the brunt of the financial and physical hardship of their circumstances. Cynthia Grant Tucker has told the stories of generations of Eliot women in her book *No Silent Witness*; the stories of Abby Eliot and her daughter-in-law Etta are summarized in John Buehrens' book *A People's History: Universalists and Unitarians in America*. An extraordinary figure in the development of Unitarianism in the Mid-west is Jenkin Lloyd Jones, who, as field secretary for the Western Unitarian Conference, paid careful attention to what lay people needed in a religious faith: community; practical moral guidance, and educational materials. He refused to subscribe to any creed, but was rather a proponent of universal religious principles.

- Reading Assignment:
  - *Missionaries, Builders and Pathfinders*, pp. 50-64, “Jenkin Lloyd Jones”
  - [Jenkin Lloyd Jones and the Abraham Lincoln Center](#), a story from Workshop 6 of A Chorus of Faiths

The work of Charles Darwin and other scientists, as well as the emerging field of biblical scholarship, provided a challenge to those who saw the Bible an inerrant revelation from God. This was especially challenging to Universalists, who were Christian, and generally Trinitarian. Debates over these matters led to the famous Bisbee heresy trial in Minnesota. The video linked in the assignments list provides not only information about the trial, but a good sense of what religious life was like in the newly developing cities and towns of the frontier.

- Reading/Viewing Assignment:
  - [Bisbee and Tuttle on the Universalist Frontier](#), a video by the UUA Prairie Star District. Please watch the first three segments (8:22, 9:20, 10:36 respectively)  
OR *Missionaries, Builders and Pathfinders*, pp.39-49

The growth of liberal religion in the South took a decidedly different path. In the South, it was the Universalist message, carried in published pamphlets and tracts, and by indefatigable circuit-riding preachers, that led people to gather small congregations. Because the ordination process for Universalists did not require formal education, as it did for Unitarians, Universalist ministers came from among the lay people. Readings include the story of Quillen Shinn, who was a denominationally sanctioned missionary, and of several of the many whom he supported in ministries of their own. A number of the churches that grew up in this period were not strong enough to survive financial difficulty or the loss of gifted leadership. Sadly, the tale of the first three African American missions in the South is a tale of lack of denominational support- a significant missed opportunity.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Quillen Shinn - Grasshopper Missionary or St. Paul?](#), a story from Workshop 16 of Faith Like a River
  - *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 92- 97, “Joseph Jordan”

- *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 98- 102, “Thomas E. Wise”
- *Missionaries, Builders, and Pathfinders*, pp> 174-182, “Athalia Lizzie Johnson Irwin”

## Readings and Hymns

With the exception of two readings by Olympia Brown, there are very few selections in *Singing the Living Tradition* from the missionaries and builders of the West, Mid-west and South. There are, however, three hymns written by William Channing Gannett, which capture the spirit of the Western Unitarians. Gannett was minister of several congregations, including Unity in St. Paul, MN, and a prolific writer- of sermons, essays, pamphlets, and hymns.

Pay special attention to Reading 569, which will be the opening reading for the session, and the lyrics of Hymn 187, “It Sounds Along the Ages,” which will be the closing reading.

Olympia Brown

Reading 569 “Stand By this Faith”

Reading 578 “The Great Lesson”

William Channing Gannett

Hymn 39 “Bring, O Morn, Thy Music”

Hymn 40 “The Morning Hangs a Signal”

