

Compass Points

a full year program for adolescents exploring
their selves, their beliefs, their UU faith,
their relationships with others
and the world

by

Gaia Brown

&

Michelle Richards

Illustrations by Terry Stafford

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*I call that mind free. .. which does not
content itself with a passive or
hereditary faith. ...*

William Ellery Channing, father of American
Unitarianism

About the Creators of This Curriculum:

Gaia Brown is a Credentialed Religious Educator, Masters Level. She has an M.A. in English from the University of Wisconsin and an M.Ed. from the William Paterson University in New Jersey. She has been a Unitarian Universalist religious educator since 1975, serving congregations in New Jersey and Illinois. Gaia also served on the board of the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) from 2000-2004. She is currently chair of the LREDA Committee on Mentoring.

In 2001 Gaia and her partner, Lloyd Rogers, with whom she has a blended family of five grown children plus three (and counting!) grandchildren, moved to the foothills of the Sierra in Reno, NV. There, freed from the demands of directing a large religious education program, she was able to fulfill her dream of publishing curricula. Gaia's other curricula include the *Super Heroes* duo (*Bible People* and *UU*) and *Treasure Hunting--Take Two* (with Ellen Schneider).

As a Humanist, Gaia feels that in today's social and political climate there is an urgent need to create in youth a passion to protect religious liberty. Also, in a post 9/11 world, there is a real need to grow young people who will be open to the "other." *Compass Points* brings the adolescent's search for religious identity into the Twenty-first Century.

Michelle Richards, a credentialed religious educator, is author of *Come Into the Circle: Worshiping with Children* (to be published by Skinner House in 2007) as well as the curriculum, *Popcorn Theology*. She is a small church RE program consultant for the Central Midwest District and created the Emerging Congregations workshop (along with Dori Davenport) for newly forming grassroots congregations.

Previously, she served for seven years as Director of Religious Education at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Elkhart and for six years as the Chair of the Central Midwest District's Religious Education Committee. Prior to becoming a religious educator, Michelle worked as a writer and television producer for several local public television stations. During this time she wrote and produced six documentaries dealing with children and educational issues. She has a bachelor's degree in Radio/Television/Film from Indiana State University with a specialization in writing and film criticism.

Michelle has been married to husband Bryan for 16 years and together they have two children, Carson (age 4) and Shannon (age 11, and eligible for *Compass Points* in the next few years). Michelle believes we have an obligation to help our youth formulate their own beliefs as well as build a sense of identity as Unitarian Universalists. *Compass Points* was designed with these ends in mind – and to use the interests of today's youth (through music, movies and the internet) to help them formulate their ideas.

A life-long UU, Terry Stafford was a DRE for eight years, and currently is the editor of CANUUE, a Canadian national newsletter for Unitarian Educators. Impressed by the historical importance of Unitarians, Terry feels that their impact on the world has largely been due to the UU focus on liberal independent thought. She feels that raising children with strong values, who use their own intelligence and who feel free to question and seek their own answers, will continue to offer the world adults who will make a difference in social progress.

Terry's interest in alternatives in education led her to study the Montessori method, then to home school her own daughters. Terry now operates Wildwood Educational Enrichment Centre. Strongly based on UU values, Wildwood offers children a learning environment where they are free to follow their inspiration in a small and respectful community.

Terry studied art at CalArts in California and the Beaux Arts in Geneva, Switzerland. She has written and/or illustrated several picture books and articles about parenting. Terry feels that illustrating UU curricula combines her passions for UU religious education and art. She is the illustrator of *Treasure Hunting-Take Two* and *UU Super Heroes* and is delighted to continue to make this contribution to UU curricula.

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Introduction

Goals of Compass Points

Compass Points will lead its young adolescent participants on a year-long spiritual journey during which they will have opportunities:

To sort out their feelings about themselves and their world as they do the difficult work of starting to create their adult selves

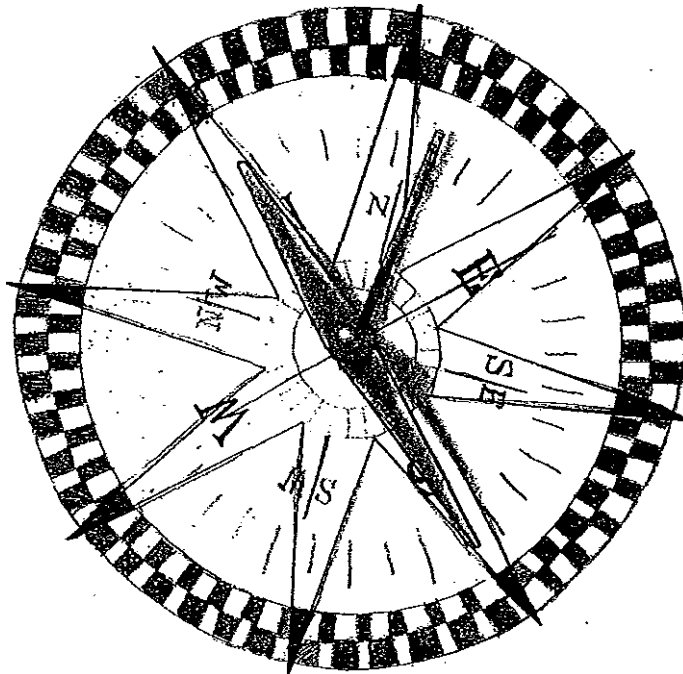
To discover what they believe about life's big questions-the nature of humanity and the divine, beliefs about death and faith

To think independently; assume responsibility, make decisions, explore values and adopt the practice of radical hospitality

To acquire enough background in Unitarian Universalist history, polity and theology that they can know and express what Unitarian Universalism stands for

To share the above with the adult congregation, which often knows even less about Unitarian Universalism than do children in religious education programs

To understand that religious liberty is a hard-won legacy that continues to need protection



Compass Points FAQs

Who is *Compass Points* intended for?

Compass Points was conceived of as a middle school curriculum, combining the kinds of themes that were explored in the old curricula *Life Issues for Teenagers* and *How Can I Know What to Believe*. As our original planning evolved, we realized that our target could be much broader.

With minor adjustments, *Compass Points* is ideal for high school groups. They might choose just one or two units to focus on during a year. Some of the sessions on UU history and polity have been used successfully in a slightly different format with a high school group.

Older youth would probably want fewer transitions (they get comfortable on those couches!) and would spend more time on discussion, less time with activities.

One activity we liked, the multi media sacred text, turned out to be too ambitious for middle schoolers. We have included that activity in the appendix for use with high school groups.

Much of the material in *Compass Points* would be of interest to adults. Most UU adults are generally unaware of our history, and although they are responsible for leading our congregations, they know little about our polity.

In addition, many adults come to UU congregations unchurched. The sessions on the Bible, Jesus, sacred texts and sages, for example, would probably all be eye openers for many.

Here is what *Compass Points* is not: It is not intended for use with children younger than 6th grade, nor is it meant as a 6th grade curriculum. Our field testing shows that 6th graders can have a successful year with *Compass Points* if there are 7th graders or 7th and 8th graders in the group. The topics considered are simply not of interest to younger youth unless they have older companions to lead the way and set the tone.

Who will gain from *Compass Points*?

Compass Points will teach all the youth and adults in the congregation! Activities such as the Congregational Poll and the Congregational Polity Poster are intended to involve or to be shared with everyone. Adults from the congregation will be asked to visit with the youth during morning sessions. And the adult leaders of *Compass Points* will find that they acquire an extensive amount of UU history and theology as they participate in the growth of the youth they teach. We are convinced that over time, a congregation that uses *Compass Points* will find that its general level of Unitarian Universalist identity will be greatly enhanced.

Can *Compass Points* be used in conjunction with COA programs?

Because of the issues which are explored, *Compass Points* is an ideal curriculum to offer in conjunction with a congregation's Coming of Age (COA) program. The established goals of this curriculum are a natural complement to the goals of most Unitarian Universalist COA programs.

However, if any requirements of the COA program involve activities on Sunday mornings, then it may be difficult (if not impossible) to do all the sessions without working in alternative time periods. Some sessions can be combined together and offered as expanded sessions as part of an overnight or in conjunction with a social activity on Friday night or Sunday evening.

Compass Points can also easily be adapted to be offered over more than one year. Using the Annotated Table of Contents and some intentional planning, the sessions of the curriculum can be spread to cover learning experiences for two years. This will give you greater flexibility and a chance to offer some expanded sessions without compromising the requirements of the Coming of Age program for your middle school age youth.

Why on Earth Did They Do That?

As we received field test evaluations back throughout the year, we realized that most of the challenges and confusions resulted from the teachers not being able to read our minds. We certainly knew what we were doing! Now we're sharing our thought processes with you. *Understanding the intentionality of our methods will ease your reading of each session, help your planning go more quickly and smoothly, and enable you to be intentional in all you do.* We encourage you to read through this introduction and then, over your favorite beverage, talk about it with the rest of your teaching team.

Structure of the Curriculum

Compass Points offers a full year of sessions, divided into five units. The first unit (*The Journey--concepts of the forming self*) sets the tone for the rest of the year and also helps the youth acquire abilities and skills that will be used in later sessions. It is designed to help a group bond and learn how to be in community. We strongly suggest that you do both the first two sessions, as they complement each other in helping everyone get a good idea of what the year is going to be all about.

There is an intentional progression in the units which follow. Unit Two (*Traveling North--concepts of belief and authority*) opens up the diversity of Unitarian Universalist belief and how it is formed. Unit Three (*Traveling East – the circle of life*) returns to the more introspective climate of Unit One as participants ponder issues of transition, dying and living. Unit Four (*Traveling South--connections to our UU faith*) is an active look at Unitarian and Universalist history and polity which emphasizes the ongoing struggle for religious freedom. Finally, Unit Five (*Traveling West--connections to the world and the web of life*) looks at how we, as Unitarian Universalists, act in the world and what the consequences of our actions are.

We recognize that most programs will not use every session in a year. We invite you to use the Annotated Table of Contents to help make choices. For some sessions, we suggest extended time periods (an afternoon, an evening, an overnight). Extended sessions can provide important time to socialize, plan a social justice event, or go deeper into the material.

Structure of the Sessions

The Journey as Metaphor.

Adolescence is generally the time when we first realize that our lives stretch on ahead of us, follow a path, and have a final destination. So while the metaphor of life as a journey might be a cliché for adults, it's a new concept for youth.

Compass Points presents a brief journey for each session. Participants prepare for the journey, travel a distance, reach a destination, rest to reflect on the trip experience, then continue on. They are given the opportunity to travel both individually and as part of a community. A brief chalice ritual opens and closes the morning, so that the journey takes place in "sacred space."

The Shared Praxis Method.

The session plans are also based on the "shared praxis" pedagogical method.¹ We begin by focusing on a theme and upon what the youth already know or feel about it (*Thoughts for the Day*). There is then an opportunity for critical reflection on the theme (*Taking a Stand*). Now we move onto the broader story or vision of the faith community (*Heart of the Journey*) and an opportunity to incorporate that story by acting upon it (*Getting There*). There is then an opportunity to reflect upon the story, to make it one's own, often by journaling (*Stopping to Rest*). Finally, there is an invitation to response and action as participants share their new learnings with the community (*Taking a Stand-Reprise or Quick Stop*).

1. See Thomas Groome's *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (Jossey-Bass, 1999).

Traveling Through a Session

Before Sunday Morning

Goals for Participants.

We begin each session plan with the goals, as that is where we ourselves began writing each session. Read over the goals and keep them in mind as you continue through the session.

We encourage you to also add your own goals for your group.. You might hope that they share more deeply, be more inclusive of newcomers, be more respectful of each other, or be more excited about turning up on Sundays. Just as we encourage the youth to keep journals, you might want to keep a record of your goals and the process your group makes towards them. Be sure to discuss your goals with other members of your teaching team, so you're all traveling in the same direction.

Session in Brief (and Length).

This is a similar structure each week. Here we have divided the session among 60 minutes, to give you an idea of how long various elements should take in relationship with each other.

Field test sites spent an hour to 75 minutes on each session, and even then, they often were not able to get through everything. Larger groups inevitably take longer to move through the session. Particularly **if** you have less than an hour for your program, you will have to make adjustments.

There is a lot of movement in each session, as we have written for youth as young as 11 or 12. Older youth might find this too much movement. **If** this is the case, ask them to help you think how you can structure the morning a bit more leisurely while still using the shared praxis method. (See the previous page.)

You may find that some discussions or activities might take longer than the times given because the youth are really engaged in an experience which is especially relevant to their lives at this moment in time. In this case, you may find it necessary to cut other elements short while still remaining true to the overall structure.

If You Have a Short Session Time•••

Many sessions can be divided into two parts and done over two weeks. For instance, for the first week of session 26 you could learn about Transcendentalism, then the second week you could have the mystery dinner party. Having participants who were there the prior week report on what happened is a good way for them to review without feeling like "we've already done that." A challenge with one session going over two weeks is that youth who miss the second week will not get any resolution to whatever themes are brought up. Also, sessions are constructed to include spiritual, intellectual, and physical moments. Dividing the sessions will challenge that balance. Nevertheless **if** you're stuck with a 45 minute time frame, you might prefer to divide the sessions rather than leaving much of them undone.

Supplies You Will Need.

The items listed first in each session are used weekly. Next are listed those things which you might not use every week but you should have on hand. (There is a list later in this introduction.) At the end of the list are those supplies which you might have to hunt around for, like feathers or a paper shredder. These are the items which are unique and necessary for this session. Look at this early enough in the week (or even earlier!) so you don't have a last minute panic.

Advance Preparation.

This is what you do to prepare for the session prior to Sunday morning. Reading this through at least a week in advance will help you plan accordingly.

You want respect from your youth, and you show them respect when you prepare sufficiently. If you seem unprepared, you communicate the unspoken message that you did not care enough to learn the material. In that case, why should they?

Likewise, reading through the stories or elements of a session in advance allows you to develop a familiarity with the material and a comfort level which the youth will pick up on.

Being prepared in advance also gives you the flexibility to change directions if necessary.

Sometimes we ask you to make choices.

Some sessions have far more material than you can use. We hope you take the time to decide what would be most interesting for your group.

It's essential to plan the timing of earlier activities so that you have enough time at the end of your morning for the closing elements of the session. Without closure, the youth are scattered out into the world without proper perspective and a sense of completion.

On Sunday Morning

Preparing for the Day's Journey.

Each session begins with a chance to remind youth their experience is grounded in a faith community (Chalice Lighting /Affirmation) and offers an opportunity for bonding (Check-in) prior to introducing the topic of the day (Sharing Thoughts for the Day) and assessing the participants' prior knowledge of the issue explored through the session (Taking a Stand).

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

This is where you begin with your group. This is when you establish that this is something different from the work-day (or school) world. If your participants have an affirmation that they are accustomed to using, or if you find one you prefer, feel free to use it instead.

Check-in.

The older your group (and, of course, the larger), the longer this is likely to last. We suggest you try to establish it as a brief sharing, a time to recognize that you have gone your separate ways the past week, and you are now together again in a caring community.

That said, Check-in sometimes serves as a necessary safe place for a youth to share something profoundly troubling in his/her life. Should that happen, you *must* honor that revelation with sufficient time and support.

If you find that Check-in is taking too long or, alternatively, youth are unsure of what to share, you can consider using a focused Check-in rather than an open ended one. A focused Check-in uses a specific question that can be answered by the group (but avoids the simplicity of "yes" or "no" answers.) Examples might be "how are you feeling right now this morning?" or "what was the best (or most challenging) thing in your week?"

Remember that check-in is a time for sharing in confidence. At the same time, it is important for youth to know that you might find it necessary to tell when you consider something to be a serious situation. And you must always tell your religious educator or minister if you suspect abuse of any kind. Make sure this is known from the outset!

Sharing Thoughts of the Day.

Every session has quotes (usually four) that are to be posted on the walls. These are also voiced by participants willing to select one from a hat or basket and read it. We have compiled the quotes in an appendix at the end of this curriculum, so you can just copy and cut those pages, rather than writing them out a second time.

Please keep in mind, here and everywhere that the written word appears, that some adolescents can still be struggling with reading. If you know someone has such difficulty, you might let them choose a quote in advance so they can practice reading it ahead of time.

The quotes are meant to get give everyone a shared focus to which they can bring their own experience. The quotes also, when possible, are representative of the six Unitarian Universalist sources. You are welcome to bring in additional or alternate quotes.

At the request of the field testers, we have added something descriptive following the name of the person quoted. If the person is a Unitarian, Universalist, or Unitarian Universalist, that is also noted.

Taking a Stand.

This gives participants a chance to say what they think and hear what their peers think. It is also a sort of "pretest" if you do the Reprise, setting a baseline from which the participants might grow. In response to a statement, participants stand on an imaginary compass needle, towards the north if they are in agreement, towards the south if they disagree.

In the field testing, some groups loved this element and came up with additional statements on which to take a stand. Another group found it threatening because no one wanted to seem different from his/her peers. That group tended to cluster in the middle. As a result, we have added a "center point", a 12" circle that separates north from south and is not to be stood on.

Start out by assuming that "Taking a Stand" will go well. Assure your group that they will have an opportunity to change their minds later, that this is just a way to start a conversation. If over time there is a reluctance, consider your group's level of emotional safety. You might lengthen the check-in or plan a social event so the youth to get to know each other better. You can encourage the youth to come up with their own statements on which to take a stand. You can also stress that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers in the Taking a Stand exercise – only opinions.

If you have someone for whom "Taking a Stand" presents a mobility challenge, you'll need to find a comfortable way for them to participate that might not involve walking and standing. Be sure that person is included in the activity, not just voting from the sidelines.

Heart of the Journey.

Here a story or activity broadens the experience or challenges the understanding of the day's theme. We have attempted to use a wide variety of elements here to meet different learning styles and different interests. Because middle school youth find multi-media elements very appealing, we have intentionally incorporated opportunities for listening to music or watching movie excerpts. Other times a physical activity or even a game will be at the heart of the session.

Getting There.

An activity (or additional activity) deepens the understanding of the theme and offers an opportunity for youth to incorporate the experience by acting upon it.

Stopping to Rest.

Each week there is an opportunity for reflection, usually by journaling. Here we are giving the youth an opportunity to begin a spiritual discipline that they might continue throughout their lives.

We know that writing is not everyone's first choice for reflecting. So we also encourage youth to draw pictures or doodle while thinking. Also, at times the journal is used as an archive for an activity that was done that day.

Teachers might want to have their own journals and model the process for the youth. Of course, you must find a safe place in which to keep these confidential books.

Going Out Into the World.

This section is designed to provide the important closure necessary for grounding the experience in context. It offers a chance for response and action as participants share their new learnings with the community through a choice of either the Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop. Then a Closing Circle affirms that this learning has taken place in a safe, religious community with people of a shared faith.

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Our hope as religious educators is to help individuals transform their lives. On a day-to-day basis, we hope that participants leave on Sunday morning having grown in some way-with a new attitude, new learning, new understanding.

Participants have approached a topic or theme; shared what they knew about it; added to their abilities, attitude or knowledge; and reflected on whatever is new. Now what? This is their opportunity to demonstrate how they have changed – or to confirm what they felt before. While this is the same activity as was done earlier, we are hoping that the people who are doing it are at least a bit different than they were before.

Quick Stop.

This is an alternative way to gauge the response to today's session, one that doesn't require everyone to get up again. Participants have just a few seconds to respond to a question or to complete a statement.

Closing Circle.

Here you acknowledge your parting from each other and your sacred space. Often there is a reading from the current Unitarian Universalist hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*. Like the "Thoughts for the Day" these are broadly representative of our six UU sources.

Then the chalice is extinguished with a unison reading. Again, if your group has traditionally used a different reading, you are welcome to continue using that one instead.

We know your morning will usually be jammed full. Still, we hope you try plan your time so that you can have your closing.

Notes from field testing.

Most of what we learned from the field testing process has been incorporated into the sessions as we revised the field test draft. Sometimes there are additional ideas that don't fit into the body of the session, and we've included them here. This is your opportunity to learn from the successes and challenges of others.

When Detours are Necessary

For many religious educators, the curriculum serves as a guide for structured learning. However, we also recognize there are times or situations in which it is necessary to adapt a particular session or activity to meet the needs of the congregation or the participants.

While doing the field testing of this curriculum, one group was experiencing a grief over a recent suicide by a person known to the members and the imminent loss of another adult in their religious community to cancer. For this

group, the unit which deals with issues about death and dying was a much different experience than it will be for most groups. Recognizing this, the adult leaders were able to address these issues within the context of the session.

Any new participant in the group changes the dynamic of the group, and the arrival of a newcomer may require some time to integrate the new person. As a result, it may be necessary to add to a session an activity for community building. There may also be times when it is necessary for the group to revisit the covenant which was made earlier.

We have structured the curriculum and the sessions to provide flexibility, but could not possibly plan for every eventuality. As a result, we encourage groups to take *Compass Points* and make it theirs by adapting it to meet their needs.

A Word About Leadership

We like to affirm that we are all learners and leaders in religious education programs, but as the teacher, you of course are the leader with the primary responsibility for the atmosphere in your room. Daniel Goleman defines leadership as 'inspiring and guiding.' In a later book he expands on this concept: "The fundamental task of leaders is to prime good feeling in those they lead. That occurs when a leader creates resonance, a reservoir of positivity that frees the best in people."²

We know from experience in general and from the results of field testing in particular that teachers who bought into the concepts of the sessions and approached them with enthusiasm were best able to find that "reservoir of positivity" in their youth. **If** you are uncertain about a session or some part of a session, talk it over with a co-teacher and see **if** there are any words of wisdom in the notes from field testing. **If** that doesn't help, see if someone else can lead that part. **And if** that doesn't work, make whatever adjustments you must so that you can guide with inspiration.

1. Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, 1998.

2. Daniel Goleman and others, *Primal Leadership*, 2002

The World of Middle Schoolers

At the end of one challenging Sunday morning, twelve-year-old Michael approached his teacher. "Mrs. Lindsay," he said, "It might not have looked like it, but we had a good time today." What Diane Lindsay herself had by now was, most likely, a headache, but she was touched enough to report the conversation to her program's religious educator. "I really think they got something out of the morning," Diane said with enthusiasm.

Teachers of young adolescents aren't always going to get positive feedback like Diane did, but **if** they make an effort to create an atmosphere of hospitality in their classroom, they are very likely to make a positive impact in the lives of their middle schoolers. Here are some ways to foster that atmosphere:

Make the commitment for the full year.

Be part of a team (four is a good number, with two present each week) of people who will commit to spending this year with this group of youth. Your consistency is important to young people who are in a constant state of change themselves.

Resolve to be empathetic with the youth.

Robert Kegan describes the thought process of a young adolescent in this way:

When I feel recognized and have a sense that you understand how I am experiencing my experience (whether this is how you experience it or not), I can find your limit setting tolerable and even a relief; if I do not feel recognized, I resent it as a violation of who I am-which is just what it is.

(Robert Kegan *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* Harvard University Press 1982 p. 181.)

Remember the importance of names.

If possible, get a class list in advance and familiarize yourself with the names. Insist that participants wear name tags until you know who is who. (Taking pictures the first day can be

helpful in putting names and faces together.) Make sure that the participants know each others' names, too. Our name is the first part of our identity. Calling someone by name shows respect for the individual.

Make sure you wear your name tag too, and that your group is comfortable calling you by name, whether it is "Mrs. Lindsay," "Ms. L:" or "Diane." Ideally, all members of the teaching team should be called in a similar manner, either by first names or last names. Reach a conclusion about this with the other members of your team.

Accept that there will be few, if any, perfect mornings.

The world with all its complexities is opening up to young adolescents. As they become more aware of the world, they realize there is a lot they don't know. But they also don't know what really is expected of people their age, what they should know and what they should be able to do. The response to this uncertainty can be a know-it-all attitude that drives adults crazy. There is also the constant seesawing between the emerging adult and the firmly embedded child. Adolescents have to deal with this, and so do all those around them.

One thing you can insist upon, however, is respect: that participants respect themselves, their peers, their leaders, other members of the congregation and the physical setting. Early in the year the group will be developing a class covenant to govern their behavior. Post it and when things are not going well with behavior, call it to the group's attention.

Be familiar with your congregation's safety policy.

And if your congregation does not have one, start with this: *There should always be two adults in your room.* This is for your own protection as well as the protection of the youth. **If** there is a time when your co-teacher is not available, invite another adult from the congregation to spend an interesting morning with your group. **If** you are unsuccessful in doing this, inform your religious educator and ask for help.

Room Set Up

Supplies You Will Need Often

Matches or lighter

Young adolescents often find matches irresistible and do not fully appreciate their potential danger. It's probably a good idea to have each adult leader be responsible for bringing matches each week. Otherwise, store the matches with other classroom supplies in such manner that you are not inviting their indiscriminate use.

Journals

These can be spiral notebooks, binders, or folders which have built-in holders for three ring-punched paper. They should hold standard lined or copy paper, large enough to encourage artwork as well as written work. You can buy copy paper already drilled with three holes.

Singing the Living Tradition

This is the current UU hymnal. Ideally you should have one copy for each two participants. **If** your congregation needs all they have in the worship space, see if they will make an investment in more. They won't go to waste! Perhaps your group can do some fund raising to buy a few. They are \$40 each from the UUA Bookstore.

Hat or Basket

This will be used weekly to hold the "thoughts for the day." You might bring in something the first week, then ask participants if there is a "container" they would like to use in this weekly ritual for the remainder of the year.

Supplies You Will Need Frequently

You might want to keep the following items available in one or two clear plastic shoe boxes:

#2 pencils with erasers
pencil sharpeners
pens
markers

crayons
cellophane tape
masking tape
glue sticks
white glue
paper clips
stapler and staples
scissors (adult-sized)

You will also need:

newsprint pad
copy paper
lined notebook paper
colored construction paper (9x12 and 12x18)
poster board
a roll of craft paper, 36" wide

(This last item is an investment, but you will use it several times and other groups will also find many uses for it.)

Supplies Which Are Sometimes Necessary

Baseplate compasses are used in the first two sessions. These are available for as little as \$10.95 each. One place to find them is <http://www.thecompassstore.com/baseplate-compasses.html>. If you start asking early, you will probably find people in your congregation who will be happy to loan you their compasses.

For Session Ten we strongly recommend you obtain at least one of these two CD's: *Bring Many Names: Music from Our Liberal Religious Tradition* or *Music in the Air: Hymns from Our Liberal Tradition, Volume 2*. Check with your religious educator to see **if** your congregation already has them. **If** not, they are available from the **Oakland, California UU church:** <http://www.uuoakland.org/worship/music/recordings/>

Some other sessions will call for playing music on a CD player, or watching an excerpt of a DVD or videotape which requires access to a DVD (or VHS player) and TV monitor. Some sessions will be greatly facilitated by access to the internet through a computer. Two sessions suggest using an office shredder as part of the activities. While these materials will not be needed each and every week, it is important to know in advance when they might be needed so you can arrange for access to them **if** required. The Annotated Table of Contents in the Appendix will help you greatly in knowing what you need when.

Up Against the Walls

Ideally, you should have lots of wall space in your room. This will allow you to post items on newsprint, allowing for ideas to be seen as well as heard.

The Principles and Sources.

Posters of the UU seven UU Principles and the six Sources which inform them are available from the UUA bookstore. **If** you do not have them to post, please make them. The Principles and Sources are listed in the front of the UU hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*. Prior to 1995 there were only five Sources, so look for a later edition of the hymnal. The Sources can also be found on page 267 of this curriculum. You will be referring to these posters frequently, so plan to keep them up for the year.

Thoughts for the Day.

Almost every week will begin with a basket of quotes which individual participants will read. These quotes should also be posted on your walls. Think about your group in choosing one of two ways to do this. We suggest that you post the quotes ahead of time, so they create some curiosity as the group assembles and are available to visual learners; but you might choose to post the quotes after they have been read, so that they will be new to all as they are first heard.

Unison Affirmations.

Your opening and closing readings for chalice lighting and extinguishing should be attractively printed and posted.

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

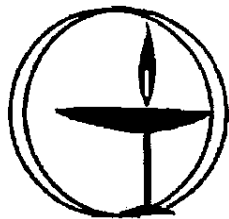
If your group has its own traditional readings, feel free to use them instead.

Unit One

The Journey

*Where we have been and what we carry with us
shape the nature of our experience
as do the companions who accompany us
on the journey*

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*What lies behind you and what lies ahead of you
are tiny matters compared to what lies within you.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Session One

Orienting to *Compass Points*

Goals for Participants:

- to start building a community
- to learn how to use a compass
- to begin the spiritual discipline of keeping a journal

Session in Brief:

Reminder: The amount of time for each part of the session is based on a 60-minute session and is given to you as a suggestion of how you might proceed. We strongly suggest you try to have a somewhat longer session-up to 75 minutes-and that you tailor the timing to fit the needs of your own participants.

- 1. Ingathering.** Name tags and introductions, Game "Two Truths and a Lie." (20 min)
- 2. Chalice Lighting/Thoughts for the Day.** (5 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** (Reviewing the Graffiti Board; see ** under Advanced Preparation); Taking a Stand. (10-15 min)
- 4. Getting There.** Learning to use a compass. (10 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** Hand out journals, decorate, complete a sentence. (10 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Closing Circle. (3 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

plastic name tag holders with inserts or material with which to make name tags
chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
compasses (one for every two or four participants; see Session Two to decide how many)
large sheet of construction paper or sheet of poster board for compass center point

bound journals, one for each youth
pens, pencils, markers, colored pencils

Advance Preparation:

Copy the words of the affirmation and the closing words on poster board and find a permanent place to display them.

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Read through the entire session, including the notes from the field testing. This will answer many of your questions and save you time in the long run!

Make a copy of the quotes for Session One in the appendix at the back of this curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold them and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room. (*See introduction, p. 10.*)

Review statements under "Taking a Stand" and edit, add or delete as seems best for your group.

From construction paper or poster board, cut a circle at least 12" in diameter. This represents the center point of the compass, where the positive and the negative parts of the needle meet. When participants "take a stand" they must be on the negative or on the positive side of this point.

Familiarize yourself with how to use a compass (see Resource 1-A if you need instruction).

Be sure to read about journaling in the introductory material on page 5, and also the comments on journaling from the field test at the end of this session.

Find a secure place to keep journals private.

**If this is not the first time that a group has done *Compass Points* in your R.E. program, ask your religious educator for the "graffiti board" done by the prior *Compass Points* group. This should be a large piece of craft paper that has been rolled up and labeled. The roll should be 2 or 3 feet long. When you find the roll, post it in your room.

Note to the teacher: This session differs from those that follow in that the opening ritual is postponed. This is so youth and adults can get to know each other a bit before they are asked to come together as a community.

Ingathering

Name Tags.

Teachers should make sure they are wearing name tags and should invite youth to make their own name tags as they enter. First names should be written in large block letters. Guests and newcomers, in particular, should be introduced to youth who already are part of the congregation. Make sure no one stands around feeling lost! If you have a graffiti board from a prior *Compass Points* group, invite the youth to look at it.

Introductions.

When you think you have most of your group assembled, invite them to sit in a circle. Teachers should introduce themselves (using whatever name they want to be addressed by) and ask the youth to do the same.

If a lot of people are new to each other, you might want to play a name game. Here's one:

The person who starts uses alliteration to state her name and a food she claims to like. For instance, "I'm Madison, and I like marshmallows." The person sitting to Madison's right says, "I'm Jake, and I like jellybeans. She's Madison, and she likes marshmallows." Now the person to Jake's right says, "I'm Randy, and I like rice cakes. He's Jake, and he likes jelly beans. She's Madison, and she likes marshmallows." And so on around the circle.

Community Building Game.

"Two Truths and a Lie." (this game is found in *Deep Fun: A Compendium of YRUU Games.*)

Each person (adults as well as youth) should come up with two true statements and one false one about themselves. Now go around your circle and have each person make the three statements as if they were all true. The group members guess which one is false.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting.

Now tell the group you are about to light the chalice, a ritual with which they will start each morning for the rest of their year together. Lighting the chalice joins them with present day Unitarian Universalists all across the continent and around the globe, Unitarian Universalists of the past, and Unitarian Universalists who in the future will also light their chalices.

Ask one of the participants to light the chalice for you. Call the group's attention to the affirmation which you have displayed and have them read it in unison:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Thoughts for the Day.

Keeping in the mood of quiet meditation, invite those who are willing to draw a quote from the basket and read it to the group. Point out that the same quotes can be found on the four walls of the room. Ask participants to consider silently the

quotes as they are read and then offer a time for comments at the end.

We do not have to wait until we are excellent before we can do excellent things.

-Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 20th century French philosopher

An idea is a curious thing. It will not work unless you do. -Jaeger's Facts

It is not what happens to me that makes me great, but what I do.

-Soren Kierkegaard, 19th C. Danish philosopher

None of us alone can save the world. Together-that is another possibility, wailing.

-Rebecca Parker, contemporary UU minister and president of Starr King School for the Ministry (UU seminary)

Heart of the Journey

Reviewing the Graffiti Board.

If you have a graffiti board from a prior group, let this group have a chance to look at it and talk about it. They might raise questions about it that you can't answer. Tell the group there will be lots of searching for answers this year-and that they will be leaving a graffiti board at the end of this year, too.

Taking a Stand.

Show the participants one of the compasses you have. Call their attention to the compass needle. Ask if someone can explain how a compass works. If no one mentions it, bring up the two poles, negative and positive. Explain that in this group, something they will be doing each week will ask them to point to either of the two poles, either positive (meaning "yes" or "agree") or negative (meaning "no" or "disagree"). Ask them to imagine the north wall of the room is positive and the south wall is negative. Then invite them to "take a stand" in response to the statements you make, indicating **if** they agree with them, disagree with them, or fall somewhere in between-but they may not stand on the center point (which you have marked with a large paper circle on the floor). Some sample statements:

My friends like to listen to rap (or whatever music is popular).

My friends complain about doing their homework.

My friends eat junk food.

My friends are in a hurry to grow up.

My friends believe in God.

My friends prefer playing computer games to watching TV.

My friends wish their parents would let them stay up later at night.

My friends think it's okay to shoplift.

My friends respect their teachers.

My friends think the world isn't fair.

My friends think it's okay to slam someone on facebook.

My friends are people I can rely on when things seem to be going wrong.

When you have finished the activity and everyone is again seated, ask the participants: **if** they had been answering for themselves instead of their friends, would they have stood in a different place some of the time? Why or why not?

Let them know that this year, in this group, they will be expected to make up their own minds about things, particularly about their beliefs. **If** they have been participating in religious education classes in previous years, they may have learned a lot about what other people thought or believed. This year they will be developing ideas about what *they* think and believe-about life and death, about people and God, about why things change and about what's important.

But we don't expect them to discover **all** These new ideas on their own. A purpose of this program is to help them find ways to figure out what they believe. That's one of the reasons this year is called *Compass Points*. A compass is something that helps you to orient yourself, to find out where you are and where you want to go.

Getting There

Reading a Compass.

Bring out all your compasses. **If** you have a youth who knows how to use a compass, let him or her show the rest of the group. Otherwise, do this yourself. Let each youth have the opportunity

to hold a compass and see how it works. You might invite each person to choose an object in the room, then determine what the coordinates are for that object. Let the group know that next week they will have the opportunity to go outside and use this new skill. Collect the compasses.

Stopping to Rest

Journal writing.

Pass out a journal to each participant. Tell them that explorers, sea captains, and many other people who go on journeys keep records of where they go, what they see and do, and how they feel about it. Some people also like to write in journals as a way of meditating. Spending a brief time writing in their journals will be part of most weeks. The journals will be kept in a private place, and while youth at times will be invited to share what they have written, they will never be required to do so. At the end of the year, they can take their journals home.

Let participants decorate the covers of their journals and encourage them to make a first entry. Along with today's date, they can write down one or more of the quotes that are posted on the walls. Or they can finish a sentence such as:

This year in R.E. I hope we ..., or

One thing that we did today which surprised me was. . .

Collect the journals and make sure they are put in a secure place.

Going Out into the World

Closing Circle.

Gather the group into a circle for the closing reading. Ask for volunteers to read each of the quotations that are on the four walls. Then invite everyone to read the closing words in unison as one participant blows out the chalice.

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes from field testing

One field test site that anticipated behavioral problems included a class covenant in this first session, rather than waiting for the third session, where a covenant is part of the session plan.

One field test site made time in this first session for all the adult leaders (not just the two who were "on" that day) to be introduced to the participants.

Taking a Stand

One field test site experienced confusion with regard to the "Taking a Stand" activity. Participants said the answer would be different for different friends. They were told to answer for one of their friends.

At another site, the participants wanted to answer twice, once for themselves and once for their friends. We intentionally asked that participants not answer for themselves so that they would not feel "on the spot" when, perhaps, they did not know each other well.

One site did not use the statement about shop lifting. Use your own discretion with your group.

Journals

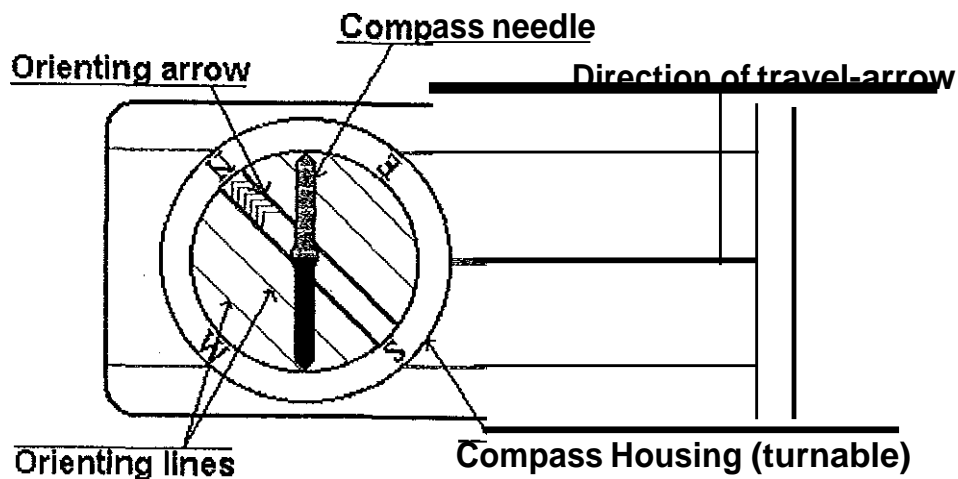
One group received journals that had been personalized in advance, which made the journals seem special.

Responses to how well the idea of journaling was received ranged from "very receptive" to ambivalent. Almost all participants were at least willing (or happy) to decorate the journals and/or draw pictures. Some wrote responses to the suggested sentence starters.

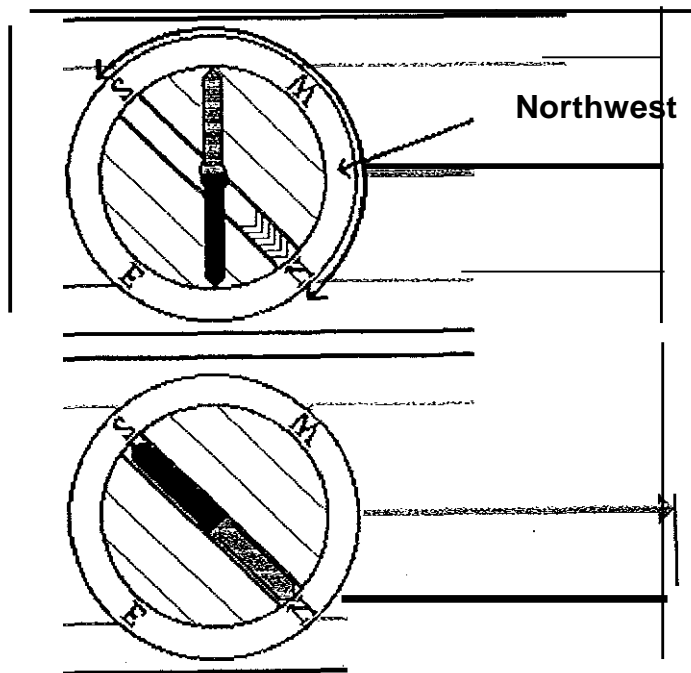
Resource 1-A. How to Use a Compass

These instructions are taken, with permission, from the website of Kjetil Kjernsmo, <http://www.learm-orienteering.org/old/lesson1.html>

The red and black (or on some compasses, red and white arrow) is the compass needle. The important thing to remember is that the red part of the needle (in the illustration below, it is gray) always points to the magnetic north pole. The compass housing is a ring that surrounds the outside of the compass and is adjustable. It should have a scale from 0 to 360 or 0 to 400. Those are the degrees of the *azimuth* (also known as the bearing). The letters N, S, E, W should also appear around the dial to correspond with the four directions north, south, east, west. A direction of travel arrow is located at the base of the compass face, as part of lines drawn in the center of the compass housing. You turn the compass housing so that the direction of travel arrow is pointing in the direction you wish to travel. The red part of the compass needle should always point north.



If you want to go northwest, for instance, you find out where on the compass housing "northwest" is (between "north" and "west"). Turn the compass housing so that "northwest" on the housing comes exactly to where the large direction needle of the travel arrow meets the housing. Hold the compass in your hand and keep it flat so that the compass needle can turn and adjust itself. Then turn yourself, your hand or the entire compass (just don't let the compass housing turn) until the compass needle is aligned with the lines inside the compass housing. Make sure that the red part of the compass needle points to then for "north" in the compass housing (turning to south is a common beginner's error!), then walk off in the direction the travel arrow is pointing.



Session Two

What Is The Journey?

Goals for Participants:

- to introduce the overall theme and objectives of the curriculum
- to give the participants a greater understanding of how using a compass can help guide them in unknown situations
- to help prepare participants for the idea of going on a spiritual journey and what this means to them personally

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking A Stand. (5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. Story, "Joshua's Journey." (5 min)
4. Getting There. Scavenger Hunt. (20 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Reflections and Journaling. (10 min)
6. Going Out Into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (10 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
paper circle "center point"
participants' journals
copies of hymnal, *Singing The Living Tradition*
compasses (one for every two or four participants, depending on the size of the teams you select)
copies of the scavenger hunt lists (one per team)
newsprint or poster board
items for each of the checkpoints on the scavenger hunt (feathers, shells, beads, stones, etc.)
plastic, paper or fancy gift bags to put the items in at the checkpoints

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for Session Two in the appendix at the back of this curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold them and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes for Session Two from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Familiarize yourself with how to use a compass. (See Resource 1-A if you need instruction.)

Read aloud through the story in Resource 2-A, "Joshua's Journey" so that you are very comfortable with the flow of the words.

Place the items for the scavenger hunt inside the bags and hide the items at various points on the church grounds; consider making some of the checkpoints a little easier to find than others.

Create the scavenger hunt list with compass directions to each of the 4 to 6 checkpoints you've established (see Resource 2-B).

Determine what rules should be followed for the scavenger hunt activity (such as no leaving the church grounds, everyone in the team stays together, etc.) Consider posting them on newsprint or poster board.

Decide which closing activity to use (Taking a Stand Reprise or Quick Stop) and determine when you will need to end earlier parts of the session in order to close with this activity.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning as a part of your weekly "check-in."

Sharing Thoughts of the Day.

Invite those who are willing to draw a quote from the basket and read it to the group. Point out that the same quotes can be found on the walls of the room. Ask participants to consider silently the quotes as they are read and then offer a time for comments at the end.

The place to find is within yourself
-Joseph Campbell, author, *The Power of Myth*

It's good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end.
-Ursula K. LeGuin, contemporary author

For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake.
-Robert Louis Stevenson, author, *Treasure Island*

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th C. Unitarian Minister, theologian and essayist

Taking a Stand

Remind the participants about the Taking a Stand activity you did last week when you asked them to answer "yes" or "no" to the statements

you posed by having them find a spot on the compass needle between the north and south poles. Remind them they can choose any spot along the continuum (depending upon how strongly they feel toward the issue), but they cannot stand on the center point. North is positive, south is negative.

Tell them today's Taking a Stand statement to consider is:

Our faith can guide us in our journey through life.

Now, where do they stand?

Ask for reflections on why they chose the place they did once everyone has decided upon a spot.

Heart of the Journey

"Joshua's Journey." Invite the participants to find a comfortable position so that they can relax and fully tune into the story you are about to read. You might consider dimming the lights or playing some meditative music to help set the mood.

Read the story "Joshua's Journey" (Resource 2-A). 1

Ask the youth if they had any thoughts as you were reading the story. Did anything strike them as odd, or did they relate to any of the things mentioned? What did the story say to them? Could they imagine going on such a vision quest, and what did they think about the ideas that Joshua came up with? (Note to teachers: If they will be doing a vision quest like this next year or did so the previous year, mention this instead of asking them if they can imagine going on such a quest.)

Bring up the concept of the moral compass, or the idea that their personal faith or theology can help guide them on their spiritual journeys.

Then invite the participants to go on their own quest with the aid of a compass.

Getting There

Scavenger Hunt. Divide the group into teams of two or four (depending upon how many youth you have).

Pass out the compasses (one for each team) and the Scavenger Hunt Lists (Resource 2- B), one to each team. Explain that they will have a chance to explore how they work to find the items on their list. Lay out any other rules you may have for the scavenger hunt (such as no leaving church grounds, everyone in the team stays together, etc.). Be sure to let them know how much time they have for this exercise, and suggest that one member of the team serve as timekeeper. You may decide to blow a whistle at the end of the allotted time and have a place (perhaps the classroom) for everyone to meet in the event all of the teams are unable to complete the scavenger hunt. Let them know that they are supposed to retrieve only one item from each of the checkpoints, leaving the other items in place for other groups to find.

Go over the parts of the compass again and explain how it works for those persons who have never used a compass before. (See Resource 1-A, *How To Use A Compass.*)

Then take the group outside and let them begin the scavenger hunt.

Stopping To Rest

Reflection and Journaling. As everyone gathers at the spot you've chosen for the conclusion of the hunt, ask them to share a little bit about how the experience was for them. Did the compass help them, or did it make it more difficult? Did they discover it became easier to use as time went on?

Return to the classroom. Pull out the journals and encourage participants to draw or write about the scavenger hunt activity, the experience and what that was like or anything they may have learned by doing it. Give them five minutes for this.

Going Out Into the World

choose from:

Taking a Stand (Reprise)

Tell the participants it's time to Take a Stand once again. Ask them to agree or disagree with this statement again by taking their position on either the north or the south pole (but not the center point):

I've already begun my spiritual journey and can use my faith to guide me on my way like a compass.

Ask them **if** anyone wants to share reasons why they've taken a stand where they did. Ask for reflection from **all** those who choose to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop.

Invite the participants to take turns quickly stating (in one sentence or less) something they would like to discover **if** they could go on a spiritual quest like Joshua's.

Closing Circle.

Gather the group into a circle for the closing reading. One good suggestion is Responsive Reading #645, "Song of the Open Road" by Walt Whitman from *Singing the Living Tradition*, with each of the scavenger hunt teams reading one of the sections and then repeating the order as necessary.

Extinguish the chalice with the words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not it's light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Resource 2-A

Joshua's Journey

At the Unitarian Universalist Church which Joshua attended, they regularly had a vision quest as part of their coming of age program for middle school aged youth. For this vision quest, each youth was supposed to go off into the woods alone with only a few essentials: water, some crackers to munch on, a tablet and a pen for writing. They were also given a compass to help them find their way in the woods should they need help returning to the rendezvous point at the end of their vision quest.

At first, Joshua was feeling a little nervous about going off into the woods to sit there for five hours with nothing to do. How would he deal with it? Could he really hack it? No cell phone, no handheld computer games, not even a book to read or another person to talk to? What on earth was he going to do for those five hours?

For the first hour, Joshua was downright bored. He kept looking at his watch, hoping it was almost over and each time he ended up disappointed because only another minute had passed. He opened up his journaling tablet, but its blank pages seemed to taunt him. He knew he was supposed to come up with something awesome to write down-the senior high youth who had been through this vision quest thing in years before talked about how they came up with some really deep stuff. All Joshua could think was boring, boring, boring. This *really* sucked. Big time.

During the second hour, Joshua fought off sleep as his head bobbed and then jerked up. The sun was directly overhead and its warmth made him feel like a sleepy puppy. Finally he gave in, bunched up his jacket to make a pillow and curled up on the forest floor to surrender to sleep.

The sound of a snapping twig close by startled Joshua awake. It was then he remembered he was in the forest, alone, and supposed to be coming up with some earth-shattering revelations and deep thoughts.

As he sat up, he pulled out the compass the youth advisor gave him and turned it over in his hands to look at it. He turned it around, watching the orienting needle swing even as the compass

needle corrected itself: always adjusting so that it pointed toward the north no matter how the compass was rotated.

The youth advisor said the compass was necessary in order to help guide them in the event that they got lost. Joshua rolled his eyes as he tucked the compass back into his jacket pocket. Well, he was lost, all right, but there was no compass that could help him. Lost because he was feeling the pressure that he had to do better now that he was in middle school, lost because he had to leave behind some of his friends when he started the new school (and those who were still his friends weren't in any of his classes this year so he rarely saw them). Lost because he'd always thought he was good at math but now he was struggling in this semester of Algebra, and lost because his parents were always fighting and he didn't know *if* they were going to make it or get a divorce like Lisa's parents did. Lost because his older brother Todd always seemed to be so much better at everything than he was, and Joshua couldn't help but feel like he should know more than he did know about things.

Even friends at school were hounding him -asking him what Unitarian Universalists believed and *if* he thought God had anything to do with the tsunami that had killed 200,000 people -and well, the truth was: *he just didn't know*.

He sighed as he closed his eyes, shutting out the trees and the leaves and the birds and the squirrels. *If* only there *was* such a thing as a compass to help when you were really, truly lost and needed to find your way. *If* only there was something he could use to help point him in the right direction while he wandered around trying to find his way as he was growing up and all these things in his life were changing that he had no control over

His fingers closed over the compass in his pocket, and he squeezed his hand over it. What he needed was a moral compass, a belief system and something to help guide him through this time in his life. He needed to understand the world, why things come and go, what happens when people

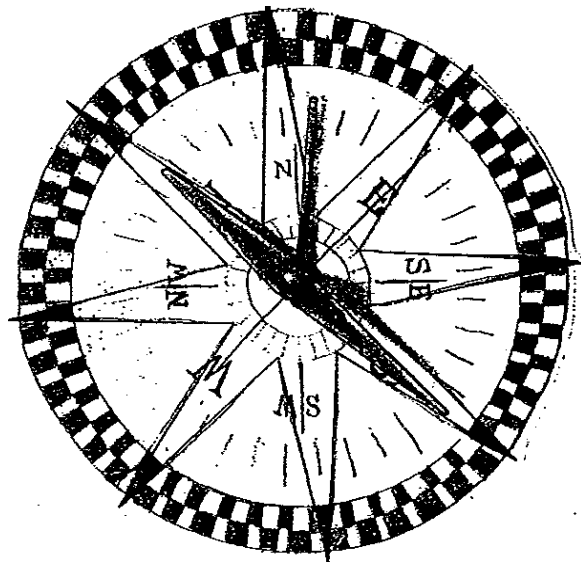
die and why bad things happen. What he needed was-faith.

His eyes popped open. That was it. He needed *faith*. Not the faith of his friends, or his parents, or perhaps not even the other members of his youth group at church. He needed a faith of his own to help guide him when he felt lost. He needed something to count on when things got rough and he felt lost-because he had the feeling he would be lost a lot in the coming months, even years.

Joshua reached for the writing tablet and scrambled to find his pen as the thoughts came fast and furious to his brain – so quickly that he couldn't even get them all down because his hand was unable to move fast enough.

And then he was hearing the whistle that it was time to gather at the rendezvous point – the five hours were up!

It hadn't been nearly long enough! He had lots of deep thoughts and didn't want to shut them off just yet. But the whistle came again, more insistent this time. He tucked away the notepad and pulled out his compass. He looked at it as he found his bearings and located his position. Then he headed northwest to go back to the main meeting cabin, using the compass to help direct him toward the right path.



Resource 2-B Scavenger Hunt

In advance, create a list of compass headings for your students to follow. Walk

around the church grounds and keep track of the compass heading and the number of steps as you create your list. Be sure to keep the size of your steps uniform and consider the relative height of most participants and their stride when deciding how big of steps to take.

Pick four to six destinations (perhaps some spots more difficult than others) and hide a small bag of trinket items at each of the checkpoints (shells, feathers, stones, beads, etc) that they can retrieve to "complete" the scavenger hunt successfully. Put all items of one type in one spot (i.e. all the feathers in the east point, all the stones in the west, etc).

Give each team a compass and a set of directions with approximate coordinates for the items you stashed at each of the checkpoints. (Example of list directions in opposite column.) Explain that it is not necessary to find the items in the order given but that their team obtain an item from each of the checkpoints *and only one item*, leaving the others for another group to discover.

Set a starting point from which all teams begin. Give directions from the starting point or from one of the other check points. (See sample list in opposite column.) Don't forget to establish an ending point or place for everyone to gather together once they have completed the scavenger hunt. Not all teams will finish at the same time or complete it in the same order, so have a place for finished teams to hang out while the others complete the scavenger hunt.

At the end of the allotted time, blow a whistle or use some other method to gather the remaining teams together at the end point.

Sample List for Scavenger Hunt

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Point A | set compass to 80 E and go 10 steps from starting point, then turn compass to 180 S and walk 22 steps |
| Point B | set compass to 240 W and go 8 steps from Point A, then turn compass to 200 S and go 12 steps |
| Point C | set compass to 20 N and go 10 steps from Point B, then turn compass to 100 E and go 6 steps |

Session Three

Where Have I Been So Far?

Goals for Participants:

- to create a class covenant
- to consider what/who has influenced their lives so far
- to begin to understand that while we can't control many of our lives' events, we can control our responses to these events

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. **Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
3. **Creating a Class Covenant.** (10 min)
4. **Heart of the Journey.** Quote from Emerson's "Experience." (8 min)
5. **Getting There.** The Puzzle of My Life activity. (12 min)
6. **Stopping to Rest.** Response to The Puzzle of My Life Activity. (10 min)
7. **Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
paper circle for center point
newsprint and markers
white copy paper, pencils with erasers
clear tape or gluesticks
brown lunch bags, one per person
a stapler
paper shredder (optional) or scissors

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for Session Three in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in the basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

- Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Cut up copy paper into quarters so that there are about 4 pieces for each participant.

Read the quote by Emerson through several times aloud so you can read it with meaning for the group.

Make copies of resource 3-A, "The Puzzle of My Life," One per participant, plus a few extras.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share briefly what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts for the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the prepared quotes in the basket and read the quotes. Participants should consider the sayings silently, then comment when all have been read.

We know what we are, but know not what we may be. – William Shakespeare, 16th and 11th century English playwright

They say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself.

– Andy Warhol, 20th century Avant Garde artist

To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.

--Henri Bergson, 19th and 20th century French philosopher

One faces the future with the past.

– Pearl S. Buck, 20th century American author

The Class Covenant.

Note to Teachers: Today you will be asking the group for the first time to share information of a personal nature. Before doing so, it's important to make sure there is a safe environment for the sharing. A class covenant can help create such an environment.

Background. Remind participants that Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal faith. That means we are not defined by creeds, but by the promises we make to each other; by the way we agree to be in relationship with each other.

When people are joined in marriage or by a service of union, they are making a covenant with each other. When a child is named or dedicated in a congregation, the parents are making a promise to the child; and often the congregation promises both the child and the parents support in raising the child. The prologue to the UU Principles states: "We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association covenant to affirm and promote" (our Principles). These are examples of covenants, of promises made.

Someone might bring up the fact that covenants are not always kept; promises get broken. This is most evident when two people separate or divorce. People aren't perfect, and we accept that. Nonetheless, a covenant is something to be taken seriously and to strive to keep.

Creating the Class Covenant.

Ask a participant to be scribe for the group and record on newsprint the participants' ideas about what should be included in the covenant. What would make the group feel safe? What would help them have fun? What would help them learn? **In** what ways should they respect each other?

When ideas are out there, try to put the covenant in a final form. Stating positives is better than negatives, **if** possible, and it's better to have it be fairly brief. Be sure the covenant mentions confidentiality, that what is said in the classroom will stay there. There is one exception to this: the youth should be told that **if** an adult leader feels a youth is in danger, the minister or religious educator will be informed.

When you have the covenant in a form people are satisfied with, read it together. See **if** a participant is willing to take the covenant home and make it into a good looking poster on the computer. (But be sure to keep a copy yourself, in case the other goes astray.)

Taking a Stand

Remind the participants that the north pole is positive and the south pole is negative. They are to "take a stand" on the compass needle to show **if** they agree or disagree with the following statement. They can arrange themselves along the compass needle, but may not stand on the center point.

I'm a different person this year than I was last year.

Where do they stand? Ask for reflections on why they chose the place they did once everyone has decided on a spot.

Heart of the Journey

Discussion of Emerson Quote.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was a famous Unitarian minister more than 150 years ago. Actually, he didn't really like being a minister, but he did like writing and thinking about life's big questions, and his writings still influence and inspire many people today (and not just Unitarian Universalists). Here's part of what he wrote in an essay called "Experience:"

Where do we find ourselves? In a series of which we do not know the extremes, and believe that it has none. We wake and find ourselves on a stair: there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended, there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight.

-*The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson, (Modern Library, New York, 1940), page 342.

Read the quote through. Then encourage the participants to envision themselves (with eyes closed, or with their gaze fixed on a blank space on the floor or wall) on a long staircase, with a few steps below them and many steps above. Now read the passage again.

What does the stairway represent? If the stairway is our life, or our journey, or the time we have to live, we realize that part of it is already behind us. Not only that, but part of our lives occurred before we were old enough to remember, or to even understand we were alive.

You might want to ask the youth to recall and share their first memory. How old were they then? Do they ever think about how much growing and learning they had done prior to that first memory? What/who were the influences in their life that enabled that growing and learning? What/who influences their lives now as they learn and grow?

Ask the group to brainstorm on these last two questions. What/who has influenced their lives up until now? Record all the answers on

newsprint. General answers might include, parents, school, church, mends, media, heredity; and there also might be more specific ideas.

When you have your list, ask the youth which influence(s), if any, they think will be less important as they get older. Which, if any, will be more important?

If you have one or two youth who have a hard time sitting through discussions, you might have them be the recorders keeping notes on the newsprint.

Getting There

Puzzle of My Life Activity.

Hand out to each participant a copy of "The Puzzle of My Life" (Resource 3-A) and a pencil (allowing for erasures). There are nine puzzle pieces drawn. Say to the participants something like:

The puzzle pieces represent important events and decisions which have influenced your lives. This means they have influenced how you live your life and how you feel about your life and yourself.

Some examples might be:

- "My family moved here from (wherever)."
- "I started middle school."
- "My mom went back to work full time."
- "I started to earn my own money"
- "I took OWL at church."
- "I became best friends with ____"
- "My grandfather died."
- "My parents got divorced."
- "Our family got our dog."
- "I was recommended for an honors math class"
- "My learning disability was diagnosed."

