



To This I Give My Heart

A Leader's Guide and FAQ

Friends,

[*To This I Give My Heart: A Coming of Age Journal*](#) is, as the title suggests, a journal for youth to use during Coming of Age. When I started in my role, I was asked to review and provide edits on *Backpacker's Notebook*. Through that process, I realized that resource was designed for a different time, a different culture, and a different generation of youth and young adults. I remembered my time as a religious educator for a small church and the difficulties of trying to plan a Coming of Age program for two youth. It was from this experience that I designed and wrote *To This I Give My Heart*.

It was designed specifically for fourteen and fifteen year olds and as an immersive tool to deepen faith formation and Unitarian Universalist identity. It includes our principles, sources, multiple theories of UU theology, thought-provoking questions and activities, and inspiration on nearly every page from Unitarian Universalist ministers, educators, and thinkers.

This resource is meant to be a "cheat sheet," filled with tips and tricks on how you might use *To This I Give My Heart* in your congregation.

As always, thank you for your support of Unitarian Universalist youth.

Bart Frost
Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries



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The journal format of [To This I Give My Heart](#) makes it easy to use for both leaders and participants. The journal is organized into eight sections: Who Are You, UU History, UU Theology, Spirituality and Worship, Community, Leadership, Justice, and Credo. These sections align with the workshops provided in [Coming of Age: Handbook for Congregations](#), as well as popular models for Coming of Age including the Anchorage model, the Delaware County model, the Lansing model, and any model based on [Backpacker's Notebook](#).

Who should use this journal?

This journal was designed for 9th graders (14/15 year olds). There are definitely elements that could be used with older and/or younger folk, but it may require adaptation. It's meant to be reminiscent of the planners that youth receive in school -- with inspiring quotes on almost every page -- as well as engaging questions and activities.

If your Coming of Age program includes mentors, each mentor should also have a copy and might want to engage with it as a tool to connect deeper with their youth.

How should I use it?

It depends on the group. You could go page by page with your youth in class. You could encourage them to work on it at home and use in-person group time as reflection. You could do a hybrid model where some activities are homework and some are class work. You could make the journal voluntary. Some activities ask youth to create a collage or make art, so art supplies may be necessary. If mentors are using the journal, they should use it in the same way students do.

What if I don't have many youth?

This was a major focus of the design process! This resource is ideal for the religious educator, minister, or lay leader working in a small congregation without enough students to build momentum. Meet on a schedule that works for youth, mentors, and program facilitator(s). The strategies above would work where a more structured curriculum like the workshops detailed in the *Coming of Age Handbook* may not. The journal questions can be used as discussion starters, homework, or for in class journaling. You could even pick and choose pages instead of going from cover to cover. Just pay attention to copyright though, and please don't replicate pages.

One of my youth finished the whole thing in a day. Is that bad?

Not necessarily. However, encourage your youth to treat it as a spiritual practice, which means focusing their intention and attention. Remind students that *To This I Give My Heart* is a tool for them to explore their hearts, minds, and souls. They should be patient and thorough with the process. Personal reflection can be hard.

My youth aren't really feeling the journal format. What should I do?



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You can adapt it in variety of ways to work for your group. It's important to pay attention to learning styles and preferences. You may wish to incorporate more embodied activities. For example, "What is holy to you?" could be adapting into a spectrum activity where the facilitator asks questions like "Do you find yourself spiritually connected to places?" and students move from one side of the room to the other for yes or no. Some activities involve listening to a sermon or interviewing a member of the congregation. If those are more successful, do more of them!

I'm a parent. Can I use this?

Sure! It might be a little bit difficult to explain some parts without religious education experience or a deep knowledge of Unitarian Universalism (if you are newer to UU), but it's not impossible!

I'm not affiliated with a UU congregation but I want to raise my child(ren) with UU values. Can I use this?

Yes. However, as mentioned above, it might be difficult to explain some concepts unless you grew up UU or spent significant time attending a congregation at some point in your life.

What are some creative things I can do with this?

One of the great things about *To This I Give My Heart* is that there are almost an infinite number of ways to use it. You could have a Coming of Age Parent Meeting that explores topics and themes. You could focus heavily on the UU History section and have youth present their research to congregation, or make skits about each person, or create videos. (If you do video, please contact yayadirector@uua.org, because we would love to help you get the proper permissions and share the videos online!) You could make a cardboard theological house, and your youth could explain it to an adult religious education class. You could take all of the quotes from throughout the book and put them on a bulletin board with some of the questions for parents to peruse while they wait to pick up their children. You could do a church-wide activity on personal spiritual journeys. The opportunities are endless!

I have a question not listed here. What should I do?

You can email me, Bart Frost, at bfrost@uua.org and I'll try my best to answer it.