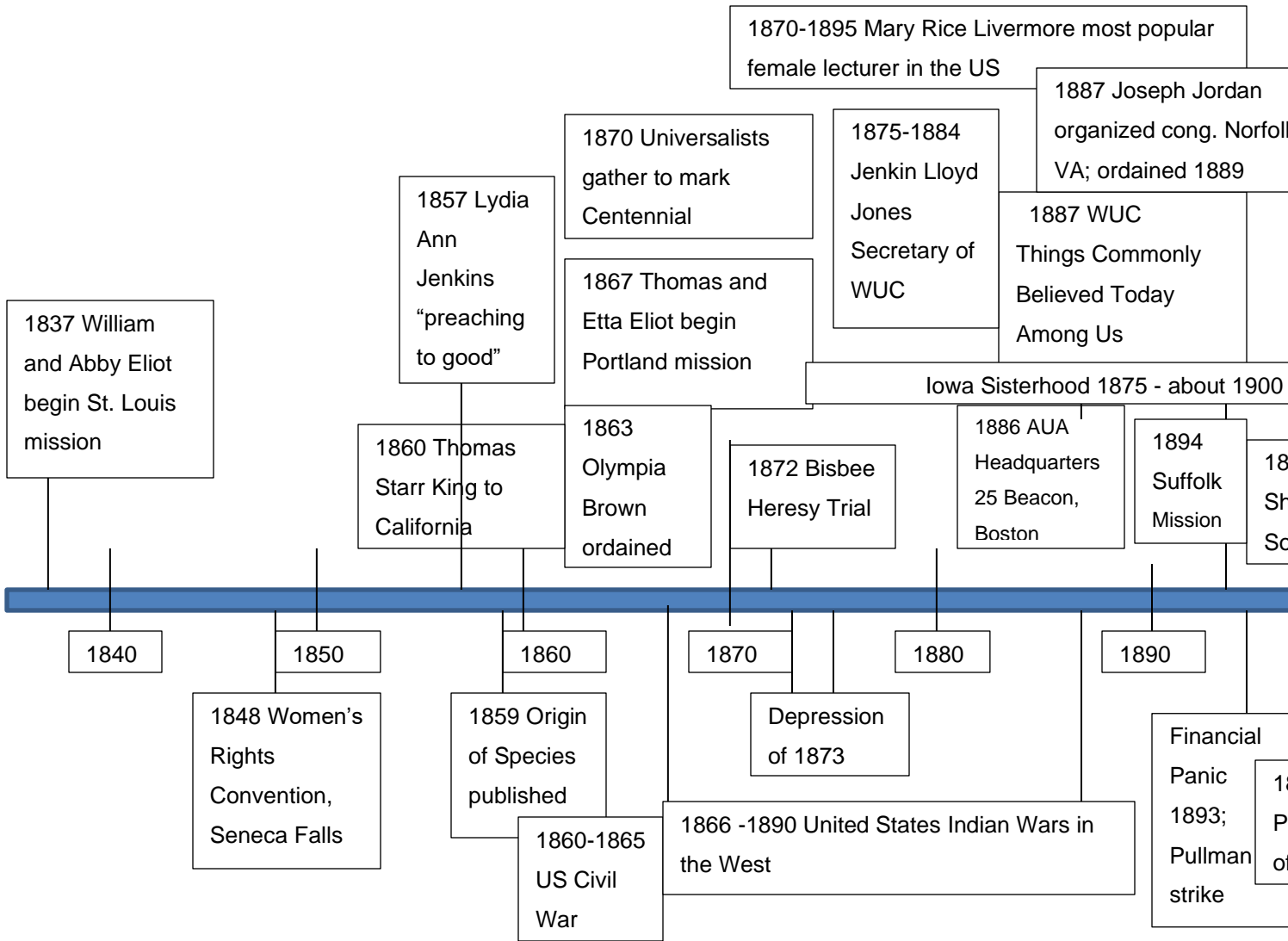
Hymn 187 “It Sounds Along the Ages” (which will be the session closing reading)

## Guiding Questions (discussion takes place during webinar):

- What did you learn about Unitarianism or Universalism from your reading for this session? What interested or intrigued you?
- If you were to write a story for Tapestry of Faith of a person or event you encountered in your reading, whose story would it be?
- How did the experiences of Unitarians and Universalists in the South, Mid-west, and West differ? How were they similar?
- Based on what you know of your own congregation, how does it fit into the larger story?

- How is Unitarian Universalism today shaped by the events and people in this set of readings?
- What response do you have to the stories of those who were on the margins of the denomination due to race, gender, social class, and geography? What does this tell us about our heritage- both positive and negative?

### TIMELINE 3: MISSIONARIES AND BUILDERS





## Session 4: Humanists - Background and Preparation

**\*Final project outline should be submitted to leaders for approval before the Session 5 webinar**

Please refer to [Timeline 4, Humanists](#) as you complete your reading and/or viewing assignments.

The early years of the 20th century were not an easy period for religious liberals, and both Universalists and Unitarians struggled to find a way forward during a time of social upheaval. Industrialization and economic inequality, immigration, Jim Crow and rampant racism, American imperialism and a pacifist response to involvement in foreign wars, the temperance and women's suffrage movements, and unfolding discoveries of science that tested old understandings of ethics and morality were some of the "signs of the times" for our religious forebears in this period. Both Unitarians and Universalists searched for institutional identity and purpose, while individuals carried their religious values into the public square in a variety of ways.

A persistent challenge for the almost exclusively white Unitarian and Universalist movements in this period was what was described in countless denominational publications as the "race problem." Most white liberals of the period enthusiastically endorsed the work and approach of Booker T. Washington and his Hampton Institute. Washington accepted the inevitability of inequality and subjugation of Black people until such time as the "race" could lift itself up through education and Black people prove themselves worthy of citizenship and equality. He advocated for teaching Black people to become craftspeople and industrial workers, so that they might earn a living filling jobs that needed to be done in a factory economy. His work, and the work of others who offered a similar educational approach for Black people, was supported by funds from individual northern philanthropists, including some Unitarians and Universalists. During the same period, individual Black people were discovering both Unitarianism and Universalism, often through their own search for theological meaning. Those individuals found our institutions—and the people who led them—to be, at best, lacking the capacity, vision and resources to support racial inclusion and Black leadership. At their worst, both Unitarian and Universalist leaders were racist and dismissive in their attitudes and actions.

- Reading Assignment:

- *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 30-35; 43-49 “Fannie Barrier Williams” and “Clarence Bertrand Thompson”
- [Finding your Way - Ethelred Brown](#), a story from Session 8 of Faithful Journeys
- *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 53- 57, “William H. G. Carter” OR [W.H.G. Carter and a Step Toward Reconciliation](#), a story from Workshop 1 of Faith Like a River
- *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 103 - 124, “Mary J. Jordan,” “Joseph Fletcher Jordan,” and “Annie B. Willis” OR *Missionaries, Builders , and Pathfinders* pp. 202-213, “The Jordan Family and the Suffolk Mission”

## The Universalists

The Universalists struggled mightily in the first part of the 20th century. Much of their energy had been expended in missionary work, and they had spread themselves quite thin. Many tiny congregations were unable to maintain buildings and pay their clergy, and were certainly not able to support missions or a national denominational structure. Some leading Universalists found a sense of purpose in the idea that they were the proponents of a “universal” religion that affirmed the nature of God as love, believing that all humankind would one day join in this “universal” religion. Others believed that their faith spoke powerfully to building the Kingdom of God on earth through making living conditions better for all people, including Black people, immigrants, and poor white laborers. Not a small number of Universalist ministers became socialist in both philosophy and political affiliation.