These events should noted, one per puzzle piece, in a sentence, a word, or a symbol- as long as the participant knows what it means. If someone wants more spaces, they can divide spaces already drawn or can tape an additional puzzle sheet to the first.

Before everyone starts, have each person put an "X" in one of the squares. This "X" represents that which the participant does not want to share with the group, for whatever reason. If someone decides they are willing to share all their events, they can replace the X. But no one will be expected to explain their X.

If participants are having a hard time thinking of things to write, suggest they imagine a time line for their lives. Did something important happen when they were a baby? When they were in preschool or daycare? When they were in kindergarten, etc.

As participants finish, they can share their puzzles with others. You might want to help them organize themselves into pairs or groups of three. In each case, they should explain *why* the event/decision was important, such as "When we got our dog, I became responsible for taking care of it." Or "When my grandfather died, it was the first time I realized that everybody dies eventually." Or "When I learned about my dyslexia, I also started to learn how to deal with it."

Stopping to Rest

Response to "Puzzle of My Life" Activity.

When the sharing of the puzzles is done, participants should fold them in half, then tape or glue them into their journals. Puzzles should be affixed so that they can still be opened.

Then ask each person to look again at the puzzle of their life. What events are they especially glad about? Make the quarter-sheet pieces of paper available and invite the youth to write down a key word or symbol to remind them of this event. Then they should fold it and put it in a brown lunch bag. They should also put their name on their lunch bag. They will be carrying this wonderful event with them for the rest of their lives.

Now they should look again at the puzzles of their lives. Are there things there that they wish hadn't happened? It might be that some of the events in their lives that influenced them were difficult challenges. Confronting challenges is one

of the ways that we grow.

No matter how we feel about events in our lives, these experiences help shape who we are. But we aren't helpless -- we can determine what our responses will be to life's challenges.

Again make the quarter-page pieces of paper available to the youth. Invite them to take one or more events from their lives that they found troubling and to exert some control over them.

First they need to write the event on the paper (or they can just use an X). Now, what do they want to do with the piece(s) of paper? They can tear it up, cut it up, scribble over the writing, use a shredder if you brought one, wad it up, etc. Invite them to be inventive and remind them that this is their choice. They are taking control. The one rule is that when they're done, they have to still have the original piece of paper, because that, too, goes in the brown paper bag. The things that we wish didn't happen will always be part of us, too.

When they are done they should staple the top of their bag (one staple only!) they'll be opening it up again next week). This is their past, and while the past does not have to determine what they become, those experiences will always be part of them.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to again line up on the compass needle, north being positive, south being negative. The statement they agree or disagree with is:

I'm a different person this year than I was last year.

Did anyone change their opinion? Why or why not? Ask for reflection from all those who choose to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop.

Invite the participants to take turns quickly stating (in one sentence or less) something about their experience this morning such as:

"One way I realize I'm different from last year is . . ." or

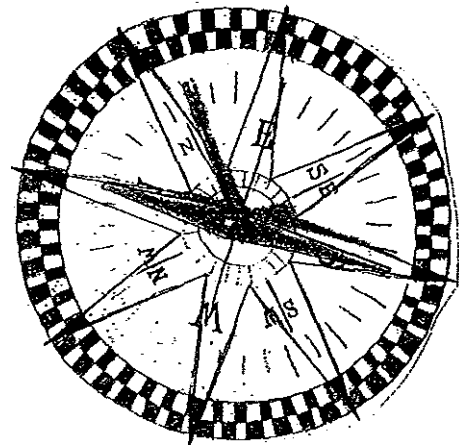
"The thing I learned that most surprised me this morning was . . ."

Closing Circle.

Gather the group into a circle for its closing reading. One suggestion is #655, "Whosoever wishes to know about the world" in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Heraklietos was a Greek philosopher who lived about 500 BCE. Ask one youth to be the leader as the others respond.

Then extinguish the chalice saying in unison:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.*

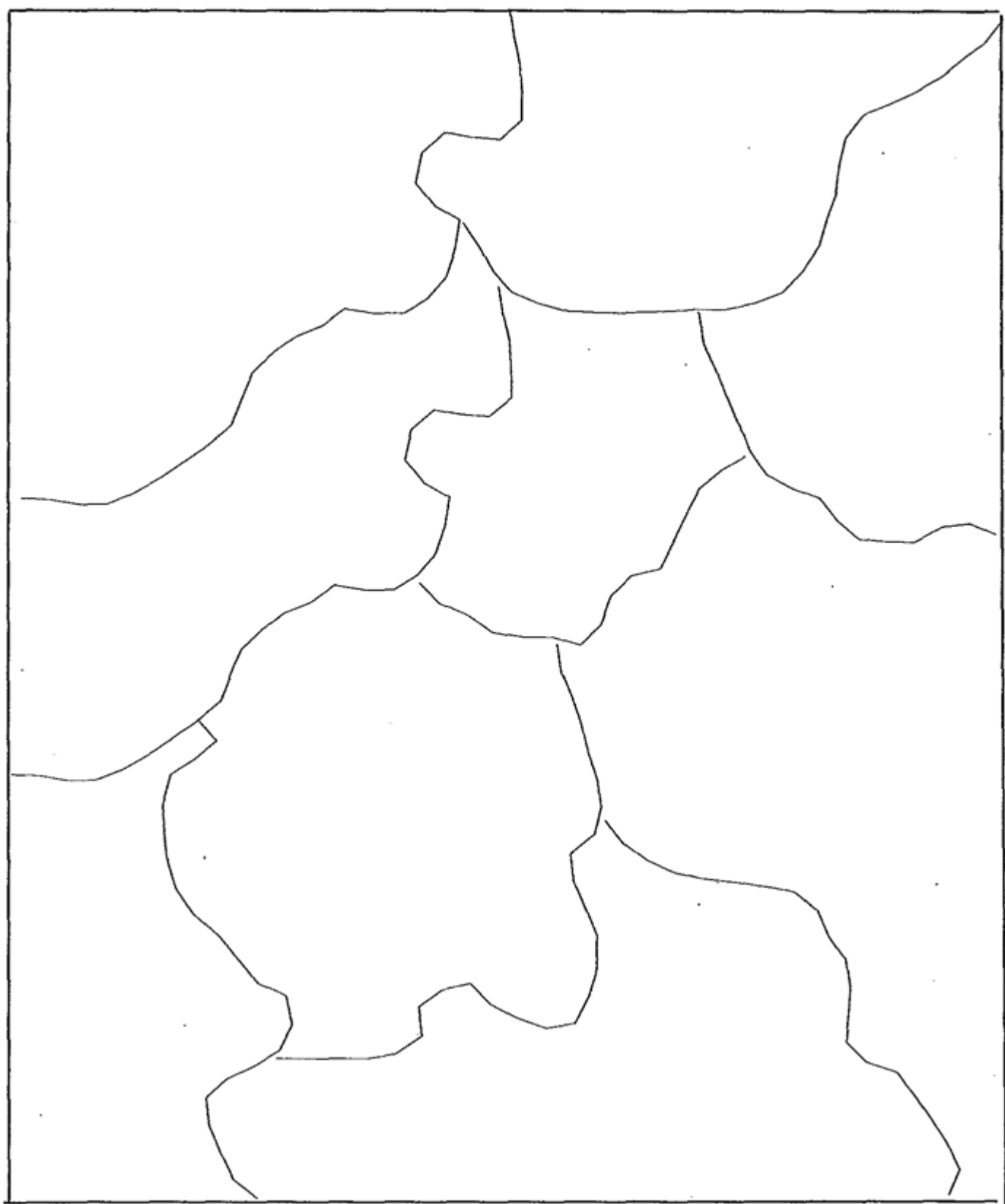


Notes from field testing:

A group that spent a long time on its covenant found the rest of this session rushed.

Larger groups are finding it works well to pair up for sharing, so everyone gets a chance to talk.

One field test site that anticipated behavioral problems included a class covenant in the first session, rather than waiting for this third session, where a covenant is part of the session plan. If the covenant is already done, you can allot time to reflect back upon the covenant and make any changes which might be necessary-- or dedicate time to making a poster of the covenant. You may also consider just allotting more time to be spent on the Puzzle of Life activity and discussion of life events.



Session Four

What Do I Carry With Me?

Goals for Participants:

- to explore the gifts and talents each participant possesses which can help them on their spiritual journey
- to explore where these gifts come from and how to further develop them
- to understand personal priorities and develop ways to understand the consequences of the choices we make

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. **Taking A Stand.** (10 min)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** Packing the Backpack activity. (15 min)
4. **Getting There.** Guided Meditation on Talents and Gifts We Carry with Us. (15 min)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Reflections and Journaling. (5 min.)
6. **Going Out Into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
large paper circle for center point
tape or CD player (optional)
meditative music (optional)
copies of hymnal *Singing The Living Tradition*
participants' journals
photocopies of the Backpack activity, one for each group (see Resource 4-A)
smooth stones, one for each participant
brown bags (from previous session) with puzzle pieces (plus some extras for anyone who wasn't here the week before)

Advance Preparation:

Plan whether or not to use music to accompany the meditation, and if so, decide which music to use.

Make a copy of the quotes for Session Four in the appendix at the back of this curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold them and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes for Session Four from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Make photocopies of the handout for the Backpack activity (Resource 4-A).

Read aloud the guided meditation several times in Resource 4-B so that you are very comfortable with the flow of the words, making a note of where, when, and how long to pause.

If you have not had much experience with leading guided meditations, refer to the information in Resource 4-C for some tips.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your

group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning as a part of your weekly "check-in."

Sharing Thoughts for the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the prepared quotes in the basket and read the quotes. Participants should consider the sayings silently, then comment when all have been read.

Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or find it not.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th Century Unitarian poet, author and philosopher

Everyone has talent. What is rare is the courage to follow the talent to the dark place where it leads.

--Erica Jong, contemporary author and poet

Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best.

– Henry Van Dyke, early 20th century Presbyterian minister and poet

Some people with mediocre talent, but with great inner drive, go much farther than people with vastly superior talent. – Sophia Loren, contemporary actress

Taking a Stand

Remind the participants about the Taking a Stand activity that you do each week when you ask them to respond positively or negatively to a statement you pose by having them find a spot along a continuum between the north and south poles, but not on the center point.

Tell them today's Taking a Stand statements to consider are:

The talents and gifts that I have come from God or a higher power.

The talents and gifts that I have are things which I inherited from my parents.

The talents and gifts that I have I developed on my own.

Now, where do they stand on each of these?

Ask for reflections on why they chose the place they did once everyone has decided upon a spot for each statement.

1!

Heart of the Journey

Packing the Backpack Activity.

Pass out the handouts for this activity and some pencils. Explain the situation they face:

Your group has been hiking along the Appalachian Trail for days now, and you are deep into the wilderness. While you were sleeping last night, some animals got into your gear and managed to destroy some of it. You need to assess what is left and pack it into the one remaining, undamaged backpack. What is most important, what do you need for survival if you may not reach "civilization" for another two days?

Inform the participants that they will need to agree on each of these things as a group before (they can be packed into the "backpack." They can only manage to include ten things, and may need to negotiate which things to keep and which things to leave out. Also explain that for the purposes of this activity, the actual size of the object doesn't matter; we're trying to determine those things which are most important.

Divide the group up into teams of three or four (depending upon the size of your class) and encourage them to get started. Emphasize that this is a group project and they will need to work together to accomplish the list.

Let them know when they have five minutes left to complete the activity so they are not caught off guard when the time is over.

After fifteen minutes has passed, call "time" and tell them they need to wrap up. Then ask for the groups to share what they discovered and what things they have selected to put in their backpack.

After every group has had a chance to share their list of priorities (things they packed in the backpack), ask them to share a little bit about how the experience was for them. Was it difficult to decide what to take and what to leave behind? Was it hard to agree with others in their group on what they needed? Did they change their minds about needing any of the items after discussing it with others in the group? Did they have to give up on anything they really wanted to take because the other members of the group didn't want to include it?

Getting There

Guided Meditation: Your Gifts and Talents.

Invite the participants to find a comfortable spot in the room. **If** you choose to play some music during the meditation, you can start your selection as you introduce the activity.

Explain that you will lead them through a guided meditation. Let them know that in order to get the most out of a guided meditation, it is important that they remain relaxed and yet tuned in to the words as you speak.

Begin sharing the words of the meditation as found in Resource 4-B.

After you have finished reading the guided meditation, give the participants a few minutes to reflect silently on the experience. Then invite whoever chooses to do so to share what the experience was like and what they found written on their stone.

If they seem interested in discussing the concept, you can expand it by asking some additional questions. Were they surprised by what they saw? Did they understand what it meant? Do they feel proud to possess this gift? Where did this gift come from? Are they developing this gift to its full potential? What might they do better to help realize the full potential of their gift?

When the conversation seems to be winding down, and all have shared who wanted to share, place the stones into the basket or hat that you use for sharing the thoughts of the day and pass it around. Invite them to select one of the stones to take home with them. Hand out the brown bags.

with the puzzle pieces from the previous session (with some extra bags for anyone who wasn't there the week before). Encourage the participants to place their stone in their bag to take with them as they go out into the world. They can keep this stone and remember their gift, and remember that their gift will always be with them, whether they still have the stone or not. Along with their past, they have a symbol of their future in the bag.

Note to teachers: If the participants seem reluctant to comment verbally on their gifts and their meditation experience, pass out the stones with the bags and move onto the journaling exercise but allow extra time for the participants to explore these ideas in their journals.

Stopping To Rest

Reflection and Journaling.

Pull out the journals and encourage participants to draw or write about they discovered as a part of the guided meditation. What are their special gifts and talents which can help them on their journey through life? What do they carry with them to help them along when the going gets tough?

Going Out Into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise)

Tell the participants it's time to Take a Stand once again. Ask them to respond to these statements by taking their position between the north and the south poles (but not the center point):

I feel comfortable sharing my gifts and talents with others.

It is not egotistical to share our gifts and talents with others.

We are obligated to share our gifts and talents with others.

Ask if anyone wants to share reasons why they've taken a stand where they did. Ask for reflection from all those who choose to share each time you pose a statement.

-OR-

Quick Stop.

Invite the participants to take turns quickly stating (in one sentence or less) something they liked about another person's gift and how they feel it will help that person in life.

Closing Circle.

Gather the group into a circle for the closing reading. One good suggestion is Responsive Reading# 551, "Earth Teach Me" from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Extinguish the chalice with the words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Notes from Field Testing:

Some youth may be reluctant to share what they consider to be their gifts and talents because it can be seen as "bragging." Reminding them that talents are our gifts (and we all have them) may be a way to encourage them beyond this thinking. Invite them to consider that it is a gift to share their talents with others. If a gift is given, it is not egotistical to share it.

The guided meditation was very popular with the youth during the field testing. They said it was relaxing even if only one out of four actually "saw" the message on the rock. This may be a factor of whether or not a participant is skilled at visualization or is a visual learner, not necessarily whether or not the youth gained something from the experience. This may also be the first time they have ever experienced a guided meditation such as this and they may not be expecting to find a visualization or an answer to a question through the meditative process. Focused relaxation through guided meditation is a valuable exercise for middle school youth, even for those who are not visual by nature. Knowing effective techniques for Meditation is a gift.

Resource 4-A

What Will You Pack in Your Backpack?

Your group has been hiking along the Appalachian Trail for days now, and you are deep into the wilderness. While you were sleeping last night, animals got into your gear and managed to destroy some of it. You need to assess what is left and pack it into the one remaining, undamaged backpack. What is most important, what do you need for survival if you may not reach "civilization" for another two days? You can only pack ten things to take with you. You must choose from:

tent

map

canteen

camera

two chocolate bars

pack of gum

radio

shovel

cell phone

comb or hairbrush

pack of matches

sleeping bag

change of clothes

Swiss Army knife

twenty dollar bill

bag of cookies

mirror

flashlight

rope

watch

first aid kit

package of Beef Jerky

compass

The Wilderness Trekker's Guide to Edible Plants book

bag of Chex mix

Note: For the purposes of this activity, the actual size of the items does not matter; it's a matter of choosing what's most important, of establishing priorities. Now, get to it – and make those tough choices!

Resource 4-B

Guided Meditation: Your Talents and Gifts

If you feel comfortable doing so, I invite you to close your eyes. If not, find a spot on the wall to focus upon. As you breathe in slowly, take as much air into your lungs as you can squeeze from the room. (Pause) Now, slowly breathe out, breathing out all the tension and knots from your body. (Pause) Take another deep breath, slowly pulling the air into your lungs and expanding them as far as they will go. (Pause) Now, slowly, slowly breathe out- letting go and releasing all that pent up energy. (Pause) As you continue to breathe slowly and deeply, listen to my words. (Pause) I invite you to go on a journey of the imagination.

You are traveling on a path through a forest. (Pause) The woods are dense with young trees, their narrow branches stretching toward the sky. (Pause) Green grass lines the path through the trees, and wildflowers spring up in spots as you make your way along. (Pause) There is a tiny spring which bubbles off to one side of the path. (Pause) You can hear the water as it gurgles over the stones.

As you continue to walk, you notice that the tiny spring quickly becomes a small creek with mini waterfalls and moving water. (Pause) You leave the path to walk toward the creek, stopping along its edge to peer down into the clear water as it moves over the rocks and swirls around a fallen tree branch.

You gaze down into that clear water at the smooth stones lying below. (Pause) You are struck

by the sudden urge to reach inside and pull out one of the stones. Your hand closes over it and you feel its smoothness in your palm.

You pull the stone from the water and turn it over in your fingers, rubbing the surface of it with your thumb. (Pause) It is a beautiful stone, you realize as you look at it. Perhaps the most beautiful stone you have ever seen.

Then you turn it over, and you notice something inscribed on the surface of the rock. Funny, you did not see this before, and did not feel the carving as you rolled the stone in the palm of your hand. But it is there now, coming into sharper and sharper focus as you continue to look at it. It says, "Your gift to the world is ..."

You rub your thumb over the stone, feeling now the bump of the words which seem somehow carved into the smooth surface. (Pause) Then you turn it over in your fingers and see some more words slowly coming into focus. (Pause) You look closely, watching as the letters appear.

What does it say? (Long Pause.) You keep looking at the stone until the message becomes clearer. (Long Pause.) The stone can tell you what your special gift is. (Long Pause.) You look closely and keep looking until you can find it on the stone. (Long Pause.)

Once you have found it, hold the stone close to you for a few minutes and savor the message of

your gift. (Brief Pause) This is *your* gift, *your* special talent that no one can take away from you. (Brief Pause) **It** is yours to keep. (Brief Pause) Yours to hold onto. (Brief Pause) Yours to develop into its full potential, or yours to neglect and let wither. (Pause) **It** is all yours, as is this special stone which you choose to hang onto as you rise to your feet and turn away from the creek.

You slowly move back toward the path which winds its way through the woods and the trees. As you continue to walk through the forest, the dirt path seems to grow steeper and the trees taller. (Pause) The creek is continuing to grow alongside you as you continue to walk, swelling and growing until it is a mighty river and then it bends to cut off your path. (Pause) You gaze across the river and the rushing water, and you can see another forest there. (Pause) That forest is full of very **tall**, very large old growth trees. (Pause) That is a very old, very wise forest, and you know you will make it there someday. (Pause) But first you must cross this river.

It will not be an easy undertaking, but you have your stone to carry with you. (Pause) You can still feel it pressed in the palm of your hand. (Long Pause)

You turn away from the river and move back down the path through the young forest. (Long Pause) Another day will come when you will cross that river. (Long Pause) Today you **will** savor this forest and these young trees and cherish the stone you found.

(Long Pause) When you feel ready to return, I invite you to open your eyes and return to this room, this place, this time.

Resource 4-C

Some Tips for Using Guided Meditation

Guided Meditations are an effective way to help a group experience deep relaxation in order to invite visualization or a significant realization about life. The words of the meditation should be spoken in a slow, soft, and rhythmic manner so participants can focus upon the spoken words and any visuals being evoked by them.

In order to achieve optimum results, participants are encouraged to close their eyes for guided meditations. However, if some middle school age youth are uncomfortable closing their eyes, encourage them to focus upon a particular object or even a fixed spot upon the wall. Good focusing objects may be candles, statues, flowers, or anything which is bright in color without having an overly busy pattern.

Since relaxation is an integral part of experiencing visualizations, guided meditations often begin with directions for participants to relax and breathe deeply. Likewise, sufficient pauses and sometimes seemingly rather lengthy silences are also an essential part of delivering this type of meditation. This is especially true when questions are posed which individuals must consider and then answer for themselves.

To a person who is not used to the process of delivering a guided meditation, the pauses may seem unnaturally long. A good way to gain understanding of how very important these pauses are is to record your voice as you give the meditation and then play it back. Hearing your words spoken back to you will give you an impression of the listener's perspective and how long those pauses should be.

With practice, it will become easier for you to understand just how long the pauses should be. Some leaders of guided meditation will count silently in order to make sure that enough time has passed before moving on to the next section of words. Other readers will extend the pauses by silently forming their own answers to the questions which are raised.

Regardless of which technique you use, not rushing through the words of the meditation is crucial to success. Even simply reading the meditation out loud multiple times beforehand builds familiarity and increases your comfort level with the necessary pauses.

Finally, because guided meditations involve deep processing of inner thoughts and visualizations, the ending must be intentionally delicate. An effective way to do this is to increase the length of the pauses as the meditation nears a conclusion. Then a final pause (after the meditation ends) allows for participants to ease themselves the rest of the way through the transition. Another technique is to follow the words of a guided meditation with a brief time of silence or with an auditory cue such as a gong, bell or chime.

Session Five

Who Is Traveling With Me?

Goals for Participants:

- to appreciate the value of friendship
- to examine our responsibilities to friends
- to explore ways friendships can help or hinder us on our spiritual journey

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. **Taking a Stand.**(5 min)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** Living Forest of Obstacles. (20 min)
4. **Getting There.** Traveling Companions. (10 min)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Reflection & Journaling. (10 min)
6. **Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches or lighter
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
paper circle for center point
participants' journals
handkerchief or towel for use as a blindfold
copy of the book, *Chicken Soup for the Preteen Soul* by Jack Canfield and Mark Hanson
published by Health Communications

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room. (See introduction.)

Note to Teachers: For the Forest of Living Obstacles activity, you will need a large room. If you do not normally meet in a large room that would accommodate this activity, consider moving to a larger room or doing it outdoors (weather permitting). Also, if you have any participants with mobility concerns, you may have to adapt this activity to accommodate their needs.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

The only way to have a friend is to be one.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th century Unitarian minister, essayist and philosopher

The friendship that can cease has never been real.
-Saint Jerome, fourth century monk and Catholic saint

When the character of a man is not clear to you, look at his friends.
- Japanese Proverb

To go against the dominant thinking of your friends... is perhaps the most difficult act of heroism you can perform.
- Theodore White, 20th century political journalist, author and historian

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) or the south pole (no), but not the center point, in response to today's statement.

It's my responsibility to help my friends when they're in trouble.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

The Living Forest of Obstacles.

Start this activity by inviting all the participants to find a place to stand in the middle of the room. They can stand close to another person or off on their own. Then ask for a volunteer to travel through the Forest of Obstacles.

Once someone has volunteered to be the traveler, have them come forward and place the blindfold over their eyes. When the blindfold is in place, tell the other participants that they have just become trees in the Forest of Obstacles. Let them know that it will be the traveler's job to make it through the Forest, and it will be everyone else's job to keep him/her from getting through. Invite "the trees" to take a minute to move into another position if they would like to do so. Explain that once they have found their spot, they can stand firm to not let the person pass and extend their arms and

legs without moving from the place they are in. They also cannot trip the traveler or physically hold him/her back by wrapping their arms around him/her.

Then let the participants know that they can be emotional obstacles as well as physical ones. They can utter things like, "You'll never get past me," or "Don't think you can do it."

Direct the traveler toward the Forestland encourage him/her to move forward into the obstacles.

Once the traveler has moved into the Forest of Obstacles and has had to go around more than one person, been blocked a few times, and made it into the middle of the "trees," ask one of the participants to help guide the traveler around the obstacles by telling the traveler how to move. (For example: "Take a step to the left", or "Turn to your right and take two steps.")

After the traveler has made some good progress through the Forest, ask another participant to help guide the traveler through by taking his or her hand (or arm) and physically helping him/her through the rest of the forest along with the person who is giving verbal clues.

Congratulate the traveler at the end of the obstacle course. Remove the blindfold so that he or she can see. Then ask for another volunteer and repeat the process using different people as the two traveling companions to help along the way.

Continue with this activity as long as time permits or as long as you have volunteers to experience it. If you are running short on time, let the participants know you have time for only one more traveler so they understand this person will be the last one through.

Note to Teachers: If you have a participant with mobility limitations, consider in advance how this activity might be adapted to accommodate his or her needs (for example all the trees sit in chairs).

Getting There

Traveling Companions.

Invite the participants to take a seat and reflect upon the experience. What did it feel like to be going through the Forest of Obstacles alone and blindfolded? How did it feel to be an obstacle for this person? For those people who moved through the obstacles, how did it feel once you had a traveling companion to help you through? Did it make it easier? How about when you had two?

Encourage the participants to think about their friends and the times they have been either a helper or an obstacle for those friends. How have they helped their friend(s) through tough times in their life? How might they have made things harder for their friends? How might they have made things more difficult by not helping and just standing by and letting the friend flounder alone? Were there times when they may have been helping, but the friend felt they were doing something to betray them? What are our responsibilities to our friends when we see them doing something that could harm themselves or hurt someone else? When might it be necessary to break a friend's trust or confidentiality and tell an adult what's happening? When are we helping friends by helping them keep something from their parents? When are we hurting them? If we think a friend has an eating disorder. . . . what should we do? If a friend takes an occasional drink . . . what should we do? If that friend gets drunk every weekend and has parents that we know are not very attentive . . . what should we do?

Note to teachers: This discussion on traveling companions may bring up some serious concerns: issues of suicide, anorexia, steroid abuse or other serious problems. If anything arises that you feel needs to be followed up on, make sure you notify your religious educator or minister, and disclose to the participants that you may have to notify them because this issue is serious enough that it should be called to their attention.

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling.

After everyone who wishes to share with the group has had a chance to do so, invite the participants to take some time to jot down some ideas in their journals. Invite them to reflect upon some of these ideas:

Who are their traveling companions? Have the people who are traveling with them now been traveling with them a short time, or a long time? How do traveling companions help one another along the journey? How could those we meet on our way hurt our progress or keep us from moving forward? And how can we tell the difference between those people who will help us and those people who will send us down the wrong path?

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

It's my responsibility to help my friends when they're in trouble.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

OR

Quick Stop.

Invite the participants to take turns quickly stating (in one sentence or less) something about the kind of person they would like to have as their spiritual traveling companion (or really good friend who helps them out when the going gets tough).

Closing Circle.

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the poem on page 40 (the introduction to the chapter on Friendship) from the book, *Chicken Soup for the Preteen Soul*. Then invite someone to share these words:

Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for awhile and leave footprints on our hearts. And we are never, ever the same.

-Anonymous

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice,
but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out
into the world,
sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.*

Notes from Field Testing:

Some youth may be reluctant to share what they consider to be their gifts and talents because it can be seen as "bragging." Reminding them that talents are our gifts (and we all have them) may be a way to encourage them beyond this thinking. Invite them to consider that it is a gift to share their talents with others. If a gift is given, it is not egotistical to share it.

The guided meditation was very popular with the youth during the field testing. They said it was relaxing even if only one out of four actually "saw" the message on the rock. This may be a factor of whether or not a participant is skilled at visualization or is a visual learner, not necessarily whether or not the youth gained something from the experience. This may also be the first time they have ever experienced a guided meditation such as this and they may not be expecting to find a visualization or an answer to a question through the meditative process. Focused relaxation through guided meditation is a valuable exercise for middle school youth, even for those who are not visual by nature. Knowing effective techniques for Meditation is a gift.

Session Six

Hospitality-That's Radical!

Goals for Participants:

- to hear a story of radical hospitality that affirms our first Principle
- to have an experience that helps them be open to "the other" (to learn how to extend "radical hospitality")
- to consider the implications of the story and the following activity to their religious journey and to the rest of their lives

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice Lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand. (5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. Introduction to "Radical Hospitality; Story of "The Good Samaritan" and Discussion. (15 min)
4. Getting There. "My Unique Lemon" activity. (12 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Journaling. (8 min)
6. Going Out Into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (10 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
large paper circle for center point
participants' journals
poster of UU Principles
lemons, one per person, and a bowl to hold them

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for Session Six in the appendix at the back of this curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold them and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes on construction paper or newsprint and post them on the walls of your room.

Decide which story you will use (resource 6-A or 6-B) and read it over several times so you are familiar with it. Having a hard time deciding which story to use? Ask your religious educator if the group has heard the story of "The Good Samaritan" at least once in their R.E. experience. It is a story that everyone should know. If your group is familiar with it, you might choose to use the story on Clara Barton, which focuses on a Universalist and a woman.

Note to the Teacher:

In ancient times hospitality was a religious imperative since it was a matter of survival that one's door be open to the stranger who needed shelter and sustenance. Today hospitality also has an additional meaning. It is now the opening of one's self to the stranger-or to a friend. This is sometimes called radical hospitality.

Religious educator Ronald Cram says hospitality is the ground on which spiritual disciplines can grow. We offer hospitality by being open to hearing someone else's story-in other words, in getting to know the person. In hearing their story, we learn that having differences is what we have in common. Hospitality requires us to live with differences that won't go away. It requires ongoing conversation, not agreement.

As youth this age become more and more self-aware, they often take comfort in being with people who are most like themselves, and they tend to exclude those who are different. Adolescents do need friends who act as mirrors, so that they can see the people they themselves are becoming. But they also should be challenge and enrich themselves by being open to

diversity of many kinds.

Our first Unitarian Universalist Principle is that we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person. This is easy to accept in theory and much harder to carry out in practice. One way to promote this Principle is to reach out intentionally to those who are different. This can be done in a general way, such as learning about another religion; or it can be done in a specific way, such as making room in one's circle of friends for someone who is "different" from the norm.

Hospitality does have boundaries. One doesn't have to partake in an abusive conversation, for instance. But in general, it's our own boundaries that need to be stretched as we make room for "the other" in our lives.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask one of the participants to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share briefly what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts for the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the prepared quotes in the basket and read them. Participants should consider the sayings silently, then comment when all have been read.

We need not think alike to love alike.

-Francis David, 16th century Unitarian minister in Transylvania

If you light a lamp for somebody, it will also brighten your path.

-Buddhist saying

Kindness is in our power, even when fondness is not.

-Samuel Johnson, 18th century English writer

Never look down on anybody unless you're helping them up.

-Rev. Jesse Jackson, contemporary Civil Rights leader

Drawing boundaries is the preoccupation of minds incapable of building bridges.

- Brian Hooking, British Professor of International Relations

Taking a Stand

Remind the participants that the north pole is positive and the south pole is negative. They are to "take a stand" on the compass needle (but not on the "center point") to show how much they agree or disagree with the following statement:

Hanging out with friends is more important than getting to know new people..

Where do they stand? Ask for reflections on why they chose the place they did once everyone has decided upon a spot.

Heart of the Journey

Introduction, Story and Discussion.

Begin by asking the participants what they think the word "hospitality" means. They might well associate it with entertaining people. While affirming that meaning of the word, tell the group they will be talking about a different kind of hospitality today, a kind that is sometimes called "radical hospitality."

Tell them this type of hospitality may be considered "radical" because it involves intentionally reaching out to those who are different from us and accepting those differences. Our first UU Principle states that we affirm the

inherent worth and dignity of every person. But do we really do this? What about those people whose opinions are different from our own? People who have different ideas about politics, religion or ethical behavior?

Let the participants know you will explore this idea further in a story about hospitality. Read the story you have chosen (Resource 6-A or 6-B).

When you've read the story, ask the group for comments. Have they ever gone out of their way to help someone they didn't know (let alone like)? Have they ever made a point of getting to know someone who was different from themselves? Can they relate the idea of radical hospitality to relying upon their moral compass?

Getting There

My Unique Lemon Activity.

Note to Teachers: The purpose of this activity is to help participants realize that if they take the time to get to know someone, they are likely to find something worthwhile or interesting about that person. At the very least, they will find qualities in that person which are unique.

How can we be open to those people who are radically different from us? Perhaps the first step is recognizing the differences and affirming those qualities which make us unique individuals. Share with the participants this quote from Deborah Tannen (a contemporary linguist) in the book, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*:

We all know we are unique individuals, but we tend to see others as representatives of groups.

Let each participant choose a lemon and take about three minutes to really get to know the lemon—to smell it, to become familiar with its size and precise shape, to check out its bumps or pointy ends, to feel how smooth or textured the skin is. Advise everyone that they'll be expected

to be able to identify their own lemon and to say what they think makes their lemon unique. Then collect the lemons, make sure they're mixed up well, and have the participants find their original one.

When each person and lemon are reunited, ask about the experience. Was it easy or hard to find the right lemon? What made it possible to pick the right one? Did it surprise them to find out how many differences lemons could have from each other? If there's time, ask the participants to introduce their lemons to the group, pointing out the lemon's many qualities.

Now ask the group if they can think of how this experience of getting to know a lemon can be applied to getting to know a new person. If they paid the same attention to people that they did to the lemon could it:

- help them make a new friend?
- help them be more understanding of someone who was different from them?
- help them not stereotype a group of people?

Remind the participants that when they open themselves up to meeting someone new, and especially when they accept the differences of that new person, they are extending "radical hospitality."

Stopping to Rest

Journaling.

Pass out the journals and encourage participants to draw or write about hospitality. When have they extended hospitality to someone? When has it been extended to them?

Looking at the poster of our Unitarian Universalist Principles, which ones are related to Radical Hospitality? What would the world be like if everyone tried to practice this? Other journaling options would be to copy the quotes for the day or maybe even to draw a lemon, to remind them of the activity.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise)

Ask participants to again line up with north being positive, south being negative. The statement they agree or disagree with is:

Hanging out with friends is more important than getting to know new people.

Did anyone change their opinion? Why or why not? Ask for reflection from all those who choose to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop.

Alternatively, you can ask each participant to share just a few words to complete a sentence such as:

What surprised me the most about this morning's session was ... or

Something I might do differently now when I meet someone new is ... or

If most people practiced radical hospitality, I think the world would be ...

Closing Circle.

Gather the group into a circle. Let them know that they will be heading North (starting a new unit) next week. Just as a compass needle always points north to help us find our way, a person's faith can be a guide along the spiritual journey. That's the topic for the next few weeks: beliefs about faith and God (or whatever you might call the Ultimate).

Tell the group that for the next session, everyone is encouraged to bring in music (or links to music videos) which says something about God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence (or what other words would the youth like to use? Ask them!)

Today's closing reading is from the Buddhist tradition, #596, "Boundless Goodwill", in the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*. Ask one youth to be the leader as the others respond. Then extinguish the chalice saying in unison:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

.Important Reminder!!

You will have to follow up with the youth during the week to remind them about the music they are to bring in. You will probably get the best results if you actually call the youth. Otherwise send a postcard, email or text. Encourage the youth to put the postcard or the printed email in a prominent place, like their bedroom mirror, to remind them. You also need to be sure you have the equipment to play what is brought in.

Notes from field testing:

Here is an additional or alternative suggestion for Taking a Stand: "I prefer meeting and getting to know people who are like me rather than people who are different."

Some of the teachers were uncomfortable using the word "radical", saying that its meaning was not congruous with hospitality. However, "radical hospitality" is the term being used by many faith groups, including UUs, to talk about the kind of world we need to be moving towards if we are to find a way to live with our differences.

Rather than using one of the suggested stories, one group read a selection from Odd Girl Speaks Out: Girls Write about Bullies, Cliques, Popularity and Jealousy by Rachel Simmons. This is in paperback and also is probably available at your local public or school library.

While one group did not do the "My Unique Lemon" activity because they thought the participants would find it silly, the rest did do it and reported it to be very successful. Said one teacher, "This was a surprise ... It was very effective." And another: "Worked well ... Particularly when they had to 'introduce' their lemon to the group."

Resource 6-A
"The Good Samaritan"
Adapted from Luke 10:25-37

One day when the Jewish rabbi Jesus was teaching a group of people, a lawyer asked him what one had to do to have eternal life. Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

This did not sound too difficult to the lawyer. His next door neighbor was his cousin, and they got along fine, as long as his cousin's oxen didn't invade his courtyard and trample on the herbs his wife grew there. But just to be sure, the lawyer asked, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied, "A man was walking along the dusty road from Jerusalem to the town of Jericho when a gang of robbers suddenly jumped out from behind some huge rocks and attacked him. They beat him and tore off his clothes, then ran away, leaving him bleeding and half-dead.

"As luck would have it, it wasn't long before a priest, on his way to his work at the temple in Jerusalem, came by. And when he saw the bloodied man lying on the side of the road, he passed by on the other side.

"A short time later, a Levite came hurrying down the road. He was an assistant to the priest, and he, too, was on his way to the temple. He saw the injured man sprawled helplessly and heard low groans of pain. And like the priest, he passed by on the other side, and continued on his way to Jerusalem.

"And then, a Samaritan appeared in the distance. Yes, a Samaritan." Jesus paused in his story while the lawyer shifted his gaze to the sparse grass beneath his feet. Samaria was a country not far to the north. The Jews and the Samaritans were bitter enemies and had been for centuries. The lawyer kicked his sandaled foot at a tuft of grass while Jesus continued.

"As the Samaritan approached the broken man and heard his faint cries, he was filled with compassion. He hurried to him, and poured wine on his wounds to clean and disinfect them, and he tore strips from his own garment to make bandages. Then he put the injured man on his own donkey, and took him to an inn, where he tended to him all night long. The next morning the Samaritan gave money to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of this man, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'

"Now," said Jesus, "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

The lawyer looked up and replied, "The one who showed mercy to him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Resource 6-B (alternate story)

"You've Treated Us Like Gentlemen"

Clara Barton, the Universalist founder of the American Red Cross, in October 1862 organized a wagon train to cart medical supplies from Washington to the front near Harper's Ferry. The eight drivers and mule-breakers assigned to her were rough and coarse. They had driven wagons throughout the disastrous Peninsula Campaign and vowed never again to go near the fighting. And now they were asked to risk their lives once more, and do so under the direction of a woman.

The sullen drivers led their wagon train onto the road, but stopped for the night at 4 o'clock, angrily telling Barton they would not drive in the night. She replied that they should drive till night, and would find it in their interest to do so. The men conferred, indignantly cracking their whips, and with full perversity proceeded to drive their teams deep into the night. As they were moving in the right direction, Barton did not interfere.

Eventually they made camp, and while the drivers were tending to the animals, Barton prepared from her own supplies a supper which could "grace a well spread table." She spread a cloth on the ground, poured hot coffee, and invited the men to put up their cold rations and join her. The men came slowly, sat quietly, and ate well. Barton chatted as if nothing had happened. Afterward the men went about their tasks. Later that chilly night; as Barton was spending a last few moments by the bed of coals, she saw the men emerge from the darkness. She welcomed them by the fire, "the red glare of the embers lighting up their bare, brown faces."

Their spokesman was hesitant, but finally said, "The truth is, in the first place we didn't want to come. There's fighting ahead and we've seen enough of that for men who don't carry muskets, only whips; and then we'd never seen a train under charge of a woman before and we couldn't understand it, and we didn't like it, and we thought we'd break it up, and we've been mean and contrary all day, and said a good many hard things and you've treated us like gentlemen. We hadn't no right to expect that supper from you, a better meal than we've had in two years. And you've been polite to us as if we'd been the General and his staff; and it makes us ashamed. And we've come to ask your forgiveness. We shan't trouble you no more."

Barton reminded them that it was their duty to go where the country had need of them. As for her being a woman, they would get accustomed to that. And she assured them that as long as she had any food, she would share it with them. They listened silently, and when Barton saw the rough, woolen coat sleeves drawing across the men's faces, it was one of the best moments of her life. The next morning, the men made breakfast for her.

Reference: Epler, *The Life of Clara Barton*, 60-63.

This story is adapted from A Year with Our Liberal Heritage by Willard C. Frank, Jr. (self-published 1984), used with permission of the author.

Unit Two

Traveling North

*Just as the compass needle always points north
to help us find our way, a person's faith
can be a guide for the spiritual journey*

Session 7	Images of the Divine
Session 8	Where Does Our Congregation Stand?
Session 9	The Diversity Which Unites Us
Session 10	Question Authority
Session 11	The Bible as Authority and Inspiration
Session 12	Sacred Texts
Session 13	Sacred Texts II: Our Personal Living Tradition
Session 14	What Would Jesus Do?
Session 15	Wise Guys



Session Seven

Images of the Divine

Goals for Participants:

- to consider that images and ideas about a divine presence are very diverse
- to discuss how such images reveal something about the people who believe in them
- to examine the many ideas and images of God which appear in the popular music of our culture

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. **Taking A Stand.** (5 min)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** Experiencing Images of the Divine. (10 min)
4. **Getting There.** Divine Images in Music. (20 min)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Reflection and Journaling. (10 min)
6. **Going Out Into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
paper circle "center point"
participants' journals
copies of the hymnal, *Singing The Living Tradition*
pictures, photos, statues or sculptures with a variety of images of Gods and Goddesses
CD player
CDs with songs that contain diverse images of God/Goddess (see Resource 7-A for ideas)
TV monitor, DVD player (optional)
DVDs with music videos which have images of God/Goddess in them (optional)

Advance Preparation:

Locate music, songs, or music videos which incorporate images of God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence (see Resource 7-A for ideas)

Locate lyrics for any selections for which the words are difficult to understand. Song lyrics can be obtained for nearly any selection on several websites. (See the end of this session for some ideas.)

During the week prior to the session, send out a postcard or email to the homes of the participants asking them to bring in some songs, music, or (optional) music videos which have messages about God, religion or spirituality in them.

Set up a television monitor, VCR or DVD player if you opt to play music videos which include a reference to or an image of God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence (optional).

If you decide to include music videos, plan to record them in advance, rent or borrow the tapes/DVDs.

Gather a variety of images of God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence for visual display (statue or picture of Jesus, God-the-Father-Figure, Buddha, Hindu Gods and Goddesses, Earth-Mother figure, etc.) Make sure you include some female images in the mix, too.

Make a copy of the quotes for Session Seven in the appendix at the back of this curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold them and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes for Session Seven from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning as a part of your weekly "check-in."

Sharing Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

To believe in God or a guiding force because someone tells you to is the height of stupidity. Each person must puzzle it out for himself or herself.

–Sophy Burnham, contemporary author best known for her books about angels and the spiritual dimension.

It is the creative potential itself in human beings that is the image of God.

-Mary Daly, contemporary theologian and feminist

The search for God is the search for reality.

–Sidney Mead, Unitarian Universalist and former President of Meadville/Lombard Theological School

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

I Corinthians 3:16 (from Christian Bible)

Taking a Stand

Remind the participants about the Taking a Stand activity which you do each week when you ask them to respond positively or negatively to a statement you pose by having them find a spot

along a continuum between the north and south poles, but not on the center point.

.Tell them today's Taking a Stand statements to consider are:

The image of God is different in different cultures and in different places.

God was created as a concept by human beings to help explain the unanswerable questions of life.

I believe there Is a divine presence or something which is greater than us human beings.

Now, where do they stand?

Ask for reflections on why they chose the place they did once everyone has decided upon a spot for each of the statements.

Heart of the Journey

Experiencing Images of the Divine.

Ask the participants to think about an image they have of God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence. Stress that they need not necessarily have (a personal belief to still have an image because ideas about the divine are all around us – in books, magazines, music, movies, TV shows. Invite them to share with the group what ideas they have.

Then ask:

Is this image different from what it was when they were young children?

Do they think they would have a different image if they were born to another family somewhere else? In another part of the country? In a different country?

How do ideas about God and the divine change from person to person and place to place?

Do where we live and how we live make a difference as to what kind of image of the divine we have?

Draw the participants' attention to the statues and pictures of the images which represent ideas people have had about God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence. Ask them to tell you what they think of these images. Do they like some of them? Do any strike them as odd? Do any of them "turn them off?" Ask them **if** any of these images represent their ideas. Ask the participants to consider:

What does this image of the divine communicate about the people who believe in it?

How might believing in this image inspire a person to act toward others?

Be sure to mention that you were unable to bring along a picture of the Islamic idea of God because their religion forbids them from making any likeness or visual image of Allah. Also stress that Buddhists have many different beliefs and only some of them see Buddha as God. Others see the Buddha as an enlightened person who achieved the highest state possible (but not as God or Divine Presence).

Move the discussion by sharing this quote from the book, *Christianity without God* by Lloyd Geering:

When Christian missionaries took Christianity to China, they discovered to their surprise that there was no word in Chinese equivalent to 'God'. They had to invent one. What they actually did was to choose what they thought was the most suitable Chinese word and attempt to give it a new meaning. Unfortunately the Catholics chose one word and the Protestants chose another.

Ask the participants for comments on this quote. Is this surprising? What does this say about a culture that has no image or word for a divine presence? What word might the participants have chosen to describe the essence of the divine to the Chinese people?

Getting There

Divine Images in music.

Let the participants know you will further explore ideas about how the Divine is seen in the dominant culture around us – in the United States and Canada- through songs (and music videos, **if** you have some to share).

Begin sharing some of the musical selections or music videos you have brought in that have some reference to God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence. After playing each piece, ask the participants to reflect upon the image. Ask them **if** they can identify what kind of image the artist is referring to. Ask them **if** they like the image of God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence that the artist is presenting in their song. Encourage participants to consider the image of the divine in the song and how believing in this type of divine image may influence a person.

Invite the participants to share their musical selections (but be prepared to move on or share more of your own **if** there are none brought in by the youth). Ask for participants to comment on those musical selections and the ideas about God expressed there.

Stopping To Rest

Reflection and Journaling.

Ask the participants to journal about their personal images of God/Goddess/Divine Presence/ Great Spirit, or as an alternative, think about creating the image of a deity for an imaginary society or fantasy world.

Explain that they may explore ideas about their image of the divine (or create their mythical God/Goddess/Deity) by writing about him or her through essay, poem, or rap; drawing a picture, or just a cascade of words on a page in their journals.

After five minutes have passed (or a majority of the participants don't appear to be actively writing any longer), ask the participants **if** anyone would like to share the images of the higher power they wrote about in their journal. Remind them that it is okay to pass and to choose not to share **if** they prefer not to.

Going Out Into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Remind the participants it's time to Take a Stand once again. Have their ideas changed? Ask them to agree or disagree with these statements again by taking their position between the north and the south poles:

The image of God is different in different cultures and in different places.

God was created as a concept by human beings to help explain the unanswerable questions of life.

I believe there is a divine presence or something which is greater than us human beings.

Ask the participants **if** anyone wants to share reasons why they've taken a stand where they did. Did anyone change their opinion or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about their position than they did before, or a little less sure? Ask for reflection from all those who choose to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly (in one sentence or less) stating something they especially liked or disliked about a particular God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence image they experienced in today's session.

Closing Circle.

Gather the group into a circle for the closing. Encourage the participants to speak as a chant Hymn # 8, "Mother Spirit, Father Spirit" from *Singing the Living Tradition*. Repeat the short chant three times. **If** they are up to it, and the group is large enough, you might even have them do the chant "in rounds." This will give a musical quality to the words without actually requiring the group to sing.

Extinguish the chalice with the closing

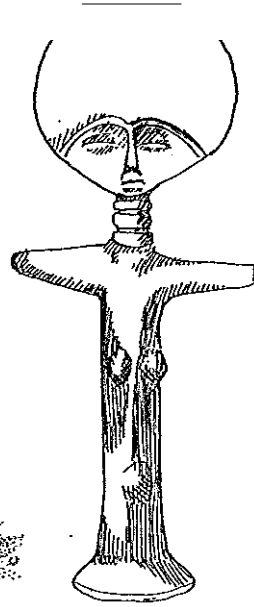
words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not it's light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Notes from field testing:

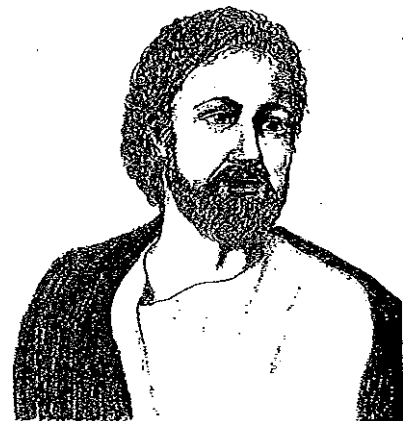
One congregation showed the beginning of the video from the curriculum Rise Up and Call Her Name with the huge variety of female deity images and compared this video to songs with a very male image of God

At one field test site youth were encouraged to bring in pictures, statues and other images of the divine along with musical selections. This made a really creative display for the session.



Clockwise from
bottom left:

Haida Totem
The Cosmos
Dancing Shiva
Ashanti Goddess
Buddha
Earth Mother
Jesus



Resource 7-A

Songs with God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Great Divine Images

"What **If** God Was One of Us?" by Joan Osborne

"From a Distance" by Bette Midler (Bette Midler Greatest Hits)

"Counting Blue Cars" by Dishwalla (female image!) (off the Pet Your Friends CD)

"Jesus is Just All Right With Me" by The Birds

"Spirit In The Sky" by Norman Greenbaum (off the CD, Spirit in the Sky)

"Jesus He Knows Me" by Genesis (We Can't Dance)

"Let it Be" and "Nowhere Man" by the Beatles

"My Sweet Lord" by George Harrison

"Like a Prayer" by Madonna (on the CD of the same name)

"God Part II" by U2 (Rattle and Hum)_____

"You and Me" by the Moody Blues (Seventh Sojourn)

"Hey, Jesus" by the Indigo Girls (Strange Fire)

"Fire and Rain" by James Taylor_____

"Dear God" by XTC (Kings For a Day)

"Morning Has Broken" by Cat Stevens

"Jesus Don't Want Me For a Sunbeam" by Nirvana

"God Shuffled His Feet" by Crash Test Dummies (off the CD with the same name)

"Hands" and "Who *Will* Save Your Soul?" by Jewel (on Spirit)

"Hey, God" by Bon Jovi (on These Days)

Session Eight

Where Does Our Congregation Stand?

Goals for Participants:

- to discuss ideas about God
- to find out what the congregation believes about God
- to take responsibility for preparing and carrying out the congregational poll
- to interact with adults in the congregation

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice Lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day and an Introduction to Ideas About God. (12 min)
2. Taking a Stand. (3 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. Further Discussion of Ideas About God. (15 min)
4. Stopping to Rest. Journaling on God beliefs. (5 min)
5. Getting There. Preparation for the Congregational Poll and Graffiti Wall. (20 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Closing Circle Conducting Congregational Poll on Beliefs.

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
large paper circle for center point
participants' journals
pencils for the participants
newsprint or a white board and markers
clear tape or glue sticks
2-3 pieces of poster board (22" X 28") on which to copy the lists of ideas about God
2-3 pieces of poster board (22" X 28") for your "Graffiti wall"
black markers
bright, colorful markers
Post-it notes (optional)
3' - 5' piece of craft paper for a banner or sign

Small press on dots in one bright color (three for every adult attendee at coffee hour)

Rectangular or Circle-shaped permanent labels (white) which are large enough to create "I Voted!" stickers (optional)

Advance Preparation:

Make sure your religious educator knows your group **will** be actively involved at coffee hour this week. Ask her/him to help you select somewhere in your coffee hour space where your group can set up a polling site. You want to be visible but not impeding traffic flow.

It's best to have vertical space for your polling posters. Take a look at how you can hang them or get them to stand up.

If possible, have a large table on which to lay the poster board for the Graffiti Wall. If you will be laying this on a table, people can just write on it. If it **will** be displayed vertically, you'll need Post-it notes so people can write down their ideas then stick them to the board.

Note to Teachers: The purpose of the Graffiti Wall is to give people the opportunity to express a belief they have which is not included on the list. Ideally, people writing on the poster board should also vote on the list items. You will also be using both the congregational poll posters and the Graffiti Wall next session.

Arrange for ways to let the congregation know your group **will** be polling them about their theological beliefs and asking for their participation. Arrange for a blurb in the Order of Service and be sure to honor the office deadline! Arrange for a brief announcement to be made from the pulpit.

Alert the parents that participants should stay through coffee hour this week. (If you have an email list that would be the ideal way to do this.)

Look at the list of tasks and figure out how to make sure everyone will have a "job." If your congregation is large, you will want to have the "Ideas about God" (at the end of this session plan) printed several poster board sheets, so that there is plenty of room for the votes (the dots) to be posted.

If your congregation has more than one service, decide whether or not the group will poll other services and, if so, how this could be done.

Unless your worship services run like clockwork, find someone who can come and give you a five minute warning before the service ends. You should be set up in the coffee hour space before the crowd arrives, but you don't want the youth to have to cool their heels while the service wraps up late – they will lose interest.

Find out if you can have access to the church copier during RE time. If not, copy the "Ideas about God" (at the end of this session plan) ahead of time-enough for all adults at coffee hour. The lists are on half sheets of paper to give the implicit message that we try to conserve our natural resources.

You also need to have a copy of the "Ideas About God" for each participant to use right from the beginning of the session, so make sure those are done ahead of time, even if the congregational ones will be done during class.

Take one of the copies of the "Ideas About God" and cut it apart to be used for the "Thoughts for the Day."

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a member of the group to light the chalice while everyone says the unison affirmation.

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share briefly what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts for the Day.

Explain to the group that this ritual will be somewhat different today. Their journey for today will involve joining the adults at coffee hour and polling them about their beliefs about God. Thus, today's quotes are the ideas that they will be asking people to vote on.

Ask for volunteers to select from the prepared sayings in the basket and to read them. As each one is read, make sure the participants understand what is being said. (This is another change in the ritual, because usually everyone listens to the quotes silently.) At this point, however, you're only interested in having the participants understand the language. You'll be discussing the meaning in a few minutes.

Taking a Stand

The statement for today is:

Adult members of our congregation have an easy time expressing what they believe about God.

Do they agree (going to the north) or disagree (going to the south)? Remember, no standing on the center point! If you regularly do the Taking a Stand (Reprise) as a closing activity, tell the group that they won't have a chance to (

take a stand again later today, but that as they interact with the adults in coffee hour, they should consider whether they think the same way, or **if** they have changed their minds. You will be asking them about this again next week.

Heart of the Journey

Ideas About God.

Hand out the halvesheets of paper with the ideas about God and pencils. Tell the group that these are the "thoughts" they just heard and they are theological statements. (Write the word "theological" on newsprint.) The word "theological" means thinking about God (*theo* being a Greek root word for God). What the group is talking about today is called "theology."

Read the statements over one-by-one with the group, making sure that they understand the concepts. If your group is shy about God-talk, try to recast the ideas in other words. If some members of the group try to opt out of the process by saying there is no God (which might be the theological stance of some or many in your congregation, or which some youth might believe themselves, or which some youth might say because they think it is shocking) assure them that you're talking about beliefs and concepts that people have about God, and there is no doubt that some people have these beliefs.

As you read each statement, the participants should be thinking about whether or not they agree with it, and they should note this on their list. They can put a star or checkmark by each statement they agree with, an "X" by those they disagree with, and a question mark by those of which they are unsure.

Resource 8-A gives you some talking points for conducting the discussion. Tailor the discussion to fit the maturity of your group. When you have finished discussing what is printed, point out the blank space at the bottom of the page. There's room for more ideas. Does anyone have an idea they want to add to the poll? Write additional ideas down on the newsprint and have the group decide which, **if** any, should be added. Then be sure to add the new idea(s) to the master

copy you will be duplicating and make sure you have it in both sections. (However, **if** you had to make the copies for the congregation ahead of time, you'll be unable to add more ideas.)

Stopping to Rest

Journaling.

You are stopping to rest early today, because once you get going on your polling preparations, you'll be on a roll.

Have participants glue or tape the list they have just been discussing into their journals. (They will need this next week.)

If there is time, participants might want to write down "Used-to Thinks" and current beliefs about God. (And they might want to share "used to thinks" with the group.)

Getting There

Preparing for the Congregational Poll.

Involve the participants in preparing to poll the congregation.

If possible, have one or two youth make copies of the list of Ideas About God and cut the sheets of paper in two. You'll want to have a list for most of the adults you expect to have at coffee hour. (This is a good time for youth to discover how many adults attend the worship service.)

Have two or three more youth copy the "Ideas About God on to two or three large pieces of poster board. (Use just black marker so the colored dots will provide a color contrast.) Be sure to leave plenty of room around each statement for the dots.

One or two participants can cut the pages of colored dots into smaller sections of three dots each.

Taping two or three pieces of poster board together, someone should make a Graffiti Wall with a title and perhaps a fanciful border. **If** you

will be laying this on a table, people can just write on it. If it will be displayed vertically, you will need Post-it notes so people can write down their ideas, then stick them to the board.

Other participants can make a large, colorful banner/sign encouraging members of the congregation to come over and vote.

If you have a large class or if you want to occupy those who finish their preparation early, you can have some participants make Thank You stickers for adults who have participated in the poll to wear. For these, you will need permanent round or rectangular labels (easy-to-remove ones tend to not stick well to clothing) which are large enough to hold the words "I voted!" (or some other short slogan). Participants can create the stickers which will be handed out to adults when they have finished voting.

Decide who will pass out the "Ideas About God" pages and who will "host" at the voting site itself

During coffee hour, the youth will pass out the lists and the dots and ask the adults to choose up to three statements that they most strongly agree with. (Giving the dots right then, rather than at the polling station, encourages people to actually follow through.) The youth can ask the adults to vote by placing one of their color dots beside the statements which they most agree with.

Going Out into the World

Closing Circle.

You will most likely find that youth will leave with their families throughout coffee hour, so have your closing circle now.

Before starting your ritual, remind the youth that while they are interacting with the adults, they should be thinking about today's "Taking a Stand" statement: *Adult members of our congregation have an easy time expressing what they believe about God.*

Read together, or read to the youth Hymn

#23, "Bring Many Names" in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Extinguish the chalice with the words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

A few minutes before the end of the service, have everyone go to the coffee hour space to get set up. Make clear the expectation that each member of the group is to help with the project until their family has to leave.

Notes from field testing:

One group suggested streamlining the session by combining the "Thoughts for the Day" and the "Ideas About God" sections so that the group was only dealing with those concepts once instead of twice. The repetition in the curriculum was deliberate (to enhance the learning possibilities), but if you think you will be pressed for time, you might do this.

One group added to "Taking a Stand" "I have an easy time expressing what I believe about God" and "I am still developing my beliefs about God."

This session engendered a great deal of enthusiasm from participants, adult leaders and the congregations ("... the kids 'rocked'. .."). Leaders who allowed for the youth to take the lead on preparation for the poll were thrilled with their creativity, leadership and cooperation.