The Universalists found their prophetic voice in Clarence Russell Skinner, a minister, a pacifist, and a proponent of building the Kingdom of God on earth. His work points the way toward a new age for Universalism, and a new affirmation of human agency in building a better world.

Here’s a brief passage from his book, [The Social Implications of Universalism](#):

*Universalism meets the demands of a new age because it is the product of those forces which created the new age. It does not send its roots down into a medieval civilization, interpreting past history. It does not come to the present weighted down with incrustations of traditionalism or of formalism, which inhibit spontaneous and contemporary action. Its theology expresses the modern conception of the nature of God and man. Its motive power arises out of the new humanism. Its axioms are the assumptions of the great social and psychical movements of the twentieth century. It is*

*the real religion which the masses consciously or unconsciously are adopting. It is the philosophy and the power which under one name or another the multitudes are laying hold upon to swing this old earth nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the religion of the people, for the people, by the people. It is the faith of the new world life, sweeping upward toward spiritual expression.*

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Clarence Russell Skinner biography from the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography](#)

## **The Unitarians**

Unitarians faced the same set of early 20th century social issues, and a number of Unitarians were notable and well-known leaders in work to care for and lift up those on the margins of society. The U.S. entry into the First World War was an event that evoked powerful protest from those who believed that their Christian faith called them to be pacifist, and just as powerful a response from those who believed that it was the United States' moral responsibility to intervene and "make the world safe for democracy."

From the Mid-west, where Western Unitarian Conference had decades earlier adopted Gannett's non-theistic statement of "Things Most Commonly Believed Today Among Us," there arose a new movement: religious humanism. The social upheaval of industrialization, the First World War, and the Great Depression had challenged the idea that humans can rely on a separate, all-powerful God to right the ills of the world. The 1933 Humanist Manifesto offered a full-on embrace of human agency and capacity to address the world's problems; among its signers were 15 Unitarian ministers and 1 Universalist.

The institutional expression of Unitarianism, the American Unitarian Association, suffered from theological and social upheavals, and especially from the economic disaster of the Great Depression. Calls from both lay leaders and ministers resulted in the first "Commission on Appraisal," to take stock and recommend a way forward. That commission, which included only two ministers, theologian James Luther Adams and soon-to-be AUA president Frederick May Elliot, produced a report, titled "Unitarians Face a New Age," which made it clear that humanism was now the dominant theological position in the movement. That 1936 report marks a watershed moment for Unitarianism, which was poised for a Renaissance.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Things Most Commonly Believed Today Among Us \(1887\) and Unitarians Face A New Age \(1936\)](#), a handout from Workshop 3 of Faith Like a River
  - [Leader Resource 1 Humanism Background](#) and [Leader Resource 2: The Humanist Manifesto III](#) in Building Bridges

## Readings and Hymns

Explore the selections in *Singing the Living Tradition* authored by people from this period. This will give you a flavor of the ways religious humanism was coming into its own. Many of the hymns were written by [Frederick Lucien Hosmer](#), one of the “unity men,” of the Western Unitarian Conference who worked with Jenkin Lloyd Jones.

Pay special attention to Reading 474, because it will be the shared opening reading for the session. This reading was adapted by John Haynes Holmes from a piece written by Keshab Chandra Sen, a Hindu intellectual from Bengal, India, friend of American Unitarian Association missionary Charles Dall. Keshab Chandra Sen, like Holmes and others of this period, had a strong belief in the “Church Universal,” which would transcend and embrace all the religions of the world.

John Haynes Holmes

Hymn 82 “This Land of Bursting Sunrise”

Hymn 474 “Unto the Church Universal”

Frederick Lucien Hosmer

Hymn 45 “Now While the Day in Trailing Splendor”

Hymn 53 “I Walk the Unfrequented Road”

Hymn 96 “I Cannot Think of Them as Dead”

Hymn 105 “From Age to Age”

Hymn 114 “Forward Through the Ages”

Hymn 269 “Lo, the Day of Days is Here”

Hymn 270 “O Day of Light and Gladness”

Hymn 272 “O Prophet Souls of All the Years”

## Optional Reading: An Alternate View

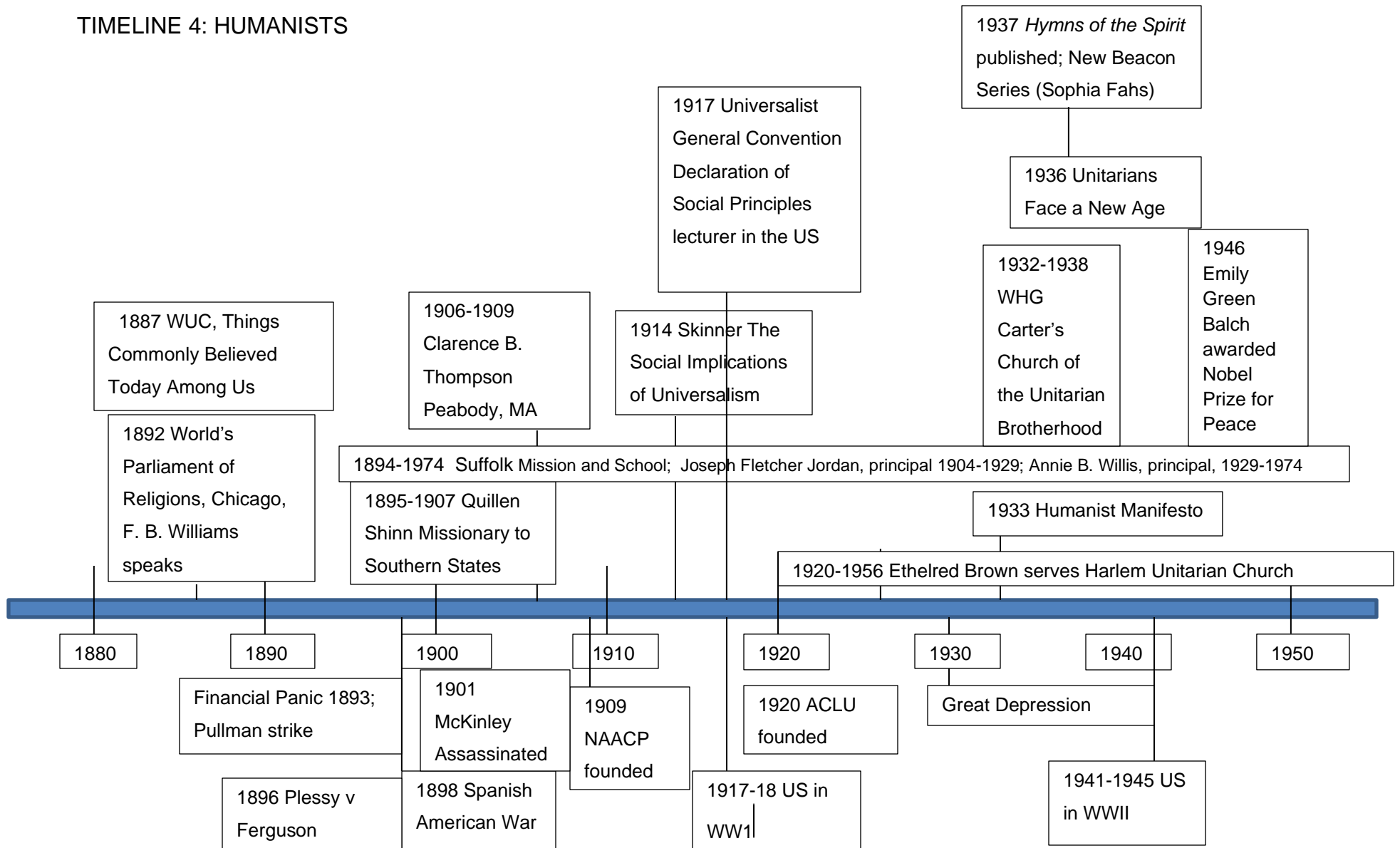
*A People's History* by John Buehrens offers his interpretation of the trajectories of the Unitarian and Universalist movements as they moved through the early and middle twentieth centuries. Scholar and historian Dan McKanan offers a different view in this keynote address delivered at the joint annual meeting of the New York State and Pennsylvania Universalist Conventions in 2011. His paper touches on much of the earlier history of Universalism in North America and in the United States and offers reflections on what Universalist and Unitarian history with social justice work can offer to debates about identity and purpose in our own time.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Before Clarence Skinner: Rediscovering Early Universalist Radicals](#)

**Guiding Questions (discussion takes place during webinar):**

- What did you learn from your reading that helped you to better understand this period of time?
- Which events and people did you find inspiring?
- What role did voices and perspectives from the denominational margins play in shaping our faith? Specifically, were the voices and concerns of Black people, immigrants, and labor part of our story? How?
- Can you imagine a story for “what might have been” if voices and perspectives from the margins had been more fully heard?
- Where does your own faith and/or theological understanding match with the conclusions in *Unitarians Face a New Age*?
- If we set aside the dated language in the document and focus on the ideas expressed, what still seems current for Unitarian Universalism and what is dated?

# TIMELINE 4: HUMANISTS



## Session 5: Making Life Religious - Background and Preparation

**\*Final project outline should be submitted to leaders for approval before the Session 5 webinar**

Please refer to [Timeline 5, Making Life Religious](#) as you complete your reading and/or viewing assignments.

***As part of your preparation for this session, prepare to briefly share the founding story of the Unitarian Universalist congregation you know best.***

The middle years of the 20th century were years when both Unitarians and Universalists faced significant institutional challenges. They responded very differently. The Unitarians, under the leadership of American Unitarian Association president Frederick May Eliot, moved to implement recommendations from *Unitarians Face a New Age* in the areas of social justice, religious education, and outreach leading to growth. The Universalists continued to work on spreading their faith, but not very effectively. Beginning with religious educators, followed by the youth organizations, the two faith traditions moved toward more cooperative and collaborative efforts as both struggled with institutional challenges and with re-inventing their theology and their faith tradition to respond to the signs of the times. By the late 1950s, exploratory conversations about merger had become serious; the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America formally merged in May 1961.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [The Fellowship Movement](#), a story from Workshop 16 of Faith Like a River
  - [From Why? To Why Not?](#), a story from Workshop 11 of Faith Like a River
  - [Youth Lead the Way](#), a story from Workshop 11 of Faith Like a River

While the institutional expressions of Unitarianism and Universalism struggled in this period to face challenges with varying degrees of success, this period saw a theological flowering. Influenced by humanism, world religions, and the religious call to faith in action and social justice work, the two traditions developed ideas that are the hallmarks of our Unitarian Universalist tradition today. Although the seven Principles and six Sources would not be made

explicit until a few years after the merger, many of the ideas found there came from this period. Reading for this session highlights three key people—all theologians and all *religious educators*—who led the two faith traditions forward in some deep and lasting ways: James Luther Adams and Sophia Lyon Fahs, both Unitarians, and Angus MacLean, a Universalist.