You might want to have the youth also vote in the congregational poll. It was also suggested that the polling be set up to encourage as much youth/adult mingling as possible.

One group used ready-made stickers (stars) for those who voted.

Resource 8 A

Discussion Points

There are probably as many ideas about God as there are people.

This is an idea held by many UU's- and it's also a reason why some UU's think the word "God" is confusing.

God cares for us and listens to our prayers.

This is a statement that would be made by some people who call themselves Theists. Theists affirm the existence of God, often one with whom they feel they have a personal relationship.

God and the Universe are the same – God is in everything and everyone.

This is a statement that could be made by a Pantheist, someone who thinks of God as being everywhere. Some people who call themselves Pagans would also agree with this statement, as they see God/Goddess everywhere in nature.

There is no way we can know whether or not there is a God.

People who say this might call themselves Agnostics, essentially meaning: "I don't know."

God created the universe and then left it to run itself.

Some people think there must have been a "first cause" that made the "Big Bang" happen, creating the Universe.

There's no such thing as God, and even the word is meaningless.

A person who thinks this way might be called an Atheist, a skeptic, a rationalist (someone who finds his or her beliefs through reason), or maybe a Humanist.

God is my conscience calling me to make the world a better place.

Is God like a moral compass?

God is present in relationships between people.

Some people who are theists, and even some who would not call themselves theists, see that God (or the divine, or the spirit of life) works through people.

Creation is on-going, and we are co-creators with God.

One way to think about this is that as we grow and take part in the world, we change and the world changes, hopefully for the better.

There's a spark of divinity in each of us.

How does this relate to our first UU principle (the inherent worth and dignity of every person)?

We can use science and reason to understand our Universe.

While some people think that "God" is the only explanation for our Universe, others believe that the human mind, aided by the scientific method, can find the answers.

I find God in nature.

This might be said by a Pagan or a Pantheist or a Humanist, and Theists, too, will say that they see God revealed in nature. Many UU's would say that they have earth-centered spirituality.

God is like a loving mother who sustains us and all life.

This might be said by a Pagan or a Theist. For thousands of years in Western culture (the culture which most influences our country) God was referred to as male. What does it imply when God is male? What does it imply when God is female?

My beliefs about Jesus make me feel closer to God. There are Unitarians who deny the divinity of Jesus but still find his message to be particularly compelling in their spiritual journey.

Please choose up to three statements with which you most strongly agree, then come to our voting site.

There are probably as many ideas about God as there are people.
God cares for us and listens to our prayers.
God and the Universe are the same-God is in everything and everyone.
There's no way we can know whether or not there is a God.
God created the universe and then left it to run itself.
There's no such thing as God, and even the word is meaningless.
God is my conscience calling me to make the world a better place.
God is present in the relationships among people.
Creation is on-going, and we are co-creators with God.
There's a spark of divinity in each of us.
We can use science and reason to understand our Universe.
I find God in nature.
God is like a loving mother who sustains us and all life.
My beliefs about Jesus make me feel closer to God.

Please choose up to three statements with which you most strongly agree, then come to our voting site.

There are probably as many ideas about God as there are people.
God cares for us and listens to our prayers.
God and the Universe are the same-God is in everything and everyone.
There's no way we can know whether or not there is a God.
God created the universe and then left it to run itself.
There's no such thing as God, and even the word is meaningless.
God is my conscience calling me to make the world a better place.
God is present in the relationships among people.
Creation is on-going, and we are co-creators with God.
There's a spark of divinity in each of us.
We can use science and reason to understand our Universe.
I find God in nature.
God is like a loving mother who sustains us and all life.
My beliefs about Jesus make me feel closer to God.

Session Nine

The Diversity That Unites Us

Goals for Participants:

- to get a picture of their congregation's theological diversity
- to become acquainted with some theological terminology
- to develop a *creative* "report" about this diversity to share with the congregation

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand.(5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. Puzzled Pairs Discussion. (16 min)
4. Getting There. Creating a Report. (20 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Comparing Individual and Congregational Beliefs. (5 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Closing Circle (5 min); delivering the "report"- right at the end of the session

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
large paper circle for "center point"
copies of hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
participants' journals
the "congregational poll" and the Graffiti Wall on poster board from last session
poster board and markers

Advance Preparation:

Write up some or all of the quotes from the Graffiti Wall and cut them apart to serve as the "Thoughts for the Day."

Put the congregational poll posters and the Graffiti Wall out of sight for the beginning of the morning.

Make a copy of the "puzzle" pages (resource 9-A). Cut between the two columns as well as on the solid lines. The "Puzzled Pairs" activity builds on the prior week's discussion, so if you were not with the group last week, speak with an adult leader who was to find out what conversations took place.

Be prepared to give enthusiastic support to whatever the group decides upon to give their "report."

Find someone to whom you can deliver your "report" at the end of the hour – the religious educator, the president of the congregation, the chair of the worship committee, perhaps some parents. Enthusiasm will be highest at this time. Either ask that person (those persons) to come to your room at the conclusion of your session, or plan to go to where they are.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Let the group know these are from the Graffiti Wall which congregation members wrote on last week. If there are a lot of them, you might want to let individuals make comments as the quotes are read, rather than waiting to the end.

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand on the continuum (but not on the center point) of the north pole (yes) to the south pole (no) in answer to today's statement. This is actually the "reprise" of the stand they took at the beginning of the previous session. Now that they've had a chance to talk with members of the congregation, where do they stand?

Adult members of our congregation have an easy time expressing what they believe about God.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did. Do they remember where they stood last session? Are they in the same place? Did they learn anything which surprised them when speaking with members of the congregation?

Alternatively, you can do a Quick Stop asking each participant to summarize in one sentence something they discovered while they were conducting the congregational poll.

Heart of the Journey

Puzzled Pairs Discussion.

Reveal the posters of the congregational poll. While some will remember how the voting went last session, it's likely that many have forgotten or did not see the results before. Remind the group that each person who participated could cast up to three votes.

Briefly go over each of the concepts again, letting those who were there last week take the lead with what they remember. ("Talking points" are on Resource 8-A)

Pass out the puzzle pieces with the theological terms and their definitions. (Depending upon the size of your group, participants might have more than one piece.)

Have them find the person(s) with the matching piece(s) which have the same font. Ask the participants to sit down next to the person whose puzzle piece matched theirs. (If they had more than one piece, they will have to sit by one person now and another one later.)

Now ask each pair to present their term and its meaning to the group. Have the group look at the statements on the congregational poll posters and decide if the label matches any of the statements. If so, write the term in a contrasting color right next to the statement. For instance, you (or a participant) would write "Pantheist" next to "God and the Universe are the same." Do this for each puzzled pair.

Not all the statements will have labels, and some labels might be used more than once.

When all the puzzled pairs have been presented, have the group look at the poster and, either eyeballing or counting the votes (dots) for each statement, have them come to some conclusion about the theological stance of their congregation.

Getting There

Creating a Report.

Suggest to the group that the members of the congregation would be interested in knowing the results of last week's poll. It's up to the group to think of a way to inform them. One way would be to write an article for the newsletter. But there must be some more creative ideas! What might they be?

If your group has a hard time coming up with ideas, here are a few: a skit, a poster, a song or rap, an art project, a worship service! They might all work on the same project, or they might divide up and do two or more projects.

Let the group know they will be delivering at least a preliminary report to whomever you have made arrangements with. If the group has decided upon a skit or song, you will want to make sure that it's written down sufficiently so they can do it again for a larger group, maybe at the beginning of a worship service at some time in the near future. (And you might arrange for *something* to be put in the congregation's newsletter, or have a poster at coffee hour.)

Stopping to Rest

Comparing Beliefs.

Have everyone pull out their journal and compare what they indicated last session were their beliefs about God with what the congregation believes. If they have a chance, have them write a sentence or two about what they have learned.

Going Out into the World

Closing Circle.

A good closing reading for today is #611 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Brahman." This reading is from the Hindu tradition and celebrates many ways of thinking about the divine. Have the group read responsively.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Delivering the Report.

Share the group's creation with whomever you have made arrangements.

Notes from field testing:

Report to the congregation: .

One large group discussed about how the report would be delivered, then had three volunteers work on it outside of class time with an adult leader.

One group decided to get creative with a cake as a means of delivering the report. They made a pie chart of the information and had that scanned on to a cake.

Several groups did posters.

Additional idea for journaling:

Asking the youth where their beliefs came from and how they developed their beliefs.

Questions about the theological terminology:

One group wanted to know why Judaism was not included in "puzzled pairs" while Christianity was. The answer is that one can feel one is Jewish culturally or by heritage while not necessarily subscribing to any particular belief or set of beliefs. Being a Christian, however, implies putting a special value on the life and/or the teachings of Jesus.

Those who wonder how one can be a Christian without being a theist are referred to Christianity Without God by Lloyd Geering, Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand

Resource 9-A
Puzzled Partners

Theist (*Theo=Greek for God*)

Someone who believes in a God, often a God with whom they feel they have a spiritual or personal relationship

Atheist (*A=negative;*
Theo=God)

Someone who denies the existence of God

Agnostic (*A=negative;*
Gnostic=knowledge)

Someone who says we have no way of knowing whether or not there is a God

Pantheist (*Pan=all;*
Theo=God)

Someone who believes God is in all things

PAGAN (ORIGINAL MEANING:
A PERSON FROM THE COUNTRY)

SOMEONE WHO FINDS GOD IN NATURE
OR MOTHER NATURE

Humanist

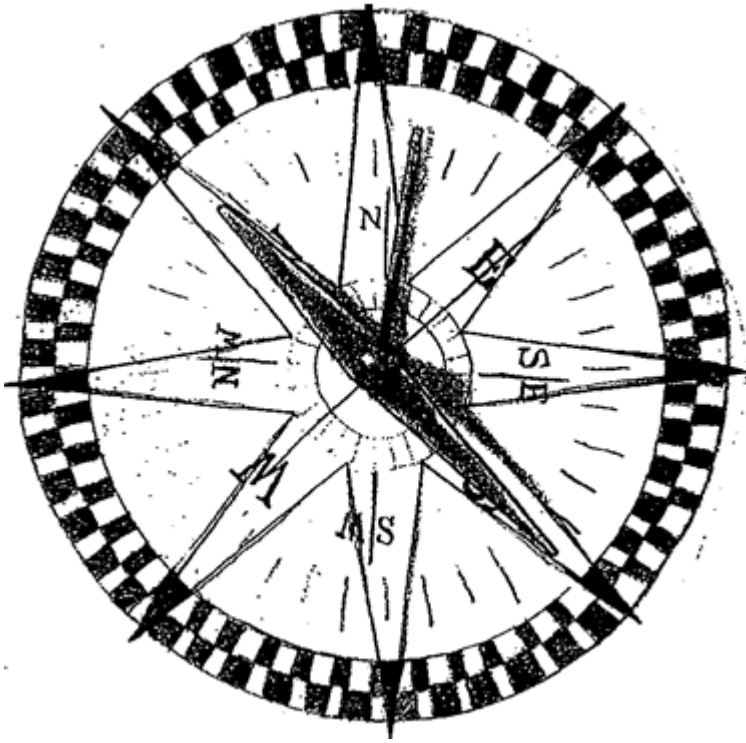
**Someone who rejects all
supernaturalism (that which lacks all
scientific explanation) and relies
primarily upon reason (using the
mind). science, and the power of
humanity to great things in the world**

Deist (Deus= Latin for God)

Someone who believes that there was
a creator who made the universe, then
left it to run itself

Christian (Follower of Jesus Christ)

Someone (often a theist) who believes
that Jesus was divine or that the
teachings of Jesus were uniquely
important.



Session Ten

Our Living Tradition

Goals for Participants:

- to review the Six Sources of the Unitarian Universalist Living Tradition
- to be introduced to the idea of spiritual authority
- to learn that the Fourth Principle, "affirming the free and responsible search for truth and meaning," means that UUs are their own spiritual authorities
- to understand that Unitarian Universalists use their Living Tradition (the Six Sources) to help inform their spiritual authority

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day.(10 min)
2. Taking a Stand.(5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. About our Living Tradition, Looking for the Sixth Source.(5 min)
4. Getting There. *Singing the Living Tradition* activity. (20 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Copying a Favorite Hymn into the Journal. (5 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
paper circle for center point
poster of UU Principles which includes the Sources (available from UUA Bookstore)
copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, ideally one per participant
CD with music from *Singing the Living Tradition* and CD player (see preparation)

Advance Preparation:

Check with your religious educator to see if your congregation already has one or both of the suggested CDs from the Oakland, CA UU church: *Bring Many Names: Music from Our Liberal Religious Tradition* or *Music in the Air: Hymns from Our Liberal Tradition, Volume 2*. If not, they are available at <http://uuoakland.org/cd-page.htm>. You can fax the order and pay by credit card, if you're in a rush. Either CD will give you songs from all of the Sources. Enjoy listening and choose the hymns you think your group will like best.

If listening to the hymns during class time is not feasible for your group, spend some time choosing hymns which you think will most interest your group to look over and read. (See activity "*Singing the Living Tradition*" under "Heart of the Journey.")

Under "*Singing the Living Tradition* Activity" you will find lots of tips, lots of choices; and lots of information. Take a long look at this section and make an outline of what you want to do and say to the group. You may not get through all of the material in this session; select what you think will be of most interest to your group.

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post them on the walls of your room.

If you don't have a poster with the Purposes and Principles, including the Sources, write out the Sources. They are in the front of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*, just a page or two

before the hymns start. The Sixth Source, earth-centered traditions, was added in 1995 and is not in earlier copies of the hymnal.

Background Information on Authority and the Living Tradition.

This session focuses upon the *authority* for our religious beliefs and *the Living Tradition* which informs that authority.

We all have authorities in our lives: bosses, teachers, parents, coaches, etc. Those authorities put limits and expectations on what we can and cannot do. When it comes to religious beliefs, people also have authorities.

Catholics traditionally have looked to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to tell them which beliefs are okay and which are not; the Pope is their final authority. Protestants have looked to the Bible; that book is their authority. Muslims look to the Qur'an and to the imams who help them interpret it; that is their authority.

Unitarian Universalists are unique in that they are their *own* authorities when it comes to religious beliefs. We don't let anyone else tell us what to believe. Even more, we feel it is our *responsibility* to form our own beliefs. This is what we mean when we talk about our fourth principle, the free and responsible search for truth and meaning,

But where are we supposed to get the information and ideas we need to build our beliefs? We get them from *our Living Tradition*, the Six Sources which underlie our Principles. The original language is located in the front of the hymnal, but in very simple terms, here are the Sources:

1. Our own lives' experiences, particularly those that cause us to feel awe or to wonder
2. The lives of people who have worked to make the world a better place
3. World (non-Western) religions
4. Jewish and Christian teachings
5. Humanist teachings and science

6. Earth-centered spirituality/religions

We give our children experience with these Sources when we have them 1) light a candle; 2) learn about Universalist Clara Barton; 3) visit a mosque; 4) participate in a Seder; 5) learn about the Big Bang; 6) celebrate the Spring Equinox. When our children have such experiences, they are being exposed to the ideas and information that will help them form their own faith in a responsible manner. We are helping them to be their own authorities.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider both quotes silently and then offer a time for comments.

[We] affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
– Unitarian Universalist Principle

I have as much authority as the Pope, I just don't have as many people who believe it.
– George Carlin, contemporary comedian

Share with the participants the idea that we

and expectations on what we can and cannot do. When it comes to religious beliefs, people also have authorities.

Some people look to sacred texts such as the Bible or Qur'an for authority on religious matters. Others look to religious leaders like priests, ministers or imams.

But Unitarian Universalists are unique in that they are their *own* authorities when it comes to religious beliefs. We don't let anyone else tell us what to believe. Even more, we feel it is our *responsibility* to form our own beliefs.

When we say we affirm a free and responsible search for meaning, that means we have the right and the responsibility to be our own authorities when it comes to our *religious* beliefs. (But middle school youth still generally need to heed the words of parents, teachers, coaches, etc. when it comes to their non-spiritual lives!)

Taking a Stand

Participants will consider a statement and take a stand on the compass needle, north being "yes", south being "no." Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

To decide what you believe, you just have to dig down inside yourself; you don't have to look anywhere else.

Heart of the Journey

About Our Living Tradition.

Have participants focus on the poster of the UU Sources and read them aloud together. Then share the following information, tailoring it for your particular group. *If you stand and point to each source as it is read, then remain standing so you can point again to the Sixth Source as you talk about, it will help the group focus upon what you are saying.*

The first five Sources were adopted by a vote of the General Assembly of Unitarian Universalists (lay people and ministers from all our

congregations who meet annually) in 1984 and 1985, when the Principles were also adopted. (The rules said they had to be voted on twice in two successive years.) The Sixth Source, earth-centered spirituality, was added ten years later in 1995, again by a vote of the General Assembly. This fact in itself is a good illustration of how our tradition is a *living* tradition; like anything living, it changes.

Last session, the group reviewed the results of the congregational poll, and with all the theological variety, they might have wondered what keeps UUs together as a religion. The answer is in the paragraph which follows the Sources (see the hymnal):

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision.

In our free and responsible search for truth and meaning—our attempt to answer the big questions about living and dying—we are blessed with many sources of information and inspiration. We learn about these Sources so that we can act responsibly as our own religious authorities. This is in contrast to many other religions. Practicing Catholics, for instance, are supposed to look to the Pope in Rome for the final answers on religious questions. (Looking at the quote from George Carlin, would he make a better Catholic or a better UU? Why?)

Looking for the Sixth Source.

Ask the youth to look at the title of our hymnal. What might it mean? Have the participants open their hymnals to the Table of Contents in the front. There the hymns are listed under headings that should look familiar. What are they? (You have to turn the page to find the listing for "Humanist Teachings.")

When the hymnal was published, we only raised up five Sources, because at that time most people felt that earth-centered spirituality was included with world religions. Over time, people changed their minds. When the Sixth Source was

added, it was printed in the front of the hymnal, but the hymns were not rearranged, and thus they are listed under just five Sources.

Ask the participants to pretend they have been appointed to a new hymn book commission, and they need to find hymns to be listed for the sixth source. Looking at the subheadings under the Source headings, where might they find earth-centered spirituality hymns? (Some possibilities are The Seasons, Solstice and Equinox, The World of Nature, Stewardship of the Earth, and The Interdependent Web.)

Getting There

Singing the Living Tradition Activity.

How much you do of the following activity will depend upon the time you have and the interests of our group. Please read through the ideas so that you can make them your own and share them with the group. You would do well to make an outline of what you will be doing and saying. You need to be able to keep eye contact. If possible, put your binder down so you can gesture, your small movements will help the youth pay attention.

Focus upon each of the Sources for our Living Tradition, one at a time, re-reading it and making sure the youth understand what it means. Then listen to a hymn which illustrates the source. *If you aren't able to get to all of the Sources as part of this session, we suggest you make it a priority to do the First Source.*

First Source.

Ask what "direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder" means. Can anyone give an example of when this would occur? Most of the time, this experience comes to us unbidden, like when we see a beautiful sunset. But we also try to create such experiences on Sunday mornings, both in the worship space with the rest of the congregation, and in the classroom. Ask the youth to name some of those experiences.

If you have the CDs you might then play "Spirit of Life" (#123), "Mother Spirit, Father Spirit" (#8), or "Wild Waves of Storm"

(#80). If you don't have a CD, you might read through "For the Beauty of the Earth" (#21) or "Morning Has Broken" (#38), especially if your youth are familiar with those hymns.

As the group listens to the song, have them keep in mind the meaning of the First Source. Since this is to illustrate transcendent wonder, you might suggest that the youth close their eyes as they listen.

If the mood is right at the end of the song, ask participants to share times when they have had a "direct experience" of wonder and awe. As the words of our Living Tradition state, these experiences are universal, they are part of being human. How a person responds to such an experience depends to some extent on her theology. A theist might say a prayer of gratitude when viewing a beautiful sunset. A pagan might feel one with the universe. A humanist might marvel at how dust particles, the same cosmic dust that we are made of, can glow with such intense colors.

At the same time, these direct experiences might influence or help a person's theology to grow and become richer. The theist might also begin to feel one with the universe, and vow to take better care of the earth. A humanist might wonder where the Big Bang, which gave us all this cosmic dust, came from.

As Unitarian Universalists we say that we, and no one else, can decide what these experiences mean for us. We are our own authority.

Second Source.

Read (or ask a participant to read) the description of the Second Source. Ask the youth to describe in their own words how we are to respond to the "words and deeds of prophetic women and men." What does the word "prophetic" mean? Do the words of this Source

A hymn you might listen to which illustrates this source is "We Are a Gentle, Angry People" (#170). Here is the background to that song:

In 1977, Harvey Milk ran for public office in San Francisco. It was the first time ever (at least in our current Western culture) that an openly gay person had run for a substantive political post, and he won. A year later he was killed by a bullet to the head, shot by a man who hated people who were gay. The community, both gay and straight people, came together to protest Harvey Milk's murder. Holly Near, a folk singer who happens to be a lesbian, wrote this song for everyone to sing at the protest.

This song might be familiar, and even if it's not, it's easy to join in. You might invite everyone to stand and sing along.

Other hymns you might choose to listen to are "Step by Step the Longest March" (#157) or "We'll Build a Land" (#121). "We'll Build a Land" is based upon words from the prophets Isaiah and Amos in the Hebrew Bible, from which Martin Luther King, Jr., a modern prophet, took the phrase 'justice shall roll down like waters.'

If you don't have a way to listen to the hymns, you might look at the song "We Shall Overcome" (#169), which was probably the most famous anthem of the Civil Rights movement. You might even be able to sing that without musical accompaniment.

At the end of the song, ask the participants who, in the eyes of Unitarian Universalists, can be a prophetic woman or man. How about Harvey Milk, who died because he was not afraid to be true to himself? How about Holly Near, who wrote a song to give voice to the anger people felt? How about all those people who gathered together to sing the song? How about each of us?

Third Source.

Read (or ask a participant to read) the description of the Third Source. Ask the youth what we hope we will learn from the world's religions.

Listen to "Be Ye Lamps Unto Yourselves" (#184) from the Buddhist tradition or "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" (#188) by the Islamic Sufi poet Rumi.

Assuming your group has had learning experiences with world religions, you might ask them to share something they have learned from this, emphasizing you're looking for a life lesson, not a recitation of facts.

Fourth Source.

Read (or have a participant read) the words of the Fourth Source. Where, in particular, do we find Jewish and Christian teachings? (The group will be looking at the Jewish and Christian Bibles, as well as sacred texts from other religions, in the next few sessions.)

A song you might listen to is "Come Sunday Morning" (#202). In that song, jazz great Duke Ellington describes the kind of experience he would have had as worship in an African American church. In the song there is a direct statement (spoken, in fact) of the call to "respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves." Tell the group to listen for it. Does anyone recognize it? (It is the Golden Rule.) In this song Ellington is sharing and commenting on a direct experience with transcendent wonder that he had. This is an example of a Christian source which does *not* come from the Bible.

Another possible song is "Oh Come, You Longing Thirsty Souls" (#209). This is from the book of Isaiah in the Hebrew and Christian Bibles.

If you don't have a way of listening to the music, you might look at "Light One Candle" (#221), a song for Hanukkah or "The First Nowell", a Christmas carol (#237). Those songs tell stories of Jewish and Christian heritage, respectively.

Fifth Source.

Read (or have a participant read) the word of the Fifth Source. You will probably have to explain the concept "idolatries of the mind and spirit." Here we are cautioned to pay careful attention to everything we think or feel. Can we prove our thought (idea) to be true? Are our feelings just and compassionate? Thinking and feeling things do not necessarily make them true or right. Again, we have to be careful to be our own authority, and to question every authority, even our own.

Possible songs to listen to are "We Would Be One" (#318) or "Gather the Spirit" (#347).

If you don't have music to listen to, you might read "Touch the Earth, Reach the Sky!" (#301) or "Children of the Human Race" (#302).

Stopping to Rest

Participants can copy the words to a favorite hymn into their journals. Alternately, they can write down the Source which they feel speaks most strongly to them, or they can reflect upon the day's activities.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

To decide what you believe, you just have to dig down inside yourself; you don't have to look anywhere else.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position that they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share. Alternatively, you can ask each participant to name which Source they feel they've learned the most about over their "R.E. career" so far, or which one they think they'd like to learn more about.

Closing Circle.

If there's time, play again a hymn that the group seemed to enjoy the most, or do a unison re-reading of the sources.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes from field testing:

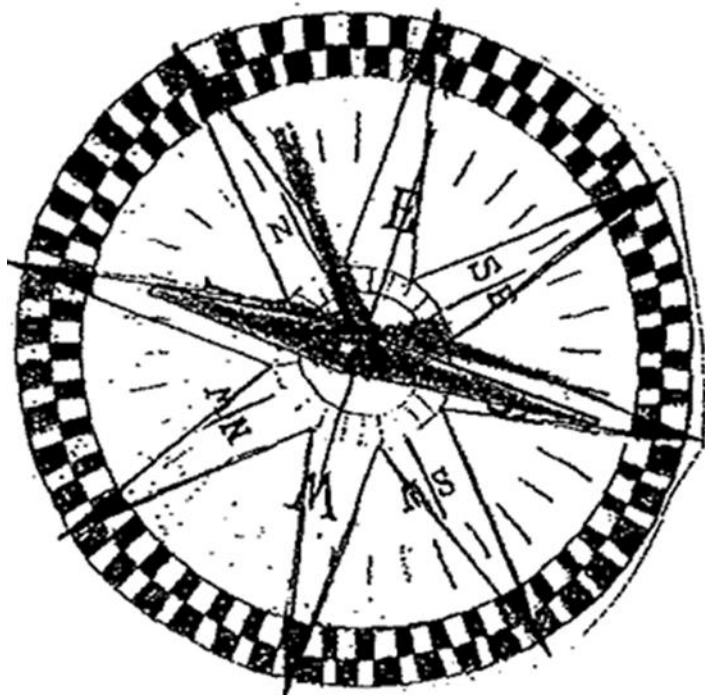
There should always be two adults in the room with your group, of course, for many reasons. This particular session needs one adult leader to share ideas and a second one to run the CD player.

If you don't have a way of listening to the hymns, and you think your group won't be

engaged by reading from the hymnal, you might have the youth share what experiences they have had with each of the sources, either in R.E. or at other times in their lives.

One group commented on being particularly moved by the story of Harvey Milk.

Several groups also presented their congregational poll results during coffee hour after this session.



Session Eleven

What's the Bible to Us?

Note to the Teacher:

This session is essential for youth who have had little or no exposure to the Jewish and Christian scriptures, which are identified as one of the Sources of our Living Tradition. Please don't think that because your group did (for instance) Timeless Themes as third graders that they have "had enough Bible." On the other hand, if they have recently studied (again, for instance) Jesus and His Kingdom of Equals and you are short on Sundays, this might be one session you can summarize before moving on to the next one on "Sacred Texts."

The purpose of this session is to create some pathways of interest for future study of the Bible. As John Buehrens, former president of the UUA says, "If you can't or won't understand the Bible, others surely will interpret it for you." (UUWorld, July/August 2003, p. 12.)

Goals for Participants:

- to realize the Bible is a collection of books of various genres
- to gain some understanding of how and when the Bible came to be written
- to begin to appreciate how much there is to be learned about the Bible

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
- 2. Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** Bible Scavenger Hunt. (20 min)
- 4. Getting There.** Living Time Line of events in Writing of the Bible. (10 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** Journaling. (5 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (10 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
large paper circle for "center point"
participants' journals
copies of the Bible (including the New Testament), at least one for each two participants
a copy of a Jewish Bible (optional)
a copy of a Catholic Bible (optional)
newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Copy the bold-printed items on the bottom half of resource 11-A and cut apart per the instructions.

Copy resource 11-B and cut apart.

Be aware of youth who have difficulty reading. **If** you think the Bible scavenger hunt could be intimidating or embarrassing for anyone in the group, have the participants work in pairs, each pair getting two (or more) verses to look up.

Print the categories for the scavenger hunt on newsprint or a white board:

Creation myths
Laws and regulations
Prayers
History of ancient Israel
Royal romance stories

Family trees
Love poetry
Stories told by Jesus
History of the ancient Christian church
Foretelling of the future
Letters (snail mail)
Stories about Jesus

Also print these questions on newsprint:

What surprised you?
What seemed familiar?
What questions do you have now?

Also print the words "Parking Lot" on a blank sheet of newsprint.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

... the Bible is human literature about the divine, not divine literature about humans.

-Rev. John Buehrens, former president of the UUA

The Bible gives me a deep, comforting sense that 'things seen are temporal, and things unseen are eternal.'

-Helen Keller 20th century American lecturer and advocate for people with visual and auditory impairment

The Bible is a book that has been read more and examined less than any other book that ever existed.

-Thomas Paine, American Revolutionary War patriot

Every Book of the [Bible], every Chapter of it, every Verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it...every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High!

--John William Burgon, late 19th century Biblical scholar

Taking a Stand

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle, north being "yes", south being "no." Once everyone has decided where to stand (and they can't stand on the center point), ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did. Today's statement is:

I know a lot about the Bible.

Heart of the Journey

Bible Scavenger Hunt.

While Unitarian Universalists find inspiration in many sacred texts, the group will start with the one which is probably most familiar to them and which has been most influential in Western culture—the Bible.

Hold up a Bible for all to see. Explain to the group that while this appears to be a single book, it's really a library containing many of the sacred texts of Jews and Christians. As Unitarian Universalists, we see these as being part of our Living Tradition.

Christian Bibles usually refer to the Jewish texts as "The Old Testament" (those books written before the birth of Jesus) and to the Christian texts as "The New Testament" (those books written about Jesus and the Christian church). Unitarian

Universalists (and an increasing number of liberal Christians) use the term "Hebrew Scriptures" or "Jewish Scriptures" instead of "Old Testament" as a way of honoring—one might even say extending hospitality to—the Jewish texts. Jewish people themselves refer to their Bible as the *Tanakh*. We most often hear of the first five books of the *Tanakh*, which are called the *Torah*.

If you have a Tanakh and/or a Catholic Bible, show the group how they contain different books. The Tanakh does not include the "New Testament." Ask if anyone knows why. The Catholic Bible includes a number of books not found in the Protestant Bible—or the Tanakh, for that matter, even though these books were written for and about Jews. These books are called "The Apocrypha."

Begin by helping everyone learn or review how to look up a verse in the Bible, using Resource 11-A (to find "Proverbs 3:13-18").

Then have each participant choose a strip of paper with a Bible verse written on it. (Some may get more than one.) Each person should look up their Bible verse. Then, looking at the newsprint list of categories of books in the Bible, decide which kind of book it best represents. Each person should also consider their passage carefully and decide upon one thing they find interesting about it to share with the rest of the group. Refer to the questions you've posted on newsprint:

What surprised you?

What was familiar?

What questions do you have now?

Encourage the participants to read aloud anything they find to be particularly interesting. Also, with the permission of the youth, write down on the newsprint "Parking Lot" (or have your assisting teacher or another youth write down) any questions which are raised.

When the group has finished this exercise, return to the questions you "parked" in the Parking Lot. If any of them are ones which bear discussion now, have that discussion. If the

questions are beyond the group's knowledge or its guesses and opinions, suggest that several members of the group might present these questions to your religious educator or to your minister, and report back to the group. Or someone might type up the questions and email them to the religious educator or minister.

Getting There

Living Time Line.

Newer text books use the year references "C.E." (Common Era) and "B.C.E." (Before the Common Era) that are used in this curriculum, so the youth are probably used to them, but teachers may not be. These equate to "B.C." (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini, Latin for "The year of the Lord").

Tell the group they are going to form a silent time line. Hand out the time line events (Resource 11-B), one to each participant. Without talking, the group should organize itself in chronological order, forming a living time line. Once they have done that, if you have more time line events, hand them out to the participants so that all the events are in order. (Some will have one event, others might have two.) Let the group decide how it wants to space itself.

Have the person with the earliest date read that date and event. Then give the group some background information for the event. (See Resource 11-C.) There is information aimed at those with very little knowledge about the Bible and those who know more. Keep in mind that what you are trying to impart is "There's lots of interesting stuff in the Bible." The point is not to be learning all these facts—if the group loses interest, skip them!

Continue with the participants reading their events. When they are done, ask the group, from what they have learned before about the Bible, and from what they have talked about today, how do they feel about the Bible being a Source of our Unitarian Universalist Living Tradition? Since our tradition is *living*, what does that say about our approach to reading or studying the Bible? How can the Bible be part of our search for truth?

Stopping to Rest

Journaling.

Time for the journals! Encourage the youth to record an observation about their Bible passage that they shared with the group, or something new they learned from their discussion.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement that was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

I know a lot about the Bible.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Now that they probably know more about the Bible than they did at the beginning of the session, do they maybe feel there's even more to know about the Bible than they realized when they first took a stand? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop.

Go around the circle and ask each participant to briefly say something about the Bible which surprised them the most of all the things they learned today.

Closing Circle.

The oldest copy of any part of the Bible found (so far) is what might be a good luck charm incised on a piece of stone about 400 BCE. It contains the words from Numbers 6:24-27.¹

If you have time to have someone look that text up, do so. Otherwise, just share it with the group:

Numbers 6:

²⁴The Lord bless you and keep you:

²⁵The Lord make his face to shine upon

you, and be gracious to you:

²⁶The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

1. This factoid from Dever, William G. *What Did The Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, USA, 2001

Notes from field testing:

One group that had studied the Hebrew scriptures the prior year combined this session with the following one, reviewing what kinds of writings were in the Bible so they would have an idea of what would be included in a sacred text.

The original "Taking a Stand" statement for this session was "It's important for Unitarian Universalists to read the Bible." One group found that most of its youth disagreed with the statement, and the teachers then had to find a way to motivate them to participate. Nevertheless, you might want to consider the original option.

Resource 11-A

Bible Scavenger Hunt Activity

How to find a verse of the Bible:

Example: Proverbs 3:13-18

Proverbs= the book, 3 =the chapter of the book, 13-18 = the verses of the chapter

Look in the Table of Contents to find the name of the book and the page it's on. (J) verses are in the Jewish scriptures; (C) verses are in the Christian scriptures, which Christians call the New

Testament. "Proverbs" is found in the Jewish scriptures (which many Christian Bibles call "The Old Testament").

Each book is divided into chapters. You can find the chapters indicated on the top of each page. The beginning of each chapter is indicated by a large numeral. In this case, in the book of Proverbs, you'd look for the large "3."

Each chapter is divided into verses, to make it easy to find the part you want. Verses "13-18" explain why it is good to seek wisdom.

Duplicate and cut apart. J =Jewish scriptures, C= Christian scriptures.

Psalms 98 (J)

Psalms 86 (J)

Exodus 19:1-6 (J)

2 Samuel 11:1-6 (J)

1 Chronicles 1:1 - 9:1 (J)

Song of Solomon 2:8-13 (J)

Leviticus 6 1:7 (J)

Key:

Psalms 98	<i>Hymn</i>
Genesis 1:20-27	<i>Creation Myth</i>
Leviticus 6 1:7	<i>Law/Regulation</i>
Psalms 86	<i>Prayer</i>
Exodus 19:1-6	<i>History of Ancient Israel</i>

2 Samuel 11:1-6	<i>Royal Romance</i>
1 Chronicles 1:1-28	<i>Family Tree</i>
Song of Solomon 2:8-13	<i>Love Poetry</i>
Matthew 13:31-34	<i>Stories told by Jesus</i>
Acts 18:1-11 (actually, all of Acts)	<i>History of the Ancient Christian Church</i>
Revelations 12:1-9 (actually, all of Revelations)	<i>Foretelling of the future</i>
Colossians 4:10-18	<i>Letter</i>
Luke 2:41-51	<i>Story told about Jesus</i>

Matthew 13:31-32 (C)

Acts 18:1-11 (C)

Revelations 12 (C)

Colossians 4:10-18 (C)

Luke 2:41-51 (C)

Genesis 1:20-27(1)

Resource 11-B
Living Time Line

2000 BCE: Sumerian story of the gods killing humanity with a great flood is written on stone tablets.

1300 BCE: The Israelites flee from Egypt in the "Exodus."

950 BCE: "J" writes a story about God sending a flood to kill humanity.

500 BCE: "P" writes a story about God sending a flood to kill humanity.

400 BCE: The last book of what will be the Hebrew Bible is written.

450 BCE: "R", an editor, combines "J" and "P", forming much of what will be the first four books of the Bible.

1 CE: Jesus is a small child.

50 CE: The first of the New Testament books are written.

100 CE: The "canon" of the Jewish Scriptures is finalized.

100 CE: The last of the New Testament books are written.

400 CE: The "canon" of the Christian Scriptures is finalized.

1945 CE: The "Nag Hammadi Library" is found in caves in Egypt.

1947 CE: The "Dead Sea Scrolls" are found.

2006 CE: "The Gospel of Judas"
is revealed.

2056 CE: Who knows what still remains to
be found and learned about the Bible!

Resource 11-C

Living Time Line Background Information

2000 BCE: The Sumerian story of the gods killing humanity with a great flood is written on stone tablets.

This story, part of the Epic of Gilgamesh, was popular throughout the ancient Middle East for thousands of years. The story tells of a man who builds a boat and saves himself and his wife from the flood. Has anyone heard of a similar story about someone else?

1300 BCE: The Israelites flee Egypt in the "Exodus."

This date is a guess, since there is no evidence for the Exodus outside of the Bible. If it occurred, it probably only involved a relatively small number of Hebrew tribes. But this marks the beginning of the Jews as one people. What Jewish religious festival commemorates the Exodus?

950 BCE: "f" writes a story of God sending a flood to kill humanity.

In this story, Noah is told to bring a pair of every kind of animal with him on the ark. This author, whose work appears in the book of Genesis, describes a human-like god who walks in the Garden of Eden, makes clothing for Adam and Eve, and closes up the door of Noah's ark. Does this story sound similar to one just mentioned?

500 BCE: "P" writes a story of God sending a flood to kill humanity.

In this story, also found in Genesis, Noah is told to bring twenty-one pairs of animals on the ark. This author, probably a priest, emphasizes rituals and sacrifices, such as priests would be responsible for.

Why would the flood story be told twice in the Bible? Think about the front page of the sports section of a newspaper after the Super Bowl. There will be several articles written by different people, each emphasizing a different aspect of the game. One, like "J", might emphasize the human emotional aspects of the game, maybe by telling about the winning place kicker who weighed only 140 pounds. Another, like "P," might emphasize the rules of the game, evaluating how the turnovers and penalties led to the results. They'd both be writing about the same game, but they'd be writing about what was most important to them. The Super Bowl is such an important sports event that one article can't tell the whole story.

450 BCE: "R", an editor, combines "Y", and "P", forming much of what will be the Torah.

It's actually more complicated than this, but enough is enough!

400 BCE: The last book of what will be the Hebrew Bible is written.

This is called The Book of Ezra after the prophet of the same name who is said to have written it.

I CE: Jesus is a small child.

Of course, the calendar didn't change to the year "1" when Jesus was born; and scholars now think that Jesus was born 4 to 5 years before the beginning of what we now call the Common Era.

50 CE: The first of the New Testament books are written.

The first books were the letters written to encourage the struggling early Christian churches. We also think there was a document recording the sayings of Jesus which was written about this time but later lost.

90 CE: The "canon" of the Jewish Scriptures is finalized.

The Jews make a final decision about what should be included in their sacred text. This was probably done because the Jews were feeling somewhat threatened by the new religion that was being preached in their synagogues. (What was the religion?)

100 CE: The last of the New Testament books are written

Much continues to be written, but these later writings do not make the cut.

400 CE: The "canon" of the Christian Scriptures is finalized.

This is the book read by Christians today. (The Catholic Bible contains several books excluded from the Protestant Bible.)

1945 CE: The "Nag Hammadi Library" is found in caves in Egypt.

Fifty texts, bound into 13 volumes, are now called the "Gnostic Gospels." These writings show that until about 200 CE, there were many kinds of Christian churches. The leaders of the group that "won" the competition to be IHE Christian church made sure that these writings were not included in the Bible. (Now, of course there are again many kinds of Christian churches.)

1947 CE: The "Dead Sea Scrolls" are found.

Fragments of almost 1000 manuscripts written by the Jewish community from between 200 BCE and 68 CE contain, with only one exception, all or part of every book in the Tanakh (the Jewish scriptures). They were found by Bedouin goat herders looking in caves looking for a lost goat.

2006 CE "The Gospel of Judas" is revealed.

Discovered in the 1970s, this ancient (1700 year old) document was not restored and translated until 2006. This document states that rather than betraying Jesus (and thus causing his death by crucifixion), Judas was actually doing what Jesus asked him to do. Is this the truth? Well, it's one story among many.

2056 CE: Who knows what still remains to be found and learned about the Bible!

Session Twelve

Sacred Texts

Goals for Participants:

- to gain an awareness and appreciation of the sacred texts of several religions
- to be reminded that these writings form part of our Unitarian Universalist Living Tradition
- to create their own "sacred text"

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
- 2. Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** Meeting Some Sacred Texts and Wisdom Sayings Poster. (15 min)
- 4. Getting There.** Sacred Text Mural. (20 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** Admiring the Mural. (5 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches or lighter
basket or hat for quotes
large paper circle for "center point"
9 x 12 construction paper-- several colors,
scissors or paper cutter, glue stick, tape
copies of any other sacred texts you might find
newsprint
large piece of craft paper, pens and markers
(lots of them, in many colors, including
metallic if possible).
camera (optional-and photo printer and paper,
either on site or to use later)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Check with your religious educator or minister for copies of sacred texts they might lend you. Among other things, your R.E. library might have books of mythology, including the *Beginnings* by Sophia Fahs, which contains creation myths from many cultures.

There also are on-line sources, including the Qur'an in Arabic and Hindu texts in Sanskrit. You might want to print a page or two of these to show the group, so that they can clearly see that English is not the default language for all sacred texts.

Copy the three pages containing Wisdom sayings (Resource 12-A). Cut these apart neatly. Cut construction paper, using several colors, so that you have pieces slightly larger than the pieces with the sayings. Centering the sayings, glue the smaller pieces to the larger ones, so each saying is neatly framed. (Alternatively, copy the sayings to different colors of copy paper and cut apart neatly.)

Post a piece of newsprint on to which these sayings can be taped during the session.

It would add a lot of interest to the sacred text project if you had a digital camera and could print pictures right that morning to add to your mural.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments. Information about these scriptures is at the back of this session plan.)

There is no better ruler than wisdom—no safer guardian than justice.

-The Qur'an (Islamic sacred text)

It is wisdom to know others; it is enlightenment to know one's self

-The Tao Te Ching (Taoist sacred text)

None is poor but the person who lacks knowledge.

-The Talmud (Jewish sacred text)

When the five senses and the mind are still, and the reasoning intellect rests in silence, then begins the highest path.

-The Upanishads (Hindi sacred text)

Taking a Stand

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle in response to the statement, north being "yes", south being "no." Once

everyone has decided where to stand (and they can't stand on the "center point"), ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Sacred texts, even when ancient, can still have much meaning for our lives.

Heart of the Journey

Meeting Some Sacred Texts.

Looking at the quotes for the day which you have posted, ask the participants **if** they can identify the religion associated with each quote. (Islam, Judaism, Taoism, Hinduism). Ask participants **if** they can name any other sacred texts and the faiths they represent. Write these answers on newsprint. Put "(sp?)" after words if you aren't sure about spelling. The youth will appreciate your honesty. (And you might mention that there are often several different spellings for words we transcribe from other alphabets.) Add the names of sacred texts you might have brought in that the group has not mentioned.

Pass around whatever examples you have brought with you and ask for comments. Let the youth know they will have time later to look some more, should they wish to do so.

You might also remind the group that some religions, such as those of many Native American cultures, have not gathered their sacred stories in collections of writings, but have kept them in the oral tradition (although much oral tradition has now been recorded in print).

Then ask participants to listen closely to this list of stories and tell you which sacred text they came from:

Noah builds the ark to survive the great flood.

Adam, the first man, is expelled from Eden for eating forbidden fruit.

Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt.

Jesus is born of the Virgin Mary

Most likely, they'll say the Bible, and they're right. But it might surprise them to know that these stories are also found in the Qur'an.

Share this information with the group:

The Bible and the Qur'an have some very similar stories because Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all related, sort of like cousins. Judaism influenced Christianity and both Judaism and Christianity influenced Islam.

Other religions also have some family relationships. (Buddhism, for instance, evolved from Hinduism.) And while each religion is unique in its own way, it seems that almost all religions have in common a wisdom saying on how best to treat others.

Wisdom Sayings Poster.

Hand out the sayings mounted on construction paper to individuals in the group. Ask them, one by one, to bring their saying up to the newsprint and tape it there. The individual can read the saying, or the whole group can read it.

When all the sayings are in place, ask for comments. What would the world be like if people of all religions followed this advice from their sacred texts?

You might want to keep your sayings poster in the room for a few weeks. If so, ask members of the group to be thinking of a title for the poster. It could be labeled "The Golden Rule", the Christian term for the saying. Or someone might have a more inventive idea.

Getting There

Our Own Sacred Text.

For the rest of the morning the group will create their own sacred text in the form of a mural. This text will refer to them as a group of Unitarian Universalist middle schoolers living in the first part of the 21st Century. Like other sacred texts, it should tell contemporary people who they are and what's important to them. And like other sacred texts, it should preserve their ideas for future generations. The sacred text should also be a source of authority, so it should reflect truth as they perceive it.

To help participants decide on what sorts of things to include in their sacred text, ask them

to think back to last week and the types of documents that were contained in the Bible. (You might refer back to Resource 11-A.) As they think about what should be included, ask these questions:

Does this idea pertain to the whole group, or can it be made to apply to them?

Does it tell their history?

Is it about one or more of their leaders?

Does it represent their god (something they hold to be most important in their lives)?

Does it explain their rituals?

Does it speak to ethics, or tell them how best to live their lives?

Does it explain laws or regulations that apply to them?

Do they have their own mythology? How did they come together as a class when they were in preschool or kindergarten? What is *their* creation story, or the story of their congregation's beginnings?

Have the group brainstorm what they would like to see included in their sacred text and record their ideas on newsprint. Be prepared for the comments to go in one of at least two different directions. The ideas might be inspired by the heritage and happenings of your congregation. Or the youth might start thinking about their own youth culture – the latest technologies they use, popular music, current fads. Let them go where their interest is.

When the group has gotten a good list going or has exhausted its ideas, go back and have someone defend the inclusion of each idea. How does it pertain to *them*? Ideas that can't be defended should be eliminated.

If the group has a hard time generating its own ideas, you might suggest some of these.

A class list indicating what year, or at what age, each individual began attending your congregation, and perhaps also telling what faith, if any, the family belonged to prior to becoming UU's. (You don't need this information for everyone; if you look at genealogies in the Bible, they contain varying amounts of information.) If you have a camera, you can take a picture of each participant or of the whole group, printing the pictures right then, if possible, or printing them during the week and adding them to the mural the following week.

Going Out into the World

A copy of the class covenant, and perhaps a write up of a description of what happens in class each week: What are their rituals? (And maybe they'd like to use a camera to record themselves and their rituals.)

A description of events of the larger congregation that the group participates in: What holidays are celebrated? How?

Quotes from weekly sessions: Could these be gathered together for their own version of "proverbs?"

Music that reflects their values: There might be something from the hymnal, but hopefully, they'll also have examples of popular music.

Books they read, perhaps on their own or in school, that reflect the struggles and conflicts, the joys and fun of being a middle schooler right now: What passages from those books are most important?

Are there any running jokes or traditions from their Sunday morning experience that they would like to include?

Once you've done your discussing, ask for volunteers to carry out various aspects of the mural (so that they are not all doing the same thing, and so that many of the suggestions are included), and spend most of your remaining time creating the mural. Participants should use symbols, pictures and words to portray the concept they have volunteered for.

Stopping to Rest

Reflection on the Mural.

Give the youth a few minutes to look at what they have created. If there is any desire to do further work on the mural, invite those interested to stay later, if possible. If the group really has gotten into doing the mural, you might want to think of a way to save it for display at a later event, such as a Coming of Age celebration.

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement that was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

Sacred texts, even when ancient, can still have much meaning for our lives.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop.

Quickly go around your circle asking each participant which version of the "golden rule" they find most meaningful, or asking them to complete this sentence in one to three words: "If everyone followed the "golden rule", the world would be" Or you can ask them to tell which is their favorite element of their mural.

Closing Circle.

Today's reading is from the Sikh tradition, #599 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Read this, or ask a participant to read it.

Then extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not it's light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Notes from field testing:

This session was originally designed to be the first of three sessions during which youth would assemble their own multi-media sacred text. Field testing showed that this was probably beyond the interest or capabilities of middle schoolers. The original activity has been rewritten for high school youth and is included in the appendix at the back of this curriculum.

One of the teachers asked for more information about the sacred texts and the religions they represent. If you are curious: we encourage you to do what this teacher did, and go on-line to find all kinds of information. One site you might start at is:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/world.htm>

In the meantime, here is the most basic information about the sacred texts mentioned in this session:

The *Qur'an* (also spelled Koran, or Quran), is the holy book of Islam. Tradition says that an angel dictated the words to the Prophet Mohammed in the 7th century of this era.

The *Talmud* is a collection of Jewish laws and traditions. It was written by many people over hundreds of years, starting in the 1st century of this era.

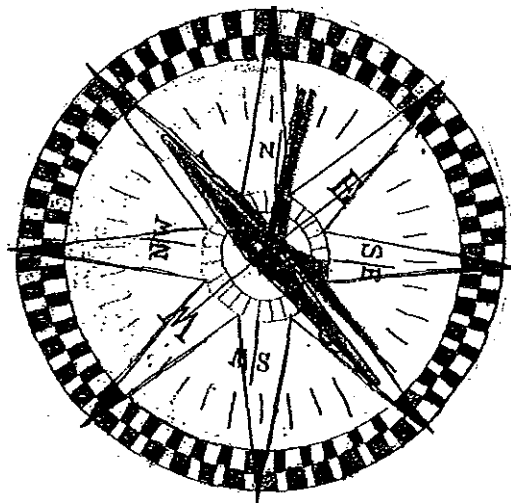
The *Upanishads* are sacred texts from the Hindu tradition. They were written about 2500-3000 years ago. The word itself means "sitting down near" because students sat down near a wise spiritual teacher to hear about mystical experiences.

The *Mahabharata*, which can be translated as "the great story of India" is the longest poem in the world (more than 2,500,000 words!) and is central to Hinduism. It was part of an oral tradition for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years before being written down about 2000 years ago.

The *Analects* are the sayings of a Chinese sage, Confucius, who lived and taught about 2500 years ago. These sayings of what one needed to do to lead a successful life (and also, if you were a ruler, how to govern successfully) were collected and recorded by his followers.

The *Dhammapada* is a collection of sayings attributed to the Buddha. They were written down about 2300 years ago.

The *Tao-te Ching* ("The Book of the Way") was written about 2500 years ago and is traditionally attributed to Lao Tzu. It is the sacred text of Taoism, a Chinese philosophy/religion.



One word which sums up the
basis of good conduct ...
lovingkindness.

-Analects (Confucianism)

Not one of you truly believes
until you wish for others what
you wish for yourself. - Qur'an
(Islam)

*Regard you neighbor's gain As
your own and your neighbor's loss
as your own. - Tao-te Ching
(Taoism)*

What is hateful to you, do not do to your
neighbor. This is the whole Torah. The
rest is commentary.- Talmud (Judaism)

Whatever you wish that others
would do to you, do so to them.
-Bible (Christianity)

*This is the sum of duty: do not do to
others what would cause pain
if done to you.*

Mahabharata 1517 (Hinduism)

**Treat not others in ways that
you yourself would find
hurtful.**

Dhammapada (Buddhism)

Session Thirteen

It's You Who Say That I Am

Note to Teachers:

This session plan is for a 60 - minute class, however, you might consider doing this session in an expanded time format so the youth can watch the entire version of the movie Jesus Christ Superstar instead of merely an excerpt. Whether you show the entire film or only an excerpt, we recommend using the Millennium version which was produced in 1999. This remake of the classic film looks very much like a contemporary music video – plus incorporates some images from "our time" (drugs appear to be sold in the temple scene, there are prostitutes, gambling, etc., as well as nuclear war heads).

Goals for Participants:

- to learn about Unitarian Universalist views of Jesus
- to understand the celebrity-effect and its power
- to explore how the perception of who Jesus was is shaped by the individual

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand. (5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. The Celebrity Effect and The Whisper Game."(10 min)
4. Getting There. Watching the movie, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. (25 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Reflection and Journaling. (5 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*

large paper circle for "center point"

participants' journals

Bibles, several different versions if possible
pictures of current celebrities (famous rappers, pop stars, actresses) with particular appeal to middle school age youth

DVD of the movie, *Jesus Christ Superstar* (We recommend the Millennium Version, See Note.) or plan to stream it

TV and/or DVD player

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

If you plan to hold a 2 1/2 hour session and show the movie *Jesus Christ Superstar* in its entirety, remind the youth of this change in plans through phone calls or emails earlier in the week. (This is especially true if class is to be held at a time other than your usual starting time such as on a Sunday afternoon or Friday evening as part of a social event or overnight.)

Locate a copy of movie, *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Millennium Version).

Watch the film (or excerpt) which you will be showing prior to Sunday morning so that you are familiar with everything that happens.

Note to teachers:

Jesus Christ Superstar originated as a stage play designed to portray the story of Jesus' crucifixion from the viewpoints of Judas Iscariot (the apostle who is blamed for the betrayal of Jesus) and Pontius Pilate (the Roman officer who sentenced Jesus to death). When the play was first written, the controversial nature of its premise (Jesus as a man with the failings of humankind - even if he was still perceived as the son of God) resulted in a reluctance of any theater's willingness to stage the play.

As a result, the songs were released via an album with the same title. The album *Jesus Christ Superstar* sold off the charts and it was the record's popularity which eventually saw it produced as a stage play, followed by a film which was made in the early 1970s and then remade and contemporized in 1999 (referred to as the Millennium version).

Despite its limitations (detailed below), this film is very engaging for the middle school age group and raises questions and ideas in them that other films might not. It also has an ambiguity which allows both Christians and non-Christians to appreciate and feel as if it is representing their point of view.

However, both the play and the film have been criticized as anti-Semitic for the viciousness with which the Jews are portrayed in the scene where Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate. There are also questions of accuracy as to the relationship which is implied between Mary Magdalene and Jesus.

If you do choose to show the entire film to the class, these issues should be addressed in some way so that the participants have a clear understanding that while this movie is accurate to the Bible in many respects, it does take some creative detours in the name of entertainment. Inviting a biblical scholar or minister to visit your class might be a good way to address some of these issues and answer some of the questions that participants may have.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

We believe Jesus is God in flesh, and we must emphasize his divinity, but not to the exclusion of his humanity.

– Robert Sabin, pastor of Apostolic Bible Church, creator of the website www.whoisjesus.com

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

– Philippians 2:8 (from the Christian Bible)

(He) contended that Jesus Christ was simply a man. In other words, (Thomas) Paine was an enlightened Unitarian.

– Robert Ingersoll, 19th century agnostic, lawyer, and philosopher

Jesus was folly human, no different than you or I, except that he made use of that humanity more folly than you or I ever will.

– Thorn Belote, contemporary UU minister

Taking a Stand

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle in response to the statements, north being "yes", south being "no." Once everyone has decided where to stand (and they can't stand on the "center point"), ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

I think Jesus' followers made him out to be something more than he was.

Jesus wasn't a celebrity in his time, only after his crucifixion.

Jesus' death occurred because of a political conflict, not a religious one.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

The Celebrity Effect.

Show the group some pictures of the celebrities which you brought in (pop stars, famous rappers, teen actresses who are currently really popular, a recent *American Idol*, etc.). Ask participants what the group of pictures all have in common. How did they get to be famous or become celebrities? Did they use their skills? What is the source of their power? Why do people idolize them and look up to them?

Share with the participants the idea that many people are celebrities because they are beautiful and quirky (Paris Hilton) or through their talents and abilities (many musicians or athletes), while others are celebrities for the important message they share with the world. Pope John Paul II was a celebrity, but people gathered around him not just because he had charisma and fame, but also because they were interested in hearing his message and hoping it would give some forward movement to their lives. There are also celebrities who may have come to fame by their

looks or through their talents who have become even greater celebrities because of the message they spread in the world (John Lennon, Bono from U2).

Does their celebrity status give them power that ordinary people don't have? What happens if they were to "fall from grace" and do something which doesn't live up to that image? Or their fans develop expectations of them that they cannot meet?

Some people believe this is what happened to the man the world knows as Jesus Christ. They believe his followers made him out to be a celebrity, and he became an image, an icon—even a god. While these people think Jesus had a meaningful message to share, they also feel his followers took this message, distorted it, and acted in ways which he might never have intended.

The Whisper Game.

Ask all participants to gather into a circle (they may sit or stand, but all must do the same thing). Explain that you will whisper a message into the ear of the person to your left, who will then pass it to the next person in the circle and so on and so forth, until it comes back around to the person on your right who will say it out loud. Let everyone understand that they can only say the message once, and that they must pass it on the way they best understood it to be said, even if it does not seem to make much sense.

Then begin the game by whispering, "Jesus of Nazareth was a carpenter's son who grew to become the messiah of many."

When the person at the end of the circle repeats the message, it should be different than the one you communicated, and may sound quite silly! Share with the participants the message you actually whispered, and ask them to share what they thought they heard.

Remind the participants that we all interpret the things we hear in our own way, and sometimes when we pass it on, it may change since we heard it differently. Some people believe this is how Jesus' message may have been distorted over the years.

Note to teachers: The Whisper Game works much better with larger groups. If you have only three or four youth in your class, you may want to forgo this activity because it may not end up very distorted—or even changed at all if you have a small group.

Getting There

Watching *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Introduce the video by explaining this movie imagines the story of Jesus and his crucifixion as it might have happened in our time and not 2,000 years ago.

In this movie, Jesus is starting to be considered dangerous by the people in power. His followers grow and begin to worship him with deep devotion. Judas has begun to sense that Jesus is starting to lose control of his message and what his followers are doing in his name. They want a revolution to overthrow the government, but Jesus is a pacifist who doesn't believe that violence is the solution.

Play the video of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. If you cannot watch the entire film, show an excerpt. We suggest starting with Scenes 6 & 7 (approx. 23 minutes into program, as Jesus arrives in Jerusalem to praise and "Hosannas"). These scenes are together ten minutes long and show the celebrity effect Jesus has on his followers and his dismay when they want to take that message in a different direction. Then show Scene #20 (approximately 1:35 into the program, as Jesus carries the cross to the place where he is crucified). This scene lasts for four minutes.

Following the viewing of the movie, engage the participants in discussion of the issues raised. Ask the participants:

Does this movie present Jesus as a man or God?