### **James Luther Adams**

The idea that our religion is revealed in our actions and not our beliefs was paramount to Unitarian theologian and professor of Christian ethics James Luther Adams, known to many as JLA. He bridged the theological divide between Unitarian Christians and Humanists, teaching that what we *do* as a result of what we believe is what really matters, and urging people of faith to make their voices heard in the public square. These readings offer an introduction to his life and his thought. Note: the “five smooth stones” metaphor did not come from Adams himself, but instead from his editor, although Adams approved its use.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [James Luther Adams' Five Smooth Stones of Religious Liberalism](#), a leader resource from Workshop 1 of A Place of Wholeness.

### **Sophia Lyon Fahs**

In 1937, Fahs was engaged by the American Unitarian Association to work on a new series of curricula and programs for children and youth. She was a humanist and a proponent of child-centered, progressive educational techniques. She also saw religious and spiritual inspiration in the experiences of life and in the shared stories and scriptures of people of many different cultures, places, and times, for, in her words, “Life is religious if we make it so.” She was developmental editor of the remarkable New Beacon Series, which was published between 1937 and 1964, and of several books, including volumes explaining her religious philosophy. Because both Unitarian and Universalist congregations used the New Beacon Series for years, her effect on our movement is deep; the common religious education metaphors, stories, and experiences smoothed the way to the eventual consolidation of the AUA and the UCA.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Introducing Sophia Lyon Fahs](#), a handout from Workshop 6 of What Moves Us



- [Learning by Heart - Sophia Lyon Fahs](#), a story from Session 6 of Faithful Journeys

### **Angus Hector MacLean**

MacLean was dean of the theological school at St. Lawrence University, where he emphasized the value of using progressive educational approaches to religious education. His idea that *how* we are taught should be in line with *what* we are taught- “the method is the message”- has become axiomatic in Unitarian Universalist religious education. His call for our institutions and structures to better reflect our open faith is still relevant today.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Kindred Spirits](#), a leader resource from Workshop 11 of Faith Like a River
  - [The Wind in Both Ears](#), a story from Workshop 3 of The New UU

### **Racial Inclusion: More Missed Opportunities**

Even though both denominations- the Unitarians in their 1942 “Resolution on Race Relations” and the Universalists in their 1943 “Affirmation of Social Principles”- spoke of racial inclusion and social justice, realities on the ground did not match the lofty principles. Readings include the two statements of principle, the story of the candidacy of Eugene Sparrow, and a reflection on Universalism’s failure to address the historic and contemporary suffering of Black people in the United States.

- Reading assignments
  - *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 59-68; 75-86; 125-127; 140-149

### **The Living Tradition**

In 2011, the Unitarian Universalist Association marked its fiftieth birthday. The new faith that was formed from the consolidation of two ancient traditions has grown and developed, with its theology and its practices evolving to meet the challenges of the times. It is a *living* tradition! There are many lenses through which to view this first 50 years. There is an institutional history, a theological history, and a history of engagement with the world grounded in a liberal faith. This session will touch on aspects of all three, by looking at key events/programs that broadened and deepened our faith, expanding the Unitarian Universalist circle. As you have

time, include the “optional” readings in your preparation; you will find them all to be of significant interest to religious educators. Begin your preparation by reviewing our work thus far, reading the text of a pamphlet that recaps our history.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Unitarian Universalist Origins: Our Historic Faith \(Mark W. Harris\)](#)

### **Civil Rights Era and Response to Calls for Black Empowerment**

In *Darkening the Doorways*, Mark Morrison-Read links the Unitarian Universalist response to the Civil Rights movement to the its response to the call for Black Empowerment a few short years later, calling the entire period “The Empowerment Saga”. The two are often separated in the telling, with the Civil Rights work viewed as a positive development in our story and the Empowerment Era as a failure of both our institutions and our people to meet the challenges before them. The readings will explore the two events/movements both separately and together. Please read them in the order given.