How is this story different from other ones you have heard/seen/read about Jesus?

How did the politics of that time and place contribute to the death of Jesus?

If Jesus were alive preaching this same message today, what might happen? Would the ending turn out the same, or be different?

Close the discussion by telling the group at one point in the film, Jesus is asked whether he is in fact God (or the "King of the Jews"). He responds "It is you who say that I am." Ask one of the participants to read from the Christian Bible the following passage upon which the dialogue is based:

They began their accusation by saying, 'We found this man inciting our people to revolt, opposing payment of the tribute to Caesar, and claiming to be Christ, a king. Pilate put to him this question, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' 'It is you who say it,' he replied.

-Luke 23:2-3

Share with the participants the idea that Unitarian Universalists have differing views about Jesus. While generally accepting that Jesus was a man (and not God in human flesh), the importance of Jesus and his teachings varies from individual to individual. For some UUs, Jesus is probably the greatest man who ever lived and they try to live their life according to his teachings. They may even call themselves Unitarian Universalist Christians. For others, Jesus was a great man with an important message – but it is not necessarily greater than the messages of other "prophetic men and women." Perhaps our Unitarian Universalist view of Jesus can be described just as Jesus said to Pilate – he is who we say he is.

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling. After the group has some time to reflect on the issues raised by the movie and share ideas as a group, give them some time to write or doodle in their journals about the experience.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statements which were posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

I think Jesus' followers made him out to be something more than he was.

Jesus wasn't a celebrity in his time, only after his crucifixion.

Jesus' death occurred because of a political conflict, not a religious one.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or "why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly (in one sentence or less) stating:

something that surprised them about today's session, or

their own views of who Jesus was.

Closing Circle.

A good choice for a closing reading would be #639 "Love One Another" from the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*.

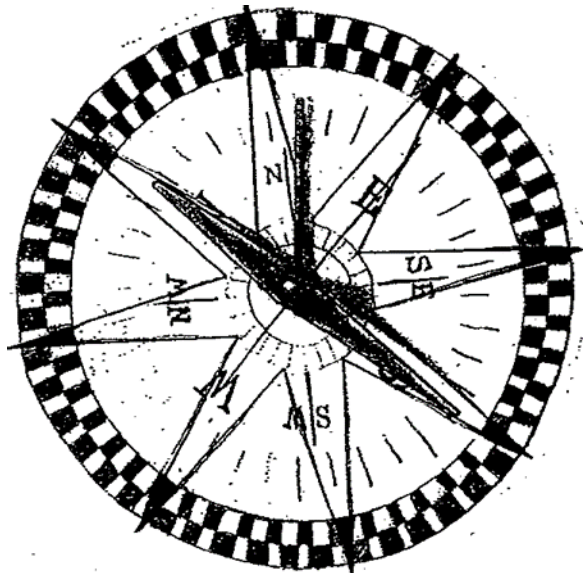
Then extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. We take that with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes from Field Testing:

One congregation showed the Herod song "So you are the Christ?" and then fast-forwarded to the "Jesus Christ Superstar" song. This may be easier for congregations working with streaming video instead of a DVD because the scenes are much closer together.

One congregation showed the movie over two consecutive Sundays so their youth could watch the entire film (in two parts).



Session Fourteen

What Would Jesus Do?

Goals for Participants:

- to explore how we know what we know about Jesus and where this information comes from
- to examine the ideas that are attributed to Jesus and to determine whether he really said them or not
- to determine what Jesus' actions might have been based upon what he is believed to have actually said

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
- 2. Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** Graffiti Wall (5 min)
- 4. Getting There.** The Jesus Seminar. (15 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** What Would Jesus Do? Journaling & Reflection. (10 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

- chalice and matches or lighter
- basket or hat for quotes
- copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
- large paper circle for "center point"
- participants' journals
- large piece of craft paper or poster board for Graffiti wall
- markers in many different bold colors
- Bibles, several different versions if possible
- two small cardboard boxes (like square tissue boxes)
- scissors or knife
- table
- basket(s) or bowl(s) for beads

- colored beads – for each color (red, black, gray and pink) you should have at least two per participant, *OR*
- (alternative to color beads) small circles cut out of construction paper in the colors of red, black, gray and pink
- books or artwork depicting several different likenesses of Jesus (optional)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Make a copy of the "Jesus Said" activity cards (Resource 14-A) and cut them apart.

Cut a slit in the cover of each box large enough to slip a bead through the hole (unless you use tissue boxes which already have an opening in the top), but not large enough so that it is easy to see what beads are already in the box.

If you will be using construction paper circles instead of beads, cut them out. You need two of each color for each participant.

Set up a voting table and place the boxes and a basket of beads (or construction paper circles) on it. Place one "Jesus Said" activity card in front of each box.

Make a copy of *What Jesus Had to Say About Homosexuality* (Resource 14-C) on colored paper. Fold it in half so it looks like a booklet.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.

-Thomas Jefferson, author of Declaration of Independence and third President of the United States

No one else has held the place in the heart of the world which Jesus holds. Other gods have been as devoutly worshiped; no other man has been as devoutly loved

-John Knox, 16th century theologian, commonly known as The Father of Protestant Reformation in Scotland

The moral and religious system which Jesus Christ transmitted to us is the best the world has ever seen, or can see.

-Benjamin Franklin, inventor, author and scientist

If Jesus came back and saw what was being done in his name, he wouldn't be able to stop throwing up.

-Woody Allen, contemporary actor, writer and comedian

Taking a Stand

Remind the participants about the Taking a Stand activity when you ask them to respond "yes" or "no" to the statement you pose by having them find a spot between the north and south poles (but not the center point). Today's statement to consider is:

We don't really know what Jesus actually said because there are a lot of contradictions in the Bible.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose their spot.

Heart of the Journey

Graffiti Wall.

Ask participants to decorate a large piece of craft paper or poster board, creating a Graffiti Wall with what they know about Jesus. They may write ideas which they themselves hold, ones which their friends have, or other ideas they have heard about Jesus and his life. After five minutes (or the writing has slowed down to the point where participants are struggling with things to add) end the session and spend some time reflecting on the graffiti. What are the common themes? Are these their ideas, ideas of other people, or both?

Then ask the group how they know what they know about Jesus. Where did they learn these things? What is the source of our understandings about Jesus? (And what do they know that they did not learn from watching *Jesus Christ Superstar* last week?)

If no one brings it up, explain to the participants that most of what we know about Jesus comes to us from the Christian Bible (often referred to as the New Testament), written many years after his death. Many of the passages contradict one another because they were written by different people at different times. Remind them that there are also gospels which didn't make it into the official canon and scholars have been reviewing these to determine what we can learn

from these "rejected" gospels.

Why were some of the gospels left out and why are there so many ideas which seem to contradict one another? The reality was that many different people had different ideas about what they wanted this new church (founded upon the teachings of Jesus) to be like. There had to be some decision making and some things were cut while other things were left in. In addition, some things were embellished or added to get across the points that they wanted to communicate about their religion.

As Thomas Jefferson once told his friend John Adams, the task of determining what Jesus actually said was one of:

"abstracting what is really his from the rubbish in which its buried ... as separate from that as the diamond from the dung hill."

Getting There

The Jesus Seminar. Explain that in recent years, attempts have been made to understand the differences and contradictions in the Christian Bible (New Testament) and to sort out as best as we are able the words that actually were spoken by Jesus and the ideas that are attributed to him but weren't really his. *The Jesus Seminar* was a project organized through the Westar Institute to research and then report on what they believed to be the words as spoken by Jesus.

Tell the participants that *The Jesus Seminar* developed a system for voting by dropping beads into a box. Just as the more than 200 biblical scholars did for the real *Jesus Seminar*, we are going to do our own voting on some of the things we think Jesus really said.

Before the first vote begins, remind participants about some of the things that were said earlier by reviewing comments made on the Graffiti Wall. Give them this hint for deciding their votes: Jesus was a humble man and he liked saying things in a way that would grab people's attention and make them really think about what he said.

Then invite the participants to come up to the voting table you have prepared with the two voting boxes and the first two statements. Ask them to read each card with the quote from the Christian Bible and select a bead to place in the box. Ask them to record their vote as it was done for the real Jesus Seminar*:

red bead = That's Jesus! (Jesus undoubtedly said this or something very like it.)

pink bead = Sure, sounds like Jesus. (Jesus probably said something like this.)

gray bead= Well, maybe. (Jesus did not say this, but the ideas are close to his own.)

black bead= There's been some mistake. (Jesus did not say this; it's someone else's idea.)

After everyone has voted by dropping beads into the two boxes, ask for a volunteer to reveal the votes in each box as you (or another volunteer) read the card with the quote from the Christian Bible. Reflect upon the results of the voting on the first statement before you move on to the next quote and the next box of beads.

Then replace the cards with new statements, replace the beads in the basket and invite voting on the next two quotes from the Bible. Share the results of the vote and engage in reflection before voting on the last two quotes. *Note: if you intend to calculate the results mathematically as noted below, be sure to ask one of the participants to keep a tally of the votes as you move on to additional statements.*

Once you have had a chance to reflect upon all the voting results, share with the group the actual results as determined by the scholars of *The Jesus Seminar*. (See Resource 14-B.)

* This information is from *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say?* by Robert W. Funk

Note to Teachers:

If the group seems interested (or you have some youth who are really into mathematical problem solving), let the group know that official Jesus Seminar results were tabulated using a mathematical formula whereby each color bead was given a number value and the ultimate value was decided by averages converted to percentages, not determined as a simple majority.

Each of the 200 scholars cast a ballot for each saying. These were weighted as follows: Red = 3, Pink= 2, Grey= 1, Black= 0. Points on each ballot were added up and divided by the number of votes to determine the weighted average. Then the scale was converted to percentages so there was a scale of 1.00 rather than 3.00. The scale was then divided in this way:

red: .7501 and up
pink: .5001 to .7500
grey: .2501 to .5000
black: .0000 to .2500

If you have youth who would like to mathematically calculate what your class' results would be based upon the voting, you can encourage them to do so.

Stopping to Rest

What Would Jesus Do? Given what has been determined to be highly likely the words and ideas of Jesus, what do they think Jesus would do based upon some of the things he really said? Would he be in favor of going to war? Would he be in favor of the death penalty? What would be his thoughts about taxes? Can they think of other things which they believe Jesus would or wouldn't do based upon his words?

As you wrap up the conversation, bring out your piece of colored construction paper with the words written on it "What Did Jesus Have to Say About Homosexuality?" (Resource 14-C) Announce that they will now discuss Jesus' views of homosexuality, and that everything he had to say on this topic is written in this paper. Open it

up and show them that it is empty. Invite participants to comment on this concept.

Journaling and Reflection. After the group has some time to reflect and share with one another, give them some time to write or doodle in their journals about the experience.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement that was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

We don't really /maw what Jesus actually said because there are a lot of contradictions in the Bible.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly (in one sentence or less) stating something:

they especially liked or disliked about a quote attributed to Jesus in today's session, or

something from the Graffiti Wall that they especially liked or disliked about Jesus.

Closing Circle.

Invite two participants to read this passage, in alternating parts and ask the remaining participants to repeat the refrain: What Would Jesus Do?

What Would Jesus Do?

If he saw the way our rivers run with the pollution of our factories and the people wearing masks to protect themselves from the smog of our cities ...

What Would Jesus Do?

If he saw the way the people of the world fight with one another, engage in genocide, rape and murder in the name of religion ...

What Would Jesus Do?

If he saw all the people who suffer and die because they cannot afford the health care they need and the babies who die because their mothers do not receive proper prenatal care ...

What Would Jesus Do?

If he saw the way the poor stay poor and the rich get richer because of governmental policies ...

What Would Jesus Do?

If he saw the sometimes small ways that individuals can make a difference and right the wrongs in our world ...

What Would Jesus Do?

What Would You Do?

Then extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. We take that with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes from Field Testing:

One congregation opted to do the Jesus Seminar voting by posting the statements attributed to Jesus in the Bible on newsprint. Each comment was placed in one of four columns (Yes, Maybe, Not Likely, Definitely Not). Another option might be to post each of the statements on newsprint and encourage participants to vote by placing dot stickers of the four colors next to the statements.

More information on the Jesus Seminar can be found at this internet link:

http://www.westarinstitute.org/Jesus_Seminar/jesus_seminar.html

Resource 14 - A

Jesus Said...

<p>"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek, too...Treat others as you would like them to treat you." (<i>Love Your Enemies</i>, Luke 6:27-31)</p>	<p>"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father, too. From this moment you know him and have seen him. (<i>Farewell Discourses</i>, John 14:6-7)</p>
<p>"Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean." (<i>On Clean and Unclean</i>, Mark 7:15)</p>	<p>"How happy you are who are poor: yours is the kingdom of God. Happy you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied. Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh." (<i>Beatitudes</i>, Luke 6:20-22)</p>
<p>The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches. (<i>Parable of the Mustard Seed</i>, Matthew 13:31-33)</p>	<p>"I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (<i>Resurrection of Lazarus</i>, John 11:25-26)</p>
<p>Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. (<i>Cause of Dissension</i>, Matthew 10:34-35)</p>	<p>"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (<i>Danger of Riches</i>, Mark 10:25-26)</p>

Resource 14-B

Answers According to the Jesus Seminar:

Love Your Enemies (Luke 6:27-31): red
(Jesus often advocated "turning the other cheek" and forgiving those who have done bad things to you.)

Farewell Discourses (John 14:6-7): black
(Jesus was humble and made no such claims for himself.)

On Clean and Unclean (Mark 7:15): pink
(Jesus generally did not think it was important to follow the strict Jewish dietary laws.)

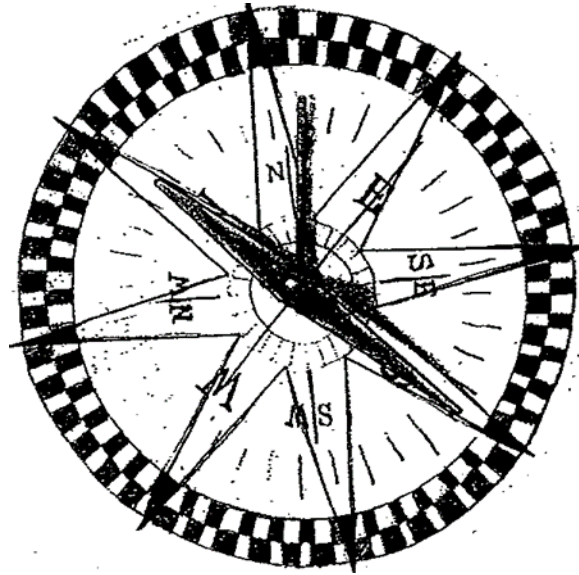
Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-22): red
(Jesus was believed to be the champion for the oppressed, the downtrodden and the poor.)

Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-33): pink
(A version of this appears in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the belief is that the more times something appears, the more credibility it has.)

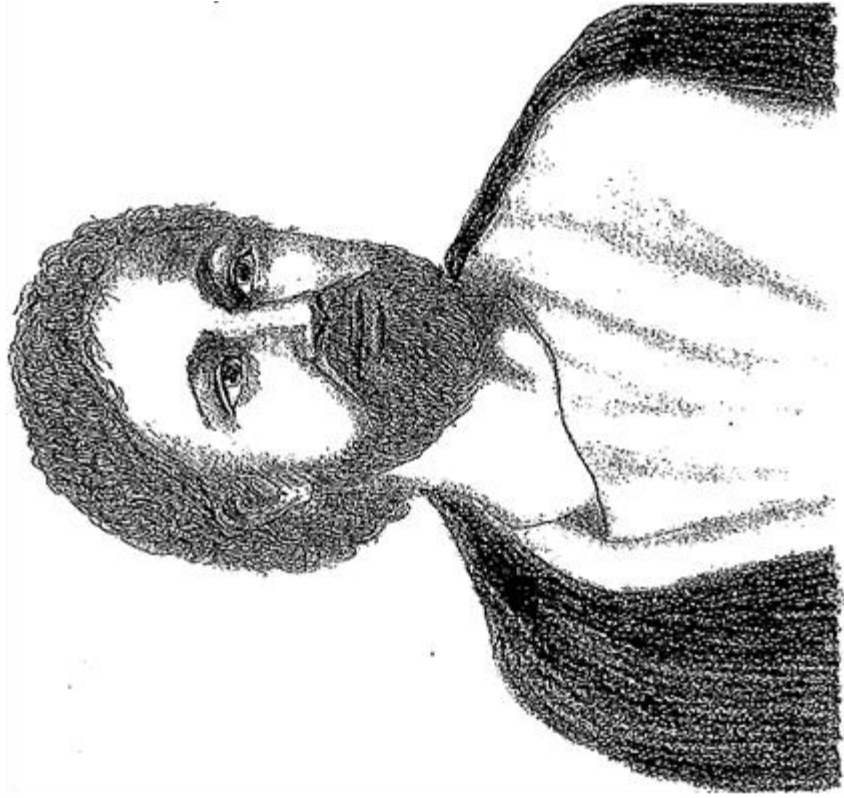
Resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:25-26): black
(Generally references to Jesus being the son of God or attributing a divine status to him were considered to be not actual words which were spoken by Jesus.)

Cause of Dissension (Matthew 10:34-35): black
(Jesus was a humble person and the consensus of the Jesus Seminar scholars was that he didn't usually refer to himself in the first person like this. Besides, Jesus usually advocated love, not war, to resolve conflict.)

Danger of Riches (Mark 10:25-26): red
(See earlier point about being a champion for the poor.)



**WHAT JESUS HAD TO
SAY ABOUT
HOMOSEXUALITY**



Session Fifteen

Wise Guys

Goals for Participants:

- to discover that many of the great sages of history had some things in common
- to continue exploring the Third Source of our Living Tradition: “wisdom from the world’s religions”
- to affirm the understanding that as Unitarian Universalists, we are our own source of authority

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
- 2. Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** Great Teachers (10 min)
- 4. Getting There.** *Name That Sage* Game Show skit. (15 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** Journaling and Reflection. (10 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Making WWUUD bracelets and Closing Circle. (10 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
paper circle for center point
participants’ journals
newsprint markers
two dictionaries (different versions)
four to six stools or chairs for game show
prop microphone for game show host (optional)
copies of skit for all participants
4 old sheets (white, brown or tan) or fabric
thick rope or twine
scissors
alphabet beads (need W’s and U’s and D’s)
cord for bracelets

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of the classroom.

Make copies of the skit (Resource 15-A) for each participant. If you do not have enough youth which you think would be comfortable acting out this skit in class, consider recruiting volunteers from the congregation to be the four great sages. (Senior high youth with a dramatic flair would be great for this.)

Make a sample bracelet with the letter beads WWUUD on a piece of cord.

Make copies of the closing circle reading for all participants.



Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice

Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

*We light this chalice to remind us
of the journey we all embark upon
in our lives,
the journey that is the search for truth
as each
of us perceives it.*

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

*It does not matter how
slowly you go so long as
you do not stop.*

– Confucius, 1st century
BCE philosopher and
educator

*A journey of a thousand
miles begins with a
single step.*

– Lao-tzu,
philosopher considered
to be founder of Taoism

*We are shaped by our
thoughts; we become
what we think. When the
mind is pure, joy follows
like a shadow that never
leaves.*

– the Buddha,
philosopher and
founder of
Buddhism

*Believe, if thou wilt, that
mountains change their place, but
believe not that man changes his
nature.*

– Mohammed, great
prophet of Islam and author of the
Qur'an as inspired by Allah

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) and the south pole (no) in answer to today's statements (but not on the center point).

Jesus is not the only great leader whose teachings became a new religion after he died.

Jesus is the only one considered born as the result of a miracle.

Jesus is the only one thought of as God by his followers.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

Great Teachers. Ask participants to share memories of their favorite teacher. Invite them to tell why this person was their favorite. Was it the way they taught, the way they interacted with them, or the things that they had to say? Post their comments on newsprint, paying particular attention to the characteristics which are mentioned as good qualities for teachers. Then mention that just as essentially every religion has a sacred text, there is generally a great teacher or sage who is at the center of that religious tradition. Ask for two volunteers to read the definition of "sage" from the dictionary. The key words to emphasize are "wise through reflection and experience" (or equivalent). Point out any words that may have come out in the discussion of

favorite teachers and connect them with these definitions.

Then tell them that while all sages were great teachers with much wisdom and experience, not all teachers can become sages. Not even all *great* teachers can become sages. Some of the world's greatest sages became what they were only after their death when word spread about their prophetic teachings. They were all people that their followers looked to in order to try and make sense of the mysteries of the world. They also had many things in common. This is what we will explore today.

Getting There

Name that Sage Game Show activity. Ask the participants to help you set up the stools (or chairs) for the skit. Invite participants to help create costumes for the sages by cutting holes in the center of the sheets for heads then wrapping twine or rope around the waist to cinch as a belt.

Pass out the copies of the skit and assign parts. Then ask the participants to take their places and have them begin reading from the script (Resource 15-A).

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling. Have the participants reflect verbally about the experience of the game show. Were they surprised by some of the similarities? Was it easy or hard to figure out some of the sage's identities? Did they know who they were before their identities were revealed through the script? Then invite the participants to add something to the journals about the sages and the experience today.

Going Out into the World

Making WWUUD bracelets.

Inform the participants that the Unitarian Universalist faith has no one great sage or teacher whose wisdom about the world serves as our spiritual guide. Remind them that the Third Source of our Living Tradition is “wisdom from the world’s religions.” This means that as Unitarian Universalists, we can look to the wise words of the sages upon whose teachings the religions of the world were founded. But the key is that we need to discover for ourselves how valuable those sages’ words are for us as individuals. We don’t look to one person to follow, but follow our own conscience and serve as our own guide.

Bring out the supplies for making the WWUUD bracelets, the beads and the cord and show the one you have made as a sample. Then invite them to make their own WWUUD bracelets.

Closing Circle.

Read in unison the reading which follows.

Make it Mine

The world is full of wisdom and great words; it is up to me to make it mine.

Our history is full of prophets and great sages; it is up to me to understand and make it mine.

There is much mystery and much we do not know; it is up to me to wonder and make it mine.

My spiritual journey is only just beginning. It is up to me to make it mine.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Note to Teachers:

Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism, is commonly considered by modern religious scholars to be a completely fictitious character. The Tao Te Ching is believed to be actually authored by a number of scholars over many years.

Not all Buddhists believe in the miraculous story of Buddha’s birth. There is another story told of how his father tried to shelter him from life after a fortune teller told him his son would either become a monk or a great leader. However, as a young man he witnessed some of the great suffering of the human condition and left his sheltered life to live the life of a monk who eventually became a great spiritual leader.

Notes from Field Testing:

The DRE from one congregation purchased some WWJD bracelet packs and an ultra-Sharpie which could be used to change the “J”s into “U”s by simply extending the hook. Some youth elected to make beaded bracelets with different statements, still using only first letters of the words in their philosophy.

One congregation encouraged participants in the “audience” to vote on the identity of the great sages prior to revealing the final answer – this can be particularly effective when inviting senior high youth or adults to act out the skit rather than the participants themselves.

Resource 15-A:

Name That Sage Game Show Activity/Skit

GAME SHOW HOST: (takes microphone):

“Welcome everyone to the world’s most unique game show – *Name That Sage*! We have invited some of the world’s greatest teachers who had so much wisdom to impart to the world – and they are here to share it with us today. Today’s contestants will be deciding just who *are* these great sages and for which religion they serve as the central figure. Let’s begin. Contestant number one, you have the first question.”

CONTESTANT NUMBER ONE:

“Do the followers of your religion consider you to be God?”

FIRST GREAT SAGE:

“My followers believe that I am the deity who delivered the revelation of a new faith.”

SECOND GREAT SAGE:

“Some of my followers worship me as a God, but many do not. They see me as a great man of wisdom and understanding about the human condition.”

THIRD GREAT SAGE:

“Originally, most of my followers saw me as a great teacher with much philosophical insight, but over the years, things changed and they began to worship me as God.”

FOURTH GREAT SAGE:

“My followers have never worshiped me as divine.”

GAME SHOW HOST:

“Looks like we got three sages who have at least some of their followers who believe they are worthy of being worshiped as God. Contestant number two, what’s *your* question?”

CONTESTANT NUMBER TWO:

“What is the story of your birth?”

FIRST GREAT SAGE:

“My birth was a miracle. I was born of a virgin woman under a plum tree. Even from birth my hair was white, and some say that I was in my mother’s womb for eight years. My name means one who is wise even as a child.”

SECOND GREAT SAGE:

“Some say that when I was born, I was received into a great golden net held by four goddesses. Four great kings, guardians of the four directions, placed me on a silver pillow while a white umbrella made from a lotus flower was held over me. Then I stood and took seven steps in each direction to examine the entire universe.”

THIRD GREAT SAGE:

“When I was born, two great dragons stood guard in

the sky and five wondrous immortal old men came down from the planets and walked upon the clouds. Five musicians also appeared in the sky, playing harps and singing. The angels sung a prophecy proclaiming that I would become a great king who would make laws and help people do the right thing.”

FOURTH GREAT SAGE:

“I was born in Mecca in what is now Saudi Arabia, in about 570 CE. I was orphaned as a child and brought up by a generous uncle. My followers see me as the last in a long line of great prophets sent by God to be his spokesman to humankind.”

GAME SHOW HOST:

“Okay, we’ve got lots of miracle stories here. Miracle births from virgins, dragons in the sky and babies walking. It’s hard to separate truth from fiction when we’re talking about things that happened thousands of years ago. But let’s give each of our contestants a chance to ask our sages one more question before they can take a guess and *Name that Sage!*”

CONTESTANT NUMBER ONE:

“What happened after you died?”

FIRST GREAT SAGE:

“After my death, my followers believe that I joined the trio of the Three Pure Ones, and finally emerged as the chief divine person.”

SECOND GREAT SAGE:

“I was revered as a great teacher and my followers

passed on the wisdom through the oral tradition of storytelling until it was written down as a sacred text. The religion which evolved eventually developed several different sects, some of which continued to see me as a great teacher and a human being who taught by example. Other groups of my followers began to worship me as a God whose spiritual presence was transformed for a time into human form. They pray to me and ask me for favors or seek my guidance in answer to their questions.”

THIRD GREAT SAGE:

“Several centuries after my death, temples were built in my honor and sacrifices were offered in my name. Rulers learned that they could twist around my words to suit their own purposes and discovered they could win over the people’s trust by invoking my name and honoring me in public.”

FOURTH GREAT SAGE:

“After my death, some of my followers were unable to accept it. They wanted to worship me as well as the words of wisdom I brought to them. However, the great leaders who continued after me established right away that I was to be revered as a great prophet, not worshiped as God is to be worshiped.”

GAME SHOW HOST:

“Contestant Number Two, your question?”

CONTESTANT NUMBER TWO:

“Did you found the religion that centers around you?”

FIRST GREAT SAGE:

“I was the keeper of the archives at the imperial court. When I was 80 years old, I set out for the western border of China and wrote the sacred *Tao Te Ching* which translated means “The Way and The Power.” You may know the religion I created as a philosophy of opposites living together in harmony. Just as there can be no beauty without the ugly, there can be no good without the evil or happiness without sadness.”

SECOND GREAT SAGE:

“At the age of 29, I renounced all my comfort and security to pursue a realistic understanding of the world and human condition. I began to meditate alone under a tree for seven weeks until I eventually arrived at the most basic truths of human life. This is when I became the Enlightened One. After achieving this state of Nirvana, I dedicated the rest of my life to teaching others the way to freedom from attachment that is the cause of all suffering. To this end, I developed the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. My followers call it the Middle Way because it suggests a balanced approach to life.”

THIRD GREAT SAGE:

“After having offended some members of the nobility, I was forced to leave my home and go into exile. I was arrested once and jailed for five days, and at the age of 62, I was pursued, along with my disciples, into the countryside by a band of soldiers sent by jealous nobles. I wanted to create a better world and a government which existed to serve the people, not itself. It was my followers who took

my ideas and wrote them down and created a whole new philosophy and religion after my death.”

FOURTH GREAT SAGE:

“I was troubled by the many people around me who worshiped many Gods when there was really only one true God. I liked to retreat into the mountains to pray and contemplate. Around the time of my fortieth birthday, I received my first revelation while in a cave. After this experience, I began to travel around and preach my message. People soon became interested in what I had to say, but some people who were in power became afraid of my popularity and they began a hostile campaign against me. A few years before I died, my followers conquered the city of Mecca and I was finally accepted as the Prophet of God.”

GAME SHOW HOST:

“Okay, contestants, you’ve heard their stories. Now its time to NAME THAT SAGE! Contestant Number One, care to take a guess?”

CONTESTANT NUMBER ONE:

“I don’t know. This is actually harder than I thought. This first guy sounds a lot like Jesus, with the whole virgin birth story and then joining the Trio of the Three Pure Ones after he died – much like the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit which Jesus is a part of. But the things he said about life being a balance and opposites living together – he must be Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism.”

GAME SHOW HOST:

“You’re absolutely right! Twenty points goes to contestant number one.”

CONTESTANT NUMBER TWO:

“The Fourth Great Sage is clearly Mohammed, the founder of Islam. His followers made a point of keeping him as an important prophet and not making him God. He was born in Saudi Arabia, and his religion took off in Mecca.”

GAME SHOW HOST:

“That’s right! Twenty points for you, also.”

CONTESTANT NUMBER ONE:

“The Second Sage must be Siddhartha Gautama otherwise known as the Buddha because he mentioned the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. I remember learning about those as part of Buddhism.”

GAME SHOW HOST:

“You got it! Twenty more points goes to you.”

CONTESTANT NUMBER TWO:

“Is the Third Sage Mahatma Gandhi, is he a sage for the religion of Hinduism?”

GAME SHOW HOST:

“I’m sorry that’s not right. Mahatma Gandhi was a great sage and a Hindu, but he has not been seen as a God by his followers. Contestant Number One, do you care to guess?”

CONTESTANT NUMBER ONE:

“It must be Confucius, whose followers created Confucianism after his death.”

GAME SHOW HOST:

“Right again! You’ve successfully named the sages and you win an all expense paid trip to the countries of India, China and Saudi Arabia to visit the birthplaces of all of our sages here today. Have a great trip! Thank you for joining us and see you next time on NAME THAT SAGE!”

Unit Three

Traveling East

*In the circle of life, every beginning leads to an ending,
and every ending leads to a new beginning.*

Session 16	<u>Transitions</u>
Session 17	<u>Dead Ends</u>
Session 18	<u>The Final Destination</u>
Session 19	<u>Life Is What We Make of It</u>



Session Sixteen

Transitions

Goals for Participants:

- to explore the idea of change as a growth experience
- to reflect upon some of the transitions which occur in our lives
- to challenge the way we think of grief and loss

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
- 2. Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** Excerpt from the story *Hope For the Flowers*. (5 min)
- 4. Getting There.** Breaking Out of Our Cocoons. (20 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** Reflection and Journaling. (10 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (10 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
paper circle for center point
participants' journals
two lengths of fabric at least 2 yards long and one yard wide or, alternatively, a blanket or sheet which is 6 feet wide (if you have a large group, you may need either four pieces of fabric or two sheets or blankets)
copy of the book, *Hope For the Flowers* by Trina Paulus and published by Paulist Press
8 1/2" x 11" colored copy paper
9" x 12" piece of construction paper or posterboard

Note to teachers: For the Cocooning Activity, you will need a large open space. If your meeting room does not normally have such an open space, you might choose to meet elsewhere or to do this activity in another location where there is enough room. As always, if you have a participant with mobility limitations, consider ways in which you could adapt the activity to meet his or her needs.

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Make a copy of Resource 16-A on colored paper and mount it on a piece of construction paper or poster board. Place this "poster" facedown somewhere in the classroom so that no one sees it until it's time to reveal it.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since

your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning. Since today's lesson focuses upon change, you might suggest that sharing could involve things which have "changed" recently.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

It is impossible to step into the same river twice, for other waters are constantly flowing onto us.
–Heraclitus, late 6th century BCE Greek philosopher

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.
-Ecclesiastes 3:1 (from the Hebrew scriptures)

Do not pursue the past. Do not lose yourself in the future. The past no longer is. The future has not yet come.
– The Buddha, philosopher and founder of Buddhism

God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves.
-The Qu'ran 13:11

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) and the south pole (no) in answer to today's statement (but not the center point).

Change is good.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

Hope For the Flowers.

Read chapter four of the book *Hope For the Flowers* by Trina Paulus. When you are finished, ask for reflections by the group. For some conversations starters, consider these questions:

Why was Yellow so reluctant to experience change?

How can someone (or a caterpillar) long for change while fearing it at the same time?

Why did Yellow need courage to spin the cocoon and begin the transition to becoming a butterfly?

Getting There

Breaking Out Of Our Own Cocoons.

Encourage the participants to experience the process of being wrapped in a cocoon and then breaking free of its confines (but stress that everyone has the right to "pass" if they do not want to engage in this activity).

All those persons who wish to participate will take turns standing in the center with arms at his or her sides as the rest of the group makes a circle around them. (If you have a large group, you may want to break into two groups of six or seven and have two people being "cocooned" at (the same time.) The group will wrap the fabric, blanket or sheet around the person in the middle (careful to wrap snugly, but not to pull it too tight) and securely tuck the loose end under one edge of the fabric, blanket or sheet. Then very gently, the group should take hold of the "cocooned" person and lay them down on the floor. The participant will be encouraged to break free of the cocoon, twisting and turning and struggling to push their way out *but not rolling*. The group can yell affirming phrases such as "you can do it!" or "come on, push!" or "keep going!"

Once the person has made it free and pushed his or her way out of the "cocoon," another person can take their turn until everyone who wishes to try has had a chance to experience it.

Note to teachers:

Figure out in advance what you might do if one of the participants seems to be really struggling and has become agitated by the experience, you could invite the other participants to encourage more, you could have someone "standing by" upon your request to jiggle the fabric, blanket or sheet slightly to help loosen it somewhat or untuck the end of the fabric to ease the process. It is important that no one feels as if they "failed" this activity, but it is also important to not have anyone experience real fear or anxiety in the process. As mentioned earlier, if one of your participants has mobility limitations, you might want to determine how his or her needs might be accommodated in advance or you may decide to forgo this activity all together. One way you might affirm those with mobility restrictions without dropping the activity would be to require the same limitations on all participants (i.e. no using arms or legs to break out- simply wriggle free of the sheet.) This could also serve to increase the difficulty of breaking free if it seems the participants are accomplishing it too easily.

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling.

Once everyone who wanted to participate has had a chance, ask the participants to reflect upon what the experience was like. Was it hard? Did they really have to work at it? Did they wonder whether they could do it? How did it feel to have the encouraging words? Was it comforting, or was it stressful because it made them feel the need to work that much harder?

Remind the participants that for us humans, physical change is generally not that dramatic or quick as it is when a caterpillar turns into a butterfly. However, emotional change can be just as intense as the transformation the caterpillar makes, and we don't always have the option of choosing to undergo the transition.

Ask participants for some examples in their lives of some transitions they've experienced in their lives – changes that may have been painful or

intense. After those who wish to share have done so, let the participants know:

Sometimes things happen in our lives that cause us a great deal of pain, grief and loss. We change because we are forced to, but even change which is forced upon us can be a growing experience. As painful as it is, as hard as it is to work through, we can come out stronger for having experienced this disruption in our lives.

Encourage the participants to write or draw in their journals to reflect upon this idea.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement that was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

Change is good.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly (in one sentence or less) stating something:

they especially liked or disliked about a change they've experienced or anticipate experiencing in the near future, or

something that surprised them about this session on transitions.

Closing Circle.

You (or another participant) can read the paragraph which follows:

We cannot step into the river twice, for other waters are constantly flowing onto us. When we embrace the river of change and flow with its currents, we will recognize that it is not just the river that is fluid—we are changing as well.

—Heraclitus

Then invite the participants to join you in saying the responsive reading which follows. Ask one person to read the changing lines and ask all the participants to respond after each line with "We are forever growing and changing."

We Are Forever Growing and Changing

Nothing ever really stays the same as it was.

We are forever growing and changing.

Sometimes we have the power over making things change, but many times we do not.

We are forever growing and changing.

It can be hard and painful and we may wish more than anything for life to remain just the same as it was before, but . . .

We are forever growing and changing.

There can be no growth without change, and . . .

We are forever growing and changing.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes from Field Testing:

The cocooning activity was very popular for congregations during the field testing, but one group in particular did not have much trouble getting out of the cocoons. As a result, the activity may have been fun but not as meaningful as it was for the youth who needed to work at it (even a little bit). It is important that the sheet or fabric be wrapped snugly or it will be too easy to break free, defeating the purpose of the exercise. Also, if the youth have their arms across their chests, it may be easier to break free than if arms are at their sides when wrapped in the sheet. Another way to increase the difficulty of breaking out of the "cocoon" would be to prohibit youth from using their arms at all, requiring them to simply wiggle free.

One teacher was concerned about taking chapter four out of context of the larger book. Chapter four (while referring back to earlier events) has meaning and an important concept of its own. Trying to summarize the plot and theme of the entire book could muddy or confuse the idea which is at the heart of this chapter – the idea of fearing change yet accepting it as a natural part of life.

Session Seventeen

Dead Ends

Goals for Participants:

- to talk about what death means to us, our society and our culture
- to share views of death and dying
- to hear the stories of persons in our congregation who have experienced grief, loss and death of a loved one

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. **Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** Graffiti Wall of Death. (10 min)
4. **Getting There.** Hearing Stories of Our Guests. (20min)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Reflection and Journaling. (10 min)
6. **Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
paper circle for center point
participants' journals
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
large piece of craft paper or poster board for
Graffiti wall
markers in many different bold colors
votive candles (at least one per participant)
taper candle to use for lighting the votives

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Find two people who would be willing to visit your class and share their personal stories of dealing with the death of a loved one. These two people should be of different ages and in different stages of life.

Set up the votive candles on a table along one wall of the room for the closing ceremony.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

Life is pleasant. Death Is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome.

-Isaac Asimov, scientist and science fiction writer

The fear of death is more to be dreaded than death itself

–Publilius Syrus, first century BCE mime writer

I look upon death to be as necessary to the constitution as sleep. We shall rise refreshed in the morning.

–Benjamin Franklin, inventor and author

For what is it to die, but to stand in the sun and melt?

–Khalil Gibran, 20th century poet, philosopher and artist

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) and the south pole (no)-but not on the center point-in response to today's statement, a quote from Jack Cleary:

I'm not afraid of death, but dying scares the hell out of me.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

Graffiti Wall of Death. Invite the participants to create a graffiti wall with all the terms they can think of that people have used to describe death. These can be slang (for example "kicked the bucket," "croaked") or polite societal terms ("passed away").

You might also make suggestions that occur to you if they are not generated by the ideas of the group, or add your own writing to the graffiti wall.

Once their ideas appear exhausted, take some time to reflect upon the result. Why do we have so many words for death – and so many different kinds of terms? What does it say about us? What does it say about our society and culture? About other societies and cultures that might use other terminology?

Do these words convey a positive or

negative view of death? Go through each word or phrase and have the participants determine whether these comments imply a healthy, positive view toward the idea of death or a negative, fearful idea toward the concept of dying. Then tally up the ones which could be considered positive and the ones which could be considered negative. Which is there more of – positive or negative? Why?

Note to teachers: The Graffiti Wall of Death will be referred to during sessions which follow, so be sure to hang it on the wall or keep it available so you or the teachers of the sessions will have it when needed

Getting There

Hearing Our Guests' Stories. Introduce your guests **if** they have not already been introduced and were not present for your check-in. Explain that your guests have visited this morning to share their personal stories about how they responded to the death of loved ones. Then invite the participants to listen as your guests share their stories.

After your guests have shared their stories, encourage the participants to ask any questions they might have. Then thank the guests for visiting and ask one or two of the youth to walk them to the door.

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling.

Before the discussion moves to a more personal note for your youth, remind all the participants that it is okay for anyone to pass on the discussion, that we encourage them to share as they are comfortable. Then you can expand the discussion by asking the participants if they have had someone they knew and was close to that has died. **If** nothing comes to mind for them, you might ask: When did they first learn about death? How old were they, and what was that experience

like? How did it make them feel? Did they see the dead body? What was that like? What did others say or do to help them deal with their grief, or to help themselves with their own grief? Was there a funeral or a memorial service? What was that like?

After some participants have had a chance to share verbally with the group, encourage them to reflect on some thoughts in their journals through words or pictures.

Note to Teachers: Many of the youth will have had different levels of experience when it comes to death, loss and grief. While some participants may have not lost anyone close to them, others may have lost a parent, another close relative or even a friend. It is important to be especially sensitive to the possibility that one of the youth in your class may be facing a situation in their lives where they are wrestling with grief from a recent or impending loss. If one of your youth seems unusually quiet, withdrawn or overly emotional (this could be loud outbursts or inappropriate joking as well as tears), notify your religious educator and minister so that this youth can receive any help that might be needed. Also, if any youth should happen to bring up that he or she has considered committing suicide, be sure to notify your minister or religious educator right away.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

I'm not afraid of death, but dying scares the hell out of me.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they

did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly (in one sentence or less) stating:

something they especially liked or disliked about one of the words on the Graffiti Wall, or

something in today's session which really surprised them.

Closing Circle.

Invite the participants to light a candle and as they do so, to think about someone they know who has died and what that person meant to them. They can announce the name of that person **if** they feel comfortable doing so, or just keep their name in their minds as they light the candle silently.

Then as a group recite the Responsive Reading #720 "We Remember Them" from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes from Field Testing:

One of the congregations had each participant create their Own poster of words about death rather than do a group project as one large graffiti wall.

Congregations experienced very meaningful discussions following the sharing of grief by the guests who visited during this session.

At the close of this session, some participants who had been previously reluctant to journal were eager to do so.

One congregation also invited a zen Buddhist priest to talk about the Buddhist concept of impermanence and a person who specialized in ancient Egyptian spirituality to talk about ancient Egyptian beliefs of reincarnation.

Some resources on talking about death with children and youth can be found on the internet at the following links:

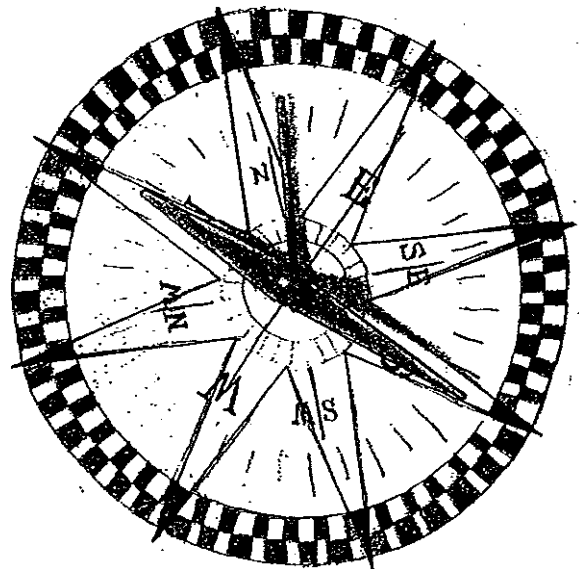
<http://www.hospicenet.org/html/talking.html>

[http://www.nccc.org/Guidance/understand.d](http://www.nccc.org/Guidance/understand.death)

[eath](#)

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/death.html>

<http://www.ext.nodak.edu/extpubs/yf/famsci/fs441w.htm>



Session Eighteen

The Final Destination

Goals for Participants:

- to examine the participants beliefs about life after death
- to consider the idea of Near-Death Experiences and what these might mean about what happens after a person dies
- to explore the concept of After-Death Communication

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. **Taking a Stand.** (10 min)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** Near-Death Experiences. (20 min)
4. **Getting There.** Watching Excerpt of the Movie *Ghost* (15 min)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Reflection and Journaling. (5 min)
6. **Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
paper circle for center point
participants' journals
Graffiti Wall from previous week
a copy of the book, *The Near Death Experience: A Reader* by Jenny Yates (or other book with personal stories of near-death experiences)
copies of additional near-death experiences which can be found on the website: <http://www.near-death.com/> (optional)
copy of the movie, *Ghost*

TV (and DVD player, if necessary)
books or artwork depicting pictures of heaven or after-life experiences (optional)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Locate the books and the stories of Near-Death Experiences you need for the lesson.

Locate a copy of the movie *Ghost* starring Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore. View the excerpt ahead of time so you are familiar with the section of the movie you will be showing.

Find the artwork and books with depictions of heaven and scenes of the afterlife if you decide to use them to complement the lesson.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

Death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight.

-Rossiter W. Raymond, 19th century scientist and author

Death is not the end, It Is simply walking out of the physical form and Into the spirit realm.

-Stephen Christopher, contemporary actor

When you're dead, you're dead. That's it.

-Marlene Dietrich, 20th century actress

Death is one of two things. Either it is annihilation, and the dead have no consciousness of anything; or, as we are told, It is really a change: a migration of the soul from one place to another.

-Socrates, Fifth century BCE philosopher and teacher

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) and the south pole (no) in response to today's statements (but not the center point).

I believe death is the end, that there is nothing more after you die.

I believe the soul is separate from the rest of our bodies and lives on after we die.

I believe souls are reborn over and over again through reincarnation.

I believe some people can communicate with the souls of their loved ones, even after death.

Heart of the Journey

Near-Death Experiences. Explore some of the comments which were made during the previous week when participants created the Graffiti Wall on words relating to death, paying particular attention to those words which relate to what happens after a person dies (such as "passed on" or "went to heaven").

Remind the participants that many people have different ideas about what happens to us after we die. Ask the participants where our ideas about what happens after life comes from. Our religion? Our parents? Our friends? Reading books? Information on the Web? How do we decide what we believe happens after someone dies? Who or what is the source of authority for our ideas about what happens at the end of life?

Inform participants that for some people, their belief in what happens after life is based upon descriptions they have heard about near-death experiences. The people who have had such experiences may have been declared clinically dead and were somehow revived by medical means or some other way which remains unexplained.

People who have had these experiences claim to have approached "the other side," the "great beyond" or "heaven." Near-death experiences generally include a sense of well-being or euphoria, out-of-body experiences of looking at themselves from a distance (commonly from up above), seeing bright lights in a tunnel, and talking with or seeing deceased relatives.

Share a brief story from *The Near Death Experience: A Reader* by Jenny Yates (or other book with personal stories of near-death experiences). Ask participants for their impressions of this story. Have they ever heard of such a story before? Does it seem believable to them? Do these stories make it seem as if death really is merely a passage into another way of living – without our bodies? What might that way of living be like?

After everyone has had a chance to share their thoughts, let the participants know that some scientists and other critics of near-death experiences (as proof of an afterlife) believe that these experiences are the result of hallucinations which are induced by the brain when experiencing trauma. In fact, doctors have been able to duplicate these same experiences through the use of medication or electronic stimulation of the brain.

What do the participants think about near-death experiences? Are they brain hallucinations, or a glimpse of what happens after we die?

Getting There

Watching an Excerpt of the Movie *Ghost*.

Other people point to incidences of after-death communication which they have heard of (or witnessed for themselves) as proof of life continuing on after the body dies. After-death communication is the term for the experiences of people who believe they have communicated or are still communicating with persons who have died. This communication may involve actually speaking with the dead person, either in person or through dreams. But it may also involve "signs" or some sort of message which communicates the idea that the dead person's spirit lives on.

Introduce the excerpt of the movie by letting the group know that although this film is a fictional story, it represents the views of many people who believe our spirit lives on in some form after leaving the body at death.

Play the scene labeled "Afterlife" on the DVD menu (or begin about 17 minutes into the film as the two main characters leave the theater and walk out onto the city street). This scene shows the violent death of the Patrick Swayze character (Sam) and his disorientation after leaving his physical body. He follows along with his body to the hospital where he runs into another "ghost" (or spirit of a person who has died). He witnesses the death of a hospital patient whose spirit is lifted into a great white light, and he learns from the other "ghost" some insights about this new spiritual dimension. Then, back at his apartment, his

girlfriend seems to almost sense his presence, but discounts it. The cat does notice, however, and seems disturbed by his being there.

Stop the movie when the scene changes after a dip to black (around 29 minutes into the movie).

Ask for first impressions of the movie from the participants. Then ask questions like:

Were they disappointed that his girlfriend didn't believe he was really there? Do they think that as the movie progresses, she will learn his spirit lives on?

Have they ever felt a "presence" but realized there was no one there?

Do they know of other people who have reported such a phenomenon?

Why might the man who died in the hospital have gone into the light while Sam and the spirit of the old man he talked to in the hospital were still hanging around the world of the living?

Explain to the participants that the movie goes on to have Sam solve his own murder and protect his girlfriend from harm. He ends up using a psychic who can bridge the gap between the living world and the spirit world to communicate with his girlfriend for him. At the end of the film, and after his "job" here on Earth is done, he then is carried up into what seems to be heaven by a very bright light.

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling. If some of the participants have expressed a belief in reincarnation or an afterlife, extend the discussion and reflection by including thought provoking questions such as:

Do people's souls exist before their physical birth?

Do these souls reside somewhere temporarily between lives?

Do souls get to "pick" their next life, or is it determined by their actions in a past life?

Is it possible for someone to communicate with those souls who are in transition through an after-death communication?

If none of the participants have expressed a belief in some kind of afterlife, encourage them to reflect on how a person's beliefs about what happens after death can affect the way he or she lives their life and how our culture might shape our ideas of what happens after a person dies.

After the participants have had some time to share with one another, encourage them to jot down some ideas or thoughts in their journals.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement that was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

I believe death is the end, that there is nothing more after you die.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly (in one sentence or less) stating:

something they especially liked or disliked about the idea of near-death experiences or after-death communication, or

Something in today's session which really surprised them.

Closing Circle.

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Recite together the Responsive Reading # 611 "Brahman" from *Singing the Living Tradition*. These are words of wisdom on the circle of life taken from the Hindu holy book the Bhagavad-Gita.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes From Field Testing:

One congregation added these two statements to the Taking a Stand exercise:

"I believe that your spirit lives on in this world after your body dies" and "I believe your spirit/soul lives on in another world after your body dies."

One teacher was really concerned about this session and believed it "glorified death." We are of the opinion that talking about death in a positive manner will not encourage youth to commit suicide any more than being realistic about the positive aspects of sex will encourage youth to engage in sexual activity before they should. Youth who commit suicide are looking for an escape from their problems or help for overwhelming depression. While death may seem like the answer to those problems, the people who believe in near-death experiences also believe the possibility exists that those problems may not disappear after a person takes his or her own life.

According to information on suicides and near-death experiences from www.near-death.com, "if a person cuts short their destined time for life"

because they have problems coping with life's demands, their problems may not necessarily go away. Their problems may also be complicated by the added burden of their knowing the full horrible consequences of their action on others."

Apparently people who believe they have had near-death experiences also learn that life is too precious to be wasted and understand we all have our "time" to die. Many think (or were told) that this was not their time to die and they were supposed to live for some purpose of which they might not be aware. Most people who believe in near-death experiences also believe we work out our problems through life and die when our mission is complete. Cutting that life short may require a person to work out those problems after life or through a subsequent life following reincarnation.

Some more information on near-death experiences can be found on the internet at these links:

<http://www.near-death.com/>

<http://skepdic.com/nde.html>

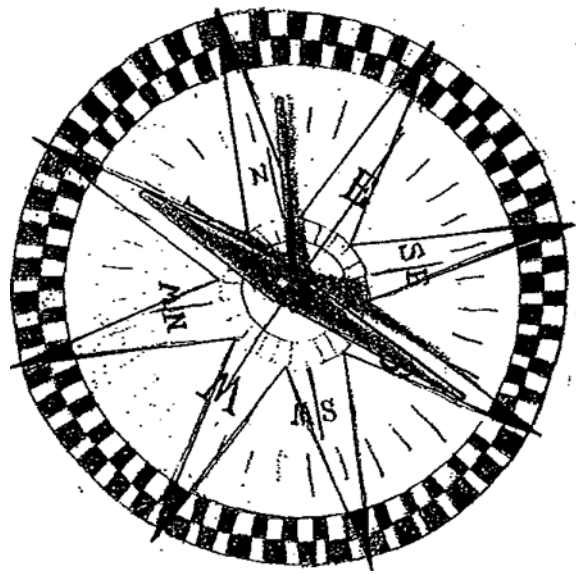
<http://www.susanblackmore.co.uk/si91nde.html>

Some more information on after-death communication can be found on the internet at these links:

<http://www.spiritualpersistence.com/>
(Developed by Unitarian Universalist minister Randy Becker)

<http://www.after-death.com/>

<http://www.adctf.org/>



Session Nineteen

Life Is What We Make Of It

Goals for Participants:

- to explore the concepts of heaven and hell
- to explore the idea that heaven or hell is what we make for ourselves and others here on Earth
- to examine ideas of what it means to live a "full" life

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. **Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** Hell Posters. (10 min)
4. **Getting There.** A Feast in Heaven and Hell. (15 min)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Before I Die I Would Like to ... (10 min)
6. **Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (10 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
paper circle center point
Graffiti Wall of Death
8 W' x 11" white paper or cardstock
(one per participant)
markers or color pencils
several rulers or long sticks (at least six)
handkerchiefs or bandanas (at least 12)
duct tape
finger foods (grapes, carrots, pretzels, etc.)
lemonade or water
cups and napkins
plates
paper tablecloth (optional, but will help immensely
with clean up)

copy of the CD *Imagine* by John Lennon
CD player

artwork or pictures from books on images of
Heaven and Hell (optional)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Locate a copy of John Lennon's song, *Imagine*.

Make copies of Resource 19-A (at least one copy for each participant).

Prepare the "feast" by assembling the finger foods on a table in a pleasing presentation.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

If you keep in mind how quickly this life disappears, you will value your time and do what is valuable.

– the Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhist leader

What matters is not when we die but how we live.

– Michel De Montaigne, Renaissance era scholar

*For certain is death for the born
And certain is birth for the dead;
Therefore over the inevitable
Thou shouldst not grieve.*

– Bhagavad Gita (Hindu Scripture, Chapter 2)

Life isn't fair. It's just fairer than death, that's all.

-from the movie, *The Princess Bride*

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) and the south pole (no) in response to today's statements (but not the center point).

Heaven is a place where souls are rewarded after a life well-lived

I believe the happiness of Heaven and the agony of Hell are what we make for ourselves here on Earth.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

Posters of Hell Begin this activity by asking participants to think about ideas or words they have heard to describe the concept of Hell. Then invite them to create posters about these. (Remind participants that they need not have a personal

belief in Hell to understand the concepts which other people mean when using this term.) Encourage the participants to draw, doodle or simply write words on the paper to describe ideas of Hell. (Be sure to also refer back to the Graffiti Wall on Death, highlighting any words which describe concepts associated with Hell).

After around ten minutes (or most of the group seems to be completed with their projects), invite the participants to share their posters and the ideas behind them. Once everyone who wants to share has done so, ask the group what religions these concepts of Hell are a part of. Are these primarily Christian ideas?

Note to teachers:

Although much of Christianity was derived from Judaism, the concept of Hell came from Zoroastrianism. Any descriptions of an afterlife are described in mostly vague terms in the Jewish scriptures, but there is some reference to a place called Sheol which is considered to be a place of darkness and silence. Other religions such as Hinduism have a concept of "the Underworld," but their conception of this place is much different than ideas about eternal punishment in Hell.

Getting There

A Feast in Heaven and Hell Explain to participants that the concept of Hell was not only a way to explain what happened after a person died, but it was also an important concept when it came to teaching people how to live the right way. With the threat of going to Hell hanging over them, people were thought to be more likely to choose good behavior over bad.

Share with the participants a parable that has been told to explain the difference between Heaven and Hell and to help teach people the way to live together.

Hell is a place where people are seated around a table that is filled with delicious food. Everyone has a spoon which is long enough to reach the food, but too long to permit them to

reach the food, but too long to permit them to feed themselves. And so the people in hell sit there, angry and frustrated — hungry but unable to eat.

Now heaven is also a place where people are seated around a table that is filled with delicious food. Here the people are also provided with spoons which are too long for them to feed themselves. But In heaven, the people succeed in eating the delicious food anyway.

Ask the participants if they know how they managed to do this. What is the solution that the people in Heaven know which the people in Hell do not? Invite the participants to discover for themselves the solution by engaging in the following activity.

Ask for some volunteers who are willing to try and act out the parable. Explain that we don't have really long spoons, but we can achieve the same affect by splinting each of the participants' arms by laying a ruler or other stick under the elbow so the arm is forced to remain straight. Then wrap the handkerchiefs around the arm and the splint, binding the two together. Wrap with duct tape to secure.

Bring out the finger foods and encourage the participants to eat the "feast" while their arms are splinted, without feeding themselves and without talking! Explain that anyone who is not participating in this exercise must also refrain from talking; they are not to offer solutions or suggestions (in anyway) to the volunteers who are trying this experiment.

The participants will soon discover that the solution of the parable is that in Heaven the people feed each other. After they have fed each other for a few minutes, suggest that they take off their splints and finish eating in the regular way and invite all the other participants to enjoy the feast with them. Serve some water or lemonade in paper cups and provide them with napkins.

While the group is eating the "feast," encourage them to reflect upon the experience by asking what it was like for both the volunteers

who were discovering the answer and the bystanders who were watching them try to figure it out. What was it like feeding the other person, or being fed? How did it feel having to rely upon another person?

Many parables were told to get people thinking about how to live their lives. What message does this one have for how we should live? What implications does it have for how we should treat others and what makes for a good life? What does this say about what creates happiness (Heaven) and what is frustration (Hell) on Earth?

Note to Teachers: Make sure the participants understand this is a voluntary activity, and no one is required to participate. Some youth have issues around food and being forced to engage in an activity where they are being fed could create anxiety or depression. In addition, the act of feeding another person can be perceived as a highly intimate act for some people – another reason why this activity should be clearly established as optional.

Stopping To Rest

Before I Die, I Would Like To ... Ask the participants, **if** they could know when and how they would die, would they want to? Would it make a difference as to how they lived their life? **If** they knew they had a limited amount of time, would this influence the decisions they make? What kinds of things would they do "before their time ran out?"

Pass out copies of the Resource 19-A and encourage the participants to fill it out. Invite them to think of all the things they would like to be remembered for when they die. Allow ten to fifteen minutes for participants to fill out the sheets.

Then encourage volunteers to share some of the items they placed on their list of things they want to accomplish before they die. Encourage the participants to tape or paste their lists into their journals for safe-keeping.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand <Reprise>.

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statements which were posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

Heaven is a place where souls are rewarded after a life well-lived

I believe the happiness of Heaven and the agony of Hell is what we make for ourselves here on Earth.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly (in one sentence or less) stating:

something they particularly liked about what one person said they want to do before they die, or

something they personally would like to do to make the world a better place.

Closing Circle.

Gather the participants into a circle on the floor. Dim the lights (if possible). Then play the CD player while the group listens to the song "Imagine" performed by John Lennon.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.*

Social Justice Expansion Possibility:

The reflection and ideas generated through the discussion of this topic may get the youth excited about "doing something" to promote people working together and making life a better place. **If** so, consider brainstorming ways the group can "make a difference" and develop a social action project which can help bring people together.

Resource 19-A

Before I Die, I Would Like to ...

See these places & things:

Learn how to:

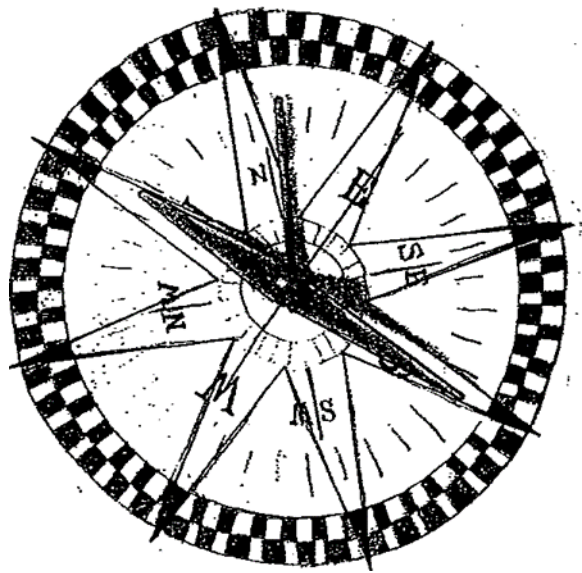
Discover:

Experience:

Accomplish:

Be remembered for:

1 (



Unit Four

Traveling South

*Religious freedom is the grounding element
of the Unitarian Universalist faith which accompanies us on our journey.*

Session 20	<u>From Pilgrims to Protestors</u>
Session 21	<u>From Calvinism to Channing</u>
Session 22	<u>Just Whose Religion Is It?</u>
Session 23	<u>Honoring Our Martyrs</u>
Session 24	<u>Hey! Who's in Charge Here?</u>
Session 25	<u>Learning from Others, Forming Bonds</u>
Session 26	<u>Thinkers and Doers</u>
Session 27	<u>Universalism: What Are We Good For?</u>
Session 28	<u>Two Paths Become One</u>

Session Twenty

From Protesters to Pilgrims

Goals for Participants:

- to hear about how the Radical Reformation gave birth to our forebears, the Pilgrims and Puritans
- to learn about an aspect of congregational polity: that every member's voice should be heard and considered
- to play a game to reinforce the new ideas they have heard

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand. (2 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. Discussion: What Do We Know About the Protestant Reformation? And Story, "From Protesters to Pilgrims." (15 min)
4. Getting There. "Reformation Neighbors" Game. (25 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Processing the Game. (4 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches or lighter
newsprint and markers
paper circle for center point
lined paper and pencils/pens, or the
participants' journals

Advance Preparation:

There is only one quote for today. Copy it on to newsprint.

[The people] joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the gospel to walk in all [God's] ways made known, or to be made known unto them, to their best endeavors, whatsoever it should cost them.

– Covenant of the Separatists

Copy Resource 20-B, the instructions page for the game, and cut in half. You need one half page per participant.

Read through the directions for the game (Resources 20-B and 20cC). The game is a puzzle that normally would be solved by one person. Take out a pencil, read through the "inspirations" and try to solve the puzzle. **If** you simply can't do it, try it with a friend. This game taps into the kind of intelligence associated with logic, and some people are more adept at it than others. There will almost certainly be one or more youths in your group who will quickly catch on and help move the process along.

Make one copy of Resource 20-C, the "Inspirations", and cut it apart in this manner: you need to wait until your entire group has assembled. Count how many are there and cut the resource so each person gets about the same number of "inspirations" and all "inspirations" are used.

Read through the information about the Reformation and be prepared to read it to the class with clarity and enthusiasm or to tell them the information in your own words. With a need to convey information, it can be more interesting and often take less time to just read a story aloud. Most young people prefer a story to a lecture.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

- Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

There is only one quote for today! Read it aloud, several times **if** necessary. Then tell the group you'll process their thoughts about the quote by taking a stand.

[The people} joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the gospel to walk in all [God's} ways made known, or to be made known unto them, to their best endeavors, whatsoever it should cost them.

– Covenant of the Separatists

Taking a Stand

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle in response to a statement, north being "yes", south being "no" (and avoiding the center point). Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

That quote makes absolutely no sense to me.

Heart of the Journey

Discussion: What do we already know about the Protestant Reformation?

Ask the group to name different kinds of churches and houses of worship they have heard of. Where do their friends go for religious services? Record the answers on newsprint. Put non-Protestant answers (Jewish, Catholic, Muslim, etc) at the bottom of the newsprint. In the center of the newsprint, record the names of the Protestant churches in a list.

Those Protestant churches are all a result of what is called the Protestant Reformation. Has anyone ever heard of that? **If** so, have them explain what they already know.

Story.

Read the story, Resource 20-A "From Protesters to Pilgrims." Invite the participants to write down, on lined paper or in their journals, questions they might have or words they don't understand as they listen to you.

Getting There

"Reformation Neighbors" Game.

Now the group is going to have a chance to pretend they are a gathered congregation, one in which everyone speaks and is listened to. Only rather than being moved by "the spirit of God", they will be moved by the spirit of the teacher, who will give them some "inspirations" to share verbally with each other. Their task is not to call a minister, but will be made known to them as they proceed with the game.

Hand out to each young person an instruction page and a strip of paper with some "inspirations."

If the group does not start using newsprint fairly quickly, suggest they do so. The visual will be very helpful to many of them.

Stopping to Rest

Processing the Game.

Did everyone participate? How easy were the tasks? What would have happened **if** someone had not spoken up with his or her "inspirations?" What would have happened **if** the group had not listened to what each person had to say?

Remind the group that in a gathered congregation, each person participates in the decision making.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement that was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now? The quote being referred to, of course, is the one with which they started the morning.

That quote makes absolutely no sense to me.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. For those who are standing more to the south now, what did they learn? For those at the north, what questions do they have?

-OR-

Quick Stop. Go around your circle asking each participant to briefly state something they learned about the Pilgrims that they hadn't known before.

Closing Circle.

Today's closing reading, by UU minister Mark Mosher DeWolfe, is a modern one which might also have been spoken by the Puritans. Read it, or ask a participant to read it.

In our lives, may we know the holy meaning the mystery that breaks in at every moment.

May we live at peace with our world and at peace with ourselves, and may the love of truth guide us in our every day.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes from field testing:

One teacher asked for a "tree" that would show where and how various denominations came to be. It's not all that easy!! Resource 20E is a flow chart to give you an idea of how the original Christian Church has split over the years. The first schism, very early on, was between the Orthodox Church in the east and the Catholic Church that was centered in Rome. As you can see, the Orthodox Church has been relatively stable. But the Protestant Reformation really exploded, and many new independent (usually evangelical) Protestant churches continue to pop up even today. Some Protestant denominations are result of evolution, such as the Presbyterians evolving from Calvinism. Other times the new denominations are in protest against the "parent" church. In England, for instance, churches outside the State church (Quakers, Puritans, Methodists) were originally called "dissenting chapels."

This flowchart attempts to show a very complicated process; please don't take it too literally!

Resources for This Session

The UUA curriculum *Neighboring Faiths* has a unit on the Reformation that was consulted for this lesson. More information about Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Michael Servetus is available there.

More information on the Separatist congregation that was gathered at Scrooby (now known as the Pilgrims) can be found at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies/immigemig/england/nottingham/article.shtml>

The "Reformation Neighbors" game was adapted from the game "Neighbors" in the UUA's Renaissance Module on Administration (which does not credit its own source).

Resource 20-A

From Protesters to Pilgrims

Unitariml Universalism is a faith movement (or denomination) that grew out of what is called the Radical Reformation – the Protestant Reformation that kept going much further than the original reformers ever hoped for or expected. Today we will follow that story from the time of Martin Luther to our religious ancestors, the Pilgrims.

Do your families ever miss coming here on a Sunday? Say you were passing on going to services and R.E. one day – maybe you were out of town on Saturday and got home real late, so everyone was going to sleep in. Would it surprise you **if** someone from the government came and arrested you for missing Sunday worship? That's what used to happen, at least in some countries in Europe—everyone had to go to church. Not only that, but the church you were supposed to go to was the same kind of church that the king went to. You couldn't go to a house of worship of your choice. In fact, **if** there *were* other places to worship, people were pretty quiet about them, because going to the wrong church could also get you arrested.

We take religious liberty for granted, but until several hundred years ago, it hardly existed. Let's go back even further in time. We're 500 years in the past, and in Western Europe, there is just one Christian church, the Catholic Church. Any time one organization or group of people has all the power, it can lead to corruption and abuse of that power.

One day in 1517 a Catholic monk named Martin Luther had had enough. He wrote down 97 ways in which he thought the Catholic Church was misbehaving, and he tacked that list on the front door of a church. Martin Luther hoped his protest would lead to reform in the Catholic

Church. Instead, it gave birth to the Protestant Reformation. "Protestant" means he was protesting, in this case the ways the pope and other leaders of the Catholic church abused their power. And "Reformation" means he was trying to reform the Church, to bring it back to the way it was described as being in the Bible. He wasn't trying to start a whole new kind of church, but that's exactly what happened.

The Reformation was like a wildfire that spread quickly throughout Europe, in part because of the new invention of the printing press with movable type. Now Bibles were available inexpensively and in the language the people spoke. (Before they had only been in Latin, so virtually no one could read them, even **if** they were literate in their own language.) And Martin Luther encouraged all people to read the Bible.

Before this, the priests of Catholic Church had been the authority for religion. Now people could look at the Bible for themselves, and thus the Bible became the authority, or where Protestants looked to learn the truth. And they were to determine the truth for themselves. Luther called this "the priesthood of all believers." God could make God's Will known to anyone, not just to the officials of the church.

There was one person in particular who thought he had figured out exactly what God had in mind for humanity, and that was John Calvin. Maybe he had perpetual headaches. Maybe he wore ill-fitting shoes. Whatever **it** was, Calvin had a dour outlook on life, and he took the Reformation much further than Luther ever did.

Calvin saw humanity as sinful and decided that meant that most people would be going to hell after they died. But that didn't mean that Calvin

couldn't help them clean up their act here on earth. Calvin set up a theocracy (government by the church) in Geneva, Switzerland, and he set strict rules for everyone to follow. If you missed church services, you paid a fine. Stores were closed (no shopping!) on Sundays. Card playing, gambling and drunkenness were *all* forbidden. Government officials were free to enter your home without warning, just to check up on you. *Calvin* thought he was best able to decide just what everyone should believe, and **if** you disagreed with him, you were in trouble.

About the same time that John *Calvin* was doing his best to take the fun out of life in Geneva, Henry VIII was starting his own little reformation in England so that he could put aside his first wife to marry his mistress, Ann Boleyn. Henry meant to keep the rituals and the kind of hierarchy that the Catholic Church had. But Calvinism was spreading from the Continent to Britain, along with Luther's idea that the Bible should be the authority people looked to. So Henry's little reformation grew. People wanted to purify the new Church of England of *all* those beliefs and rituals that were part of Catholicism but were not mentioned in the Bible. These Protestants were called Puritans.

As Calvinists, the Puritans believed that most people were preordained to go to hell. (That means before people were even born, they had been condemned to hell.) They, too, were strict about how people should behave. But they were determined to remain members of the Church of England, and to purify it from within. And so most of the Puritans were tolerated in England.

But then there were the Separatists. They were Puritans who couldn't wait for the Church of England to shape up, and the Church of England did not tolerate their brand of religion. Separatists had to worship in secret, and when they were discovered, they were thrown into prison.

Whereas it's easy to see how people became members of the Church of England.-you were born in England, you were born into the church of England – the Separatists thought of churches and church membership very differently. No one should be forced into church membership. People should belong to a church because that's what they want to do. After *all*, threatening someone with imprisonment or death might make them attend a certain church, but it won't change the way they believe in their hearts. Instead, a church should be "gathered." That means that people freely choose to gather themselves into a group. And what will hold this group together and make it a church is not symbols or rituals or priests or a creed they can all recite, but a *covenant*, an agreement among *all* parties as to how they will be in relationship with each other.

In 1607 a seventeen-year-old Protestant boy, William Bradford, was present when such a church was gathered in Scrooby, England. He said that the people "*joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the gospel* [i.e. in the manner of the early Christian church, as described in the Bible], *to walk in all [God's] wisdom made known unto them, to their best endeavors, whatsoever it should cost them. . . .*"¹

At this point, stop and point out the words of the covenant which you have posted on newsprint. Ask the youth if they can now explain what the words mean. If the group has made a covenant earlier in the year, compare the two. What is the point of making a covenant?

The covenant of the Separatists did come with a cost. Because they could not practice their faith in England, they had to emigrate, first to the Netherlands, then, in 1620, to the English colonies in North America. We call these Protestants the

Pilgrims, "pilgrim" referring to someone who is on a religious journey. Today, the church that was gathered in Scrooby in 1607 and that emigrated in 1620 to what became Plymouth, Massachusetts, is Unitarian Universalist.

Protestant churches that were "gathered", such as the church of the Pilgrims, were called "congregationalist." That is because they were governed by the people of the whole congregation, not by a priest or bishop or even a group of members. Instead, everyone had a voice in the important decisions of the church. Remember Martin Luther's idea of "the priesthood of all believers? Luther said that God could make God's will known to everyone.

So the gathered churches developed the radical idea that *every* member, no matter what station in life, was to be heard from when there was a decision to be made-because it was possible for God to speak through a potato farmer as well as through a prince.

Gathered churches were sure that God wanted one of their own members to be their minister. But how could they tell just which person God had in mind? How could they be sure it wasn't just their own desire, as opposed to the will of God? They did so by having every single member speak and be heard. All opinions needed to be considered thoughtfully. Then, having heard from all members, the congregation used their powers of reason to come to a conclusion. The minister so chosen was said to have been "called." Today we still speak of people being called to the ministry.

Resource 20-B

"Reformation Neighbors" Instruction Sheet

Remember how the "Separatists (Pilgrims) believed that it was important that every member of their congregation participate and be heard from in their congregational meetings? As Unitarian Universalists who value the democratic process, we follow in the steps of the Pilgrims. This game is designed to show how important it is in our congregations that everyone speaks up and that everyone is heard. Keep that in mind as you play the game!

1. Your teacher will tell you when to begin.
2. Each member of your class will receive bits of information. You might want to pretend that you are part of a Separatist congregation, and these are "inspirations from God." *Do not show this piece of paper with your "inspirations" to anyone!!*
3. What will be required of you, and how you go about it, will become clear as you share your "inspirations" with the other members of the group through verbal communication.
4. You are encouraged to write on newsprint to help solve the tasks.
5. Remember that some of the "neighbors" in this game actually lived in different countries and at different time periods. What they have in common is that they were all part of the Protestant Reformation.

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Resource 20-C

"Inspirations" for "Reformation Neighbors"

To the teacher: Copy this page and the next one. Once you know how many youth will be participating in the activity, cut the copies of these pages so that each participant will have approximately the same number of "inspirations."

The dog's owner lives next door to the house with the chestnut trees.

Calvin has a cow.

Mice live in the chinks of the log cabin.

Only one of the neighborhood houses is located on the east side.

Pansies grow around the house next to Henry VIII.

The Pilgrims live next door to the red brick house.

A dog is tied to the cherry tree.

One of your group's tasks is to decide who grows roses.

A horse is tied up in the yard next door to Henry VIII.

The houses in the neighborhood are standing in a semicircle, beside each other.

Luther grows pears.

Mums grow around the gray stone house.

Each neighbor has a different animal.

The Puritans live next door to the Pilgrims.

Daffodils grow in the castle garden.

The person who has a cat lives next door, to the northeast, of the house with the oak tree.

Your group has less than three tasks.

There's a doghouse in the castle courtyard.

Only one of the neighborhood houses is located on the west side.

Each of the houses in the neighborhood has a different kind of flower in its garden.

The castle is in the most northern position in the neighborhood.

Each house has a different kind of tree in its yard.

The gray stone house stands next to the cottage.

The Puritans grow daisies.

The Pilgrims have mouse droppings in the comers of their house.

The Pilgrims live at the west end of the neighborhood.

There is a cow tied up behind the gray stone house.

One of your group's tasks is to decide who has an apple tree.

Henry VIII lives in the castle.

Each neighbor has a different kind of house..

Teachers: Do not let anyone in the class see this solution until after the game is played!!

Reformation Neighbors Solution

	Pilgrims	Puritans	Henry VIII	John Calvin	Luther
Animal	mice	cat	dog	cow	horse
Tree	oak	chestnut	cherry	apple	pear
House	log cabin	red brick	castle	gray stone	cottage
Location	west	northwest	north	east	northeast
Flower	roses	daisies	daffodils	mums	panstes

Session Twenty-One

From Calvinism to Channing

Goals for Participants:

- to experience what it felt like to grow up in a Calvinist faith
- to appreciate how Unitarianism evolved as a response to Calvinism
- to name and celebrate their "capacities"- the divine within themselves

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
- 2. Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** Hearing a Sermon. (15 min)
- 4. Getting There.** Discussion and Capacities Capture Game. (15 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** Journaling. (10 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
large paper circle for "center point"
participants' journals
copies of the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
large bowl like a salad bowl
wrapped candy, like Hershey's kisses or Jolly Ranchers (see preparation)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Ask a man (someone who can seem intimidating) with a theatrical, booming voice to come play the part of Jonathan Edwards. (Maybe that person can borrow a robe from your minister.) Whoever is doing the reading needs to read the sermon aloud several times, so it will flow when he is performing for the group. **If** you feel you must shorten the sermon, be sure to leave in the part about the spider dangling over the fire--this is the most famous part of the sermon. And make sure that at least a full page remains – **if** it's too short, the youth won't begin to have the experience of what it was like to live under Calvinism.

You also need someone to play the role of William Ellery Channing. Make sure this person can remain hidden outside your room but within earshot so he (or she) will know when to make the surprise entrance. A minister's robe would be nice here too – ~~or~~ a black suit. Have Dr. Channing practice his or her entrance and also practice your dialogue with him/her. The smoother you are, the more enjoyable and memorable it will be for the group.

You will use the candy for the Capacities Capture. For a large group, have as many pieces of candy per person as the number of participants you expect (12 pieces each for a class of 12, or 144 pieces). If you have a small group, have 2 pieces per person times the number of participants (for five participants, 2X5X5, or 50 pieces). For the right visual effect, you need to have a lot of candy.

You might do a trial run of the Capacities Capture, finding out how far away from the bowl one should be to have a good opportunity for tossing pieces of candy into the bowl. You want it to be doable but not a slam dunk. (See Capacity Capture under "Getting There.")

Taking a Stand

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

I call that mind free. . . which recognizes in all human beings the image of God. . . .

-William Ellery Channing, 19th century minister, known as "the father of American Unitarianism"

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome Insect over the fire, abhors you. . . .

-Jonathan Edwards, 18th century preacher

*I can never join Calvin in addressing his god. . . **If** ever man worshiped a false god, he did.*

-Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to John Adams.

The great end in religious instruction is. . . to awaken the conscience

--William Ellery Channing

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle in response to today's statement, north being "yes", south being "no." (No standing on the center point.) Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

When people are born they are like blank slates, and they can work at being good or evil.

Heart of the Journey

Hearing a Sermon.

This morning the group will be hearing part of a much, much longer sermon by 18th century preacher Jonathan Edwards. This is the kind of preaching that our Puritan forebears often heard when they went to church. For this, everyone should be seated in a chair. Let the youth know that the original sermon would have lasted close to an hour. They are just getting a small portion of it and **if** it makes them uncomfortable to sit there and listen to **it**—that's the whole point!

Jonathan Edwards was probably the greatest preacher of his time. He preached about an angry God who was disappointed in people and who would show them no mercy, no matter how good and kind and upright they were, unless they had a conversion experience and were "born again." Many people, even many who thought they were religious, would not have a sincere conversion experience, and thus would burn eternally in Hell. This was the message young and old heard on Sunday mornings. This was the message of Calvinism, which emphasized how unworthy and corrupt people were, even those who seemed to be living exemplary lives.

Tell the youth to sit up, put their feet flat on the floor, and pay attention. Then introduce Rev. Edwards and let him take the pulpit.

Getting There

Discussion.

If they need to, let the participants get up and stretch. Then ask them what they thought of Jonathan Edwards' sermon. How about the image of people being like spiders dangled over the edge of Hell by a very angry God? What about the concept that there was no good in people?

And what points did William Ellery Channing make? Here are some you hope they remember:

He was the first person to define and describe American Unitarianism.

He thought that people should use reason in determining religious beliefs.

He believed each and every person has many capacities which, if developed, can help the person be like God.

Help the group start to name some capacities people have that – when developed – help make them in the likeness of God, or help them reach their full human potential. After one or two suggestions, start the game.

Capacity Capture.

The group will play a game which will help them think about human capacities. Have the group sit or stand around a large bowl. They should each have as many pieces of candy as there are participants.

Point out that the bowl is empty- this is the way Jonathan Edwards would have thought of human beings- there was no goodness in them. But Channing voiced the belief now held by Unitarian Universalists, that we all have capacities which we can develop, until we are filled with (the) goodness (of the divine).

Each individual should name a capacity in this way: "We can be kind" (or loving, or thoughtful, or wise, or working for justice, or we can develop our consciences, etc). As she names the capacity, the participant tosses the candy (which represents the capacity) into the bowl.

Then everyone else should toss a piece of candy in, saying the same words. If a piece of candy misses the bowl, the participant should pick it up and try

again. When we talk about developing our capacities, we do mean that we have to work at it – it doesn't always come easily.

Another person now should name a capacity and toss a piece of candy in the bowl, again with the group imitating the initiator. Continue in this way until everyone has had a turn naming a capacity. You want to avoid repeating a capacity that has already been mentioned. (If you're going to do the litany suggested for your closing circle, you should record the capacities as they are mentioned.)

This is not a competitive game. (Remember – Channing said that in addition to developing our own capacities, we should make sure others can develop theirs. This is why Channing was an early opponent of slavery – how can you develop your capacities if you are enslaved?)

If someone has some sort of a disability that keeps them from tossing the candy into the bowl, have the group figure out a way that individual can successfully play. If someone repeatedly misses the bowl, have the group decide how they can help that person succeed. And if someone cannot think of another capacity, have the group help out.

When each person has had the opportunity to name a capacity, call the group's attention to how full the bowl is. Human beings are brimming with the potential of good.

Let the group divide up the candy and munch on it while they work in their journals.

Stopping to Rest

Journaling.

Invite the youth to write or draw in their journals. Things to think about: How do they think they would feel about life, God, and other people if they agreed with Jonathan Edwards' view of humanity and God? What capacities do they have that they think are particularly strong? Which ones do they think they should put more effort into developing?

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

When people are born they are like blank slates, and they can work at being good or evil.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop.

Payback time! Let each individual say in one sentence what they would like to say to Jonathan Edwards, should the real preacher (not your guest actor) time travel ahead to the 21st century.

Closing Circle.

Suggested closing readings from *Singing the Living Tradition* include #466, "Religion" by Vincent B. Silliman or #592, "The Free Mind" by William Ellery Channing.

As an alternative, you could go around the circle and have each person repeat, litany-style, the capacities they named during the game. As an example:

One: We can be peacemakers.

All: We can be peacemakers.

One: We can be loyal friends.

All: We can be loyal friends.

(continuing until each has spoken, then)

One: May it be so.

All: May it be so.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes from field testing:

*Participants seemed to be both provoked and energized by Jonathan Edwards' preaching. They responded vigorously ("I would find **away** to sleep with my eyes open!"). Nevertheless, field test teachers reported that the length of the sermon, as presented here was just right.*

*One enthusiastic report noted that a thespian with a booming voice **played** Edwards and the DRE (female) played Channing. Both wore robes and had great fun.*

The "Capacity Capture" game made its point well, and the group that chose instead to just have participants list capacities said they thought it would have been better to actually play the game.

*It was suggested that some of the words in the sermon be replaced with ones the youth would be more likely to understand, but they'll get the effect even **if** they don't understand all of the language. However, it was also reported that some of the quotes were difficult for the youth to understand. Please take time to make sure everyone has some idea of what they mean.*

I call that mind free. . . which recognizes in all human beings the image of God. . . .

– William Ellery Channing

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you. . . .

–Jonathan Edwards

How does our first Unitarian Universalist principle (the inherent worth and dignity of every person) respond to these two quotes?

I can never join Calvin in addressing his god.
. . . If ever man worshiped a false god, he did.
-Thomas Jefferson

Who was Calvin? (Hint: He was a major figure in session 20!) We claim Thomas Jefferson as a Unitarian because he stated he was one. (He was never a member of a Unitarian church, but then, there were no Unitarian churches in Virginia during his lifetime.) Why would he say that Calvin's god is a false god?

The great end in religious instruction is . . . to awaken the conscience
--William Ellery Channing

What do participants think the purpose of their religious education is?

Jonathan Edwards.



William Ellery Channing



Resource 21-A

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God (Jonathan Edwards) and Script

11

Jonathan Edwards:

(This sermon is being preached) for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of, there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it; but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon the air

does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. . . .

There are black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. **It** is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. **If** God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or

obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by

a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and bum it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment. . . .

Teacher: Stop, stop! This has gone on long enough!

Jonathan Edwards: I won't stop! Not while this room is filled with loathsome sinners!

Teacher: Oh, is there no one to save these poor young people from this Calvinist ranting?

William Ellery Channing makes a grand, surprise entrance.

Channing: I'll save you!

Teacher: Who are you?

Channing: I'm Rev. William Ellery Channing.

Teacher: But how can you help? You weren't even born until 1780 – 22 years after Jonathan Edwards died.

Channing: What does that matter? This is a skit.

Teacher: Oh, yeah. Well, how can you help?

Channing: By telling a story from my childhood. When I was just a lad, my father took me to hear a famous preacher. That preacher sounded a lot like Rev. Mr. Edwards here. He preached about how sinful people were and how hell and damnation waited for them in the future. And when we left the service, my father shook the minister's hand and congratulated him on a great sermon. "Then it's all true," I thought, and I felt sick about how wretched people must be and how we must surely deserve our awful fate.

But then, as our horse pulled our little carriage home from that service, my father began to whistle. And when we got home, he settled down in his favorite chair and read the newspaper as if nothing was bothering him in the least.

And it was then that I realized, "My father doesn't believe the minister! People listen to those sermons, but they don't believe them!"

Teacher: Well, I think people are basically good.

Channing: And so do I. I believe that each person has worth and dignity, and that each person is born with certain capacities, like the capacity to be loving, to make moral choices, or to be wise, or to be happy. And it's each person's responsibility to develop their capacities to the fullest extent possible. Not developing your own capacities, or keeping someone else from developing their capacities – well that, to me, is where people fall short of God's ideal.

Teacher: You sound sort of like a Unitarian.

Channing: Well, I should. I'm the father of American Unitarianism. As the liberal Congregational churches increasingly grew away from Calvinism, some of the more orthodox (conservative) Congregational churches said, "Hey, you're starting to sound like a different kind of church altogether." And then, in 1819, I preached a sermon entitled "Unitarian Christianity," defining what this new religious faith was all about. **It** was the first time in the United States that people of our faith actually accepted the name "Unitarian."

Teacher: But Unitarian *Christianity*? Most Unitarians don't think of themselves as Christian.

Channing: Not now, but 200 years ago they did. Remember, just moving away from Calvinism was a big deal back then. Even today there are plenty of folks who think people are basically sinful and that God will condemn them to hell **if** they don't believe a certain way.

But this is what I preached: That people can use reason to develop their religious beliefs – not just emotions, like fear, as Rev. Edwards would have you believe.

And that people have the potential to be like God, **if** they'll develop their capacities.

Teacher: Oh, thank you, Reverend Channing, for bringing us your life-affirming words. We're proud to be the children of the faith you helped to define. We're learning to use reason, to be our own authority for our beliefs. And we will try to develop our capacities.

Channing: I'm glad to hear that. This is a proud faith, with an important message to share with the world. I have to leave now, and I'll ask Rev. Edwards to join me. Actually, I'd like to give him a little hell for scaring your class so.

The two ministers exit.

Session Twenty-Two

Just Whose Religion Is It?

Goals for Participants:

- to consider that the United States (or Canada) is full of religious diversity
- to ponder the tension between expressing one's own religious beliefs and respecting the religious beliefs of others
- to be able to make a brief statement explaining Unitarian Universalism to a peer

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
- 2. Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** "Children, Pull Out Your Chickens." (15 min)
- 4. Getting There.** Writing "elevator speeches" or Making Bumper Stickers. (20 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest** Journaling. (5 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
large paper circle for "center point"
participants' journals
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
large removable labels for bumper stickers and permanent markers (optional)
UU principles poster

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Read the article (Resource 22-A) aloud several times so it will flow.

Decide on the activity for your group. The suggested activity is "Elevator Speeches." In a column in the *UU World*, Bill Sinkford, former president of the UUA, challenged UU's to develop their own "elevator speeches"- speeches in which they could explain Unitarian Universalism to someone in the time it would take them to ride an elevator up or down a few floors – in other words, in a sentence or two.

If this is too verbally oriented for your group, another option is to make bumper stickers. For those, full page labels can be cut in half lengthwise. Permanent markers will work best.

If you plan to do the alternative reading for the closing (#591 in *Singing the Living Tradition*), either make copies of it or make sure you have a hymnal for each two participants.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants' to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

I distrust those people who know so well what God wants them to do because I notice it always coincides with their own desires.

– Susan B. Anthony, Unitarian and leader in the cause of female suffrage

God is too big to fit inside one religion.

– Seen on a bumper sticker

Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . .

– The Bill of Rights, Article 1

if we can't end our differences, at least we can make the world safe for diversity.

– John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States

Taking a Stand

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle in response to today's statement, north being "yes", south being "no" (but not on the center point). Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

I think we should be able to sing Christmas carols in school.

Heart of the Journey

Children, Pull Out Your Chickens.

Read the article found on Resource 22-A, "Children, Pull Out Your Chickens."

When you have read it, ask the group what serious point the article is trying to make.

Note to Teachers:

The intensity of the discussion which follows will probably depend upon your cultural environment. In some places, prayer and religious clubs in public schools, the teaching of evolution, "faith-based initiatives" and the like are hot topics. As of this writing (2006) there is a feeling among religious liberals and moderates that the Federal government and some state and local governments are being taken over or are reacting to conservative Christian values- in other words, we are moving towards governance by a theocracy. Your discussion will be colored by where you live and by the headlines of the day.

Ask the youth if they can identify any issues about religion in their schools. Do they know of anyone who feels discriminated against because of their religion? Do *they* feel discriminated against?

Then share this information with the group: The issue of religion in public schools has been going on for almost as long as we have had public schools.

Remember, the Pilgrims came to the new world so they could have religious freedom. They were soon followed by the Puritans. Those groups quickly merged, since they were so close in religious beliefs. As long as it seemed like *everyone* had the same beliefs, there didn't seem to be a problem.

But it didn't take long for America, particularly outside of New England, to become religiously diverse. Soon after the American Constitution was written, Congress adopted a Bill of Rights to specifically prevent the government from abusing the population. This was a list of articles whose purpose was to protect our liberty. The very first article begins:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .

There are some people who say the Bill of Rights gives them the right to have public prayers

in schools; tills is their "free exercise" of their religious belief. Ask the participants if there's a problem with that line of thought. The satiric essay they just heard certainly reveals the dilemma of just whose prayer should be spoken.

Many people of faith would say that there is no reason why a person can't bow their head any time they want and pray whatever prayer they want. It's another tiling altogether, however, when a person of one faith is forced to participate, even just by having to stay silent and listen, while someone of a different faith prays in the manner of their religion.

When one group feels the need or the right to promote their faith over other people, it can quickly lead to abuse. In Philadelphia in 1840, riots were sparked because of a furor over reading the Bible in schools. The schools used a Protestant Bible, but as we learned (in the lesson on the Bible), the Catholic Bible differs from the Protestant Bible, and Catholics asked that their children be able to use their own Bibles. When Protestants, who outnumbered the Catholics, voted against using both Bibles, a Catholic alderman introduced a law that would forbid Bible reading in the schools. The result, in short, was a riot. Over a few days, 20 people were killed and two Catholic churches and the homes of 50 Catholic families were burned.

What solutions can the youth think of to avoid conflict over religion in schools? What can they themselves do?

Now take a look at your UU Principles poster. Which of the Principles promote religious freedom? Which are dependent upon religious freedom **if** they are to be practiced? Hopefully, the group will see that **all** of our UU Principles both promote and rely on religious freedom. The implications are that Unitarian Universalists must stand firmly to protect religious freedom, their own –and that of others.

To the questions that might be asked by middle school youth, "Why is **all** tills stuff important to me?" and "Why is it important for me to be a Unitarian Universalist?" (instead of just a good person), the answer is that we cannot take freedom of religion for granted, even though it has been guaranteed in our Constitution. Each

generation must have citizens who know the importance of religious freedom and who will work to keep it a reality.

Getting There

Elevator Speeches.

There is a better chance for tolerance when we understand each other's beliefs. Tell the group they will be creating "elevator speeches"- speeches that are so brief they could be delivered to someone in the time it takes for an elevator to go from the ground level to maybe the 12th floor. Tills is a speech they should be able to give to explain to a classmate at school or a peer in another situation about what Unitarian Universalism is **all** about. **It** should only be a sentence or two **long**-something that might make the listener think, "That's interesting; I'd like to know more."

Participants should work in groups of two or three so they can share ideas. Here are some ways to start the speech:

"Unitarian Universalism is ... "
or *"In our congregation (or church) we. . . "*

Each group member can come up with their own speech **if** desired, or they can create one speech for their group. When the groups have decided upon their speeches, have them share these with **all** the participants.

An interactive way to share the speeches is to have two people share an "elevator" space: The first person can ask the second person to explain Unitarian Universalism with the second person responding. Then other members of the group can tap on the shoulder of either person and enter the "elevator space" to take over as either the asker or the responder.

Bumper Stickers.

If using tills alternative, point out the bumper sticker quote from the beginning of the session and encourage participants to come up with their own pithy statement that defends religious pluralism/tolerance/liberty.

Stopping to Rest

Journaling.

Let the youth copy their elevator speeches (and perhaps the speeches of some others in the group) into their journals.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement that was posed earlier today. North

is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

I think we should be able to sing Christmas carols in school.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop.

Ask each participant to say, on a scale of 1-10 feet, how high they think the wall of separation between church and state should be.

Closing Circle.

The following reading is from a letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury (CT) Baptist Association in 1802. Read this, or invite a participant to do so.

"Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between church and State."

Notes from field testing:

Taking a Stand

One group (that really has gotten into "Taking a Stand") added statements to ponder:

I believe we should have no parties in school because it is against some children's religion.

I believe we should have prayer at high school graduation ceremonies.

One group thought the teachers needed background information to be able to explain the Santeria ritual mentioned in the satiric essay. Of course, we always should be aware of the context and meaning of other people's religious rituals, rather than just appropriating them. It could well have been among the author's intentions to show how meaningless (and demeaning) it is to take a religious ritual out of its context. In the world revealed by this essay, no religion (including our own) receives respect. An introduction has been added to the essay so that it has some context.

If you think your participants are not mature enough to appreciate satire, you might share with them a longer version of the Catholic/Protestant controversy that is mentioned under the "Discussion" in "Heart of the Journey."

Resource 22-A "Children, Pull Out Your Chickens"

Background: In 1992, the Supreme Court ruled in Lee v. Weisman that a clergy-led prayer was not allowed at a high school graduation. In response to this ruling forbidding the leading of prayer in public schools (of course, students have always been allowed to pray privately) some states drafted resolutions or legislation to get around the Supreme Court ruling.

This satiric essay was written in response to the Texas legislature's attempt to reinstate prayer in the public schools. As the essay explains, many communities in Texas agreed that they wanted prayer in schools. But even very conservative people generally accept that the Supreme Court will never allow prayers that promote one religion over another. You can't have a specifically Christian prayer, or Muslim prayer, or Jewish prayer. Or could you? In this essay, the author playfully contemplates what would happen if each religion got its own day in school.

Let's quiet down, children. Now that we've finally gotten rid of that terrible Supreme Court decision, I can again lead you in prayer.

So, children, let's get ready for our morning prayer. Did everyone remember to bring their chicken?

Mary, where is your chicken? That's all right, Mary. Don't cry. As I told you yesterday, **if** you can't afford a chicken, the school is required to buy one. I've got plenty of extra chickens up here by the prayer mats, meditation crystals, and peyote buds. Did anyone else forget to bring their chicken?

As you know from your schedule, children, today I will lead you in a Santeria prayer. It's a recognized, ancient religion. Now, I know some of you have complained that many of these prayers don't represent your beliefs. But remember, they do represent the sincere beliefs of many

Americans. I promise you that eventually we will lead the class in a prayer representing your own religion.

But you'll have to be patient. _There are hundreds of Christian denominations with all sorts of beliefs in the United States. And there are hundreds more non-Christian religions recognized in America. **If** your religion isn't on our list, just let us know and we'll make sure it's added. We don't want to leave anyone out. That's not the American way.

Everyone knows that you have never been prevented from praying in school, but for years you were denied having teachers and principals lead you in prayer. You should be thankful.

Johnnie, I don't know what you're doing to that chicken, but stop it. You need to straighten up and be serious. This is important. If it were not important, then why did 224 Texas counties and 51 Texas cities go to the trouble to pass resolutions supporting the reinstatement of state-sponsored prayer in our public schools? I'll tell you why, because lots and lots of people said the loss of state-sponsored prayers led to drug use, crime, violence, teenage pregnancy, dropouts, family disintegration, child-abuse, pornography, racism, poor academic achievement, overcrowded prisons and lots of other bad things.

Before we start, remember that tomorrow we will have a traditional Wicca prayer and we'll try to cast a spell on the press. Remember to bring a lock of your mother's hair.

John, keep that chicken quiet. What is it, Lucy? **If** you want me to tell you when I will lead you in a prayer of your religion, you'll have to tell me what it is. You can't look at someone and tell their personal beliefs. Unitarian?

Let's see, coming up we have Christian Science, Amish, Tibetan, Buddhism, Seventh-Day Adventist, Comanche, Zoroastrianism, Druze, Calvinist Baptist, Unification, Hasidism, and Deliverance Pentecostal That one should be

interesting. I think that's when you
bring a rattlesnake and a cup of poison.

I don't see it coming up right away, Lucy.

Let's see, we have the Reformed Druid of
North America, American Vegan,
Shanti Yoga, Evangelical
Presbyterian, Baha'i World Faith, Church
of Satan; Gnostic Orthodox, House of
Yahweh, Agasha Temple of Wisdom,
Church of Metaphysical Christianity,
Jain Meditation, Catholic
Charismatic, People of Destiny, Branch
Davidian, Coptic Fellowship. . .

I don't know, Lucy. **It** doesn't look
like Unitarianism will come up any time soon.
But **if** we don't lead you in a prayer from your
church or religion this year, the government
guarantees we lead you in a prayer of your
religion at least once before you graduate.
This way, it's fair for everyone.

OK, kids, on the count of three, pull
the heads off your chickens and I'll start
today's prayer.

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Session Twenty-Three

Honoring Our Martyrs

Goals for Participants:

- to learn about some important people in our UU past
- to gain a sense of the courage and sacrifice that led to our religious freedom
- to ponder their own sense of courage

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
- 2. Taking a Stand.** (10 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** UU Martyrs Posters. (15 min)
- 4. Getting There.** Meeting the Martyrs. (10 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** Journaling/Honoring Our Martyrs Ceremony. (10 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Closing Circle and Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop. *Note that these are reversed today.* (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
large paper circle for center point
participants' journals
compass (optional)
12"X18" construction paper (bright or light colors) and smaller pieces
glue and scissors
collage materials (metallic papers, stickers, yarn, etc. (optional-see preparation)
markers
candles with holders *or* tea lights (see preparation)
CD with soft instrumental music or drum
flashlight (if your room will be very dark)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Copy Resource 23-A (9 pages).

The group will be making posters honoring our UU martyrs. **If** your group enjoys art projects, you might want to give them an opportunity to make collages rather than just using markers. **If** so, be sure to give them extra time. (Let them know they can cut out the picture on their biography, **if** they want.)

Find out from your religious educator **if** there is a public place, such as a hallway, where your posters can be displayed.

Think through safety factors for the candle ceremony. **If** your group is mature enough, they can have tapers with cardboard holders (like are often used for Christmas Eve services). In this case, each individual would light their candle from a central candle (probably in your chalice) and continue to hold it throughout the ceremony; this would be the most emotionally effective. **If** your group is less mature, you can have them light tea lights which have been arranged around the chalice. **In** this case, they could use a hand held taper to bring the flame from the chalice to the tea light. Note that you will have to protect your table from the dripping wax.

Figure out how to darken your room for the ceremony or find another space which you might darken, if possible.

Choose some appropriate music to play during the ceremony or find a drum that will have a deep sound.

The important thing is this: To be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.

-Charles Dubois

Taking a Stand

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

Be as beneficent as the sun or the sea, but if your rights as a rational being are trampled on, die on the first inch of your territory.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th century Unitarian minister and author

Whoever said anybody has the right to give up?

-Marian Wright Edelman, contemporary justice advocate and writer, founder of The Children's Defense Fund

Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation, and publicly and privately. . . avow their sympathy with despised and persecuted ideas and their advocates, and bear the consequences.

-Susan B. Anthony, Unitarian and leader in the cause of female suffrage

This morning the "Taking a Stand" activity will be somewhat different. Participants will be asked to stand north, south, east or west. You can use a compass to determine the points. Here is the situation:

- **It** is some time in the not-too-distant future.

Over the years, the United States has evolved into a theocracy and religions that don't conform to the government's standards have been outlawed. If you break the law by practicing another religion, your name is posted on the internet and you are likely to lose many of your friends. While you have been attending a government sponsored church (because you are required to), you hear that some Unitarian Universalists are still holding secret services. What is your reaction to that news? Go to the compass point which best describes what you would do.

North: You continue to go to the state sponsored church and don't bother to learn any more about the UU services. Why **take** any risks?

East: You continue to go to the state sponsored church but make contact with the secret UU's and wish them well, because you hope with enough resistance, the laws will change. But you're afraid to attend their services.

South: You continue to go to the state sponsored church but also start attending the secret UU services; you hope the government doesn't catch you, but you feel you must keep your free religion alive.

West: You quit attending the state sponsored church and attend only the UU services, even though you know you will be found out.

Where do you stand? And why?

Now the government has told employers they can (but are not required to) fire employees whose names, or the names of their family (!

members, have been posted on the internet for practicing another religion.

Where do you stand? And why?

Now the government has decreed that vigilantes can, **if** they wish, shoot at people whose names have been posted on the internet.

Where do you stand? And why?

Heart of the Journey

UU Martyrs Posters.

Today the youth will be learning about Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists who were persecuted for their religions beliefs, some to the point of death. When a person dies for a noble cause, that person is called a martyr.

Pass out the information about UU martyrs. Each individual might choose to concentrate on one martyr, or a pair might work together on two martyrs (or one martyr, **if** you have a large group). Using the information at hand, have the participants make a poster honoring their martyr. Participants can use words or symbols to tell about the contributions this person made to religious freedom and/or the freedom of others. Tell the youth that when the posters are complete, they will use them to introduce this UU martyr/hero to the rest of the group. Afterwards, they will be having a candle lighting ceremony honoring these martyrs in the cause of religious freedom.

Those who finish early might help the teachers set up the area for the ceremony.

Getting There

Meeting the Martyrs.

When the posters are done, have the youth briefly talk about their martyrs/heroes with the rest of the group.

Stopping to Rest

Journaling/Honoring Our UU Martyrs Ceremony.

Ask the participants to think about what words of thanks, praise, encouragement, etc. they might share with their UU martyr or hero were they to meet that person today. Writing these words down will help the youth to focus on what they really would say and also to remember what they want to say, so you might pull the journals out for this, or at least have them write down their thoughts on a scrap of paper.

For the ceremony, dim the lights and start the music or drumbeat. Ask the participants to say the words they have just written. **If** it's really dark and the youth needs to read, the teacher should hold a flashlight. The youth should then light a candle in honor of the martyr, using the chalice as the flame from which the candles are lit.

Going Out into the World

Closing Circle.

(Note that this comes earlier in your session today, so that extinguishing the chalice becomes part of the ceremony.) When all the martyrs have been honored, gently end the music or drumbeat. Ask the participants to blow out their candles. Then extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Now ask participants to take a stand on a statement that refers to those that were posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no" and the center point is off limits. Where do they stand now?

*It's worth it for people to suffer in the
cause of religious freedom.*

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share

Alternatively, if the group has achieved and is maintaining an air of reverence, you might suggest that they consider silently why they are now standing where they are.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Ask each participant to say the name of a martyr or hero they learned about today, and it need not be the person they made the poster about.

Notes from field testing:

Thoughts for the Day.

One group said the teachers liked the challenge of the quotes, but the youth thought we were trying to confuse them. Here is some help.

Be as beneficent as the sun or the sea, but **if** your rights as a rational being are trampled on, die on the first inch of your territory.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th C. Unitarian minister and writer

*Be generous in thought with those with whom you disagree, but **if** someone tries to take **away** your right to think for yourself and act upon your beliefs, remember that defending your belief is more important than anything else.*

Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation, and publicly and privately . . . avow their sympathy with despised and persecuted ideas and their advocates, and bear the consequences.

-Susan B. Anthony, Unitarian and leader in the cause of female suffrage

*You must be more concerned with what your beliefs are than with how the world regards you. **If** you agree with unpopular or forbidden ideas, you have to be willing to live with the results of your convictions.*

Taking a Stand

*It was hard for participants to remember what each direction meant. One group posted signs for north ("no contact"), east ("contact only), south ("contact **and** limited involvement") and west ("full involvement").*

Meeting the Martyrs.

One teacher suggested giving participants a format to use, like writing three sentences, one describing the martyr, one telling what this person did, and one describing how/why this person died,

For a parent/youth event:

There is 2004 documentary film about Viola Liuzzo entitled *Home of the Brave* which was well received at numerous film festivals. **It** shows ((footage from the 60's, including an interview with her children soon after her death. Information about the film is at:

<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/hob.html>

The film is geared to high school or older, but younger youth would probably be carried by the adults in the conversation that could follow the film.

For the congregation:

As with numerous other sessions, the information that the youths have gained here is probably known by few of the adults in the congregation. You might look for a forum in which to share this information: at a lunch with their parents, for an adult discussion group or covenant group, as part of a service.

Resource 23-A Honoring Our Martyrs

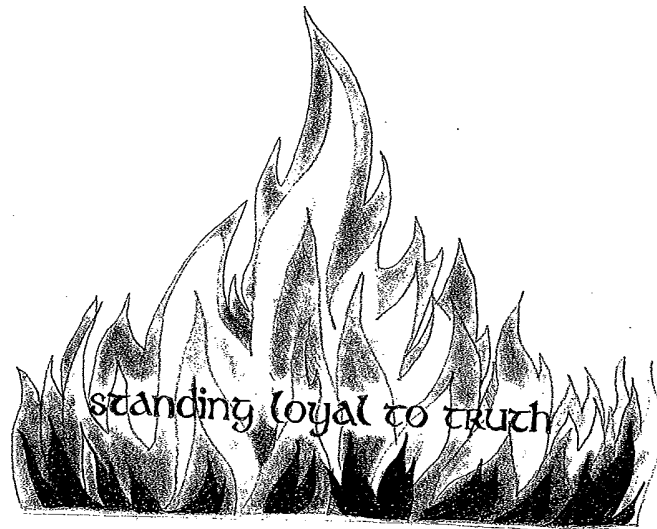
Katherine Vogel (about 1459 to 1539)

Katherine Vogel (sometimes spelled "Weigel") lived in Krakow, Poland. We know little of her, except that it was rumored she was in the habit of talking with Jewish people. Whatever the influence was, she came to hold firmly to two heretical beliefs: that God was a unity (not a trinity) and that Jesus was human rather than divine.

At some point, when Katherine Vogel was about 70, the local authorities decided they must lock her up until she recanted (admitted her ideas were wrong). To set the mood, perhaps, they locked her up in a chapel. And there she stayed for 10 years, saying she could not lie and claim to believe something which she did not.

Finally, she won -- sort of. The authorities decided she would never recant and so they burned her at the stake in the market place. Those who were present reported that the white-haired 80 year old woman went to her death cheerfully. Her last statement was to this effect: "Neither in this life nor the next can anything evil befall the soul of one who stands loyal to truth as one is given to know it.

Katherine Vogel is the first person we know of to be killed for her Unitarian beliefs; she was the first Unitarian martyr.



Michael Servetus 1511-1553

Born what is now part of Spain, Michael Servetus was only about 15 when, due to the marvelous new invention, the printing press, he acquired a Bible. Reading it through, he was surprised to find no mention at all of the trinity, which formed the basis of his catholic faith.

At age 20, then living among Protestants in what is now Switzerland and France, Servetus wrote a book called *On the Errors of the Trinity*. The theological arguments in this book got the attention of the Catholic Inquisition, which persecuted (often to death) people who disagreed with Catholic doctrine.

Fearing for his life, Servetus changed his name and went into hiding in France. He became a noted doctor, publishing the first description of how the blood circulates through the lungs. But he also continued his theological exploration, and he began in time to correspond with John Calvin, who had set up a theocracy (government by the church, Calvin's church) in Geneva, Switzerland. They sent letters back and forth stating their beliefs. Servetus would send Calvin's letters back to him with rather snide comments about Calvin's beliefs written in the margins. Increasingly angry, Calvin vowed that if Servetus ever came to Geneva, he would not get out alive.

In 1553 Servetus published another book putting forth his religious beliefs. At this time, his real identity was revealed to the catholic Inquisition, which arrested and imprisoned him. Escaping the dark night, wearing only his nightshirt, Servetus tried to flee to Italy, where he thought he might be safe. But his way took him through Geneva and, unfortunately, over a weekend. In this theocratic city, everyone had to attend church on Sunday. Servetus went, was recognized, and was imprisoned this time by Calvin, who made good on his promise to end Servetus' life.

So Michael Servetus was burned to death at the stake (along with his book). A few months later, he was burned at the stake again, this time in effigy, by the Catholic Inquisition, which wanted to make an example of him. But Servetus' death inspired others with similar beliefs to band together in religious groups that would later be called Unitarian.



Faustus Socinus (1539-1604)

Sixty years old, plagued with chronic illness, and suffering from impaired vision and hearing, he was confined to his home in Cracow when the mob burst through the door. They had come for this damnable heretic. [As he was being] dragged into the market place in his night clothes, the fanatical university students made a great bonfire of his treasured books and manuscripts. The mob could not decide whether their victim should be burned alive or drowned, and in the confusion one of the university professors spirited him out of harm's reach.

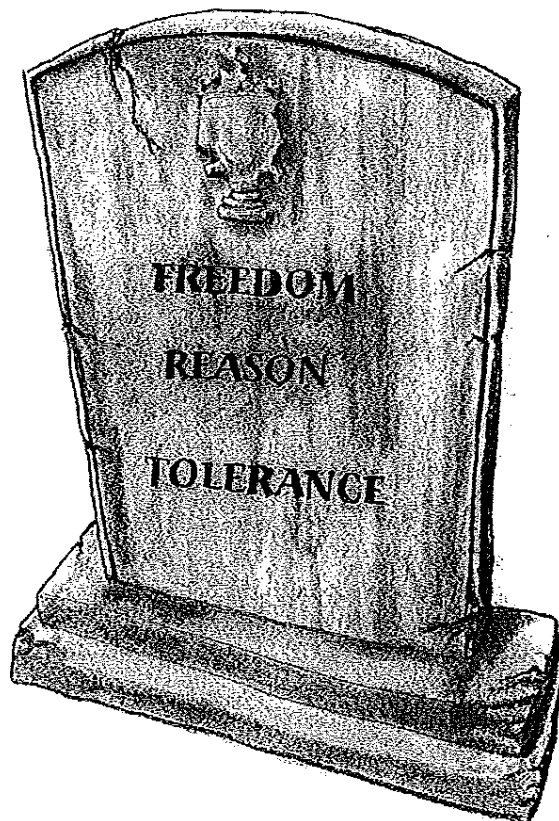
The heretic's name was Faustus Socinus. His heresy was Unitarianism. Though born in Italy in 1539, he had lived for the past twenty years in Poland and had become the spiritual leader of the Polish Unitarians, called "The Polish Brethren." A quiet, scholarly man, he hated religious controversy, but defended his beliefs when forced to it. He even had been the subject of an earlier violent street attack. Where could he find the peace and safety to rebuild his library and continue his studies?

Socinus moved to a town 45 miles away from Cracow. Here he was in a community of 300 Unitarian families. Even the local nobility were Unitarians. Socinus tried his best to start anew without his beloved books and papers, but his health never recovered. He died six years later, in 1604, and was buried in a Unitarian cemetery. In another 50 years Unitarianism, which had thrived in parts of Poland, had been wiped out by oppression from orthodox churches.

In 1933 a new stone was placed on Socinus' grave. The inscription, written in Latin, memorialized Faustus Socinus "in recognition of his efforts for freedom, reason and tolerance in religion."

The above is excerpted and adapted from "Pro Libertate, Ratione, et Tolerantia" in *A Year with Our Liberal Heritage* by Willard C. Frank, Jr., self-published in 1984.

Used with permission. The original source is Earl Morse Wilbur, "The Grave and Monument of Faustus Socinus at Luslawice," *Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society*, pt. II (1936), 25-41.



George de Benneville 1703-1793

George de Benneville was orphaned as an infant but was brought up in the British royal court with Queen Anne as his godmother. At age 12 he went to sea. While in northern Africa, he saw some dark Muslim men tending a sick comrade, and he felt that in their compassion they were "more Christian" than he was.

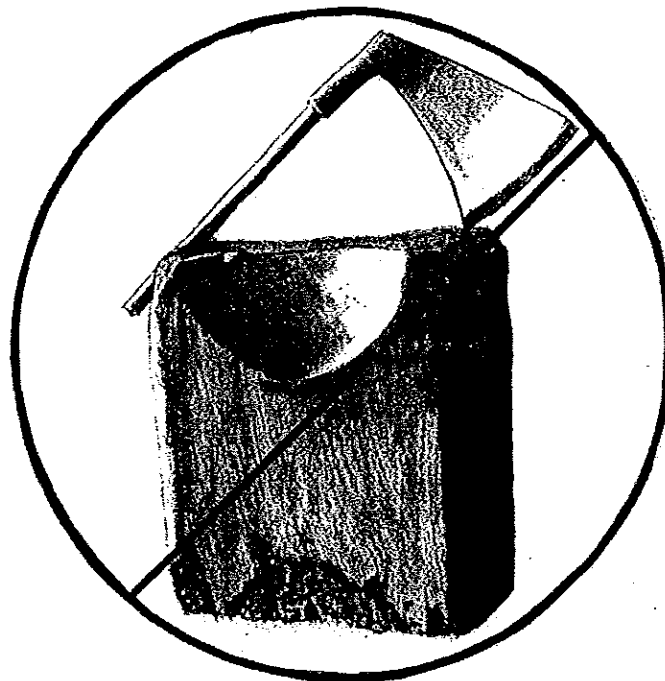
Back home and still young, he became depressed, feeling that he was the worst of sinners and that he would burn in hell for eternity. Then one day, he had a vision of Jesus, who told him he was forgiven. This "conversion" experience made de Benneville a Universalist: if he, the worst of sinners, was saved, then everyone was saved. Salvation was universal to everyone.

Young George felt compelled to go to France and preach his good news, but at that time, it was illegal to believe in universal salvation. With a friend, 17-year-old George was arrested and condemned to death.

On the day of execution, the friend was hung. George, because of his noble birth, was to have the privilege of being beheaded. He refused to be blindfolded and prayed for God to forgive his executioners as he knelt and waited for the axe to do its gruesome job. Suddenly a man arrived on horseback, bringing a reprieve from the King of France, and de Benneville's life was spared.

George de Benneville studied medicine and continued preaching Universalism in Europe. Sometimes he was imprisoned for his beliefs and preaching. In 1741 he decided to go to the English colonies in America, to Pennsylvania, where he felt both his preaching and his medical skills were needed.

Although he never formed a formal church, de Benneville did conduct religious services in his medical office/home, spreading the good news of Universalism before there was a Universalist church. Despite his trip to the scaffold at age 17, George de Benneville lived to be ninety.



Joseph Priestly, March 24, 1733-February 6, 1804

Joseph Priestly grew up in the home of his Aunt Sarah in northern England. Aunt Sarah had many friends who were ministers-dissenting ministers. That means they did not believe the **church of England** and they did not believe in Calvinism. They were, for the most part Unitarian, although no one yet called him- or herself "Unitarian."

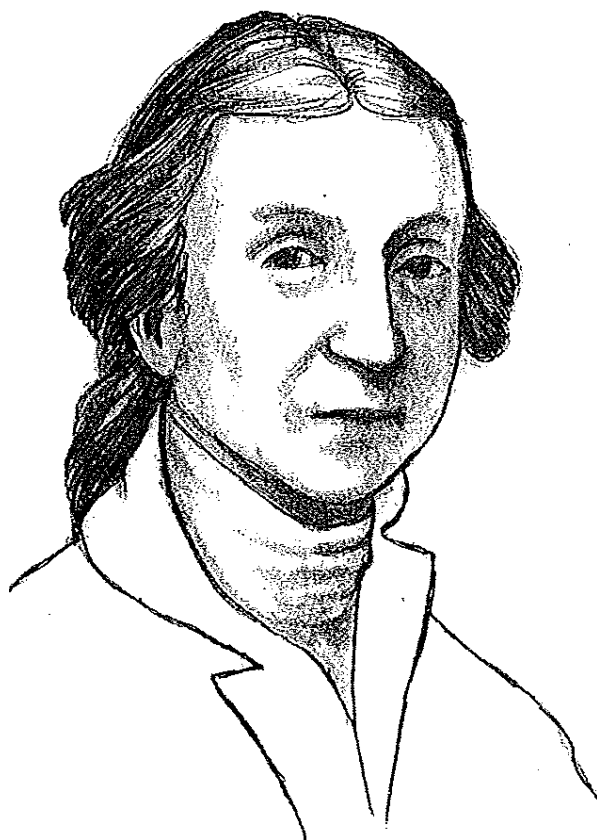
When Joseph was a young man and wanted to study for the ministry, he remembered the conversations he had heard around Aunt Sarah's dining room table. He decided he would not go to the academy where he would be required every six months to say he believed in ten tenets of the Calvinist faith. Instead, he went to a more liberal school. Eventually, he became a "dissenting minister."