- Reading Assignment:
  - *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 153-159
  - [Southern Unitarian Universalists in the Civil Rights Era- Small Acts of Great Courage](#), a handout from Workshop 7 of Resistance and Transformation
  - [James Reeb and the Call to Selma](#), a story from Workshop 5 of Faith Like a River
  - Optional: [Viola Liuzzo and the Call to Selma](#), a story from Workshop 5 of Faith Like a River
  - [The Empowerment Controversy](#), a handout from Workshop 12 of Resistance and Transformation
  - [Timeline of the Empowerment Controversy](#), a handout from Workshop 12 of Resistance and Transformation

- *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 215- 229 “The Empowerment Paradox”
- Optional: *Darkening the Doorways*, pp. 160- 214
- Optional: Video [Wilderness Journey](#)

## Response to the War in Vietnam

The War in Vietnam in the 1960s and into the 1970s caused deep divisions in Unitarian Universalist congregations. Some people believed that the war was necessary and important to limit the spread of Communist totalitarianism. Others believed the war to be an unnecessary, even immoral, intervention in another country. Some of our ministers and congregations became very public in their opposition to the war. Beacon Press, our Unitarian Universalist publishing house, attracted the enmity of the Nixon administration when it published the Pentagon Papers, a set of previously classified papers that showed ways in which the U.S. government had not been truthful about the conduct of the war. Readings include an abridged version of a sermon preached by the Rev. Jack Mendelsohn the Sunday after an interfaith service in which people turned in (and some burned) their draft cards; an information flyer from that time about being a conscientious objector; and a leader resource about the publication of the Pentagon Papers.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [The Church and the Draft Resisters](#), a story from Workshop 10 of Resistance and Transformation
  - [Conscientious Objection and the Draft](#) ([PDF](#), 4 pages), a handout from Workshop 10 of Resistance and Transformation
  - [Stronger than We Look](#), a leader resource from Workshop 11 of Faith Like a River (second story)

## Comprehensive Sexuality Education

In 1970, the Unitarian Universalist Association published the groundbreaking curriculum, *About Your Sexuality*, embracing the idea that youth have a right to sexuality education that views

sexuality as a positive and enriching part of life and provides young people with complete and accurate information. That program was replaced in 1999-2000 with *Our Whole Lives*, a lifespan program which remains the gold standard for comprehensive sexuality education. The readings include a leader resource about the development of AYS; a *UU World* article about the transition from AYS to OWL; and a sermon by Rev. Diane Rollert about a time when AYS came under fire through a sensationalized media story and the heart-warming response of Unitarian Universalist youth and adults.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Stronger than We Look](#), a leader resource from Workshop 11 of Faith Like a River (first story)
  - [From Liberation to Health](#), a handout from Workshop 14 of Resistance and Transformation
  - [Loving Our Whole Lives](#), a handout from Workshop 14 of Resistance and Transformation

## **Women and Religion**

Unitarians and Universalists were among the first to ordain women and strongly supported women's right to vote. But, women and women's issues became less and less visible in both movements in the first half of the 20th century. In the 1960s and 1970s, women's issues moved back to the Association's front burner. The 1977 Women and Religion Resolution called for an Association-wide examination and response to women's issues. Readings include the text of the resolution and an excerpt from a *UU World* article about the changes brought about by the resolution.

- Reading Assignment:
  - [1977 Women and Religion Resolution](#), a handout from Workshop 13 of Resistance and Transformation
  - [Thirty Years of Feminist Transformation](#), a handout from Workshop 13 of Resistance and Transformation

- Optional: Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Women and Religion](#) website to explore ongoing work.

### **The Welcoming Congregation**

Beginning with the 1970 publication of *About Your Sexuality* and program called *The Invisible Minority*, the Unitarian Universalist Association has moved steadily toward social justice, civil rights, and full inclusion for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Following a 1984 General Assembly resolution, the UUA created the highly successful “Welcoming Congregation” program. In 1996, the UUA Board took the position that civil marriage is a civil right, and in 2004, the first full and legal marriage of a same-gender couple took place in Eliot Chapel at UUA headquarters in Boston. Reading assignments include a handout detailing the history of UUA work for GLBT inclusion and social justice and a *UU World* story from 2006, when the 500th congregation became a “welcoming congregation.”

- Reading Assignment:
  - [Stronger than We Look](#), a leader resource from Workshop 11 of Faith Like a River (third story)
  - [The Welcoming Congregation](#), a handout from Workshop 15 of Resistance and Transformation
  - Optional: Visit the [Welcoming Congregation](#) page on the UUA website for current information about the program

### **Readings and Hymns**

As you have time, explore the selections in *Singing the Living Tradition* authored by people from this period of time, noting which ones are familiar to you.

Von Ogden Vogt

Reading 476 “Before the wonders of life”

Vivian Pomeroy

Reading 477 “Forgive us”

James Luther Adams

Reading 591 “I Call that Church Free”

Francis Anderson

Reading 546 "To Free the Heart"

Sophia Lyon Fahs

Reading 439 "We Gather in Reverence"

Reading 616 "For So the Children Come"

Reading 658 "It Matters What We Believe"

Clinton Lee Scott

Reading 438 "Morning"

Reading 565 "Prophets"

Kenneth Patton

Hymn 303 "We are the Earth Upright and Proud"

Hymn 308 "The Blessings of the Earth and Sky"

Hymn 310 "The Earth is Home"

Hymn 378 "Let those who live in every land"

Hymn 379 "Ours be the poems of all tongues"

Reading 437 "Let Us Worship"

Reading 443 "We Arrive Out of Many Singular Rooms"

Reading 444 "This House"

Robert Terry Weston

Hymn 369 "This is the Truth that Passes Understanding"

Reading 530 "Out of the Stars"

Reading 538 "Harbingers of Frost"

Reading 547 "Summer Meditation"

Reading 650 "Cherish Your Doubts"

Vincent B. Silliman

Hymn 42 "Morning, So Fair to See"

Hymn 133 "One World"