But Priestly is often known more as the founder of modern chemistry than as a minister. As a scientist, Priestly is credited with the discovery of oxygen. He also figured out how to carbonate water (like we use in soda pop) and he discovered how to use India rubber to make erasers.

For awhile, Priestly continued in his dual career as minister and scientist. His scientific work brought him great fame. But he also wrote about his dissenting beliefs-especially that the trinity was nowhere to be found in the Bible. Although the last burning of a dissenting (or Unitarian) person in England had occurred in 1612, Unitarian beliefs were still illegal. Priestly was denounced in the House of Commons as an agent of the Devil. A few days later an angry mob carrying torches set fire first to the chapel where Priestly preached, then to his home and laboratory.

Fortunately, Priestly had been warned about the job. He and his wife escaped with only the clothes on their backs and had to go into hiding. Priestly wanted to go back to his fire-blackened chapel the next Sunday and preach on the topic of forgiveness, but his friends convinced him his life would be at risk.

Now aged 61, Priestly and his family (including grown sons) decided to move to the United States. There he settled in central Pennsylvania, in a settlement for English dissenters. It is there that he started a church that was to be the first founded specifically as a Unitarian church.



Norbert Capek 1870-1942

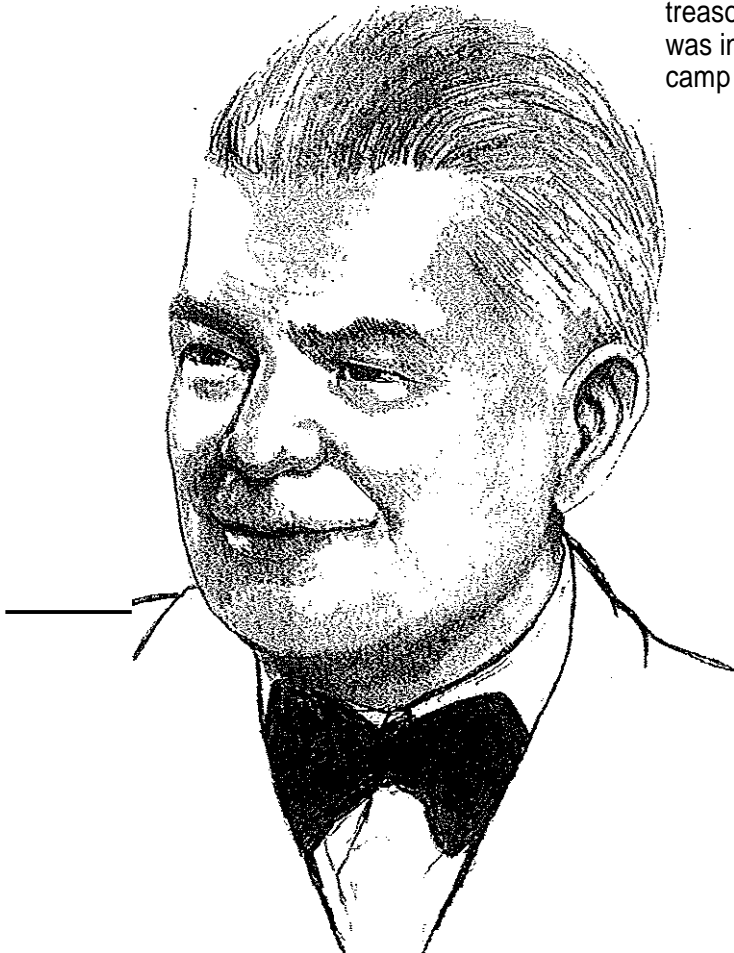
When Norbert Capek was 12, his parents sent him from his home in a tiny town in Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) to Vienna, Austria; There he worked long days, six days a week, in his uncle's tailor shop. But Sundays were his own, and he used them to visit different churches. In this way, Capek left the Catholic Church of his childhood and became a Baptist, because he felt he could think for himself in that religion. While still a young man, he became a Baptist minister.

But thinking for yourself was not politically correct. Officials of the Austrian Empire spied on Capek. Sometimes the police would put their ears against the wooden door of Capek's church, listening to his big, booming voice and hoping to hear him say something for which they could arrest him. But when Capek left the church, the police couldn't find him, because they were looking for a big man to go with that booming voice, and Capek was a short man who blended in with his congregation.

In time, Capek felt enough political heat that he took his family to the United States; There his religious beliefs continued to evolve, until he felt he could no longer be a Baptist minister. Now a layperson, he and his family looked for a new religious home. In time, they became Unitarians, because the children said they liked going to a place where they were encouraged to ask questions and explore ideas.

In 1921 Capek, now a Unitarian minister, took his family back home to the city of Prague. There Capek formed what became the largest Unitarian congregation in the world – 3200 members! It was for this congregation that he created what has become one of the most beloved Unitarian Universalist traditions, the flower communion.

During World War II (in 1941) Capek, who had successfully dodged the authorities of the Austrian Emperor's government, was arrested by the Gestapo. He was charged with high treason, and passages from some of his sermons were used as evidence. While he was eventually found to be innocent of high treason and a court recommended he be released, he was instead sent by the Gestapo to a concentration camp where he died of poison gas.



Rev. James Reeb January 1, 1927-March 11, 1965

James Reeb was born in Wichita, KS, but went east to go to seminary and become a minister. His first job as a minister was as a hospital chaplain in Philadelphia. The job of a chaplain in a hospital is to comfort seriously ill and dying patients and their families. Many of the people among whom James Reeb worked were African American.

In Kansas, Reeb had not known many black people. Now, as he met these people, Reeb realized that their lives had been made unfairly difficult because they were not given the chances that white people had to improve their lives. He decided to devote his own life to promoting justice and compassion for all.

Reeb became assistant minister at a Unitarian church in Washington, D.C. He liked working there because of the racial diversity in the congregation. But he felt a need to do more. So he and his family moved to the Boston area, where he worked on a low cost housing project for poor people, most of whom were black.

Following a voter rights demonstration in Selma, Alabama in late February, 1965, a young black man was fatally wounded by police. When Rev. Martin Luther King organized a march to protest this death, 500 peaceful

marchers met

State Troopers with billy clubs and tear gas. Now Dr. King called for people of faith to come support the protest. Almost one-fifth of all the Unitarian Universalist ministers from around the country answered the call: James Reeb was one of them.

Less than a day after arriving in Selma, James Reeb was clubbed over the head by white men as he and two other ministers sat at a restaurant. Two days later, James Reeb was dead. At his memorial service, Dr. Martin Luther King delivered the eulogy, asking, "Why must good men die for doing good?"

The death of this white minister enraged the country in a way that (unfortunately) the death of a black person could not do at that time. The atmosphere was created in which President Lyndon Johnson could introduce the Voting Rights Act at a joint session of Congress. As he did so, President Johnson referred to Rev. James Reeb as "that good man."



Viola Liuzzo, April 11, 1925-March 25, 1965

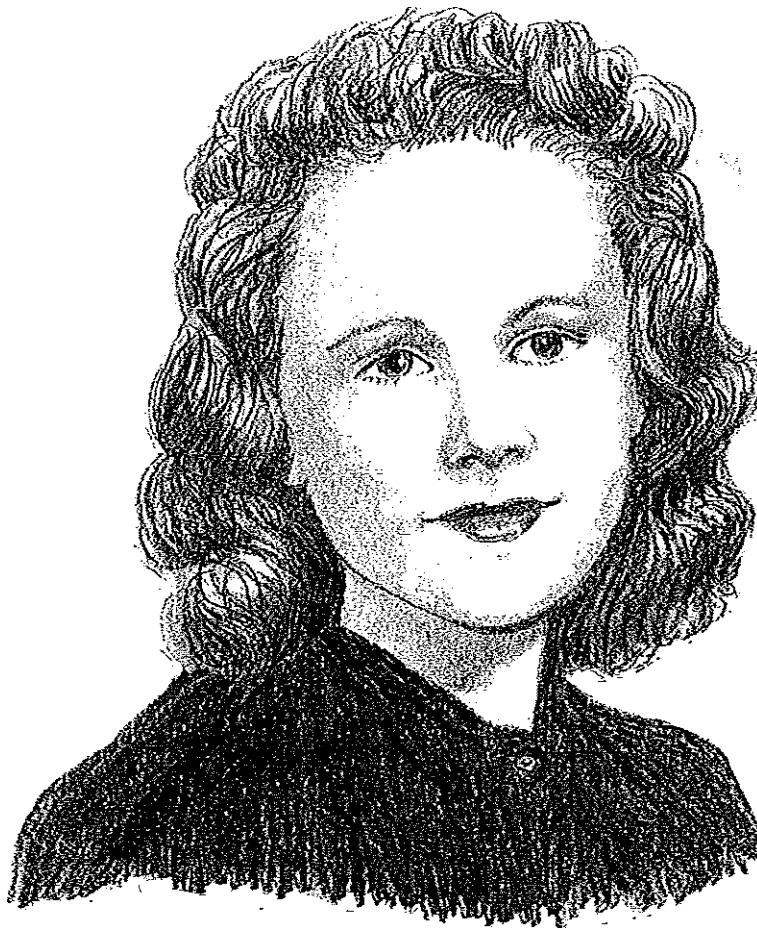
A 39-year-old wife and mother of five children aged 7, 10, 14, 18 and 19, Viola Liuzzo (leeOOZ oh) was a member of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Detroit, MI. She grew up as a poor child in the South. Among her friends were Black children who were even poorer than she was, and she shared what she had with them. When she moved north to Michigan, her best friend was a Black woman. Both women felt a need to work for the rights of African Americans.

Following a voter rights demonstration in Selma, Alabama in 1965, a young black man was fatally wounded by police. When Rev. Martin Luther King organized a march to protest this death, 500 peaceful marchers were attacked by Alabama State Troopers with billy clubs and tear gas. Now Dr. King called for all people of faith to come support the protest.

Viola Liuzzo heard Dr. King's call. Leaving her children in the care of her husband and her best friend, she went to Selma, intending to stay one week. There she helped with registration and organization of the many people, including other Unitarian Universalists, who were arriving to give their support. On March 25, while she was driving a young black man home in the evening, her car was overtaken by a car filled with members of the Ku Klux Klan, one of whom shot her in the head. She was the only white woman to lose her life in the struggle for civil rights.

Of her murder, Dr. King said, "If physical death is the price some must pay to save us and our white brothers from eternal death of the spirit, then no sacrifice could be more redemptive." Viola Liuzzo's 14-year-old son said, "She wanted equal rights for everybody, no matter what the cost."

There is a plaque honoring her at the Unitarian Universalist Association headquarters in Boston.



James H. Barrett, August 9, 1919 -July 29, 1994

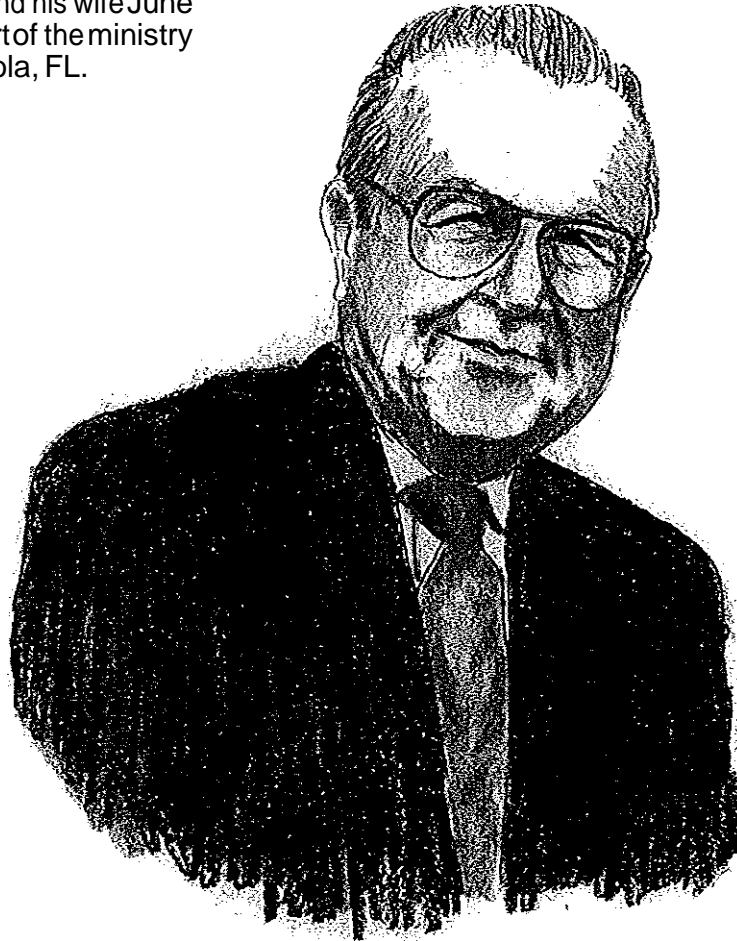
As a teenager in Maryland, James Barrett got his pilot's license. He joined the *Army Air Corps* and served *in* World war and the Korean and Vietnam wars. He retired as a lieutenant colonel in the United States Air Force in 1969.

James Barrett then started a second career. He got his teaching certificate and taught middle school math and biology for 11 *years*.

In the 1990's, clinics that provided abortions were often surrounded by protesters. **It** was difficult and frightening to get through these often angry crowds who gathered on the sidewalks and driveways outside the clinics. Volunteers were sought to serve as escorts both for women who needed abortions and for doctors who performed the abortions, so that they could enter the buildings safely. James Barrett and his wife June did such work, which they saw as part of the ministry of their UU congregation in Pensacola, FL.

On July 29, 1994, as the Barretts were escorting a doctor, a pro-life protester fired a high-powered shotgun through the windows of their car, injuring Mrs. Barrett and killing the doctor and James Barrett.

James Barrett was buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors on the eve of his 75th birthday. The service was conducted *by* his good friend, the minister of his Unitarian Universalist church.



Session Twenty-Four

Hey! Who's in Charge Here? (Congregational Polity)

To the teacher:

Congregational polity? What's that, and why should I care? More to the point, why should kids care?

Congregational polity is the way that Unitarian Universalist congregations govern themselves. It is based upon a system of church governance that goes back more than 400 years. As such, it is part of our Unitarian Universalist heritage. Moreover, it is also part of our civil heritage: it was the democratic spirit of congregationalism that sparked the American Revolution. Separation of church and state- the very foundation of religious liberty-is a legacy of congregational polity. As the next generation that will keep alive the flame of religious liberty, our young people should know the lessons of this history.

Our polity can also be seen as the glue which sticks us – Unitarian Universalists of many stripes – together. UU congregations might call themselves churches or fellowships or societies; they might have 80 or 800+ members; they might worship in a white-steepled historic landmark in a quaint New England town or a glass edifice that invites in the surrounding western mountains; they might tend towards theism or humanism, Christianity or earth-centered spirituality. No matter what other differences there are, Unitarian Universalist congregations all govern themselves by congregational polity. When our young people leave their homes and their particular congregations, it just might be the familiarity of UU polity that will help them find a place in a new congregation.

Goals for Participants:

- to be introduced to the concept of Congregational Polity
- to see in what ways our UU Principles are derived from our polity
- to make a poster about our polity that can be used to inform and teach adults in the congregation
- to think through some of the ramifications of our polity
- to prepare for next week's guests

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand. (5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. Characteristics of Congregational Polity Poster. (10 min)
4. Getting There. Comparing UU Principles and Polity; Putting Polity to Work Challenge. (15 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Preparing for Next Week's Guests; Journaling. (15 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle.(5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
participants' journals
large paper circle for center point
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
poster of the UU Principles and Sources
large piece of poster board or newsprint and tape
token prizes (optional)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post them on the walls of your room.

Make one copy of resource 24-A, "Characteristics of Congregational Polity" and cut it apart. If you want to be fancy, mount the strips on brightly colored construction paper for an eye-catching poster.

Make a copy of resource 24-B, "Polity Scenarios" and cut it apart.

If you don't have enough copies of the hymnal for your group, make copies of reading #475 for the closing.

If you are having your minister and/or a member of the congregational leadership visit next week, make sure those arrangements have been made.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

I feel we are all islands-in a common sea.

-Anne Morrow Lindburgh, 20th century American author

Though leaves are many, the root is one.

--William Butler Yeats, 20th century Irish poet

The ideal society is not a choir singing in unison, but a symphony playing in harmony.

-Peter Gay, contemporary Jewish American historian of social history

Taking a Stand

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle (but not on the center point) in response to today's statement, north being "yes", south being "no." Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Our UU congregation (church, society, etc.) is free to do whatever it wants to do.

Heart of the Journey

Congregational Polity Poster.

Remind the group that a few weeks ago they heard about the Pilgrims, who formed their congregation by agreeing to a covenant, who believed each person's voice should be heard, and who chose their own ministers.

(It helps visual and kinetic learners if you tick off one-two-three on your fingers as you list these three items.)

These were rules the Pilgrim and Puritan congregations used to govern themselves – rules that were part of their polity, or the manner in which they were governed.

Each time a new town was established, a new congregation was also gathered. By 1648 those congregations decided they needed to get themselves organized, so that the government in England wouldn't come poking its nose into their affairs.

Ministers from most of the Puritan churches met in Cambridge, at what later became Harvard University, to set rules that all the churches would follow. Now we call these ideas "The Cambridge Platform", and they are the ideas that all Unitarian

Universalist congregations use to govern themselves, even today.

Hand out individual pieces of "Characteristics of Congregational Polity" (including the title), asking one or two participants to be responsible for each, depending on the number in your group. Ask the participants to come up when they hear what is described on their slip of paper. They should tape the slip to the poster board, then return to their seat. When all the slips are affixed, they will have a poster explaining congregational polity that they can share with the adults in the congregation.

When the Puritan ministers met in Cambridge, the first thing they did was to decide upon a name for their churches. They chose the name "Congregational" because each church would be governed by its own congregation: it would have "Congregational Polity." We need to remember how revolutionary this was, because until now, most churches had been governed by priests and ministers. (Indeed, this experiment with self governance did eventually lead to the American Revolution. But that's another story! What we'll be talking about now are characteristics of congregational polity.)

Characteristics of Our UU Congregational Polity

The congregations did not have creeds—because it was assumed that everyone was a Calvinist. (We tend to forget how very intolerant the Puritans, who valued their own religious freedom so much, were to others.) Instead, each congregation was united by a covenant, an agreement which all members signed.

Each congregation is united by its covenant.

Congregations decided for themselves what their covenant was. Those who were willing to "walk together," supporting the covenant, could be members.

Each congregation determines for itself what its conditions are for membership.

What's more, each gathered church was complete in itself, as opposed to being under any hierarchy.

Each congregation is complete in itself.

Each congregation had the right to choose its own minister and also the right to ordain its minister (to say, "You are a minister.") In most other churches, only a bishop or other authority determined who could be a minister.

Each congregation can choose its own minister.

Congregations ordain ministers.

An important concept concerned relationships between the individual congregations. Congregations were encouraged to help other congregations by giving advice or support or even by telling each other when they were screwing up!

Congregations are to support and advise each other.

The ministers at Cambridge declared they should be free to use reason to interpret the Bible for themselves.

Ministers have a "free pulpit." They are free to say what they believe to be true.

The Cambridge Platform also contained the beginnings of true freedom of belief. When the ministers said it was their right to use their own reason to interpret the meaning of the Bible, it was hard to refuse that right to other people, even as beliefs eventually strayed further and further from Calvinism. Thus, over the years, religious conformity gave way to diversity of belief.

Congregations cannot require their members to have certain beliefs, i.e. to subscribe to a creed.

Many changes happened to the Congregational churches over the following 150 years.. One of the most important was that ministers started to move away from Calvinism, the idea that people were born sinful. (Some also quit

referring to Jesus as divine.) By 1800, more than 80% of the Puritan churches in the Boston area were referred to as "liberal Christian" and were increasingly given the derogatory name of "Unitarian." And in 1819, William Ellery Channing, the father of American Unitarianism, preached his famous sermon on "Unitarian Christianity" in which he set out the beliefs of the movement and derided Calvinism for its inhumanity, unreason, and gloom. Within the next few years churches declared themselves Unitarian (liberal) or Congregationalist (orthodox). The Unitarian churches remained congregational in their polity, but they left the theology of their Puritan forebears.

Getting There

Comparing UU Principles and Polity.

Call the participants' attention to your poster of the UU Principles. Since so many religious education programs are built around the UU Principles, it might surprise the youth to learn these things about them.

They are relatively new, having been adopted in 1985 (whereas our polity is more than 350 years old).

They are not intended to be a creed.

They are not necessarily even intended to be affirmed by individuals; note that they say "*We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote. . . .*"

They are, however, a covenant, an agreement about how the congregations will be in relationship to each other.

With the group looking at their poster on congregational polity and at the poster of the Principles, have them comment on how polity could have influenced the Principles. For instance, the idea of support among churches could have influenced the third Principle; or our being non-creedal and the idea of the free pulpit both could have influenced the fourth Principle, and so on.

Putting Polity to Work Challenge.

Divide participants into three groups and give each one of them a polity scenario from Resource 24-B. Have them read through the scenario, then prepare an answer to its question.

When they are ready, have the groups report to each other, reading the scenario and their answer to the question. Ask the groups who are listening to the answers decide if the reporting group is correct. **If** you have prizes to distribute, each group with a correct answer will get rewarded.

Here are the answers:

A. Just as members give money to their congregations, so congregations give money to the UUA. In 1918, during the first World War, the AUA (the American Unitarian Association, precursor of the UUA) demanded that **if** a church wanted to receive any funds from the AUA, its minister had to support the war. Some ministers refused to do this. Of those who refused, some lost their jobs; other congregations kept their ministers but left the AUA. How did the AUA go against congregational polity in making this demand. (Warning, there are two parts to this answer!)

Ministers have the right to their own beliefs (freedom of the pulpit). And if a congregation can't get money from the Association unless its minister believes a certain way, then the congregation isn't really free to choose its own minister. (Twenty years later the AUA did apologize for having made this requirement, acknowledging it had been wrong to do so.)

B. In 1963, during the height of the Civil Rights movement, some people wanted to require that any congregation belonging to the UUA had to allow African Americans to be members. Congregations that insisted on being segregationist would be booted out of the UUA. Unitarian Universalists stand for fairness in human relations and a just world. So why couldn't the UUA make this demand?

Congregations are free to choose whatever requirements they want for their own membership.

C. The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greater

Whoville has discovered that every single member (

believes that the Grinch is a manifestation of the divine, and they have written a little poem about this which they recite each Sunday:

*Holy Grinch, furry and green,
You're the best god we've ever seen.*

Now they've decided that anyone else who wants to join their congregation has to be willing to agree with this poem. The UUA says **if** they make this requirement, their congregation can no longer be a member. Aren't UU congregations supposed to be able to set their own requirements for membership?

Yes, with one exception: the requirement cannot be that members have to agree with a certain creed

Stopping to Rest

Preparing for Next Week's Guests.

Next week the minister and a member of the congregation's leadership will visit to answer questions related to congregational polity. Have the group brainstorm possible questions on newsprint, then make up a final list. While the group might think of new questions prior to next Sunday, it would be good to give your guests the questions you do have now in advance.

Possible questions for the minister:

How would you describe the free pulpit?:
Why is a free pulpit important?
What did it mean historically to be called?
How did you experience your call?
Who ordained you?
What does ordination mean to you?
When were you installed as our minister?
What was the service like?

Possible questions for the church leadership:

How does one become a member of our congregation?
What are the requirements of membership?
How old do you have to be?
What are the rights of membership?

What are the responsibilities?
How did our congregation come to be?
Do we have any special relationships with any other UU congregations?
Do we meet or have programs with any other congregations?

You might also ask some of the participants to bring juice and cookies, sweetrolls, bagels, or some other baked goods so the group and their guests can have light refreshments next week.

Journaling.

If there's time, have the youth pull out their journals and reflect on **if** they think congregational polity is "fair" and **if** not, what would they change.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand <Reprise>.

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement that was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

Our UU congregation (church, society, etc.) is free to do whatever it wants to do.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

—OR—

Quick Stop.

Ask participants to state in a sentence what surprised them most about today's session or what they really liked about another group's response to the polity challenge.

Closing Circle.

In unison, read #475 from *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Love is the spirit of this church." Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Notes from field testing:

*One teacher, feeling youth this age do not
have experience of living without freedom, told
her group about visiting a country under
Communist rule.*

*One teacher drew a map of Massachusetts,
showing where Cambridge and Plymouth are.
You might want to bring in a map of
Massachusetts.*

*In general, the youth found the
information interesting and enjoyed the polity
challenge. One group was keeping its polity
poster for future use.*

Characteristics of Our UU Congregational Polity

- Each congregation sets its own conditions for membership.

Each congregation is complete
in itself.

Each congregation can choose
its own minister.

• Congregations ordain ministers.

Congregations are to
support and advise each
other.

Ministers have a free pulpit;
They are free to say what
they believe to be true.

Congregations cannot
require their members to
have certain beliefs, i.e. to
subscribe to a creed.

Resource 24:B
Polity Scenario Challenge

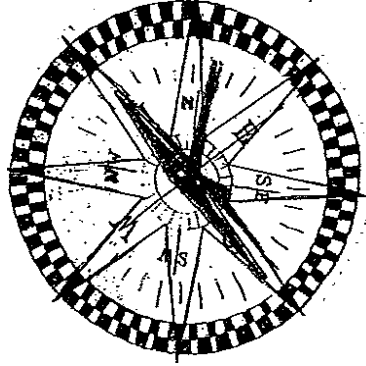
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B. In 1963, during the height of the Civil Rights movement, some people wanted to require that any congregation belonging to the UUA had to allow African Americans to be members. Congregations that insisted on being segregationist would be booted out of the UUA. Unitarian Universalists stand for fairness in human relations and a just world. So why couldn't the UUA make this demand?

C. The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greater Whoville has discovered that every single member believes that the Grinch is a manifestation of the divine, and they have written a little poem about this which they recite each Sunday:

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We need not think alike to love alike.
Francis David, 16th C. founder of
Unitarianism in Transylvania

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Session Twenty-Five

Learning from Others, Forming Bonds

Goals for Participants:

- to have their earlier learnings reinforced by conversations with the minister and a leadership representative
- to gain a better understanding of ministry and membership
- to find a group of UU peers with whom they may form a relationship and to plan a way of connecting with that group
- to review the covenant they made at the beginning of the year and possibly to re-write it

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand. (5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. Talking with Our Guests. (15 min)
4. Getting There. Researching a UU Peer Group. (15 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Reviewing/Rewriting Our Covenant. (10 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
large paper circle for center point
copy paper, cut into small pieces
pencils
note cards and envelopes for thank you notes
District and/or UUA directory
telephone or cell phone (optional)
laptop or church computer with internet connection (optional)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of the room.

Early in the week, follow up with your guests, giving them the draft of the group's questions. Let your guests know they will only be with the group (unless they want to stay) for about the first half of their session. You might need to reorganize the morning so that the your minister can do her/his presentation first thing.

Later in the week, follow up with whomever is bringing food.

If you have a phone line available, try to bring in a laptop. Otherwise, see if the group can use a church computer that is connected to the internet.

Ask to borrow the most current District and/or UUA directory from your church office.

Cut up a sheet of copy paper so each participant can have a piece on which to write a number.

There are approximately 1000+ UU congregations belonging to the UUA. To get an exact number, since it changes from year to year, go to

<http://www.uua.org/aboutuua/statistics.html>

(The number for 2004/05 is 1039)

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

If your minister is there, you might ask her/him to lead a reading. And/or ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be.

-Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Civil Rights leader and martyr

The most holy bond of society is friendship.

-Mary Wollstonecraft, 18th century British Unitarian and author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*

Church is a place where you get to practice what it means to be human.

-James Luther Adams, 20th century UU Theologian

All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

-George E. Odell, from reading #468 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

Taking a Stand

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle, north being "more", south being "less." Before doing so, they should write down on a small slip of paper a numeral representing the number of UU congregations they think there are (either in the USA or in Canada, depending upon which country you are in.). When they have written their number down, they should arrange themselves from larger to smaller numbers on the compass needle. (You might ask them to do this in silence, just looking at others' written numbers and rearranging themselves as necessary.) Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the number they did.

Let the group know you'll tell them how many congregations there are at the end of the morning, **if** they haven't been able to figure out the number for themselves by then.

Heart of the Journey

Talking with Our Guests.

As much as possible, have the youth ask the questions of their guests and serve as hosts. (Ideally, they prepared questions the prior week.)

In addition to having the group ask their questions, you might have them share with their guests what they have been learning. They can show their congregational polity poster or talk about other things they have covered.

After the guests leave, ask two members of the group to write a brief thank you note to each guest. Make sure they do this prior to the end of the session. It's nice **if** each participant can sign it.

Getting There

Researching a UU Peer Group.

The Puritan churches were charged with advising, supporting, and even admonishing each other (saying, "You screwed up!"). And today the group should have gotten some idea about the relationships their own congregation has with other UU congregations. Now they're going to do some.

research to find a peer group with whom they can have some sort of a relationship.

If the group wants to form a relationship with people they can visit, they will probably want to stay close to home. Looking in the District directory, they can see what other congregations are near them and can tell if they have R.E. programs. **If** you have a computer available, they can go online to websites to find out more about the RE. programs of various congregations... i.e. *Is there a group of kids our age?* And/or they can call the church in question and ask whomever answers. What they want to get is the name of a contact whom they can call or email.

In this electronic age, **if** the group is in an isolated location or wants to connect with a group far away, they might check out names of congregations in the UUA directory, then follow the same procedure as described above, having a relationship by phone, letter or email.

The kind of relationship and the extent of the relationship will depend upon the interest of the youth. **If** they can't finish their research that morning, ask several of them to follow up over the week and report back about with whom they spoke or emailed. They could also ask your religious educator for suggestions.

Stopping to Rest

Reviewing Your Covenant.

As a group, have the participants decide **if** their covenant should be rewritten, now that they know more fully what it means. What do they promise each other? What should they be able to expect from each other as they "walk together" through the rest of the year? As the group talks, are they making sure that every person is heard from? Fine tune the covenant until everyone feels heard from.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Tell the participants how many congregations are certified with the UUA With

the information they have gained over the morning, is that more or less than they would have thought? Have them arrange themselves on the compass needle; north is more, south is less.. Ask **if** anyone finds the number surprising, and **if** so, why.

-OR-

Quick Stop.

Have each participant say something (in one sentence or less) about an activity or outing they would like to do with another youth group (or something they would like to ask the other church).

Closing Circle.

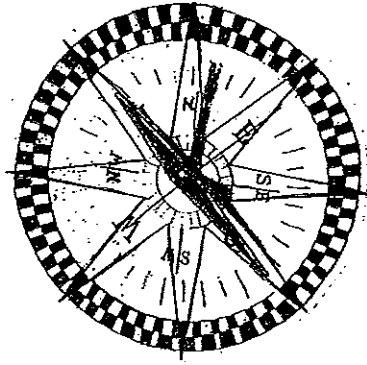
Recite your new (or existing) covenant together. Then extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

*You might ask for volunteers to bring in snack
food for next week's session.*

Notes from field testing:

Central Unitarian Church in Paramus, NJ did the following with great success: The teacher went to the suggested website and wrote down the number of congregations in the US and in each state. During the session, she asked participants to guess the member of congregations in the US without going over. She also asked them to guess the state with the most congregations and the state with the least and how many were in their home state. In their state, which congregation was the largest, which was the smallest, and how many members did their own congregation have. Those who got the closest won a cookie. There was lots of interest and lots of surprise.



*There is no great and no small/ To
the Soul that maketh all.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Session Twenty-Six

Thinkers and Doers

(The Transcendental Mystery Dinner Party)

Goals for Participants:

- to be introduced to the concept of Transcendentalism
- to become aware of some great mid-19th century Unitarians and to understand that these people associated with and influenced each other- and their influence is still felt today
- to learn how theology can influence actions
- to meet a number of Unitarian *women*

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand.(5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. "Transcendentalism Demystified" Story and Conversation. (10 min)
4. Getting There. The Transcendental Mystery Dinner Party. (25 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Journaling. (5 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
participants' journals
large paper circle for center point finger food (see Advance Preparation)
construction paper cut into 3" X 12" strips
single hole punch and yarn
markers
small paper plates or napkins

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips

of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Read over "Transcendentalism Demystified" (Resource 26-A) and decide how you will convey that information to the youth.

Make a copy of the first seven pages of Resource 26-B (with the portraits) and cut it apart so it can be distributed to participants. (The last two pages are the answers for the teacher.)

Finger food for the "Transcendental Dinner Party" might include popcorn and jell-o cubes. . . foods that are sort of mysterious. And you might serve dessert as a reward at the end. Having small plates will discourage hoarding of food. If you asked volunteers to bring snack food in, be sure to give them a reminder email or call.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

*Everything in Nature contains all the powers of Nature.
Everything is made of one hidden stuff*
-Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th century Unitarian minister, theologian, author – and Transcendentalist

All seems beautiful to me; I can repeat over to men and women, You have done such good to me, I would do the same to you.
--Walt Whitman, 19 century poet and Transcendentalist

Be not simply good; be good for something.
-Henry David Thoreau, 19th century Unitarian writer and Transcendentalist

I accept the Universe!
-Margaret Fuller, 19th century Unitarian and Transcendentalist who encouraged women to pursue intellectual interests

Taking a Stand

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle in response to today's statement, north being "yes", south being "no." (No standing on the "center point.") Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose their spot.

I don't know what the word "transcendental" means.

Heart of the Journey

"Transcendentalism Demystified" Story and Conversation.

Share with the group the explanation of Transcendentalism (Resource 26-A). Tell the youth that they will be hearing many hints to help solve the "mysteries" they will encounter later. When you've finished the explanation, ask the participants to look at the "Thoughts for the Day" again and explain them in the light of what they have just learned.

Getting There

The Transcendental Mystery Dinner Party.

Most Transcendentalists lived in the Boston area, and even those who didn't, visited there. These people really knew each other and spent time together.

Margaret Fuller was famous for hosting "Conversations" at which people came together to talk and listen to each other. These conversations included (or at times were limited to) women, who at that time (the mid-19th century) had very few opportunities to stretch their intellects. Today the "conversation" will take place at a dinner party given at Ralph Waldo Emerson's house.

Every participant should assume the character of a Transcendentalist. (And if you have a small group, they can assume two roles.) Hand out the slips of paper and have the participants write the name of their Transcendentalist in marker on a strip of construction paper. Be sure the letters are large enough to be seen across a table. Then they should punch holes in two corners and attach yarn to make a name placard that they will wear, making sure the yarn is short enough that their placard will show above the table.

This will be a sort of mystery dinner party, because the group will be playing the game "Two Truths and a Lie." Each participant has the name of a Transcendentalist and three statements about that person. Two of the statements are true. The third is false. The first thing each participant should do is figure out which statement they have is false. Once they have decided which one they think it is (and it might be no more than a guess), they should silently point to that statement and ask a teacher to let them know if they are right or not. If they are wrong, the teacher should point to the false statement.

When every person knows which of his/her "facts" is a lie, have the group sit around a table. Each person introduces him/herself and reads their "facts" in any order they choose. (Ralph Waldo Emerson should start, since he's the host. You might also let "Mr. Emerson" – even his friends did not call him Ralph! – determine the order in which the players are up.) The Transcendentalist who is "up" should read all three statements before the group starts to decide which one is false. The group should try

to figure out the “lie” by thinking about what they have heard about the Transcendentalists and what they know about UU values. There should be conversation until the group arrives at one answer. (And if they pay attention, what they learn about one Transcendentalist might help them figure out the truths/lie for another.) Once the group has decided on their answer, the teacher can give the explanation for why the lie was false.

The only rule of the conversation is that they have to address each person by his/her Transcendentalist name. (You might also have a rule that they have to keep their food on their plate or napkin—in other words, make some sort of rule so that the food is parceled out slowly.)

Play the game until all the Transcendentalists have had a turn. You might keep score for the entire game. Or you might decide to reward each correct response by passing the food around at that time.

At the end, serve dessert.

Stopping to Rest

· Journaling.

Here are some ideas for this week's reflection: If you could ask the Transcendentalist you portrayed a question, what would it be? Which of the Transcendentalists do you think you'd like to meet, and why? Describe a "Transcendental" experience you've had and how it made you feel.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand on the question that was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

I don't know what the word "transcendental" means.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Do they feel they know

-OR -

Quick Stop. Ask each participant to name one person (living or dead) he or she would like to invite to dinner and tell why. It does not have to be a UU!

Closing Circle.

Read responsively with the group, or ask two participants to read #660 from *Singing the Living Tradition*, "To Live Deliberately" by Henry David Thoreau. Alternately, read #659 by Walt Whitman.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Expanding the Session. This would be a good lesson to serve as a springboard for a social action project regarding human rights.

more than they did at the beginning of the session? Is there a lot more for them to learn?

Sources: Information about many Transcendentalists can be found at <http://www.uua.org/luuhs/duub/articles/>

The quote from Louisa May Alcott's journal comes from Joan Goodwin's article on that website. Material for that article is copyrighted 1999-2004 by the Unitarian Universalist Historical Society.

Resource 26-A

Transcendentalism Demystified

During the time Louisa May Alcott was eleven to fourteen years old, her family lived in Concord, MA. Back then, in about 1845, Concord was a small town surrounded by countryside. One day Louisa had an experience in which, she later explained, she "got religion." She had been running in the Concord woods early one fall morning, not really thinking about anything in particular. And then, still without thinking about it, she stopped and looked at the sunlight streaming down on the meadows. She wrote in her journal: "A very strange and solemn feeling came over me as I stood there with no sound but the rustle of the pines, no one near me, and the sun so glorious, as for me alone. It seemed as if I felt God as I never did before, and I prayed in my heart that I might keep that happy sense of nearness all my life."

The kind of religious experience that Louisa had is one that might be called Transcendental, an experience that came to her without her thinking about it or trying to make anything special happen. She referred to it as feeling the presence of God, but it could also be described as feeling at one with nature or realizing that one is part of the great cosmos. Some people would describe the feeling as mysterious.

Transcendentalists generally were Unitarians, but they felt that Unitarianism had put too much emphasis on using the intellect and reason. Transcendentalists thought religious experiences were likely to come suddenly, and when you least expected them – just as that feeling came to Louisa May Alcott when she ran through the woods. These feelings were possible because we are one with Nature and Nature is one with us, and all of Nature – rocks, rivers, flowers, birds, bugs, stars and people – is infused with a divinity, a godlike quality.

If your group would be receptive, you might at this time have them close their eyes and try to remember a time when they might have had a "Transcendental" experience. It might have happened when they were outside – running,

riding a bike, or sitting by a river. It might have happened when they were inside or riding in a car and caught sight of a beautiful sky through the window. They might have been alone or with a good friend. Such experiences are less likely to happen when one is in a large group, and they aren't "organized" Take a few minutes for them to remember such an experience, and if they feel comfortable, have them share it with the group.

Because the Transcendentalists thought that God and Nature were the same thing, some of them weren't very "religious" about attending church. The leading Transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson, had been a Unitarian minister, but left that job to write and lecture. Another important Transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau, built himself a humble one room cabin on a pond (Walden Pond) and spent about two years there, most of the time by himself, so he could connect with nature.

But the influence of the Transcendentalists had as much or more to do with what they did as what they thought. Because Transcendentalists believed that there was divinity within everything and everyone, that meant that women and African slaves were also part of Nature and were filled with god-like qualities. Also, if all of Nature was divine, then this world was divine. Living life in this world, right now – rather than looking forward to a future life in heaven – became more important. And since this was the case, people were entitled to have a fulfilling life. So we find many reformers of the mid- 19th century were Transcendentalists or were good friends with the Transcendentalists. Abolitionists, educators, peacemakers and women's rights advocates made up the large circle of Transcendentalists – male and female – that formed around Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Today those gardeners who say they find God in their back yards, physicists who know about quarks but still wonder at the cosmos, and people who have a passion for social justice all share in the legacy of the Transcendentalists.

Resource 26- B: Transcendentalist Mysteries: Participant Copy

Ralph Waldo Emerson

From the time I was 14 and for the rest of my life, I kept journals – all of which were published.

My Aunt Mary introduced me to the ideas of Hinduism, which influenced me as I developed the ideas of Transcendentalism.

In my essay "Self Reliance" I stressed that people can accomplish anything they set their minds to without any help from their own inner resources.



Henry David Thoreau

I built myself a four-room cabin at Walden Pond so I could party with my Transcendentalist friends.

I was one of the first people to think about using non-violent civil disobedience to show that I disagreed with the government.

I spent a night in jail for refusing to pay my taxes, which I said supported the Mexican-American War.



Bronson Alcott

Rather well-to-do parents pulled their children out of a school I ran because I taught sex education.

Middle class parents pulled their children out of another school I ran because I canceled the annual talent show.

Poor parents pulled their children out of another school I ran because I let an African-American girl enroll.



Abigail Alcott

I was the role model for the mother in my daughter Louisa's book, *Little Women*.

I worked as a social worker among poor people in Boston.

It took *my* husband a long time to convince me that slavery was wrong.



Louisa May Alcott

When I was about 13, I had a crush on a friend's father, who happened to be Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Church was so important to me, I went to Wednesday night prayer meetings along with regular Sunday services.

Because we tried so hard to lead moral lives, not hurting anyone or anything, my family and I were close to being vegans.



Lydia Maria Child

I wrote one of the first books talking about the culture of Native Americans of New England and how they had been mistreated.

I wrote a book telling about how everyone, black and white, would be better off if there was no slavery.

I wrote a cookbook featuring New England cooking.



Elizabeth Peabody

I was the first woman to teach theology at Harvard.

Margaret Fuller held her "conversations" in my bookshop.

I started the first kindergarten in the United States

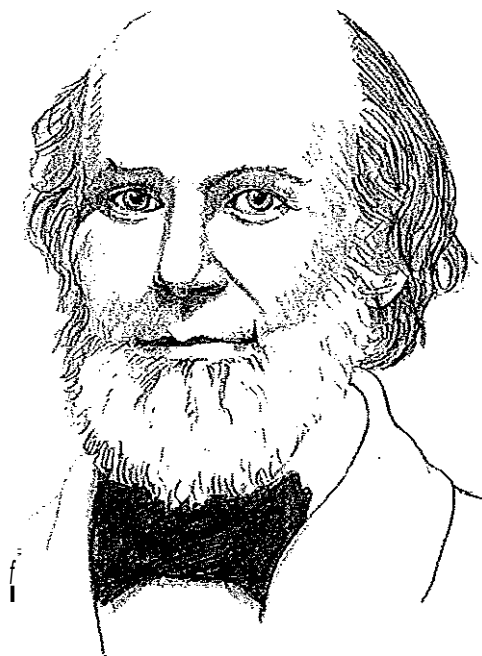


Theodore Parker

Because of my radical theology, most of my Unitarian ministerial colleagues tried to deny me a free pulpit.

Because I had an escaped slave hidden in my home, I wrote my sermons with a gun on my desk.

The government gave me a special citizenship award for helping escaped slaves.



Margaret Fuller

I held "conversations" at which women could actually use their intellects and show their knowledge.

I helped women get the right to vote.

I was credited with having had the greatest impact on the advancement of women's rights prior to the actual start of the women's rights movement in the mid 1800's.



Caroline Dall

When I was 12, I attended lectures given by Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote reports on them for my father.

As the youngest in the Transcendentalist circle, I was known for playing practical jokes on my elders.

I wrote a book about the Transcendentalists, saying it was more about doing social reform than talking about ideas.



Julia Ward Howe

I wrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" after seeing injured soldiers returning from battle during the Civil War.

I started Father's Day as a way to honor injured soldiers who had children.

I started Mothers' Day as a reminder that mothers did not want to send their sons to war.



William Lloyd Garrison

The anti-slavery society I founded did not admit women as members.

For 35 years I published *The Liberator*, an anti-slavery newspaper, without missing an issue.

While some anti-slavery people wanted to send the slaves back to Africa, I believed that they could and should stay in this country with all the rights that whites have.

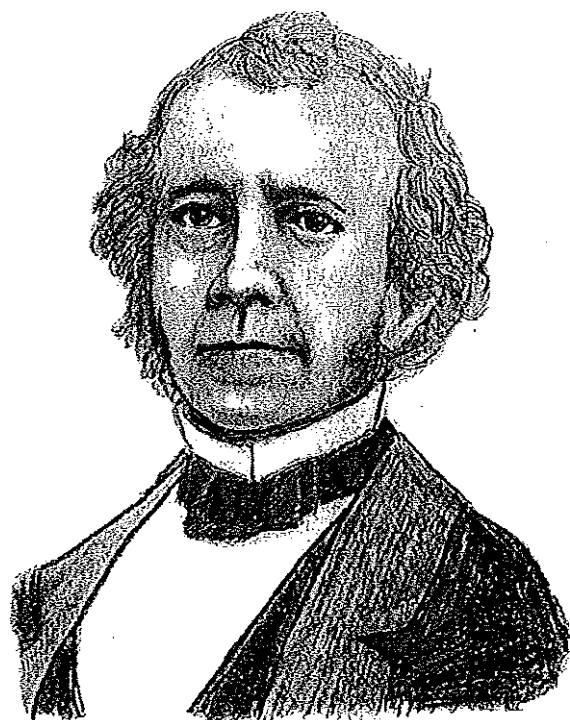


John Turner Sargent

I was minister-at-large to the poor people of Boston who could not afford to support a church.

I was one of very few Unitarian ministers who supported Theodore Parker's right to preach his radical theology.

I felt there was too much emphasis on the free pulpit, or the right of a minister to preach the truth as he saw it.



Walt Whitman

My poetry celebrated the sexuality and passion of all of nature.

My poetry reminds people that they are insignificant beings.

Some of my poetry is in the UU hymnal.



Answers:

Ralph Waldo Emerson

From the time I was 14 and for the rest of my life, I kept journals – all of which were published. My Aunt Mary introduced me to the ideas of Hinduism, which influenced me as I developed the ideas

of Transcendentalism.

F: In my essay "Self Reliance" I stressed that people can accomplish anything they set their minds to without any help from their own inner resources. *You need those inner resources!*

Henry David Thoreau

F: I built myself a four-room cabin at Walden Pond so I could party with my Transcendentalist friends. *Thoreau built himself a one room cabin and although he had occasional daytime visitors, the idea of living at Walden Pond was for him to connect with nature..*

I was one of the first people to think about using non-violent civil disobedience to show that I disagreed with the government.

I spent a night in jail for refusing to pay my taxes, which I said supported the Mexican-American War.

Bronson Alcott

Rather well-to-do parents pulled their children out of a school I ran because I taught sex education.

F: Middle class parents pulled their children out of another school I ran because I canceled the annual talent show. *Schools back then did not have annual talent shows!*

Poor parents pulled their children out of another school I ran because I let an African-American girl enroll.

Abigail Alcott

I was the role model for the mother in my daughter Louisa's book, *Little Women*.

I worked as a social worker among poor people in Boston.

It took my husband Bronson a long time to convince me that slavery was wrong.

In fact, she came from a family of abolitionists who had even hidden a fugitive slave.

Louisa May Alcott (author)

When I was about 13, I had a crush on a friend's father, who happened to be Ralph Waldo Emerson.

F: Church was so important to me, I went to Wednesday night prayer meetings along with regular Sunday services. *Like many other transcendentalists, she was not a big church goer.*

Because we tried so hard to lead moral lives, not hurting anyone or anything, my family and I were close to being vegans..

Lydia Maria Child

I wrote one of the first books talking about the culture of Native Americans of New England and how they had been mistreated.

I wrote a book telling about how everyone, black and white, would be better off **if** there was no slavery.

F: I wrote a cookbook featuring New England cooking. *No, but she did edit the first magazine for children. (And Franny Farmer, another Unitarian, wrote a famous cookbook.)*

Elizabeth Peabody

F: I was the first woman to teach theology at Harvard. *Women at this time were governesses or taught very young children. Harvard was more than 100 years from even having female students, let alone professors!*

Margaret Fuller held her "conversations" in my bookshop.

I started the first kindergarten in the United States

Theodore Parker

Because of my radical theology, most of my Unitarian ministerial colleagues tried to deny me a free . pulpit.

Because I had an escaped slave hiding in my home, I wrote my sermons with a gun on my desk. (He was ready to use it if someone threatened to recapture the slave.)

F: The government gave me a special citizenship award for helping escaped slaves. *In fact, he was arrested for helping escaped slaves.*

Margaret Fuller

I held "conversations" at which women could actually use their intellects and show their knowledge.

F: I helped women get the right to vote. *It would be 70 more years before women got that right.*

I was credited with having had the greatest impact on the advancement of women's rights prior to the actual start of the women's rights movement in the mid 1800's.

Caroline Dall

When I was 12, I attended lectures given by Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote reports on them for my father.

F: As the youngest in the Transcendentalist circle, I was known for playing practical jokes on my elders. *The Transcendentalists are not known for their great senses of humor, and 150 years ago, younger people were very respectful of their elders.*

I wrote a book about the Transcendentalists, saying it was more about doing social reform than talking about ideas.

Julia Ward Howe

I wrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" after seeing injured soldiers returning from battle during the Civil War.

F: I started Father's Day as a way to honor injured soldiers who had children. *No, although it's a nice idea.*

I started Mothers' Day as a reminder that mothers did not want to send their sons to war.

William Lloyd Garrison

F: The anti-slavery society I founded did not admit women as members. *It did have women who were members-but some male members left it to found a society that did exclude women.*

For 35 years I published *The Liberator*, an anti-slavery newspaper, without missing an issue.

While some anti-slavery people wanted to send the slaves back to Africa, I believed that they could and should stay in this country with all the rights that whites have.

John Turner Sargent

I was minister-at-large to the poor people of Boston who could not afford to support a church. I was one of very few Unitarian ministers who supported Theodore Parker's right to preach his radical theology.

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F: I felt there was too much emphasis on the free pulpit, or the right of a minister to preach the truth as he saw it. *In fact, he was a champion of the free pulpit.*

Walt Whitman

My poetry celebrated the sexuality and passion of all of nature.

F: My poetry reminds people that they are insignificant beings. *Titles such as "Song of Myself" are reminders of how much Whitman celebrated the greatness of humanity.*

Some of my poetry is in the UU hymnal.

Session Twenty-Seven

Universalism: What Are We Good For?

Goals for Participants:

- to become acquainted with the early founders of American Universalism
- to learn about the Universalist views of humanity and God
- to consider whether people's behavior is based on their conscience or external factors such as reward and punishment

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10)
2. **Taking a Stand.** (5)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** Universalist Beginnings. (7)
4. **Getting There.** Balloting with Ballou. (28)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Journaling. (5)
6. **Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle.(5)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
participants' journals
large paper circle for center point
yellow, green and blue copy paper
three bowls or baskets to receive ballots
pencils or pens with identical ink
newsprint and marker

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post them on the walls of the room.

Cut colored copy paper into squares about 2" on a side, large enough that they can easily be folded. You need 8 squares of each color for each participant.

Read through the information on Universalism in Resource 27-A and decide how to share it. You might ask your religious educator if the group learned about John Murray when they were younger.

If you want the participants to read the voting situations, you might want to copy them and cut them apart (Resource 27-B).

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes which you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

[A person's ethical behavior] would be in a poor way if [people] had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death.

–Albert Einstein, 20th century mathematician

A consciousness of guilt destroys all the expected . . . pleasures of sin.

– Hosea Ballou, 19th century Universalist Minister and theologian

You may possess only a small light, but uncover it, let it shine, use it in order to bring more light and understanding to the hearts and minds of men. Give them, not hell, but hope and courage.

–John Murray, 18th century Universalist Minister

Stand by this faith. . . . There is nothing in all the world so important as to be loyal to this faith which has placed before us the loftiest ideals.

--Olympia Brown, 19th century Universalist minister

I don't believe in punishment. Who in life gets punished?

--Maurice Sendak, contemporary author

Taking a Stand

Participants will take a stand on the compass needle in response to today's statement, north being "yes", south being "no." They may not stand on the center point. Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Without the threat of punishment, people would have no reason to be good.

Heart of the Journey

Universalist Beginnings.

Remind participants that as Unitarian Universalists, we are the heirs of two religious traditions. They have spent time looking at the Unitarian side of their ancestry, and this week they will look at the Universalist side.

Read or in some way share the information contained in Resource 27-A. It's possible that participants have in years past heard about John Murray. If so, let them tell the story. It is much less likely that participants have heard about Hosea Ballou.

Getting There

Balloting with Ballou.

In *A Treatise on Atonement*, Hosea Ballou maintained that "a consciousness of guilt destroys all the expected . . . pleasures of sin." In other words, people want to do what's right because they want to feel happy, not guilty. So you don't need the threat of punishment to make people be moral. With that idea in mind, the youth are going to do some balloting with Ballou.

Read (or have a participant read) each situation in Resource 27-B. It might be necessary to read some of the more complicated situations several times. When the participants understand the situation, they are each to mark three different ballots (colored squares of paper) for the situation.

On the blue square they are to indicate what they think Hosea Ballou would do (blue for Ballou). This is what the participant thinks is the most moral choice, even if it's not what s/he or her/his friends might do.

On the yellow square they are to indicate what they themselves would do (yellow for "you.")

On the green square, they are to indicate what they think their peers, in general, would do (green for general).

After they've written "yes" or "no" on each ballot, they should fold the ballots in half and in half again, then bring them up and put them in the appropriate basket or bowl. When all the ballots have been cast, a teacher or participant should open each up and a participant should record the results for each color on the newsprint. (It might be best to have a teacher read the yellow ballots, so that the participants can truly be anonymous in their personal responses, even if they have distinctive handwriting.)

When the ballots have been recorded for the first situation, open up the results to discussion. Then repeat this process for the remaining situations. Be sure to do similar situations in the order in which they are printed.

As you discuss the results, keep these questions in mind:

Ballou didn't expect people to be completely moral, but he did think they'd generally try to do the right thing. Would he be disappointed?

Did people seem to base their general (green) or personal (yellow for "you") responses on the possibility of punishment?

Did the possibility of reward change the results?

What are the possible rewards or punishments that could occur in situation #8? How does that effect the balloting?

Stopping to Rest

Journaling. Take out the journals and ask the participants to think about something that surprised them, either about themselves or other people, in the discussion they just had. Ask them to write or draw a response to that surprise.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

Without the threat of punishment, people would have no reason to be good.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

—OR—

Quick Stop.

Ask participants to respond to Hosea Ballou's belief that a guilty conscience is enough to make people do the right thing. In a sentence, how right or wrong was he?

Closing Circle.

This responsive reading (free of copyright) is by Reinhold Niebuhr. It is also #461 in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime,

Therefore, we are saved by hope.

Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history;

Therefore, we are saved by faith.

Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone.

Therefore, we are saved by love.

No virtuous act is quite a virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own;

Therefore, we are saved by the final form of love, which is forgiveness.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Notes from field testing:

One group found interesting gender differences in the “taking a stand” – the boys agreed and the girls disagreed.

One group that was almost all 6th graders found the “Balloting with Ballou” to be boring. But the other groups were enthusiastic about the activity, so much so that one teacher got spontaneous feedback that, “This was interesting.”

There were more “situations” than could be accomplished during the session time. You might want to choose among them – but do make sure you do several that have a progression.

Resource 27-A

Universalist Beginnings

Ask participants what they know about Universalism. If you did the session on martyrs, they met George de Benneville, who as a teenager came within minutes of being beheaded for preaching the good news of Universalism: that people were basically good and that God would bring all people to heaven.

On the other side was Calvinism. Ask those who heard the sermon by Jonathan Edwards a few weeks ago what his message was. Calvinists thought that all people were dreadfully sinful and most would wind up burning in hell for eternity.

There is the story of a Universalist who was invited to Sunday dinner at the home of a Calvinist. “Then will you be roasting your young son for our dinner?” asked the Universalist. The Calvinist was indignant. “Sir! How could you ever suggest such a repugnant thing?” “Well,” replied the Universalist, “It’s no different from thinking that a loving father God would roast his own children in hell.”

Participants might have heard the story of John Murray. As a young Methodist minister in England, he had been sent to the home of a young woman who had Universalist leanings. His job was to bring her back to a belief in Calvinism. But as they spoke together, her reasoning was so clear that Murray realized she was right and he was wrong. From then on, he preached Universalism until the tragic death of his wife and son. Then, despondent, he decided to seek a new life in the New World, but would never preach again.

On its way to New York, Murray’s ship got caught up on a sandbar on the coast of New Jersey. Going ashore for fresh water and food, Murray met a farmer named Thomas Potter who had, through his own careful searching of the Bible, become a Universalist. Potter even had built a small chapel on his property certain that in time God would send someone to preach the message of Universalism. Now, Potter was sure Murray was that man.

It took Murray quite a while to admit he was indeed a Universalist preacher, and then, he still refused to preach in Potter’s chapel. Potter then asked for a deal: if the wind had not changed by Sunday, freeing the ship, Murray would preach. Murray finally relented. The winds stayed becalmed, and that Sunday in 1770 John Murray preached the first Universalist sermon in America. Eventually Murray went to Gloucester, MA, where he founded the first Universalist church in America.

Twenty years after Murray’s first American sermon, there was another young man who, like Thomas Potter, had searched the scriptures in the Bible and also come to a belief in universal salvation. Only 19 years old, Hosea Ballou mounted a horse and went from one town in Vermont to another, preaching the good news.

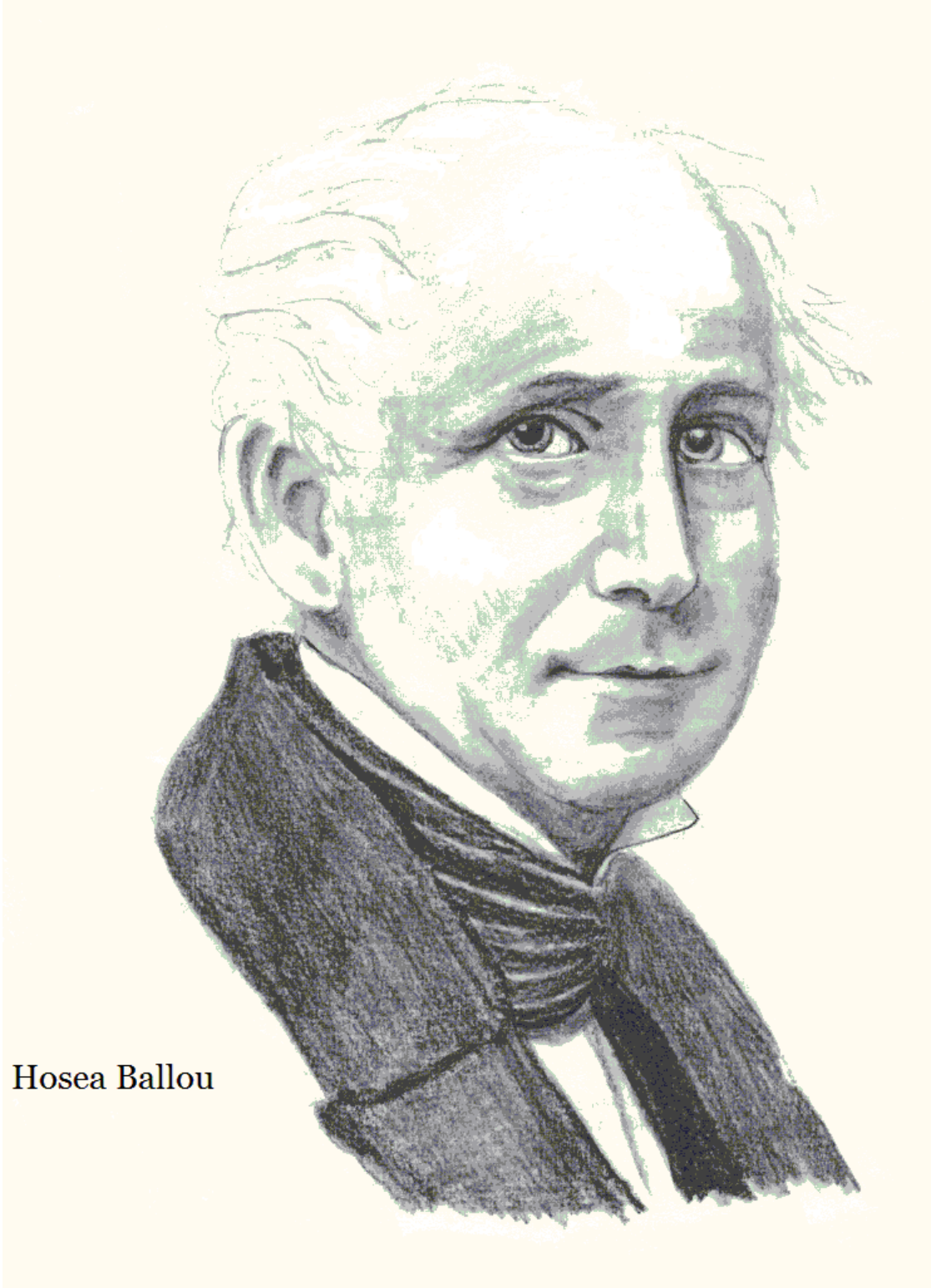
While Calvinism saw people to be endlessly wicked and deserving of punishment, Ballou believed that people, while not perfect, struggled to be good and to do the right thing. And Ballou’s beliefs encompassed *all* people, no matter where they lived or what religion they followed.. Everyone, *everyone* would be received

by the loving God. Ballou made the comparison of God to a doctor: just as a doctor does not turn away someone for being ill, but instead heals that person, so God would not turn away someone for being sinful, but instead would help the person turn away from sin.

Ballou wrote down his ideas and called them, *A Treatise on Atonement*. The *Treatise* was particularly important because it gave all Universalists a common reference which they could use to spread their message—which they did, throughout much of the young United States.

Calvinists thought Universalism to be a dangerous religion because – if the threat of punishment in hell was gone – what would make people try to be good?

What about the youth in this group? Do they think Universalism is a dangerous religion? Do people avoid doing wrong because they don't want to be caught and punished? Do people do good things because they expect to be rewarded?



Hosea Ballou

Resource 27-B

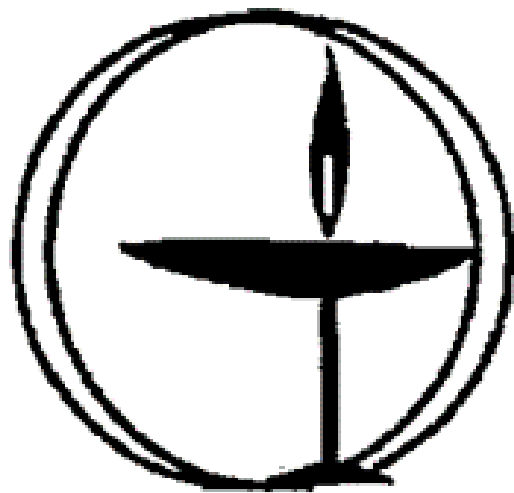
Balloting with Ballou

1. A classmate offers to sell you the latest model of a handheld Gameboy (which you really want) for half the going price. You wonder why you're being offered such a good deal, but decide it's none of your business. Do you buy the Gameboy?
2. A classmate offers to sell you the latest model of a handheld Gameboy (which you really want) for half the going price. You know watches, wallets and small electronics are being reported as stolen in the locker room. Do you buy the Gameboy?
3. A classmate offers to sell you the latest model of a handheld Gameboy (which you really want) for half the going price. Your friend Devin had a Gameboy stolen from the locker room last week and has since bought a new one. If you don't buy it, someone else will get the great deal. Do you buy the Gameboy?
4. You've got a report on earthquakes due the day after tomorrow, and if you don't hand in a good paper, you'll fail Earth Science. Unfortunately, you've got sports obligations tonight and tomorrow night. Fortunately, a friend who goes to school in a neighboring town offers to sell you a copy of her report on earthquakes that she got an A minus" on last year. You could probably learn a lot about earthquakes just by reading her paper, and since she's from another school, there's no way your teacher would ever suspect it wasn't your work. Do you buy it and turn it in as your own work?
5. You've got a report on earthquakes due the day after tomorrow, and if you don't hand in a good paper, you'll fail Earth Science. Unfortunately, you've got sports obligations tonight and tomorrow night. Fortunately, you've found a great report on earthquakes that some other middle schooler posted on a website. You're not sure what the quality of the paper is, but at least it's something to hand in. Of course, one of your classmates might find the same website and turn in an identical paper, but how likely is that? Do you print up the report and hand it in as your own?

6. Every year your parents throw you a huge birthday party at an arcade with lots of games and pizza. Your friends always know exactly what you want, and buy you really cool presents. This year your parents suggest that instead of spending the money on a party, they'd make a spaghetti dinner for your guests, after which you could watch a rented movie. The money saved would be donated to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). Oh—and instead of gifts, your friends would be asked to bring food for your congregation's food pantry. It's your choice. Do you stick with the arcade games, pizza and presents?

7. Every year your parents throw you a huge birthday party at an arcade with lots of games and pizza. Your friends always know exactly what you want, and buy you really cool presents. This year your parents suggest that instead of spending the money on a party, they'd make a spaghetti dinner for your guests, after which you could watch a rented movie. The money saved would be donated to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). Oh—and instead of gifts, your friends would be asked to bring food for your congregation's food pantry. It's your choice. You know that when your parents are really proud of you, they tend to give you a lot more privileges, like going to the mall more often or staying up later. Do you stick with the arcade games, pizza and presents?

8. For the first two years of middle school, there was only one person who would eat lunch with you – someone who was maybe even a bigger loser than you felt you were. Then last week a kid from a really cool group suggested you join them, and you did. It was awesome! Now you are on your way up and your former lunch buddy is eating alone. Do you suggest to your new friends that it would be nice if your old friend also joined the group?



Session Twenty-Eight

Two Paths Become One

Goals for Participants:

- to explore why and how our two faiths of Unitarianism and Universalism came together
- to understand what it means to have two faith traditions and a dual heritage
- to examine what the Unitarian Universalist Association and Canadian Unitarian Council offer to youth

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day.(10)
2. **Taking a Stand.** (5)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** The Ever-Widening Circle. (10)
4. **Getting There.** The Merger, the Unitarian Universalist Maze and Tug of Friendship.(25)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Reflection and Journaling. (5)
6. **Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (5)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
participants' journals
computer(s) with access to the web
copies of *The UU World* magazine
UU Principles poster

a chime, gong or bell
newsprint and markers
index cards
hole punch
yarn, string or cord
pencils for participants
a thick rope, at least 20 feet in length

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

If you do not already know, find out the name of your district/region, what state(s) or province(s) make up this district/region and how many congregations are in it. District and regional information can be accessed through your region's website which is linked from the UUA website: <http://uua.org/directory/districts/index.shtml>

The website for the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) is: <http://www.cuc.ca/>

Create name tags by writing words on the index cards, punching them with a hole-punch and stringing some yarn or cord through them with the ends tied so that they can be hung around the participants' necks. You will need one name tag

with the acronym or initials of your congregation on it, one with “UUA” (or CUC) on it, three or four with the name of your cluster, area or city on them (See Ever-Widening Circle activity) and one for each of the other participants with the name of your district and region on them.

Make copies of the Unitarian Universalist Maze (Resource 28-B), one for each participant.

Preparing for the Day’s Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

*We light this chalice to remind us of the
journey we all embark upon in our lives,
the journey that is the search for truth as
each of us perceives it.*

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

Universalists believe that God is too good to damn people, and the Unitarians believe that people are too good to be damned by God.

– Thomas Starr King, 19th century Universalist minister and then later, a Unitarian minister

When our two historic traditions consolidated in 1961 we ended up with one religion, Unitarian Universalism, which affirms two incompatible doctrines of human nature.

– Thandeka, Associate Professor of theology and culture at Meadville/Lombard Theological School

There were from the earliest days of both denominations, Unitarians with Universalist beliefs, and Universalists with Unitarian beliefs.

– Lisa Doege, Unitarian Universalist minister at First Unitarian Church in South Bend, IN

The Unitarians represented the educated and intellectual part of our religion, and the Universalists represented the more intuitive and caring part of our religion.

– Suzelle Lynch, Unitarian Universalist minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church West in Brookfield, WI

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand on the north pole (yes) or the south pole (no) in answer to today’s statement (but not the center point).

I consider myself more of a Unitarian than a Universalist.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

The Ever-Widening Circle.

Invite one of the volunteers to stand (or sit) in the center of the room. Around this participant, place the name tag you have created with the acronym of your congregation or its initials (i.e. UUFE, UUI, FUSN, etc.). Let the participants know that this person represents your UU congregation.

Invite three or four participants to create a circle of yarn, rope or cord around this first volunteer. Let them know they have created a circle which is a cluster of congregations. Place the name tag for your “cluster,” “area,” or “city” on the circle of yarn or rope. (If there are no other churches nearby and you are not a part of a cluster of neighboring churches, skip this step.) Explain to the youth that this circle represents the group of churches in your area. Ask if any of them has attended any events at these neighboring congregations. If your group has partnered with the middle school youth group at any of these churches for an event or activity, remind them of this and have them talk briefly about the experience of connecting with other UU youth.

Encourage the participants to make another, larger circle around the participant and outside the first circle. Place a name tag on this circle as you explain that your congregation, along with any neighboring congregations are a part of a district with other UU churches from your region of the country. (If your congregation is not part of a district – such as congregations in the MidAmerica region -- skip this step and go on to regions.)

Ask the participants if any of them know what the name of your district is. Ask them if they

know how large the district is, and what state(s) or province(s) make up this district. Have participants take a guess at naming how many congregations are in your district. Write down some of the number estimates. If you will have access to a computer and the internet, explain that you will check on these numbers together as a group. If not, tell them how many congregations are a part of your district and let them see how their guesses compared to the actual number.

Note to teachers: Updated regional information can be found on the Unitarian Universalist Association website at: <https://www.uua.org/regions> or the Canadian Unitarian Council website at: <http://www.cuc.ca/>. If your district is named for someone (such as Ballou-Channing, Clara Barton, etc.), remind the youth of what they might have heard already about this person. (For example: “Who remembers William Ellery Channing who arrived just in time to save us from that hell and brimstone preacher who was trying to make us understand what hell was like just sitting there listening to him go on and on?”)

Invite the participants to create an even larger circle of yarn, rope or cord around the other circles. As you place the name tag, “Region,” explain that regions are made up of districts or former districts that have merged together. Ask if any of the participants know what the name of your region is and how large it is or what states are part of it.

Have the participants make one final circle that is larger than all the others. This circle represents the UUA or the CUC. Place the tag “UUA” or “CUC” on the outer circle. Explain your region is but one of 5 regions, each of which are made up of many congregations of UU churches

that form the Unitarian Universalist Association in the United States and Mexico.

There are over 50 Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist churches located in Canada, but there is a separate unifying organization for Canadian congregations, known as the Canadian Unitarian Council or CUC. However, youth and young adults maintain a continental service connection within the negotiated agreement with UUA in 2001.

Talk about how all the congregations and UU churches are joined together with one another by covenanting to be a part of this larger organization and how we are all linked through the adoption of the Principles and our Sources. Refer to the poster of the Principles if you have one.

If your group has access to one or more computers from which you can log on to the internet, take some time to explore the UUA website at www.uua.org. Or the CUC website at <http://www.cuc.ca/>.

Make note of what information is on the home page. What does it say about our denomination? Depending upon the time you have, explore some areas of the website including what it says about being a Unitarian Universalist, Frequently Asked Questions, UU History (which includes a great link to Famous Unitarian Universalists) and the section for Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) located under the drop-down menu of specialized ministries on the UUA website. Youth information for CUC can be found at: <http://www.cuc.ca/youth/index.htm>.

If your group does not have access to a computer and the internet (even through the church office), invite the participants to look through some copies of *The UU World*.

If you have access to only one computer

and your group is too large to gather around it all at one time, break into smaller groups and have the participants who are not using the computer look through some issues of *The UU World*.

Getting There

The Merger. Remind the participants that what we know today as Unitarian Universalism was once two different faith traditions which have merged into one.

On a sheet of newsprint, draw a large upside-down “Y.” Label the two branches as Unitarianism and Universalism, and the stem as Unitarian Universalism. (See Resource 28-A.)

Ask the participants as a group if they can remember what was the core of Universalist belief. If they need a reminder, tell them that the central idea is revealed through the words of John Murray, one of the founders of the American Universalist movement along with Hosea Ballou. He said (in reaction to Calvinism which believed sinners would be sent to hell):

*“Give them not hell, but hope and courage.
Preach the kindness and everlasting love of
God.”*

Write on the Universalist line the words “no hell/love instead” and “universal salvation.” Explain that Universalists believed God so loved his people that he would never punish them for an eternity, and as a result they believed in universal salvation which is the idea that all people would go to Heaven. ***Note to teachers:*** *Universalists believed in an image of God that was like a loving father, and as a result, a decidedly male image.*

Ask the entire group of participants if they can remember what the core of Unitarian belief was. If they need a reminder, tell them about how

Unitarians rejected the concept of a trinity (Jesus being divine and on equal par with God-the-Father). Write along the Unitarian line “no trinity/one God.”

Unitarians, who were mostly highly educated and located on the East Coast became more and more intellectual as time went on. They began to pursue a quest of the mind and began subjecting religious beliefs to the test of reason. Write the word “mind” on the Unitarian line.

Universalists were more deeply spiritual and conducted services which encouraged participants to become emotionally as well as intellectually involved. They have often been likened to the heart of our faith heritage. Draw a heart on the Universalist line or write the words “heart.”

How did these two groups grow to become so much alike that they felt the need to join together in the 1960s? The reality is that they were always very similar and held many of the same beliefs. A person who was a Unitarian might also have Universalist beliefs, and vice-versa. In fact, the youth groups of these two denominations joined together in the 1950s to create an organization called Liberal Religious Youth (LRY).

But there was also a different approach to polity, theology and worship, so some conflict was inevitable. They had to break new ground and reach compromises in order to form this new religion.

The Unitarian Universalist Maze.

Share with the participants the idea that merging the two religions was like navigating a maze through difficult territory. Pass out copies of the Unitarian Universalist Maze (Resource 28-B). Invite participants to complete the maze after you

explain the unique qualities of this particular exercise. This first thing which makes this maze different is that the object is to get the two groups to the middle. There is something else unique about the maze, and it has something to do with the way they will need to arrive at a solution. (Give the group this hint, but not the answer!)

Participants will soon realize there is no way to solve the maze without going over barriers. In order to complete the maze, they will need to go over the lines blocking their path. Once this becomes clear, announce to the participants that to create a new religion from two different faiths, you have to cross barriers and do things in a new way. There is no clear path from here to there just as there was no clear path for those people who were merging the two faiths of Unitarianism and Universalism.

What were some of the barriers they were faced with? The very name of this new religion was a potential issue which threatened the merger. Which should come first? And why?

Some people thought the first word would be considered an adjective, therefore making the word Unitarian merely a description of the Universalists. Others were concerned that in going with the name Unitarian Universalist, some people would just drop the “Universalist” part because the name is too long and just say “Unitarian,” forgetting all about the Universalist part of the faith. Yet others believed that it should be an entirely new name, one that reflects both faiths but not necessarily have the name of both groups as part of it. Eventually, they went with placing the two names in alphabetical order.

Another barrier they faced was the deeply held concern that because the Unitarians far outnumbered the Universalists, the merger would

mean the Unitarians might “swallow up” the Universalists. Ask the participants: have any of these fears been realized?

What other barriers might they have faced? How might they have been resolved?

Tug of Friendship.

Invite the group of participants to gather into a circle by sitting on the floor. (If you have someone with mobility concerns, this exercise can be modified so that everyone begins seated in a chair instead.) Place the rope in the center of the circle and tie it into a large loop, slightly smaller than the circle of participants. Put the rope on the floor in front of everyone’s feet (or as an alternative, on everyone’s knees if seated). Explain to the group that their goal is to pull on the rope to get everyone into a standing position, but without touching the floor (or chair) with their hands. To be successful, it will take the whole group’s effort to tug them into a standing position.

Try it again, only this time, ask one of the participants to not put any effort into the tugging. What happens? Can the other group members compensate for the one who refuses to participate?

Return once again to the starting position, and ask everyone to cooperate this time. With everyone working together, they should once again be successful in easily getting the group back to a standing position.

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling.

Ask the participants to reflect upon the process of working together they just experienced. Then invite them to imagine what it must have been like for the delegates who negotiated the merger of

our two faith heritages, when hundreds of people had to compromise and work together so that a majority vote could be reached to make the merger a reality. *How would that many people make the process of negotiation difficult? How could they ever come to any sort of resolution?*

Invite the participants to engage in some quiet reflection by writing or drawing in their journals about the two faith traditions they have inherited and why it is important to keep the ideas of both in mind.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is “yes”, South is “no.” Where do they stand now?

I consider myself more of a Unitarian than a Universalist.

Ask participants to share reasons why they’re now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

– OR –

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly (in one sentence or less) state:

something surprising about today’s session, or

something they like about being a part of a dual faith tradition.

Closing Circle.

Invite participants to share with the group something which is great about being a Unitarian Universalist, and striking a chime (or ringing a bell, striking a gong, etc) after they share their answer. The group may keep going as long as they wish and the answers are insightful (not silly or a backhanded put-down) and everyone feels they have had a chance to share as they wish. Participants may share more than once as long as they are not preventing others from doing so and their words are contributing to the overall mood.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not it's light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter
on our journey.*

Optional Expansion of Session Idea:

Plan to make a trip to Boston and visit the UUA headquarters. Many churches in the area will offer home hospitality to youth groups, or you can stay overnight at a youth hostel in the area. Call the UUA office to arrange a tour.

A trip to Boston and Concord, MA will bring to life much of the Unitarian Universalist

history the youth have learned in this unit. They can see Walden Pond which was the source of inspiration to Henry David Thoreau and the pulpit where William Ellery Channing preached his sermons. There are also many more historical sites which are tied to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages such as the house of Paul Revere and if you take a side trip to Gloucester, MA, your youth can visit the birthplace of Universalism in America at the church where John Murray served as minister.

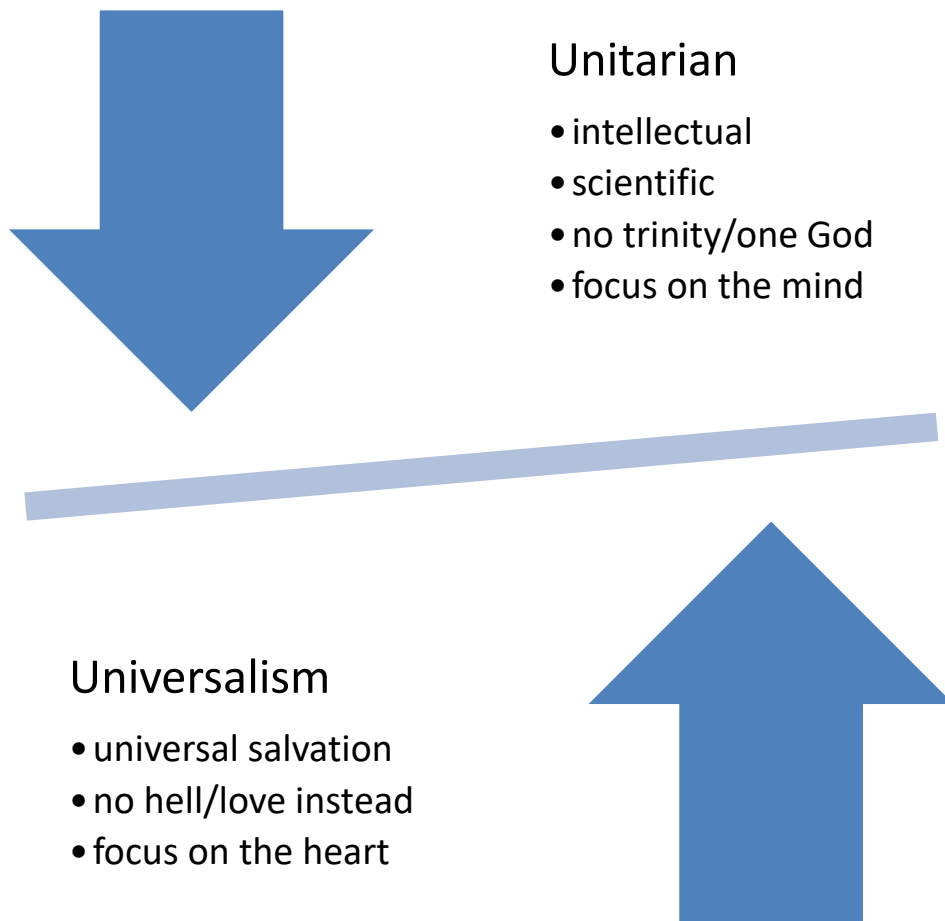
They can meet the staff at the UUA, talk to people at the YRUU office, and (particularly for those youth in isolated areas) come to a real understanding of the web which connects us to hundreds and thousands of other Unitarian Universalists all over the continent. A trip to Boston is an opportunity to make our liberal heritage “come alive” and personally relevant to our youth.

For more information on things to do, how to get there and even fundraising to make such a trip possible, check out the details on the UUA website at:

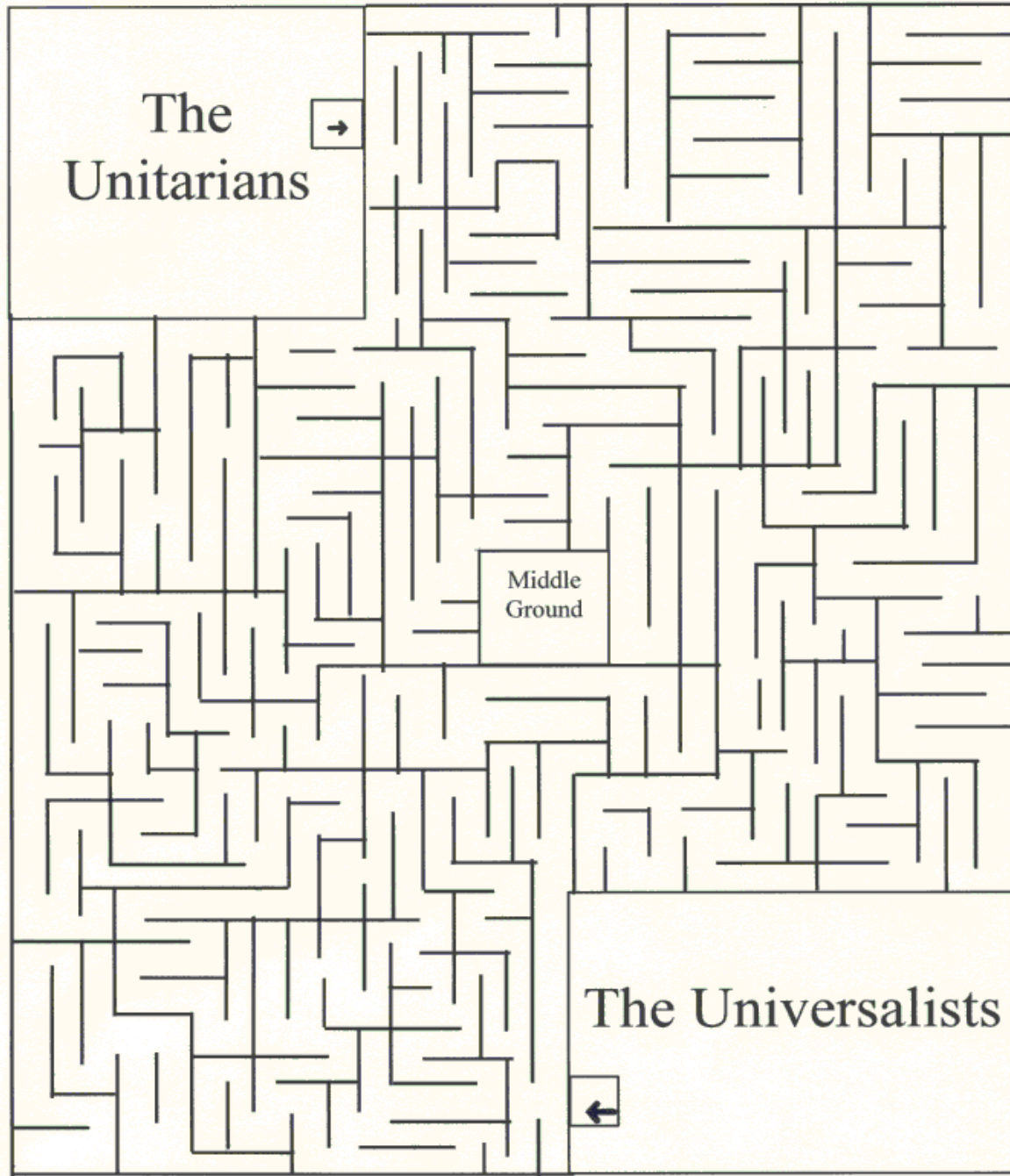
<http://www.uua.org/aboutuua/boston/heritagetours.html>

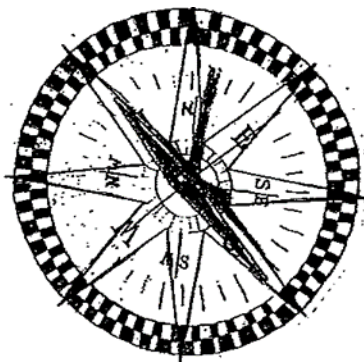
Resource 28-A

Unitarians and Universalists



Resource 28-B
Unitarian Universalist Maze





Unit Five

Traveling West

Connections to the World and the web of life sustain us on our journey.

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Session Twenty-Nine

No Fate but What We Make

Goals for Participants:

- to explore whether or not there is a power that directs human affairs
- to examine how the choices we make affect the rest of our lives and the lives of others
- to see how our actions become significant when our choices affect our futures and the lives of others
- to explore the second Principle and how our actions affect how we interact with others in just, equitable and compassionate ways

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. **Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** Playing the Cards You're Dealt. (15 min)
4. **Getting There.** Working with What You've Got. (15 min)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Reflection and Journaling. (5 min)
6. **Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) and Closing Circle. (10 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
participants' journals
paper circle for "center point"
deck of playing cards (2 decks for a group of more than 8)
writing paper
newsprint or poster board
pens or thin markers
craft paper

paints
paintbrushes
newspaper (to keep table clean while painting)
bell or chime
large, clear bowl of water
smooth stones, at least one for each participant
(or alternatively, marbles)
CD or tape of meditative music (optional)
CD or tape player (optional)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Prepare the papers for the Working with What You've Got project. (See Resource 29-A for some writing prompt suggestions.) To start the art project papers, paint three shapes of varying sizes in three different colors on sheets of craft paper (you might do circles on one paper, squares on another, etc., so that they vary slightly from one project to another). You will need one project "start" for each of the participants, so you will need several papers with writing prompts and several papers with shapes painted on them.

Decide whether or not to use meditative music for the closing exercise with the stones and the water "ripple ritual;" locate an appropriate meditative style CD or tape to use if desired.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

The more alternatives, the more difficult the choice.

– Abbe D'Allanival

It is our choices...that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.

– J.K. Rowling, from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

There is no fate, but what we make.

–The character of John Connor in the movie, *Terminator Two*.

Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.

– William Jennings Bryan, early 20th century lawyer, statesman, and politician

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand on the north pole (yes) or the south pole (no) but in answer to

today's statement—and in a twist for this session, participants can stand on the center point if they choose to do so.

I am in control of my own destiny.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did if *anyone did choose the middle spot (and even if no one did) talk about how "both yes and no" might be a valid and understandable answer for this statement.*

Heart of the Journey

Playing the Cards You're Dealt. Expand upon the Taking a Stand exercise by asking the participants if they feel as if things happen to them all of the time, or if they feel they have the power to make things happen. Transition into the next part of the session by asking the participants if they believe in the concept of fate.

Explain that believing in fate means that what happens to you is a result of things outside your control. The idea of karma means that we reap what we sow; or in other words – we get what we deserve.

To further explore the concept of fate, play the Game of Fate using a deck of regular playing cards. (If you have more than 8 in your group, you'll have to divide into two groups.) Deal out one card to each person and explain that they can look at their card but not show it to anyone else. Then turn over the top card of the remaining pile of cards. Explain that this suit of cards (whether spades, clubs, hearts or diamonds) is "trump." Trump is considered "higher" than any other card, so a "trump" card can even take an Ace of another suit.

There are only two rules for play in this game. Everyone must follow suit (for example, if diamonds are led, everyone must lay down diamonds if they have one) but they do not have to play "trump" just because they have it (they can choose to hold onto it instead). The highest card wins.

Now, ask the participants of the group to "bid," or in other words, predict whether or not

they will win this hand (have the highest card value), even though they do not know what cards the other players have—they can only rely on the knowledge of their card and how they might guess it will play (for example, an Ace might win if no trump is played). Have them say, "one" if they think they will have the highest card played or "zero" if they don't think they will. Then the person to your left should lay their card down first. The others must follow suit. Who had the highest card? Did that person think they were going to win it?

Collect all the cards, shuffle them and invite the person on your left to deal out two cards to each person, one at a time. Now have the participants predict whether they will "take the trick" (have the highest card) one time, two times or zero times. Invite someone to write down the "bids" so it is easier to remember. Remind the participants that they must follow the suit led if possible, but they do not have to play a trump card if they decide not to.

Then play the hand. Did those who thought they would take the tricks do so? How did it work out?

Continue playing the game, with the dealing of the cards going to the next person on the left with each different round, and each time dealing one more card out to the group. Keep playing until round six when each person will have six cards and will need to predict whether they can take zero through six tricks.

After you've played the sixth round, collect the cards and encourage the group to talk about what that experience was like. Did it become easier or harder the more cards they had to play? How did the cards which were played before they had a turn affect how they played their cards? Were they able to predict how many "tricks" they would end up with? How did their predictions change as the game progressed? Did they develop any strategies of how to play their cards to get the number of "tricks" they'd predicted? How did their choices affect the way others played their cards? How did their choices affect the outcome of the game?

Expand the discussion by asking the participants how this game mirrors real life. If no

one brings it up, mention that we are all given different things in our life—some "cards" may be good, others may be "bad." It's how we play the cards that are dealt which makes a difference, and how we feel about the cards which we hold in our hand.

Getting There

Working With What You've Got. None of us is working with a clean slate, and our actions have an effect not only upon the future, but upon other people who interact with us in life. As Unitarian Universalists, we believe in justice, equity and compassion in human relations. How does this concept of fate (doing the best with what we've got) affect our sense of justice, equity and compassion in our dealings with others? What is our responsibility toward others when all of our actions have the potential of affecting someone else? How can we do the best that we can when so much depends upon factors outside of our personal control, for example:

what city/town we live in
what part of the city/town we live in
who our parents are
what our parents do for a living
whether our parents are divorced or still together

Can the participants think of other things in their lives that are outside of their control? Using newsprint or poster board, make a chart with two columns. Mark the left column "Outside Our Control" and the right column "Within Our Control." Add any comments participants may have already mentioned as being out of their control, then ask them to name some things which are within their control (such as the friends they choose to hang around with or the after school activities they engage in). *Note: Some things may belong in both columns (for example, if participants are required to play piano by their parents but they don't want to do so).*

Next ask the participants to think about those things which they listed as being out of their control and how they might turn them to their best

advantage, or to take the "fate" which was given them and make it work for them. Jot down any ideas they might have on the newsprint/poster.

Then explain that they will each be given the opportunity to work on a group activity which is built upon what the person before them has already created. These projects will involve either a writing component (such as a short story) or an art component (such as creating a painting, mural or other picture). Each person should pick a project to start with (either a writing project or art project), but let them know they will not be finishing it.

For this activity, one person at a time contributes to the piece, and the others follow in succession, working with what the others have already created and adding to it. Use a small bell, chime or gong and ring it at one-minute intervals to signal that the person currently working must stop and the next person should begin. When the bell, chime or gong rings, the project must get passed to the next person in the circle to carry on with what has already been created. Continue until everyone has had a chance to contribute to each of the projects or time runs out.

Note to teachers: If you have a really large group, consider breaking into two teams and plan to have each of the projects rotated among the participants of the teams rather than the whole group.

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling. Ask the participants for some feedback on the experience of adding to projects already started and worked on by others. What was that like? Was it hard to give up a project once they'd started working on it? Did it get tougher the more people had added their influence to the project before they got it handed to them? How do they think their addition to the project affected others? How might this experience affect their future dealings with others in a way which is just, equitable and compassionate?

After all participants who wish to share

have reflected verbally with the group, invite all participants to reflect in their journals with words or pictures that express their experience here today.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." They are also able to stand on the center point today. Where do they stand now?

I am in control of my own destiny.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

Note: There is no Quick Stop for today's session since the Closing Circle duplicates this activity. If your group regularly does the Quick Stop, just skip to Closing Circle.

Closing Circle.

Ask someone to read this quote from Joseph Epstein:

We do not choose to be born. We do not choose our parents, the country of our birth, or the immediate circumstances of our upbringing. We do not, most of us, choose to die; nor do we choose the time and conditions of our death. But within this realm of choicelessness, we do choose how we live.

Start playing the meditative music for the closing water ripple activity (optional).

Encourage participants to come forward and share one thing they appreciate about their lives or something they would like to make happen. As they share, have them select a stone (or marble) to place in the bowl of water. After everyone has had a chance to drop their stone in

the water, say some words of reflection such as:

Just as the stones you have dropped here in this bowl have sent ripples out along the water, our actions make a difference and send out some ripples of their own. Let us always be mindful of this.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison

words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Notes from field testing:

The card game was very popular in the field testing, and the youth not only enjoyed it, they understood the lesson behind it. Said one teacher, "The kids got into it and made the connections to life very clearly and articulately." Another teacher said, "They loved the card games!"

One group had such meaningful conversations around the ideas raised by the card game and the Out of Control/Within Control discussion that they ran out of time for the group projects.

Some of the groups really liked the rock and ripple ritual at the end of the session, but for one group of mostly 6th graders, it was not taken seriously and they laughed throughout the closing. The success of this activity is probably related to the maturity of your group, whether or not they like engaging in ritualistic activities like this and the particular energy in the group for the day. Sometimes even a mature group can be too riled up to settle down for a ritualistic closing like this if the weather is too beautiful outside or if earlier physical activity (such as the card game) continues to keep the group on a high energy level throughout the entire session. If the closing ritual

does not seem to be appropriate for your group on that particular day, drop the meditative music and do the closing as a Quick Stop instead, asking each participant to verbally share one thing they appreciate about their lives or something they would like to make happen. Then, you (as the teacher) can drop a few stones into the water and say the closing words about ripples in the water.

Social Justice Expansion Possibility:

The ideas raised in this session may be a natural lead-in to a discussion of how the group might get involved in a social justice project. You could brainstorm ideas of how they could take action to create a climate of "justice, equity and compassion" in their community. Or, the group could consider what they would like to see happen to improve the lives of people in their area. This might also be an opportunity to consider more deeply those issues in your community that are within your control to change and how your group might work to change those laws, policies or ideas.

Resource
29-A
Story Prompt Suggestions for Writing
Projects

It wasn't the kind of summer we had expected.

It was a dark and stormy night.

Patrick picked up the bottle and put it in his backpack.

Emily had spent the entire night lying awake.

"Just leave me alone!" shouted Ben as he slammed the door.

The small red van rolled to a stop in front of the drugstore.

They had always been best friends. That was until...

Session Thirty

The Devil Made Them Do It

Goals for Participants:

- to explore the concept of whether people are born good or bad, or whether they become that way through their life's experiences
- to further explore the idea of inherent worth and dignity-for everyone?
- to consider what makes a person engage in violent behavior
- to consider societal influences that could cause a person to commit an evil act

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
- 2. Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** A Tale of Two Boys and Shock Rock. (15 min)
- 4. Getting There.** Breakdown in the Living Machine. (20 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** Reflection and Journaling. (5 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
participants' journals
large paper "center point"
several copies of the Bible
copy of the CD, *Portrait of an American Family*
by Marilyn Manson
CD player
dominoes (optional, as alternative to Breakdown in Living Machine activity)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Read through the story in Resource 30-A so that you are comfortable with the content and the flow of words.

Locate a copy of the CD *Portrait of an American Family* by the group Marilyn Manson (or download off the internet). Listen to the song in advance and make copies of the lyrics in Resource 30-B so the participants can read the words as they listen to the music.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to

read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

The power of choosing good and evil is within reach of us all.

– Origen of Alexandria, Second Century Christian theologian and philosopher

All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

-Edmund Burke, 18th century author, orator and political philosopher, who served for many years in the British House of Commons and supported the independence of the American Colonies

Every sweet has its sour, every evil its good

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th century Unitarian Minister and essayist

Every minute you are thinking of evil, you might have been thinking of good instead

-Evelyn Underhill, 20th century religious author

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) or the south pole (no) in answer to today's statement (but not on the center point).

All people have the potential to do good, but may choose to do evil instead

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

A Tale of Two Boys.

Share with the participants the story in Resource 30-A. Invite their comments afterward. Reflect back on the comments which were made during the Taking a Stand activity. Were these two boys "born evil"? Many kids are victims of bullying, harassment and abuse – but not all become violent killers. Many kids feel intense hatred and have violent thoughts—why do some people act

on them, and others do not?

Invite the participants to take a stand once again in relation to these ideas. Solicit ideas of why they chose to stand where they did after each statement.

Watching violent movies and TV can make you do violent things.

Listening to music with graphic words and "hate-mongering" can make you do bad things to others.

Playing computer games with simulated killing or murder can make you think like – or even act like a killer.

Competitive sports can incite aggressive behavior in people.

Friends can encourage each other to do bad things, things that they would not necessarily do on their own.

Note to Teachers: If there is anything currently in the news which would be appropriate to bring into the discussion (or something that was recently a big issue in your community or the world at large), feel free to add statements relating to this and give the participants a chance to discuss evil in the context of this recent event.

Shock Rock.

Listen to a sample of Marilyn Manson music; play the song "Dogma" from the CD *Portrait of An American Family*. Have some copies of the lyrics available (as the words are hard to understand) while you listen to the music. (See Resource 30-B for a copy of the lyrics.)

If the participants are not familiar with the shock-rock musical style of Marilyn Manson, you might equate it with the current "shock" music of the time (i.e. gangsta rap, etc.). Explain that references to violence and obscenities are usually a part of such music (which is why some people believe the lyrics can incite others to commit violent acts). With Marilyn Manson's music, even the music has a violent, harsh grinding sound to it

and the words are screamed rather than sung or rapped.

Getting There

Taking Responsibility. Ask one of the participants to read from the Bible passage Genesis 3:11-13:

'Have you been eating of the tree I forbade you to eat?' The man replied, 'It was the woman you put with me; she gave me the fruit, and I ate it.' Then God asked the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman replied, 'The serpent tempted me and I ate.'

Explain to the participants that along with music, violent TV shows, movies and computer games, people have sometimes blamed their evil actions on others—or as in the case of Adam and Eve—the Devil (whom the serpent is supposed to represent). The devil was often seen as a troublemaker, causing humans to do bad things they might not have otherwise done. But what happens when we blame the Devil, or the music/video games/movies? What does that say about responsibility when we pass the blame for our evil actions?

What happens when a person commits a horrible, evil act—do we still believe they have an inherent worth and dignity? Is this inherent worth a part of all people—no matter what their actions and the consequences of their evil deeds?

After the shooting at Columbine High School, trees were planted as a memorial for each of the people who died. The trees that were planted for Dylan and Eric were cut down. What does that say about "inherent worth and dignity"? What does this say about those people who cut those trees down? Should those trees have been planted to memorialize the killers as well as the victims of the violence?

Dylan and Eric have been labeled as "evil"—like other people throughout history who committed atrocious acts (such as Adolf Hitler, Jeffrey Dahmer, etc.). Can the group think of other people who have been called "evil"? How

does the inherent worth and dignity of all persons fit in with the evil acts they committed?

Let the participants know that all religions teach some notion of the laws of consequence for a person's actions. For some Christians, it is the belief that at the time of death, they will be judged for their sins and sent either to Heaven or Hell based upon their actions in life. Many Buddhists and Hindus subscribe to the notion of karma, which means for every cause there is an effect. All actions have consequences. Those Buddhists and Hindus who believe in reincarnation believe persons who commit evil acts may suffer for those acts in another lifetime.

The first rule of Wiccans is non-harming, often referred to in literature as "an' it harm none do what thou wilt." Essentially this means that Wiccans believe people can follow their hearts and their own desires only insofar as their actions do not damage anyone else. In fact, many Wiccans subscribe to the threefold law, a moral code which emphasizes that any good which is wished upon a person in a spell will rebound threefold on the person who casts it—and a spell which wishes evil upon another will rebound threefold upon the one who casts it as well.

Unitarian Universalists, regardless of their beliefs about the nature of God/Goddess/Great Spirit/Divine Presence or beliefs about what happens after we die, agree that we all have the power to do good. We also firmly believe in the value of justice, equity, and compassion in human relations—which means when a person chooses to do evil—everyone suffers.

Remind participants of the ripple effect the stones dropped in the water caused when we talked about how our choices affect others (last session). When a person chooses to do evil, then the effect can be devastating—both to themselves and others. Instead of a ripple, the consequences of a person's evil actions can cause an earthquake. When a person is killed through an evil act, not only is that person eliminated from the world in which we live—any potential children and their children (and so on) are also removed. What might that murdered teenager have become, or accomplished? What might the children of that teenager have become or accomplished? The

ripple effect goes on and we might never know just to what extent the future was changed by those evil acts.

Breakdown in the Living Machine. Invite the participants to explore this idea by building a human machine. Pick a volunteer to start by standing in the center of the room and doing some sort of repetitive action, as if they were a part of a larger machine (for example, moving an arm up and down or a leg from left to right). Then ask others to join, one by one, doing their own repetitive action along with and in sync with the others who are already a part of the machine. Their actions should somehow be dependent upon or in relation to the actions of another person in the group. (For example, if the first person is moving an arm from left to right, the second person can stand sideways and move their arm from front to back alongside them.) Once the machine is humming and moving along smoothly and they are all working together as a group, walk among the participants and whisper in someone's ear that they've just been "taken out" and that they need to crumple to the floor. Watch for any possible reaction by the other participants. If they try to stop, remind them they are a machine and they need to keep churning as best they are able.

Move around the people in the machine and whisper in another person's ear that they have been "taken out" and they need to crumple to the floor. Again, if the group reacts, remind them to keep going. Whisper in a third person's ear that they are "taken out" and they need to crumple to the floor. Continue "taking out" parts of the machine until half the participants are crumpled on the floor. Then congratulate those who have remained a part of the machine and compliment their ability to go on despite what was going on around them.

Note to Teachers: If you have a small group of participants, you may find it difficult to do this activity effectively. An alternative might be to create a line of dominoes and have a few pulled from the line before the cascade comes to them. How do the pulled tiles affect the cascade of falling dominoes?

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling. Encourage the participants to reflect on the experience. Did the machine continue working smoothly as some of its parts broke down? Were their repetitive actions still in sync with one another, or were they having trouble keeping their motions together as some people dropped out? What about the people who were "taken out"—were they getting in the way of the ones who were still functioning? Were they feeling "left out" of the process? How did the loss of these people in the living machine affect the functioning of the whole group? What did your "evil" act of taking them out accomplish?

After the participants have a chance to share verbally with the group, invite them to take some time to jot down some ideas or drawings in their journals.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Remise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement that was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

All people have the potential to do good, but may choose to do evil instead.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly stating (in one sentence or less) something which might have happened if an evil act had not occurred. (For example: one of the students killed at Columbine might have discovered a cure for cancer.)

Closing Circle.

As a group, share responsive reading #597, "Love Versus Hate" (from the Buddhist holy book, the Dhammapada) and excerpted in the *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

For more information:

on the Columbine shooting:

<http://columbine.free2host.net/index.html>

<http://www.disastercenter.com/killers.html>

<http://www.salon.com/news/feature/1999/09/23/columbine/>

<http://slate.msn.com/id/2099203/>

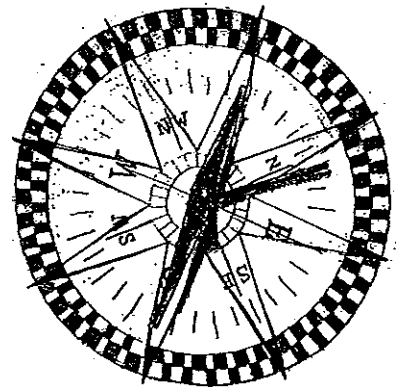
on preventing school violence and having a safe school, check out the website:

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/gtss.html>

Notes from Field Testing:

One teacher who did not get additional background on the boys (and their families) wished she had gotten more information as the youth were not even aware of the Columbine incident and were quite curious about it. If you do not have much knowledge of the Columbine shooting, you might use the links above to get these details. You could also pass on these links to the youth in your classroom if they are interested in exploring this further on their own time.

One teacher who had the group read the lyrics to the Marilyn Manson song without using the CD felt the activity was ineffective. The lyrics are included with this session so the youth can follow along because the words in the song are very hard to understand. We suggest that if you are unable to locate the CD; you simply drop that activity from the session rather than just reading the words from the lyric sheet.



Resource 30-A

A Tale of Two Boys

Dylan was a rather ordinary kid, although somewhat of an overachiever. As he was growing up, he played T-ball, baseball, and soccer with his friends. Born to middle class parents (his father was a geophysicist, his mother worked with the disabled), he attended an elementary school for gifted children and then went on to middle school where he met his best friend, Eric, whose family had moved around a lot because his father was in the Air Force.

When the two boys started high school, they were still really close. Dylan was active in the school plays, video productions and the radio network. He was a computer assistant and helped to maintain the computer server for the high school.

In their sophomore year, Dylan and Eric got an after school job at Blackjack Pizza where they got into quite a bit of mischief. They were caught setting off fireworks in the alley behind the pizza place, booby-trapping the fence and one time even setting fire to an aerosol can in the mop sink.

When they weren't working, Dylan and Eric liked to play computer games online and listen to Goth music because they liked the raunchy, violent lyrics. Their favorite bands were KMFDM, Marilyn Manson and Joe Arpaio.

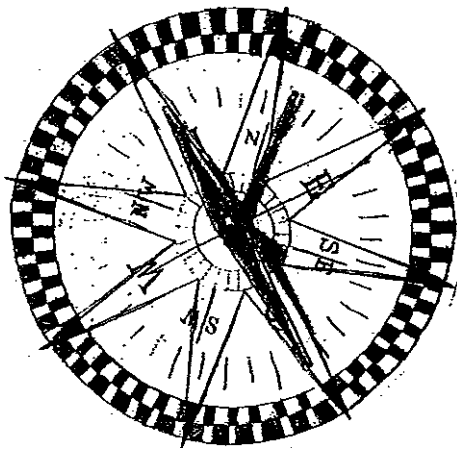
Their senior prom was held in April of 1999, and they went along to the dance with some 12 others in a limo. The friends who were there with them that night said nothing at all seemed unusual or out of the ordinary. Eric had just been rejected by the military because he was taking a prescription drug antidepressant, but Dylan was talking happily about a positive future attending the University of Arizona where he planned to major in computer science.

No one suspected that three days later, these two boys would walk on to school grounds armed with a duffle bag full of pipe bombs and a backpack containing two sawed-off shotguns, a 9mm semi-automatic carbine rifle and a 9mm Tech-9 semi-automatic pistol. After a five-hour shooting spree and setting off multiple explosions that were meant to wipe out most of the school, 13 students and one teacher were dead—and 21 were seriously wounded in the worst school shooting in history.

The two boys responsible for the massacre at Columbine High School shot themselves, so we'll never know the full story of why they did what they did. Many people have speculated about what drove them to this violence. Some have said it was the violent computer games they played, others the music with hate-mongering lyrics. Some people believe that it was because they were harassed and bullied at school. But they were hardly powerless – and they were only 17 days away from graduation.

Resource 30-B
Lyrics for the Marilyn Manson song, "Dogma"

burn the witches, burn the witches, don't take time to sew your stitches
burn the witches, bum the witches
good is the thing that you favor, evil is your sour flavor
you cannot sedate all the things you hate
burn the bridges, burn the bridges, don't take time to sew your stitches
burn the bridges, burn the bridges
good is the thing that you favor, evil is your sour flavor
i don't need your hate, i decide my fate
you cannot sedate all the things you hate



Session Thirty-One

Going To Extremes

Goals for Participants:

- to come to an understanding of fundamentalist belief and the causes of religious extremism
- to understand that all fundamentalist groups have common beliefs and ideas, no matter what the religion
- to explore the responsibilities of Unitarian Universalists and the role of our Principles in light of fundamentalist belief

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand.(5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. A Matter of Perspective (10 min)
4. Getting There. Living Our UU Principles. (20 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Reflection and Journaling. (5 min)
6. Going Out into the World.Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (10 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quote
participants' journals
paper circle for "center point"
newsprint and markers
a large tray
an assortment of objects, some larger and taller than the others (such as candles, statues, religious objects, flower vases and other decorative objects)
a towel or cloth large enough to drape over the tray with the objects on it

table or shelf
index cards and glue or tape
pieces of paper and pencils

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Make a copy of the fundamentalist ideas in Resource 31-A and cut them into separate slips of paper.

Prepare a tray of objects for the "Matter of Perspective" activity. Place taller objects in the center of the tray, and shorter/smaller objects in the front around the outside of the tray. Place a towel over the objects and set off to the side until needed.

Read through the scenarios in Resource 31-B to decide which ones to use based upon the interests of your group and the issues relevant to your local area. If there is an issue happening locally that you decide to add as an additional or alternative scenario, write up the situation.

Make a copy of the scenarios which you will be using from Resource 31-B, cut apart into slips of paper and glue or tape onto index cards.

Make copies of the poem in Resource 31-C; or alternatively, write the words to the refrain on a piece of newsprint so the participants can read along for the responsive reading.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from a religious conviction.

-Blaise Pascal, 17th century French mathematician and philosopher

With or without religion, you would have good people doing good things, and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.

-Steven Weinberg, recipient of the 1979 Nobel Prize for Physics

Some people twist religion to the way they think.

- Arneshuia Balial, U.S. Army Captain and convert to Islam

Only a Sith thinks in absolutes.

-the character of Obiwan Kenobi, from Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) or the south pole (no) in answer to

today's statement (but not the center point).

Religious fundamentalists all believe the same thing.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

Fundamentalist Belief. On a piece of newsprint, write the word "fundamentalism." Ask the participants if they can explain what is meant by this term. If no one is able to articulate it, explain to the group that the term **fundamentalism** is used to describe *the movement to return to what is considered the defining or founding principles of a religion* – that which is "fundamental."

Hand out the slips of paper on fundamentalist ideas to the participants from Resource 31-A (one per person, although if you have more than five participants, you might want to pair up some individuals so that everyone has one).

Explain to the participants that fundamentalists see themselves protecting not only a distinctive doctrine, but a way of life. Invite the participant(s) with the slip of paper that says "that which is fundamental" to come forward and tape it onto the newsprint.

Tell the group that every major religion has its fundamentalists: from Christianity to Islam to Judaism. Even Buddhism and Hinduism have had their share of fundamentalist groups.

For religious fundamentalists, their sacred text is the word of God, and therefore infallible. No one has the right to argue with it, challenge it, or disagree with it. In any case where it is open to interpretation, the church leaders determine what the interpretation means. Invite the participant(s) with the slip of paper "no one can disagree" to come forward and tape it to the newsprint.

Because—from their perspective—there is only one right picture of the world and one right set of beliefs, children should learn what their elders believe. They should not be taught to explore new ideas and think for themselves. They

should not be exposed to outside culture. To ensure this happens, the church should control education, even public education. Invite the participant(s) with the slip which says "one right set of beliefs" to come forward and tape it to the newsprint.

Ask the participants if they have heard of any attempts for fundamentalist groups to control education and what is taught in schools. (If no one brings it up, you might mention the controversy over teaching evolution in schools and the push to include prayer in public schools or some other issue that may have been in the news recently.)

Because fundamentalist religious groups strongly believe that there is only one right way, (their way), they also believe that their world view is superior to that of others (they are right/everyone else is wrong). Invite the participant(s) with the slip "we are right/everyone else is wrong" to come forward and tape it to the newsprint.

While Unitarian Universalists believe strongly in *the search for truth as each of us perceives it*, fundamentalists believe not only have they already found the truth, but that this truth should be the same for everyone, everywhere. Invite the participant(s) with the slip "truth is the same for everyone, everywhere" to come forward and tape it to the newsprint.

A Matter of Perspective. Invite the participants to sit in a circle on the floor as they are able. On a high table or other raised platform, place the tray of objects covered with a towel so that it is in the center of the group and considerably above the level viewpoint of all participants. Carefully remove the towel to expose the objects.

Pass out some slips of paper and pencils. Invite the participants to write down the objects that they see without speaking or consulting with others. They also cannot twist, turn or move their bodies to see more than what is in view.

After everyone has had the chance to write down what they saw on the slip of paper, invite some participants to share their list with the group. How much overlap is there in the list? Who saw "the same things." Were some things missing from lists of one side that were a part of the other side's lists?

Cover the tray again and invite the participants to stand and move around the circle so that they are at the exact opposite point from where they started. When they are sitting on the floor again, uncover the tray and ask participants to make a new list based upon what is in view this time. Then invite participants to comment on their new observations and how their new lists might compare with their old ones. How does their new position change their perspective? How can things which are so clearly in view now have been totally absent before? What does this say about the way people see the world? What does this say about our belief in *the search for truth as each of us perceives it*?

How does this narrow view of perspective (everyone should see the world the same way we do) translate into the rise of extremist groups who think nothing of using violence, destruction and even terrorism as a means of stopping people who have a different set of beliefs from themselves? How do these ideas affect others who may hold the same theological beliefs, but not adhere to the same fundamentalist restrictions of interpreting their sacred text as literal and not open to interpretation?

Getting There

Living our UU Principles. Invite the participants to consider the ways in which we have our own tendencies toward bias and the times when narrow-minded thinking has perhaps colored our own judgment. Can we practice our own beliefs of the inherent worth and dignity of all people and the search for truth as each of us perceives it without judging others or feeling superior ourselves?

Divide the participants into groups, with approximately three to four persons per group. Hand out the scenario cards you have chosen and created from Resource 31-B. Give them some time to consider the situation on the card, then present to the whole group their response. Groups can present their response in the form of a skit, poster, song/rap/poem/cheer or any other form they choose.

After each group gives their presentation, invite feedback from the other participants.

Some things to consider:

When does an action reveal fundamentalist thinking and belief? When is an action more revealing of extremism (advocating for political measures) rather than fundamentalism? When is it both? Is it possible for a person to be an extremist Unitarian Universalist? Can a person be a Unitarian Universalist fundamentalist?

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling. Ask the participants to reflect upon the activities and the information they learned today about fundamentalism. Invite those who would like to share verbally to do so, then have everyone reflect silently in their journals.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes," South is "no." Where do they stand now?

Religious Fundamentalists all believe the same thing.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly stating (in one sentence or less) an answer to this statement:

If I was a fundamentalist, I might think or believe...

Closing Circle.

Share as a responsive reading the poem by

the Muslim author Yahya in Resource 31-B.

Invite one or two persons to read the verses and all participants to read together the refrain.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Note to Teachers:

Christian fundamentalists generally consider the term "fundamentalist" to be positive when it is used to refer to themselves, but they strongly object to the placement of themselves and Islamist groups into a single category, and resent being labeled together with factions that use kidnaping, murder, and terrorist acts to achieve their ends. However, there is no objection to the term "fundamentalist" when it is used to describe only Christian groups, and objections to the use of term "Muslim fundamentalist" are much less strong.

Many Muslims protest the use of the term "fundamentalist" when referring to Islamist groups, because all Muslims believe in the absolute inerrancy of the Qur'an, and this term is often used to refer to extremist groups. Furthermore, many Muslims strongly object to being placed in the same category as Christian fundamentalists, whom they see as being religiously incorrect, and fail to see the theological distinction between fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist Christian groups. Unlike Christian fundamentalist groups, Islamist groups do not use the term fundamentalist to refer to themselves.

For more information on fundamentalist beliefs:

<http://www.uua.org/world/2004/01/feature2.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/fundamentalism>

<http://www.bidstrup.com/religion.htm>

Resource 31-A Understanding
Fundamentalist Ideas

"We must return to that which is fundamental."

"No one has the right to argue with, challenge,
or disagree with the word of God."

"Children should learn what their elders believe
because there is only one right set of beliefs."

"We are right, everyone else is wrong."

"The truth is the same for everyone, everywhere."

Resource 31-B

Fundamentalist Scenarios

Note to Teachers: You are encouraged to pick and choose from among the following scenarios the issues which are most relevant to your group and the current events happening locally or nationally. You may also consider adding a scenario of your own which relates directly to an issue which is particularly relevant to your area at this time.