Hymn 287 "Faith of the Larger Liberty"

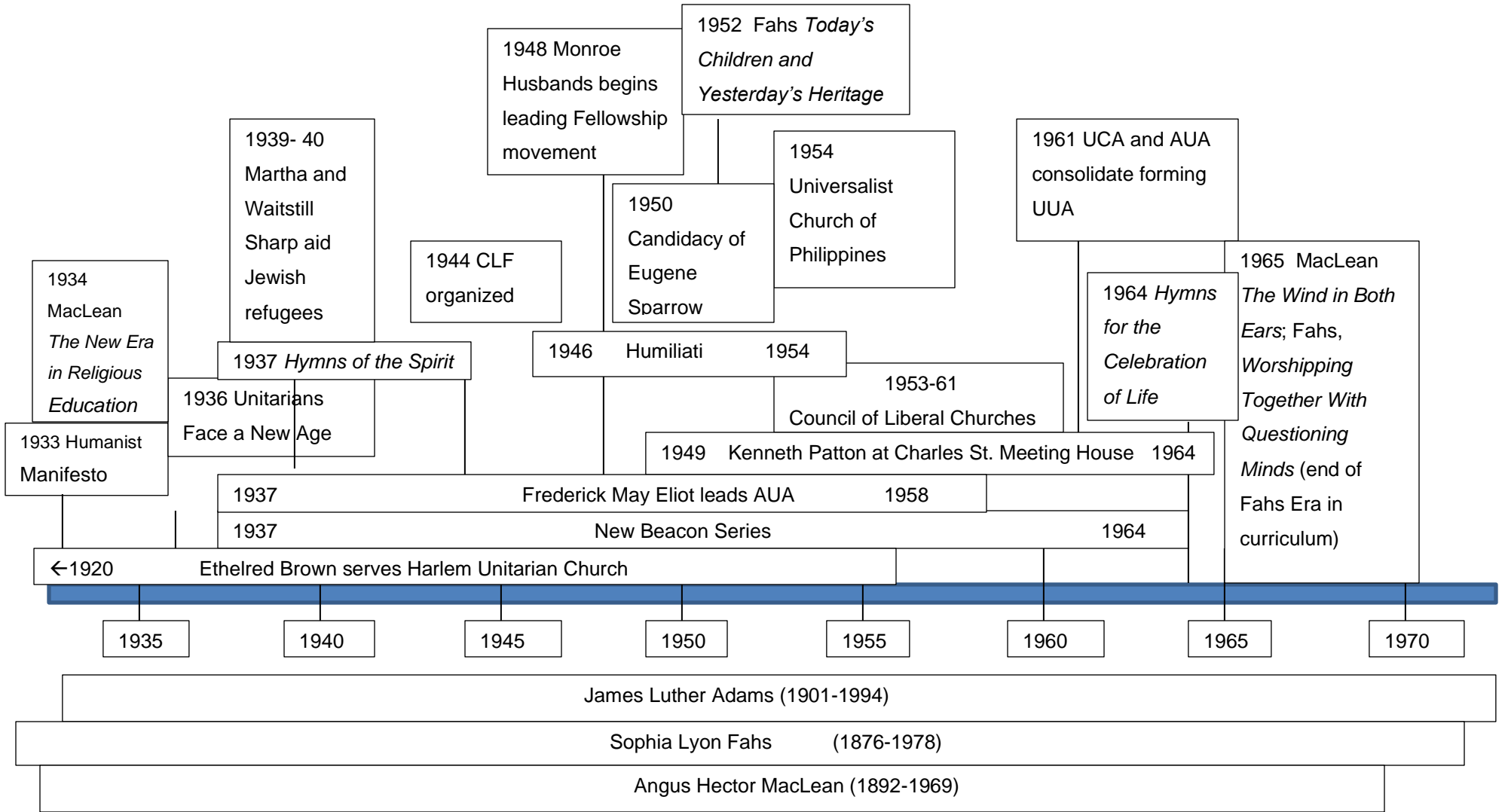
Hymn 414 "As We Leave this Friendly Place"

Reading 466 "Religion"

**Guiding Questions (discussion takes place during webinar):**

- What did you learn about Unitarianism or Universalism from your reading for this session? What interested or intrigued you?
- What ideas and practices from mid-twentieth century Unitarianism and Universalism are reflected in our faith today?
- What difference does it make if we put religious education and faith development in the center of the way we tell our Unitarian Universalist story?
- Share the story of how the congregation you know best came into being.
- What did you learn from your reading that helped you to better understand a current program, movement, challenge, or event that affects your work as a religious educator?
- How might knowing and sharing this information and perspective help you in your work?
- Some of the stories from this session point to work that still must be done.” What are some of your dreams for Unitarian Universalism, especially dreams that continue some of the work begun in the first fifty years?

# TIMELINE 5: MAKING LIFE RELIGIOUS





## Session 6: Final Projects - Background and Preparation

### Final Project Preparation

As you prepare for your final project, look back over the application ideas you and others have created over the course of this module. As you read them, select any that you would especially like to develop further or put into practice. Add any new ideas you have to the collection.

**You are asked to prepare a final project that shows a way to use what you have learned about our Unitarian Universalist history in your professional work.** The project can show

documentation of something you have already done or a plan for something you will do. It can be the development of one of the ideas in the group's collection or something entirely new.

You can work alone or with a small group. You may use any electronic format that works to present your project—a slide show, documents or flyers, video, audio, Pinterest, Tumblr, and a blog are all possibilities. The project you prepare should take about three hours to prepare and should require about 15 minutes to present. All projects will be posted in the shared folder set up by the leaders. *You must submit a statement via email of what you plan to do and with whom you will be working to the leaders for approval by the start of Session 5. The leader may offer suggestions or request revisions in your plan.* Here are some ideas for final projects to get you started:

- Find a local story (person, congregation, region), exploring how that story fits with the broad scope of Unitarian Universalist history and share through a blog post, or a story for all ages, or another kind of presentation
- Create a video that tells a historical story or “markets” a Unitarian Universalist history program for a particular age group or for a multigenerational group. Examples of such programs include Faith Like a River, Resistance and Transformation, and A Place of Wholeness
- Write a skit or song to teach some aspect of Unitarian Universalist history to a particular audience
- Create a Pinterest board or a Tumblr blog to select and present (curate) themes from Unitarian Universalist history

- Explore the history behind a contemporary challenge or stance in today's Unitarian Universalism, and design a way to offer this history to help clarify the challenge or stance, perhaps through a congregational or district workshop, or at a LREDA cluster or small group gathering
- Create plans for a discussion group that explores more deeply some of the topics in *Stirring the Nation's Heart*, *Darkening the Doorways*, *Missionaries, Builders and Pathfinders* or one of the Find Out More resources, such as *Elite: Uncovering Classism in Unitarian Universalist History* (Note: there is a small group discussion guide for [Darkening the Doorways](#) and one for [Elite](#).) Find an exciting and engaging way to market your plans.
- The interactive timelines in each session were created as the final project by two participants, Sadie Kahn Greene and Mr. Barb Greve, for the field test of this module. While the program used to develop these no longer allows for editing or adding to them, the timelines are still quite helpful and may serve as inspiration for a new generation of timelines as someone's final project. If this is of interest, check out the article [Top Ten Free Timeline Tools for Teachers](#).

Here are the criteria module leaders will use to evaluate your plan:

1. Does the project plan offer a practical application of something the participant(s) has learned about Unitarian Universalist history?
2. Does it fulfill one or more of the goals of the program (see Introduction)?
3. Are there clear presentation plans? What form will the presentation take?
4. Is it possible for the participant(s) to complete this project in three hours and to present it in the allotted time?

### Find Out More

There are many resources that will help you delve more deeply into particular topics in Unitarian Universalist history. Here are some recommendations:

- Collection of videos prepared by Unitarian Universalists about topics in our history here: <http://www.uua.org/re/adults/curricularresources/uuhistoryvideos>
- Unitarian Universalist history in Tapestry of Faith for adults. These programs are all modular, which means that you can offer them individually or in a small series. See the

program Introductions for workshop series suggestions. A number of the readings for this Renaissance module come from one of these programs.

- [Faith Like A River: Themes in Unitarian Universalist History](#), by Alison Cornish and Jackie Clement. Each of the sixteen workshops explores the history of a theme that is important in our tradition, such as covenant, evangelism, heresy, and so on
- [Resistance and Transformation: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History](#), by Colin Bossen and Julia Hamilton. Each of the sixteen workshops explores the history of our social justice work in a particular area
- Unitarian Universalist history in Tapestry of Faith for youth and children and for multigenerational groups
  - [A Place of Wholeness](#), by Beth Dana and Jesse Jaeger, is a twelve-session program for high school-aged youth to better understand themselves in the context of the Unitarian Universalist living tradition
  - Tapestry of Faith programs for children contain many historical stories. [Search Tapestry of Faith](#) for stories of particular people or events
  - The Tapestry of Faith toolkit books *Stirring the Nation's Heart* and *Missionaries, Builders and Pathfinders*
- Skinner House books has published a number of Unitarian Universalist history titles, including some that were required for this module. Here's a selection of others:
  - [Universalists and Unitarians in America: A People's History by John Buehrens](#)
  - [The Arc of the Universe is Long: Unitarian Universalists, Anti-Racism and the Journey from Calgary](#) by Leslie Takahashi Morris, James (Chip) Roush, and Leon Spencer
  - [Black Pioneers in a White Denomination](#) by Mark D. Morrison-Reed
  - [Call to Selma: Eighteen Days of Witness](#) by Richard D. Leonard

- [Elite: Uncovering Classism in Unitarian Universalist History](#) by Mark Harris
- [The Fellowship Movement: A Growth Strategy and its Legacy](#) by Holly Ulbrich
- [The Incredible Story of Ephraim Nute: Scandal, Bloodshed and Unitarianism on the American Frontier](#) by Bobbie Groth
- [Standing Before Us: Unitarian Universalist Women and Social Reform 1776-1936](#) by Dorothy May Emerson
- [Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography](#) prepared by the Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage Society (online)
- Books from other sources:
  - [Giving Birth to Ourselves: a History of the Liberal Religious Educators Association, 1949-1999](#) by Joan Goodwin (Liberal Religious Educators Association, 1999)
  - [The Larger Message: Universalist Religious Education's Response to Theological and Cultural Changes, 1790-1930](#) by Elizabeth Strong (Meadville Lombard Press, 2004)
  - [Making the Manifesto: The Birth of Religious Humanism](#) by William Schulz (Skinner House Books, 2004)