Scenario #1:

A group in your community is fighting to preserve the Ten Commandments monument located on the grounds of the courthouse. Your youth group wants to respond to their challenge that the Ten Commandments are the basis of all law and relevant to all religions and therefore should be able to be located on the grounds of the courthouse. Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Scenario #2:

Some members of your church's youth group have decided to take a radical stand in regard to their beliefs in animal rights by spray painting people who wear fur coats or leather goods. Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Scenario #3:

Some kids at school are putting down Muslims or students who are of Arabic heritage. They claim that all Muslims (or Arabs) are terrorists or are in league with terrorists who have attacked our country. Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Scenario #4:

You witness a teen at your school being harassed, bullied or teased because he or she is suspected of being gay or a lesbian. The students who are harassing the teen claim that a BGLT lifestyle is a sin and an affront to God. Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Scenario #5:

An extremist group sets off a pipe bomb at an abortion clinic, calling the doctors, nurses and others who work there "baby killers." Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Scenario #6:

The school board is considering a proposal to add intelligent design theory as a requirement for science programs in your district. The argument for adding intelligent design is that it is as valid a theory as evolution is. Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Scenario #7:

You overhear some adults in your congregation putting down evangelical Christians because the core of their faith is based upon the idea that Jesus died on the cross to save people from their sins. Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Scenario #8:

You attend a youth concert sponsored by an evangelical church. During an intermission of the music, a preacher takes the stage to announce the evangelical belief that it is every Christian's responsibility to "save" those people who are nonbelievers. Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Scenario #9:

An extremist group has decided to put a halt to the cutting down of trees (which it views as harmful to our environment) by hiding spikes on the trunks. These spikes could harm any worker who attempts to cut down the tree. Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Scenario #10:

You attend a service at a mosque where all girls and women (not just Muslims) are required to cover their hair and wear floor-length skirts in order to participate and not distract the other worshipers. Is this fundamentalist thinking? And what is a response that Unitarian Universalists can make?

Resource 31-C

Peace, The Greater Jihad by Yahya

I hear some brothers talking, saying we should join the fight,
Their talk keeps me thinking, cause I want to do what's right.
They say that all true believers should help the Taliban,
They say that we should fight a war with them in Afghanistan.

Everywhere I look and hear, there's that word jihad,
The way it's tossed around would make the Prophet sad.
When are we all going to learn what God really meant.
It's not about other people, it's destroying your own evil
bent.

The greater jihad, it's not killing people.
The greater jihad, it's about fighting evil.
The greater jihad, it's a battle that's inside you.
Now that you know, what are you gonna do?

Muhammad said that the struggle in battle—that's the lesser fight,
So he fought the greater one first, so his words could be a light.
Take the plank out of your own eye, before your brother's speck,
Maybe you would stop to think – wouldn't be so quick to correct.

The greater jihad, it's not killing people.
The greater jihad, it's about fighting evil.
The greater jihad, it's a battle that's inside you.
Now that you know, what are you gonna do?

Man's been asking the question all along, does God create evil,
He didn't have to create it—he just created people.
Everything that's good in life comes from God's merciful hand,
And everything that's evil is done by the hand of man.

The greater jihad, it's not killing people.
The greater jihad, it's about fighting evil.
The greater jihad, it's a battle that's inside you.
Now that you know, what are you gonna do?

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Session Thirty-two

Do No Harm

Goals for Participants:

- to examine alternatives to violence in creating social change
- to explore the connections between great historical figures who believed in non-violent social change
- to think about some of the causes which we believe in strongly enough in to take a stand on

Session in Brief:

1. **Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. **Taking a Stand.** (5 min)
3. **Heart of the Journey.** From Thoreau to Gandhi to King. (25 min)
4. **Getting There** Making Protest Signs. (10 min)
5. **Stopping to Rest.** Reflection and Journaling. (5 min)
6. **Going Out into the World.** Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop and Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
participants' journals
large paper "center point"
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
copy of the book, *Civil Disobedience* (optional)
DVD or videotape of the movie *Gandhi*
paint stirrers (one for every participant) or other long, narrow thin pieces of wood
large pieces of poster board (two per participant)
thick markers
heavy duty stapler (used to staple thick items together)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Watch the clip of the movie that you will be showing so that you are familiar with the content.

Cue the videotape or the DVD to the cluster of scenes labeled "Causing Trouble" which starts with Gandhi staging a public burning of the passes Indians are required to carry and ends with Gandhi addressing the audience to encourage a non-violent response in resisting the new law requiring fingerprinting of all Indians in the country. (This scene is located approximately 11 minutes into the film, labeled "Causing Trouble" on the DVD menu.)

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

Nonviolence is not a weapon of the weak. It is a weapon of the strongest and the bravest.

– Mohandas Gandhi, social reformer and non-violent protestor who led the country of India to independence

Be not too eager to deal out death in the name of justice, fearing for your own safety. Even the wise cannot see all ends.

– J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, Book Four, Chapter One

Violence is impractical because the old eye for an eye philosophy ends up leaving everybody blind.

– Martin Luther King Jr., minister and leader of the American Civil Rights movement

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.

– John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) or the south pole (no) in answer to today's statement (but not the center point).

When something is unjust, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to do something about it.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

From Thoreau to Gandhi to King. The Boston Tea Party is a famous act of non-violent protest that everyone should be familiar with. Ask the participants: was this an effective means of getting

the attention of the British, and did it accomplish its objectives?

History is full of other actions of a non-violent nature designed to change the hearts of people and bring about social change.

When a frenzy of support for the Mexican-American War swept across the United States in the middle of the 19th century, the widespread belief was that this war would benefit the Mexican people by offering them the benefits of liberty, freedom and democracy that Americans enjoyed.

However, a small but vocal minority, (mostly ministers, scholars and abolitionists) saw it as a violent act of aggression against a weak neighboring country. Even Abraham Lincoln (who was then a freshman congressman from Illinois) called the war immoral and a threat to the nation's values.

Although the outspoken critics were initially branded as heretics and traitors, public support for the war began to fade once newspaper reports were circulated about the conditions the troops faced and the brutality which was inflicted upon Mexican civilians.

Henry David Thoreau (remember him from our Transcendentalist Dinner Party?) was thrown into jail for refusing to pay a poll tax, a tax he declined to pay because it was to support the Mexican War. He only spent one night in jail because (much to his disappointment and frustration), his tax was paid by one of his relatives.

As a result of this experience, however, Thoreau went on to write the essay *Civil Disobedience* which would later inspire two great men of the twentieth century who would reform their societies and bring about unprecedented social change through non-violent protest: Mohandas Gandhi and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Gandhi was an educated man who loved to read and who received inspiration from Thoreau's ideas as laid out in *Civil Disobedience*. (If you have the book, hold it up so all participants can see it.) Ask the participants if they are familiar with that term. What does it mean?

Years later, Dr. Martin Luther King drew his inspiration from Gandhi's writings to lead the United States' civil rights non-violent protests.

These three men (Thoreau, Gandhi and King) believed that disobedience which disrupted the *everyday* workings of society—without violence—made a point of dramatizing the need to make societal changes.

Introduce the clip from the movie by saying this is a small part of a movie about the life of Mohandas Gandhi and his efforts to bring independence to the people of India through non-violent protest. In these scenes, Gandhi is a young attorney who has traveled to South Africa and is faced with injustice and discrimination because he is of Indian descent. Despite the fact that he is an educated man and a lawyer, he is thrown off the train because he refuses to give up his first class seat (no "colored" are allowed to ride in that part of the train), and he is later harassed for refusing to step off the sidewalk when some young white men block his path.

Then play the excerpt from the movie which lasts for about 20 minutes.

Getting There

Making Protest Signs. Encourage the participants to spend some time reflecting on some of the issues and ideas which were a part of the video they watched.

Were they surprised to see Gandhi continue to drop the passes in the burning trash can even though the police were brutally hitting him? If they were faced with the same situation, would they continue? Would they feel the urge to fight back?

How about the courage Gandhi showed when confronted by the young men when he refused to step off the pavement into the street? Have the youth ever been in a situation where they needed to back down or stand firm? What happened? What do they think would have happened if the young white men had chosen to attack Gandhi?

What happened during the scene between

Gandhi and his wife? Why did she initially refuse to clean the toilets, and why did he insist that she do so? Was his angry outburst justified?

How did the youth feel when they heard Gandhi's words as he addressed the crowd about the new law requiring fingerprinting of Indian people? Did they understand his willingness to give his life before his obedience? Did they understand his commitment to a non-violent response? What do they think of this?

Ask the participants **if** there are any causes that they feel really strongly about, causes which they feel the need to take a stand on as Gandhi did. If they could change something about our society or the way people live or treat each other, what would it be?

Invite participants to create protest signs with statements about the causes they feel strongly about. Using markers, they can make pictures or write words on the poster board (but encourage them to keep these brief). Then using a heavy duty book stapler, attach a paint stirrer or narrow piece of thin wood for the handle.

Note to teachers: If the participants are having trouble of thinking of anything, you might try bringing up some recent issues either locally or nationally that you know some of them might have responses to. You could also remind them of comments or ideas expressed in previous sessions to jar their memories and create some inspiration.

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling. Invite participants to share their signs with the others if they choose to do so.

Then give the participants some time to reflect individually in their journal about the ideas they saw in the film, how they felt making their protest signs or something they would like to see changed in the world.



Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." ·Where do they stand now?

When something is unjust, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to do something about it.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly stating (in one sentence or less) something about the world they would change if they could.

Closing Circle.

Share responsive reading #577 "It is Possible to Live in Peace" by Mohandas Gandhi from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Extinguish the chalice with these unison

words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Optional Social Justice Expansion: This session naturally leads to several possibilities for social action. Depending upon the causes that the group brings up. (and particularly if most of the participants feel strongly about a certain issue), the group could plan and/or participate in a march (with or without their protest signs), a sit-in or some other peaceful protest.

Optional Expansion of Session Idea: Obtain a copy of the script for the play *The Night Thoreau Spent In Jail* and encourage the participants to act out the play for themselves, the congregation (either as part of a worship service, coffee house or fund-raising event), or another youth group.

This play is available from Amazon.com and other booksellers. It uses a dramatization of the night Thoreau spent in jail to highlight some of his life and philosophies. Created in the 1970s as a subtle (or perhaps not so subtle) reflection of protest over the Vietnam War and Thoreau's belief in civil disobedience, it is still highly relevant today.

The often told (but apocryphal) anecdote of Emerson coming to visit Thoreau in his cell is found in this play, whereby Emerson asks Thoreau what he is doing in jail, and Thoreau responds to Emerson, "What are you doing out there?"

Optional Expansion of Session Idea: Explore the idea of becoming a Conscientious Objector and what this concept means. (See internet links below for more information.)

For more information on Gandhi:

<http://www.mkgandln.org/index.htm>
<http://www.mkgandlll-sarvodaya.org/>

on Thoreau:

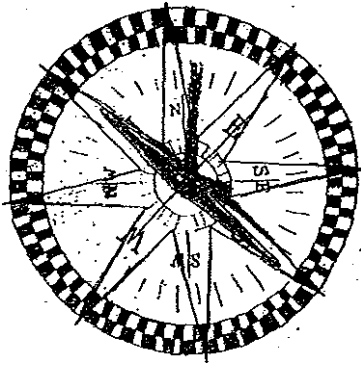
<http://eserver.org/thoreaulthoreau.html>
<http://eserver.org/thoreaulcivil.html>
<http://www.transcendentalists.com/1thorea.html>

on King:

<http://www.stanford.edu/group!King/>
<http://www.thekingcenter.org/>

on becoming a Conscientious Objector:

<http://www.objector.org/>
<http://www.nisbco.org/>
<http://www.sss.gov/FSconsobj.htm>



Session Thirty-Three

Our Place in The Universe

Goals for Participants:

- to examine the role of human beings in the grand scheme of things
- to take a look at how we fit into the world
- to determine the participants' thoughts and feelings about our responsibility to others and to our earth
- to explore the seventh Principle "respect for the independent web of all existence"

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand. (5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. Genesis and Native American views. (15 min)
4. Getting There. Meditative Hike (20 min) or "Green" Hunt. (20 min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Journaling and Reflection. (5 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter) basket or hat for quotes participants' journals

paper circle for "center point"
copies of the hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*
several copies of the Bible
artwork or books on "The Garden of Eden"
(optional)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Find a natural area for the group to participate in a meditative hike. This could be part of your church grounds, a natural area close by, or some other place in your community.

Arrange for transportation and field trip release forms if you will be traveling off site for the meditative hike; if you will be traveling any distance, consider holding the entire session at the remote site.

Review the options for expansion of this session and decide whether or not to extend the time in order to include the social action projects listed (or another idea which is related to preserving our environment).

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing Thoughts of the Day

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

I believe in God, only I spell it Nature.
– Frank Lloyd Wright, 20th century Unitarian architect

Only as far as the masters of the world have called in nature to their aid, can they reach the height of magnificence.

–Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th century Unitarian minister and essayist

To me a lush carpet of pine needles or spongy grass is more welcome than the most luxurious Persian rug.

–Helen Keller, 20th century American

lecturer and advocate for people with visual and auditory impairment

Earth has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed

– Mohandas Gandhi, social reformer and non-violent protestor who led the country of India to independence

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) or the south pole (no) in answer to today's statement (but not the center point):

Respect for the interdependent web of existence includes all life forms, including mosquitos, fleas, and bacteria.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

Genesis and Native American Views. Ask for participants to read passage Genesis 1:26 from the Bibles you have brought in. More than one version is best, so they can hear the differences in the wording while keeping the central idea of humans as the center of the universe. The passages should contain something along these lines:

God said "Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild, (beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth." God blessed them, Saying o them, "Be fruitful and multiply, Fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals upon the earth."

Ask participants for their interpretation of this passage from the Bible. What does it mean to be "masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, and all the things which crawl upon the earth?" Does it mean that we are free to exploit them as we wish, or does it mean that we are responsible for taking care of them?

After participants have had a chance to share their own opinions, explain that this particular passage from the Bible has been understood to mean different things at different times. Where it once was believed this meant we can use the gifts of nature given by God for our benefit, many Christians today believe it is a statement of our responsibility to take care of our environment, being responsible stewards of the Earth.

Then ask volunteers to read Responsive Reading #550, "We Belong to the Earth" from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Ask participants for their impressions of the two readings, and to explain any differences between them.

(The Native Americans had no concept of ownership of the land, they felt they were the caretakers of it and they had a strong belief in living in harmony with the Earth. While the Bible passage can be interpreted to mean humans are also supposed to serve as responsible caretakers of the Earth, it still implies a superiority that the Native American view does not.)

Which of these passages more closely expresses our Unitarian Universalist beliefs in regard to the environment? How do these notions set up expectations of behavior toward the environment? Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part?

Expand the discussion by asking the participants what this means. Reflect back on the responses and ideas which were brought up during the Taking a Stand exercise. What is our responsibility toward the earth and nature? Can

we respect things like mosquitos and still spray our yards to rid ourselves of them? What forms of life are worthy of existence, and which, if any, are not? Where do we draw the line when it comes to our respect for existence, or can we? Can we use the resources of our land responsibly?

Close the discussion with the idea that while Unitarian Universalists all hold sacred the need to respect the independent web, what exactly this means varies from person to person, and ideas about this for us may even change over time. The important thing to remember is that we all have a responsibility to respect the gifts of our Earth and to use its resources wisely.

Getting There

Meditative Hike. Take the group on a meditative hike through a natural area near your church grounds or at the natural area you have arranged in advance for them to explore. (If the place you will hike is any distance from the church, plan to hold the entire session near to the field trip site.)

Prior to the start of your hike, explain to the participants that since this is a meditative walk, you will be attempting to "tune in" to nature and as a result, will do it in silence. Invite the participants to look for examples of how the earth has been taken care of or has been "used" by human beings. Encourage them to take in the various sights, sounds and experiences they feel as they walk.

Then lead them out for a meditative hike, being careful to model the silence yourself as best you are able. Be sure to watch the time and if the group is getting restless and unable to hold to the meditative nature of the walk, wrap things up earlier than anticipated in order to accommodate their restlessness and need to share experiences.

Alternate Activity: Going on a "Green" Hunt.

If inclement weather prevents you from going outside, take the group on a "green" or "environmentally-friendly" hunt through your congregation's building(s).

Invite them to tour the church grounds,

and as they do so to make note of those things which are helpful to our environment and those which are not. (For example, a recycle bin in the church office for copy paper that is to be discarded; disposable plates for hospitality/coffee hour or washable ones which are reusable, etc.)

Stopping to Rest

Reflections and Journaling. If the group has remained true to the nature of the meditative, quiet nature of the hike, encourage the participants to reflect on their experiences in their journals before sharing verbally with the group. Alternatively, if the group as a whole seems to need to reflect verbally, gather them into a circle for some sharing outdoors about their experiences before encouraging them to write some of their thoughts down in their journals.

If your group engaged in the alternative activity (the "Green" hunt), invite reflections on what they saw and how the congregation could make some changes to become more "green." Then ask the participants to contribute these or other ideas to their journal.

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes," South is "no." Where do they stand now?

Respect for the independent web of existence includes all life forms, including mosquitos, fleas, and bacteria.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not?

Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as

possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly stating (in one sentence or less) something they saw on the meditative hike (or the "green" hunt) that surprised them, or something they would like to do to help the environment.

Closing Circle.

Invite all the participants to join you in chanting Hymn #387 from *Singing The Living Tradition*: "The Earth, The Water, The Fire, The Air."

Extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

We extinguish this chalice, but not its light. That we take with us as we go out into the world, sharing it with those we encounter on our journey.

Social Action Expansion Ideas:

Expand the time of the session to 2 hours, allowing the group to return to the place where you engaged in the meditative hike and clean up any areas you find that have been disturbed or "trashed" by human hands.

Expand the session to 2 hours, allowing your group to participate in a clean-up project on the church grounds or in a natural area such as along a riverbank or in a forest habitat. If the place you will be cleaning up is not on church property, be sure that the park system or forest preserve is aware of your plans to do so.

Make plans to meet on an additional day and engage in a service project based upon improving the environment. Expand the session by a half hour in order to

help them brainstorm ideas and explore this idea to a logical conclusion.

IF your group participated in the alternative activity, they may want to prepare a report after their “green hunt” with some ideas of how the church might make changes to become more environmentally friendly. They can present their report to the Director of Religious Education who can give it to the Board of Directors.

Explore how your congregation can become a Green Sanctuary-- a congregation that lives out its commitment to the Earth by choosing to live in a way that nurtures life, builds relationships, and rejects material consumption as the sole determinant of happiness.

Information about the Seventh Principle Project's (Green Sanctuary Program can be found at:

<http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary>

verbally.

Session Thirty-Four

What Do We Have Faith In?

Goals for Participants:

- to explore what is of ultimate value
- to examine the fourth Principle "the free and responsible search for truth and meaning"
- to determine what or whom to have faith in
- to discover how we can use the Sources of our Living Tradition to find answers to our questions

Session in Brief:

1. Preparing for the Day's Journey. Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (10 min)
2. Taking a Stand. (5 min)
3. Heart of the Journey. Graffiti Wall and Definitions of the Word "Faith." (10 min)
4. Getting There. Scavenger Hunt for Sources. (20min)
5. Stopping to Rest. Reflection and Journaling. (10 min)
6. Going Out into the World. Taking a Stand (Reprise) or Quick Stop; Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
copies of the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
participants' journals
paper circle for "center point"
craft paper or poster board for Graffiti
Wall markers in many different bold colors
dictionaries, at least two different versions
a stick or small tree branch to use as a talking stick (or a rock, large shell or other item which can be used for this same purpose)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Write out these same quotes from the appendix on construction paper or newsprint and post one on each wall of your room.

Make several copies of the scavenger hunt list in Resource 34-A. You will need one copy for each group of participants.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or how they are feeling this morning.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Ask for volunteers to select from the basket of quotes that you have prepared and to read them to the group. Ask participants to consider the quotes silently until all are read and then offer a time for comments.

I always admired atheists. I think it takes a lot of faith.

– Diane Frolov and Andrew Schneider, from the TV series "Northern Exposure"

You must find things to believe in yourself, for a life without faith in something is too narrow a space to live.

– George E. Woodberry, early 20th century poet, critic and teacher

Faith is the subtle chain which binds us to the infinite.

– Elizabeth Oakes Smith, 19th century poet, author, and women's rights advocate

An unexamined faith is not worth having.

– James Luther Adams, 20th century Unitarian Universalist minister and theologian

Taking a Stand

Participants will stand between the north pole (yes) or the south pole (no) in answer to today's statement (but not the center point).

Unitarian Universalists don't have faith in anything.

Once everyone has decided where to stand, ask for reflections on why they chose the spot they did.

Heart of the Journey

Graffiti Wall. Invite the participants to create a Graffiti Wall on the word "faith." Ask them to write comments or phrases that come to mind when they think of this word. Ask them to think of someone they feel has great "faith" and to list those qualities.

After a few minutes (or ideas seem to be not flowing as freely), call "time" and reflect upon some of the words and comments on the Graffiti Wall. Talk about the kind of person who could be described by the words on the wall. Could a Unitarian Universalist "fit the bill?" Can a Unitarian Universalist be "a person of faith?" What do we have faith in?

Invite a few participants to read the definition of the word "faith" from the dictionaries. Compare the observations in the dictionary definitions to the words and comments on the graffiti wall. How are they alike? How are they different? If there are a few participants who were adamant that a Unitarian Universalist cannot be "a person of faith," do they still think this is the case? Did the definition change the minds of anyone who thought Unitarian Universalists could be a "person of faith?"

Note to teachers: According to the Webster Dictionary, at least one definition involves "something that is believed especially with strong convictions."

Getting There

Scavenger Hunt for Sources. Tell the participants that the word "faith" has also been defined to mean "that which is of ultimate value." Ask them to think about that idea for a minute. What is of "ultimate value" for Unitarian Universalists? How can we determine what is of "ultimate value" for people with such diverse theological points of view?

Remind the participants of the fourth Principle which promotes a "free and responsible search for truth and meaning." Tell them we've learned much of the responsibility for being a Unitarian Universalist involves being our own authority and that we may change our ideas as we change; we are all on a lifelong spiritual journey to understand what is truth for us and what it means.

We've talked a lot this year about searching. What about finding? How does a Unitarian Universalist find some answers to what he or she can have faith in? How does a person determine what is of "ultimate value"?

Our Unitarian Universalist Sources are a way we can help "find" the answers we are searching for. These Sources are places we can look to understand the world and our place in it.

Today, we are going to go searching for what these Sources mean and how to use them to find answers to life's big questions. Our Sources can shape our beliefs, and our beliefs are what

shapes our faith.

Divide the participants into groups of three or four. Pass out copies of Resource 34-A to each group and explain the rules for the scavenger hunt (i.e. no leaving church grounds, do not disrupt the worship service, can't get everything from the same place, etc.). Explain that all of the groups should find something that represents each Source. If it is something that they cannot physically bring back, then they should indicate it and its location on their list (such as the painting in the RE corridor). Let them know how much time they have and when they will need to return to their classroom. Then let the groups go off in search of their Sources!

Note to teachers: If it is a nice day, and the weather cooperates, consider encouraging them to go outside for some of their items—this could be particularly relevant to Source number six. If any group is really having trouble coming up with some items for their list, give them a hint by pointing them toward a bookshelf or the church office. A bookshelf in particular is likely to have something on a topic which would fit under any one of the Sources. But don't let any group get away with pulling from a bookshelf a book for each and every Source!

Stopping to Rest

Reflection and Journaling. After time is up and all groups have returned to the room, invite each group to share what things they came up with on their scavenger hunt to illustrate the Sources our Living Tradition draws upon. Ask any group to justify or explain why they chose something which is not immediately obvious. After a group has shared, invite the other participants to comment on what they found and the things which they came up with. Then invite anyone who wishes to share to tell about the process. Was it hard? Was it fun? Was it enlightening?

Ask the groups how the Sources might be used to help a person discover what is of ultimate value and to help shape their UU faith. Invite specific examples if they can come up with some.

Then ask the participants: when can it be important to have faith? How can our faith sustain us through difficult times? For example: if you have faith in a friendship with a certain person, it can be easier to patch up an argument, because you know that they want the best for the relationship, just like you do. Invite the participants to share with the group as interest warrants.

Then hand out the journals and invite participants to reflect their thoughts and experiences in their journal. Through writing and/or drawing pictures, encourage them to express their ideas and feelings about what is of "ultimate value" and how they might go about determining what is of "ultimate value."

Going Out into the World

Taking a Stand (Reprise).

Ask participants to take a stand again on the statement which was posed earlier today. North is "yes", South is "no." Where do they stand now?

Unitarian Universalists don't have faith in anything.

Ask participants to share reasons why they're now standing where they are. Did they change their opinions or ideas? Why or why not? Do they feel stronger about the position than they did before, or a little less? Encourage as many as possible to share.

-OR-

Quick Stop. Invite the participants to take turns quickly stating (in one sentence or less) something they liked (or surprised them) about one of the group's choices to illustrate the Sources on the scavenger hunt.

Closing Circle.

Using a talking stick that can be passed around the circle (or other object which can serve this purpose), invite participants to share with the group an "I Have Faith In" or "I Have Faith

That ..." statement. These statements can be as deep as they wish to share ("I have faith in modern medicine" or "I have faith in my fellow man" or "I have faith that justice will be done") or not so deep (such as "I have faith that the sun will come up tomorrow"). However, these statements should be brief, stated as a positive and not intended to shock, surprise or be competitive.

Then extinguish the chalice with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Optional Expansion of Idea: Encourage the participants to create credo statements (or develop projects which express their personal theological beliefs). Extend the time for reflection and journaling to allow them some time to jot down ideas in their journals. You can use the ideas in Resource 34-B to guide them in creating their credo statements or projects.

Resource 34-A

Scavenger Hunt for Unitarian Universalist Sources

Your group's task is to find something which represents each of the ideas behind the six Sources of our Living Tradition of Unitarian Universalism. If you cannot physically bring your object to the group, make note of what it is and where it is located on this sheet. Happy Hunting!

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

Resource
34-B
Questions for Reflection and
Journaling
in Developing Credo Statements or
Projects

1. Which of the seven Principles holds the greatest value for you?
2. Are there any Principles which you disagree with? Which one(s) and why?
3. Which of the six Sources is most important to you in your own search for answers?
4. What are the mysteries that you wonder about?
5. What are the forces which create and uphold life? Is there a guiding force to the universe?
6. Who are the prophetic men and women whose words are meaningful to you?
7. How can we confront the powers of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love?
8. What wisdom (if any) does the Bible have for you?
9. Do the teachings of Jesus hold any meaning for you?
10. What do you believe about the nature of God/Goddess/The Divine/Great Spirit?
11. What do you believe happens after a person dies?
12. What keeps you going when life gets tough?
13. What does it mean to be religious?
14. What is a sacred text for you?
15. What ideas closely resemble your personal theology? (Christian, Buddhist, Atheist, Agnostic, Humanist, Pantheist, Pagan, etc.)
16. What does the word "faith" mean to you?
17. What is of "ultimate value" for you?
18. What does it mean to be a Unitarian Universalist?
19. How can you best express what you think and believe?

Session Thirty-Five

Movin' On

Goals for Participants:

- to review the year's highlights
- to leave a legacy for the coming class
- to consider the next phase of their spiritual journey
- to celebrate their year together

Session in Brief:

- 1. Preparing for the Day's Journey.** Chalice lighting/Check-in/Thoughts for the Day. (20 min)
- 2. Teachers Taking a Stand.** (10 min)
- 3. Heart of the Journey.** Leaving a Legacy. (10 min)
- 4. Getting There.** Letter to Self. (5 min)
- 5. Stopping to Rest.** Celebrating with Food and Friends. (10 min)
- 6. Going Out into the World.** Journal Ceremony; Closing Circle. (5 min)

Supplies You Will Need:

chalice and matches (or lighter)
basket or hat for quotes
participants' journals
large paper circle for "center point"
tape or CD player (optional)
playlist of songs you've heard during the year (optional) from Resource 7-A and/or from Session 10 *Jesus Christ Superstar*
Imagine by John Lennon
large piece of craft paper and markers
colored paper
writing paper and pens
envelopes
sealing wax and sealing stamp (optional)
festive food – such as cookies, brownies, a decorated cake—and a beverage
tea lights and a candle taper for the journal ceremony
tablecloth or fabric (to protect from dripping wax)

Advance Preparation:

Make a copy of the quotes for this session in the appendix at the back of the curriculum, cut into strips of paper, fold and place in a basket or hat to be shared as part of the opening ritual.

Make a copy of the enlarged quotes in Resource 36-B, place slightly larger pieces of colored paper behind them and post them on the walls of your room.

Decide what music you will play for the party (we suggest using selections from music which was used over the year in various sessions—see Supplies You Will Need for some ideas)

Set up the tea lights around your chalice for your journal ceremony. Remember to put something over the table or surface to protect from dripping wax.

Preparing for the Day's Journey

Chalice Lighting/Affirmation.

Ask a participant to light the chalice as the group says their unison affirmation:

We light this chalice to remind us of the journey we all embark upon in our lives, the journey that is the search for truth as each of us perceives it.

Check-in.

Invite the participants to share what has been happening with them and their lives since your group was last together, or, assuming summer is approaching, ask them to tell the group one thing they're looking forward to doing while on summer break.

Sharing the Thoughts of the Day.

Today's quotes are taken from the various sessions over the past year and represent an overview of what has been discussed. The appropriate session is named after each quote. Ask for a volunteer to select one quote and read it. Then tell the youth what session the quote is from, and ask them what they recall from that session. You might want your binder opened to the Annotated Table of Contents (located in the Appendix), which lists the goals and activities for each session. If the conversation picks up steam, you might want to go the session itself, so that you can fill in details. Please note that this should take some time; this is your review for the year.

I have as much authority as the Pope, I just don't have as many people who believe it. (10—Our Living Tradition) -George Carlin

They say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself (3—Where Have I Been So Far?) -Andy Warhol

To go against the dominant thinking of your friends...Is perhaps the most difficult act of heroism you can perform. (5—Who Is Traveling with Me?) -Theodore H. White

If you light a lamp for somebody, it will also brighten your path. (6—Hospitality—That's Radical!) -Buddhist saying

If Jesus came back and saw what was being done in his name, he wouldn't be able to stop throwing up. (14—What Would Jesus Do?) -Woody Allen

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you... (21—from Calvinism to Channing) -Jonathan Edwards

Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome. (17—Dead Ends) -Isaac Asimov

God is too big to fit inside one religion. (22—Just whose Religion Is It?) -Seen on a bumper sticker

A consciousness of guilt destroys all the expected...pleasures of sin. (27—Universalism: What Are We Good For?)

-Hosea Ballou

Whoever said anybody has the right to give up? (23—Honoring Our Martyrs)

-Marian Wright Edelman

The power of choosing good and evil is within reach of us all. (30-The Devil Made Them Do It)

Only a Sith thinks in absolutes.

(31-Going to Extremes)

-Obiwan Kenobi in *Star Wars*, Episode Three)

Taking a Stand

This week it is the teachers who will take a stand! Youth can do the following to decide on statements to pose: they can choose statements from earlier sessions in this curriculum, or they can make up their own statements. If they choose to make up their own statements, be sure to draw healthy boundaries for what is posed. Statements should be connected to beliefs, not to anything personal in the lives of the teachers. Give the group about five minutes to come up with one or more statements, then teachers should line up on the compass needle.

Heart of the Journey

Leaving _____ a Legacy.

Tell the participants there is one more Graffiti Wall for them to create. This one will be a legacy for the next group of youth who will do *Compass Points*. They can let future participants know what they liked best about this year, or something they wish they themselves had known before the year started, or something that the next group might want to do differently. The youth are invited to express their ideas in words or pictures on the Graffiti Wall. Make sure that

somewhere there is written the following information:

*o is creating this Graffiti Wall
for whom they are creating it
why they are creating it*

Getting There

Letter to Self.

Now that the youth have given advice to someone else, what do they want to tell themselves? Is there something they want to accomplish this summer? Is there something they want to do differently in school next year? Is there a resolution, like a New Year's resolution, that they'd like to make? Is there something they learned in RE that they want to learn more about (perhaps doing some online research)? There might be other suggestions that arise from what your group has done over this past year.

Hand out the writing paper and envelopes.

Ask each participant to address the envelope to herself or himself and then to write the short note and put it in the envelope and seal it. If you happen to have sealing wax; let the youth use that on the back of their envelopes. Let participants know you will be sending these letters to them at the end of the summer.

Stopping to Rest

Party!

As the participants enjoy the food, you might play some music that they have experienced over the past year. Some suggestions include songs which included references to images of the divine (see Resource 7-A for reminders on what music was played in session 7), selections from the CD with music from *Singing the Living Tradition* (from session 10), selections from the CD *Jesus Christ Superstar* (from session 13), the song *Imagine* by John Lennon, (from session 19) etc.

If you still have posters, artwork, graffiti walls, quotes or anything from the year lining your walls, invite the participants to remove them and take anything with them which they wish to keep. Anything they do not wish to take with them can

be recycled or given to your religious educator to be saved in an archive or used for the next *Compass Points* group.

[Alternatively, if you don't think your group will engage in spirited conversation on their own, you can have them play Two Truths and a Lie (see Session One).]

Going Out into the World

Journal Ceremony.

Play celebratory music and call each participant up by name. After you hand them their journal, they can light a tea light to affirm that they will be carrying their light with them as they continue on in their journey.

Closing Circle.

Extinguish the chalice (but leave the tea lights burning) with these unison words:

*We extinguish this chalice, but not its light.
That we take with us as we go out into the
world, sharing it with those we encounter on
our journey.*

Note to Teachers: After the participants leave, be sure to save the Graffiti Wall by rolling it up, securing with tape or rubber bands, and labelling it in clear, LARGE letters "for *Compass Points* Session One." Or you can have several youth do his task during the party time. Give this to your religious educator to store.

Also make sure you leave with the addressed envelopes for the youth, and give yourself some tickler to make sure you mail them at the end of the summer.

I have as much authority as the Pope, I just don't have as many people who believe it.
– George Carlin

They say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself
-Andy Warhol

If you light a lamp for somebody, it will also brighten your path.
-Buddhist saying

*If Jesus came back
and saw what was being done
in his name, he wouldn't be
able to stop throwing up.*

– Woody Allen

*The God that holds you over
the pit of hell, much as one
holds a spider, or some
loathsome insect over the fire,
abhors you.*

– Jonathan Edwards

Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome.

– Isaac Asimov

A consciousness of guilt destroys all the expected . . . pleasures of sin.

– Hosea Ballou

Whoever said anybody has the right to give up?

-Marian Wright Edelman

Only a Sith thinks in absolutes.

– Obiwan Kenobi in *Star Wars*,
Episode Three)

*To go against the dominant
thinking of your friends...is
perhaps the most difficult act
of heroism you can perform.*

– Theodore H. White

*The power of choosing good
and evil is within
reach of us all.*

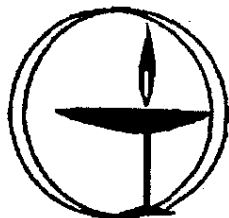
– Origen

*God is too big to
fit
inside one
religion.*

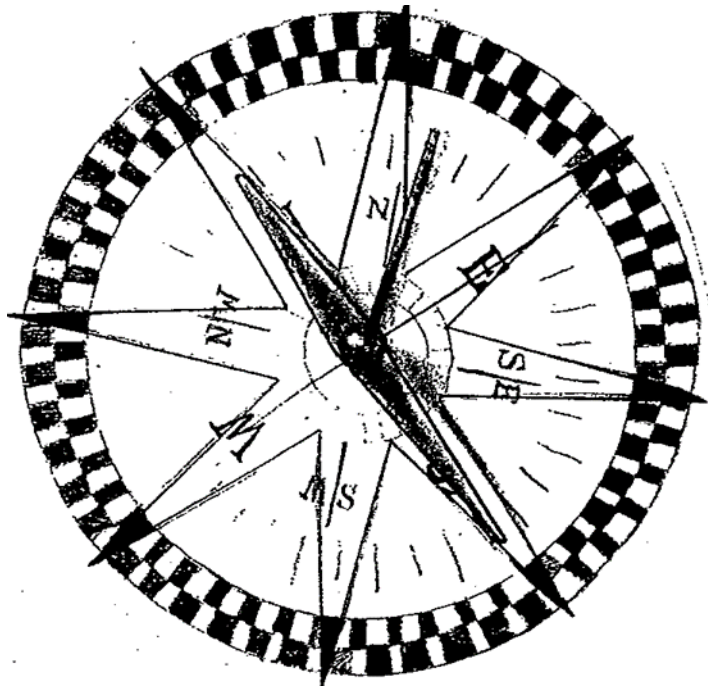
– Seen on a bumper
sticker

Appendix

Annotated Table of Contents (With goals for each session & supply list)	295
Our Sacred Texts Project (an opportunity to explore creating a sacred text as part of Compass Points—recommended for High School age youth)	303
Quotes for Thoughts of the Day (Listing of quotes for each session to be cut up and placed in a hat or basket for sharing in opening ritual)	305



*No one has a right to sit down and feel
hopeless. There's too much work to do.*
Dorothy Day



Annotated Table of Contents

The annotated table of contents is to help you in your planning. Please note that the supplies listed are ones that are particular to that session. Most sessions will require many other supplies that we suggest you keep on hand. See p.9-10 of the Introduction.

	Page
<u>Session One—Orienting to Compass Points</u>	13
Goals for Participants:	
to start to build a community	
to learn how to use a compass	
to begin the spiritual discipline of keeping a journal	
Supplies:	
compasses (one for every 2-4 participants)	
bound journals, one for each youth	
plastic name tag holders with inserts or material with which to make name tags	
<u>Session Two—What Is the Journey?</u>	19
Goals for Participants:	
to introduce the overall theme and objectives of the curriculum	
to give them a greater understanding of how a compass can help guide them in unknown situations	
to prepare them for the idea of going on a spiritual journey and what this means to them personally	
Supplies:	
compasses	
bags (fancy or not) for items at checkpoints on the hunt—and the various items	
<u>Session Three—Where Have I Been So Far?</u>	25
Goals for Participants:	
to create a class covenant	
to consider what/who has influenced their lives so far.	
to begin to understand that while we can't control many of our lives' events, we can control our responses to these events	
Supplies:	
clear tape or glue sticks	
brown lunch bags, one per person	
a stapler	
paper shredder (optional)	
<u>Session Four—What Do I Carry with Me?</u>	31
Goals for Participants:	
to explore the individual gifts and talents that can help them on their journey	
to explore where these gifts come from and how to further develop them	
to understand personal priorities and to develop ways to understand the consequences of the choices we make	
Supplies:	
CD player and meditative music (optional)	
smooth stones, one per participant	

Session Five—Who Is Traveling with Me?

39

Goals for Participants:

- to appreciate the value of friendship
- to examine our responsibilities to friends
- to explore ways friendships can help or hinder us on our spiritual journey

Supplies:

- blindfold
- Chicken Soup for the Preteen Soul* by Jack Canfield and Mark Hanson

Session Six—Hospitality? That's Radical!

43

Goals for Participants:

- to hear a story of radical hospitality that affirms our First Principle
- to do an activity which helps them be open to "the other"
- to consider the implications of the story and the activity to their religious journey

Supplies: lemons, one per person

Session Seven—Images of the Divine

51

Goals for Participants:

- to consider that images and ideas about a divine presence are very diverse
- to discuss how such images reveal something about the people who believe in them
- to examine ideas and images of God which appear in the popular music of our culture

Supplies:

- pictures, photos, statues with a variety of images of Gods and Goddesses
- CDs (and player) with songs that contain diverse images of God/Goddess
- DVDs (and player) with music videos that have images of God/Goddess in them (optional)

Session Eight—Where Does Our Congregation Stand?

57

Goals for Participants:

- to discuss ideas about God
- to find out what the congregation believes about God
- to take responsibility for preparing and carrying out the congregational poll
- to interact with adults in the congregation

Supplies:

- large pieces of poster board
- craft (large roll) paper
- small, bright press on dots
- large white permanent labels (optional)

Session Nine—The Diversity That Unites Us

63

Goals for Participants:

- to get a picture of their congregation's theological diversity
- to become acquainted with some theological terminology
- to create a creative "report" about this diversity to share with the congregation

Supplies: poster board

Session Ten—Our Living Tradition

69

Goals for Participants:

- to review the six Sources of the Unitarian Universalist Living Tradition
- Compass Points / Appendix / Page 290

to be introduced to the idea of spiritual authority
to learn that the Fourth Principle, affirming the "free and responsible search for truth,
and meaning," means that Unitarian Universalists are their own spiritual authorities
to understand that Unitarian Universalists use their Living Tradition to help in forming their
spiritual authority

Supplies:

CDs, "Bring Many Names: Music from Our Liberal Religious Tradition" and/or "Music from
Our Liberal Religious Tradition" vol. 2 from the UU Church of Oakland, CA
(www.uuoakland.org/cd-page.htm). Seep. 69 for more ordering information.

Session Eleven—What's the Bible to Us?

77

Goals for Participants:

to realize the Bible is a collection of books of various genres
to gain some understanding of how and when the Bible came to be written
to begin to appreciate how much there is to be learned about the Bible

Supplies:

copies of the Bible (same edition, at least one copy for every two participants)
copy of a Jewish Bible and/or a Catholic Bible (optional)

Session Twelve—Sacred Texts

90

Goals for Participants:

to gain an awareness of and appreciation for the sacred texts of several religions
to be reminded that these writings form part of our Unitarian Universalist Living Tradition
to create their own (personal to their group) "sacred text"

Supplies:

copies of various sacred texts (Qur'an, etc.)
craft paper
bright, multi-colored markers, including metallic if possible
camera & photo printer, optional

Session Thirteen—It's You Who Say That I Am

99

Goals for Participants:

to learn about Unitarian Universalist views of Jesus
to understand the celebrity-effect and its power
to explore how the perception of who Jesus was is shaped by the individual

Supplies:

Bibles-several different versions, **if** possible
pictures of current celebrities
DVD (or VHS) of the movie *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Millennium version), player

Session Fourteen—What Would Jesus Do?

105

Goals for Participants:

to explore what they already know and understand about Jesus and where this
information comes from
to examine the ideas which are attributed to Jesus and determine whether
he really said them or not (as the Jesus Seminar has done)
to determine what Jesus' actions might have been, based upon what he believed
to have actually said

Supplies:

- craft (large roll) paper
- Bibles, several different versions **if** possible
- two small boxes (like square tissue boxes)
- colored beads (red, pink, grey, black) or squares of construction paper in those colors

Session Fifteen—Wise Guys

115

Goals for Participants:

- to discover that many of the great sages of history had some things in common
- to continue exploring the Third Source, "wisdom from the world's religions"
- to affirm the understanding that as Unitarian Universalists, we are our own source of authority

Supplies:

- prop microphone (optional)
- old sheets or fabric for sages' costumes
- alphabet beads (with an abundance of W's and U's) and cord for bracelets

Sixteen—Transitions

125

Goals for Participants:

- to explore the idea of change as a growth experience
- to reflect on some of the transitions that occur in our lives
- to challenge the way we think about grief and loss

Supplies:

- blanket or sheet
- book, *Hope for the Flowers* by Trina Paulus (Paulist Press)

Seventeen—Dead Ends

129

Goals for Participants:

- to talk about what death means to us, our society and our culture
- to share views of death and dying
- to hear the stories of persons in our congregation who have experienced grief, loss and the death of a loved one

Supplies:

- craft (large roll) paper
- votive candles (at least one per participant) and taper
- members of the congregation willing to share a personal story of the death of a loved one

Eighteen—The Final Destination

133

Goals for Participants:

- to examine their beliefs about life after death
- to consider the idea of near-death experiences and what these might mean about what happens after a person dies
- to explore the concept of after-death communication

Supplies:

- book *The Near Death Experience: A Reader* by Jenny Yates or a similar book
- DVD or VHS movie of *Ghost* (with Demi Moore and Patrick Swayze)
- artwork showing pictures of heaven or after-life experiences (optional)

Nineteen—Life Is What We Make of It

139

Goals for Participants:

to explore the concepts of heaven and hell
to explore the idea that heaven and hell are what we make for ourselves and others
here on earth
to examine ideas of what it means to live a "full" life

Supplies:

rulers or paint stirrers
handkerchief or torn rags
finger foods
CD, *Imagine* by John Lennon

Twenty—From Protestors to Pilgrims

147

Goals for Participants:

to hear how the Radical Reformation gave birth to our forebears, the Pilgrims and Puritans
to learn about an aspect of congregational polity: that every member's voice should
be heard and considered
to play a game to reinforce the new information they have heard

Twenty-One—From Calvinism to Channing

157

Goals for Participants:

to experience what it felt like to grow up in a Calvinist faith
to appreciate how Unitarianism evolved as a response to Calvinism
to name and celebrate their "capacities" -the divine within themselves

Supplies:

large bowl
wrapped pieces of candy (lots of it)
adult male guests who will play the parts of Jonathan Edwards and William Ellery Channing

Twenty-Two—Just Whose Religion Is It?

167

Goals for Participants:

to consider that the United States (or Canada) is full of religious diversity
to ponder the tension between expressing one's own religious beliefs and respecting the
religious beliefs of others
to be able to make a brief statement explaining Unitarian Universalism to a peer

Supplies: large labels for bumper stickers and permanent markers (optional)

Twenty-Three—Honoring Our Martyrs

173

Goals for Participants:

to learn about some important people in our Unitarian Universalist past
to gain a sense of the courage and sacrifice that led to our religious freedom
to ponder their own sense of courage

Supplies:

compass (optional)
collage materials (optional)
candles with cardboard holders or tea lights
CD with soft music, or drum
flashlight (If your room will be very dark)

Twenty-Four—Hey—Who's in Charge Here?! (Congregational Polity)

187

Goals for Participants:

- to be introduced to the concept of congregational polity
- to see in what ways our Unitarian Universalist Principles are derived from our polity
- to make a poster about our polity that can be used to inform and teach adults in the congregation
- to think through the ramifications of our polity
- to prepare for next week's guests

Supplies: token prizes (optional)

Twenty-Five—Learning from Others, Forming Bonds

199

Goals for Participants:

- to have their earlier learnings reinforced by conversations with the minister and a leadership representative
- to gain a better understanding of ministry and membership
- to do research to find a group of Unitarian Universalist peers with whom they can form a relationship and to find a way to connect with that group
- to review the covenant they made at the beginning of the year and possibly rewrite it

Supplies:

- District and/or UUA directory
- Cell phone or speaker phone (optional)
- laptop or church computer with internet connection (optional)
- light refreshments

Twenty-Six--Thinkers and Doers (The Transcendental Mystery Dinner)

203

Goals for Participants:

- to be introduced to the concept of Transcendentalism
- to become aware of some great mid-19th century Unitarians and to understand that these people associated with each other, and that their influence is still felt today
- to learn how theology can influence actions
- to meet a number of Unitarian *women*

Supplies:

- finger food
- small plates or napkins
- construction paper, hole punch and yarn

Twenty-Seven--Universalism: What Are We Good For?

217

Goals for Participants:

- to become acquainted with the early founders of American Universalism
- to learn about Universalist views of humanity and God
- to consider whether people's behavior is based on their conscience or external factors such as reward and punishment

Supplies:

- yellow, green and blue copy paper
- 3 bowls or baskets
- pencils or pens with identical ink

Twenty-EightTwo Paths Become One

227

Goals for Participants:

to explore why and how our two faiths of Unitarianism and Universalism came together
to understand what it means to have two faith traditions and a dual heritage
to examine what the UUA and the CUC offer to youth

Supplies:

computer(s) with access to the web (so youth can visit the UUA/CUC web pages-optional)
several copies of *The UU World* magazine
several copies of *Synapse* (YRUU publication) or *Busking on the Causeway* (the Canadian youth publication)
chime or bell
index cards
hole punch
yam, string or cord
a thick rope, at least 20 feet in length if you have a large group of participants

Twenty-Nine—No Fate But What We Make

239

Goals for Participants:

to explore whether or not there is a power that directs human affairs
to examine how the choices we make affect the rest of our lives and the lives of others
to see how our actions become significant when our choices affect our futures and the lives of others
to explore the second Principle and how our actions affect how we interact with others in "just, equitable and compassionate ways"

Supplies:

deck of playing cards
craft paper, paints and paint brushes
small stones or marbles, one per participant
meditative music (optional)

Thirty-The Devil Made Them Do It

245

Goals for Participants:

to explore the concept of whether people are born good or bad, or whether they become that way through their life's experiences
to further explore the idea of "inherent worth and dignity" for everyone?
to consider what makes a person do violent things
to consider possible societal influences that could cause a person to commit an evil act

Supplies:

several copies of the Bible
copy of the CD, *Portrait of an American Family* by Marilyn Manson
dominoes (if you have a small group)

Thirty-One-Going To Extremes

253

Goals for Participants:

to come to an understanding of fundamentalist belief and the causes of religious extremism
to understand that all fundamentalist groups have common beliefs and ideas, no matter what the religion
to explore the responsibilities of Unitarian Universalists and the role of our Principles in light of fundamentalist beliefs

Supplies:

a large tray

an assortment of objects, some larger and taller than the others (such as candles, statues, religious objects, flower vases and other decorative objects)
a towel or cloth large enough to drape over the tray with the objects on it

Thirty-Two—Do No Harm

261

Goals for Participants:

- to examine alternatives to violence in creating social change
- to explore the connections between great historical figures who believed in non-violent social change
- to think about some of the causes we believe in strongly enough to take a stand on

Supplies:

- DVD or video of the movie, *Gandhi*
- copy of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* (optional)
- paint stirrers, heavy duty stapler, poster board

Thirty-Three—Our Place in the Universe

267

Goals for Participants:

- to examine the role of human beings in the grand scheme of things
- to take a look at how we fit into the world
- to determine their thoughts and feelings about our responsibility to others and our Earth
- to explore the seventh Principle: "respect for the independent web;"

Supplies:

- a Bible (or several copies of one with passages from *Genesis* selected)
- artwork or books on "The Garden of Eden" (optional)

Thirty-Four—Faith

273

Goals for Participants:

- to explore what is of ultimate value
- to examine priorities and assigning importance
- to determine what or whom to have faith in

Supplies:

- a CD or cassette tape with meditative music (optional)
- CD or cassette tape player (optional)

Thirty-Five—Moving On

279

Goals for Participants:

- to review the year's highlights
- to leave a legacy for the coming class
- to consider the next phase of their spiritual journey to celebrate their year together

Supplies:

- letter envelopes
- tape or CD player (optional)
- CDs of songs you've heard during the year (optional)
- sealing wax and sealing stamp (optional)
- festive food—such as cookies, brownies, a decorated cake—and a beverage tea lights and a candle taper for the journal ceremony

Our Own Multi Media Sacred Text

A project for older youth

"Make your own Bible. Select and collect all the words and sentences that in your reading have been like the blast of trumpet..."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Time requirement:

This project needs a morning session for planning, then an extended time, like a Sunday afternoon or an overnight, for its completion. Alternatively, a group might decide to make the project the focal point of its meetings for a month or more. Note that there has to be time in between the planning and the execution for youth and their leaders to assemble resources and equipment.

Equipment/supplies suggestions:

Recording and playing equipment for
DVD's and CD's
Video camera
TV or monitor
Digital camera and printer
Paints, brushes and self-hardening clay
CD's brought in by participants
calligraphy pens (or chisel tip markers)
"vellum" type paper or other paper

Background requirement:

The youth should have spent some time looking at the Bible and other sacred texts, so that they know the scope and "flavor" of what they will be creating. They also should have had the opportunity to explore their own beliefs and hear about the beliefs of other members of the group.

The First Session:

Planning a Multi-Media Sacred Text

Throughout the history of humanity, people have felt compelled to tell their own story. Before the written word, this was done orally around the campfire or by painting pictures in

caves or by carving symbols into rocks. Now we have many kinds of technology that allow us to record what is important in our lives.

Over whatever time frame you have determined, your group will be creating and compiling a multi-media sacred text. This text will refer to them as a group of Unitarian Universalist high school youth living in the first part of the 21st Century. Like other sacred texts, it should tell contemporary people who they are and what's important to them. And like other sacred texts, it should preserve their ideas for future generations. The sacred text should also be a source of authority, so it should reflect truth as they perceive it. This text might:

- tell their history
- tell about how they move in the larger world (like their relation to the congregation, or their participation in cons or rallies)
- tell about their leaders – how the group is governed, or how it governs itself, what rules or laws it has
- explain their rituals and traditions
- speak to their ethics, or tell them how best to lead their lives
- introduce, explain and/or praise their god (whatever they hold to be most important in their lives)

The first session of this project will all be discussing and planning.

Brainstorm what might be included. When you have a long and varied list on newsprint, go back and have people defend the various ideas. (Remember, every sacred text is formed by what is left out as well as by what is included.)

When you have a working list of what you will include, discuss how it will be included. For instance, if you want to have a record of how you do joys and concerns, you will probably want to record that event with a digital or a video camera. Who has access to the equipment? If you want to include a certain song, who will bring in the CD?

You also might want to use art media, painting a mural (which you might then also record on camera), making a clay chalice, etc. Be sure to think through what you will need in each case and decide how you will get those things.

Decide what you want the final product to look like. Will you create a DVD and make a copy for everyone? Will you collect things in a box which you decorate and keep in your room? *Will* you do a dramatization and video record it? (That might require props, costumes, scenery.) Remember, your sacred text, with its wisdom and history, should be available to future generations.

Now that you've made all these decisions, remember that most sacred texts grow and change over time. Invite everyone to be thinking during the week of other things they might want included: favorite quotes (which might be gathered up as "proverbs"), music, or whatever else they might think of. They should bring these in for the next session.

The Second (Extended) Session: Creating a Multi-Media Sacred Text

Taking time to get everyone oriented and on task will make the sacred text project go much more smoothly. Remember, it took almost 1000 years for the Jews to write the Tanakh (their Bible), and Unitarian Universalists believe that "revelation is not sealed." Guided by our experiences and our inner light, (our inner authority), we are always open to adding to or changing our beliefs. Even though you might have a product within some time frame, you should always be able to add to your sacred text at a later date.

Begin by reviewing your plans from last week. Find out who brought what they said they would. Then see what else came up for people during the week—what else should possibly be added to the sacred text? As you did last week, make sure that there is a reason for everything you decide to include. Keep your ideas on newsprint so they are accessible to the whole group.

When you have a (for now) definite plan of what **will** be included, you can proceed one of two ways:

1) As a group, you can go over each element, deciding in general how it **will** be accomplished and who **will** be responsible. Or

2) You can make one or more people responsible for each element, and have them figure out the logistics.

You might well have more tasks than people, and need to either assign several at one time or select one or more project leaders who will make sure everything is attended to eventually. Remember that sacred texts often jump around, repeat themselves, and are inconsistent. Things do not necessarily have to fit together neatly.

Wrapping It Up

Either after you have finished your project or while you are working on it, be thinking of what your sacred text should be called and with whom you would like to share it. Make sure there is some way to archive your sacred text, so it **will** be available in the future.

Quotes for Sharing Thoughts for the Day

Session One: Orienting to Compass Points

We do not have to wait until we are excellent before we can do excellent things.

-Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

An idea is a curious thing. It will not work unless you do.

-Jaeger's Facts

It is not what happens to me that makes me great, but what I do.

-Kierkegaard

None of us alone can save the world. Together-that is another possibility, waiting.

-Rev. Rebecca Parker (UU)

Session Two: What is The Journey?

"The place to find is within yourself."

-Joseph Campbell

"It's good to have an end to journey toward,
but it is the journey that matters in the end."

– Ursula K. LeGuin

"For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go.

I travel for travel's sake."

-Robert Louis Stevenson

Do not go where the path may lead,
go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Session Three: Where Have I Been?

We know what we are, but know not what we may be.
— William Shakespeare

They say that time changes things,
but you actually have to change them yourself.
—Andy Warhol

To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to
mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.
-Hemi Bergson

One faces the future with the past.
- Pearl S. Buck

Session Four: What Do I Carry With Me?

Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful,
we must carry it with us or find it not.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Everyone has talent.
What is rare is the courage to follow the talent
to the dark place where it leads.
-Erica Jong

Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent
if no birds sang there except those that sang best.
— Henry Van Dyke

Some people with mediocre talent, but with great inner drive,
go much further than people with vastly superior talent.
— Sophia Loren

Session Five: Who's Traveling With Me?

The only way to have a friend is to be one.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

The friendship that can cease has never been real.
– Saint Jerome

When the character of a man is not clear to you, look at his friends.
– Japanese Proverb

To go against the dominant thinking of your friends...is perhaps the most difficult act of heroism you can perform.
– Theodore H. White

Session Six: Radical Hospitality

We need not think alike to love alike.
– Francis David

If you light a lamp for somebody, it will also brighten your path.
– Buddhist saying

Kindness is in our power, even when fondness is not.
-Samuel Johnson

Never look down on anybody unless you're helping them up.
– Rev. Jesse Jackson, Civil Rights leader

Drawing boundaries is the preoccupation of minds incapable of building bridges.
– Brian Hocking

Session Seven: Images of the Divine

To believe in God or a guiding force because someone tells you to is the height of stupidity.

Each person must puzzle it out for himself or herself.

- Sophy Burnham

It is the creative potential itself in human beings that is the image of God.

Mary Daly

The search for God is the search for reality.

Sidney Mead

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

I Corinthians 3:16

Session Ten: Question Authority

[We] affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

(Unitarian Universalist

Principle)

I have as much authority as the Pope,
I just don't have as many people who believe it.

—George Carlin,
comedian

Session Eleven: The Bible as Authority and Inspiration

...the Bible is human literature about the divine, not divine
literature about humans.

-John Buehrens, former president of the UUA

The Bible gives me a deep, comforting sense
that 'things seen are temporal, and things unseen are eternal.'
-Helen Keller

The Bible is a book that has been read more and examined less than any
other book that ever existed.
-Thomas Paine

Every Book of the [Bible], every Chapter of it, every Verse of it,
every word of it, every syllable of it...every letter of it, is the
direct utterance of the Most High!
-John William Burgon, late 19th C. Biblical scholar.

Session Twelve: Sacred Texts

There is no better ruler than wisdom-no safer guardian than justice.
-The Qur'an

It is wisdom to know others; it is enlightenment to know one's self.
-The Tao-te Ching

None is poor but the person who lacks knowledge.
-The Talmud

When the five senses and the mind are still, and the
reasoning intellect rests in silence, then begins the
highest path.
-The Upanishads

Session Thirteen: It's You Who Say That I Am

We believe Jesus is God in flesh,
and we must emphasize his divinity,

but not to the exclusion of his humanity.
– Robert Sabin

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
-Philippians 2:8

(He) contended that Jesus Christ was simply a man.
In other words, (Thomas) Paine was an enlightened Unitarian.
-Robert Ingersoll

Jesus was fully human, no different than you or I,
except that he made use of that humanity more fully than you or I ever will.
– Thom Belote

Session Fourteen: What Would Jesus Do?

No one else has held the place in the heart of the world which Jesus holds.
Other gods have been as devoutly worshiped; no other man has been as devoutly loved.
-John Knox

The day will come when the mystical generation of
Jesus...in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the
fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.
– Thomas Jefferson

The moral and religious system which Jesus Christ transmitted to us
is the best the world has ever seen, or can see. –Benjamin
Franklin

If Jesus came back and saw what was being done in his name,
he wouldn't be able to stop throwing up. –Woody
Allen

Session Fifteen: Wise Guys

It does not matter how slowly you go so long as you do not stop. -Confucius

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.-Lao-tzu

We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think.
When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves.-Buddha

Believe, if thou wilt, that mountains change their place, but believe
not that man changes his nature.
-Mohammed

Session Sixteen: Transitions

It is impossible to step into the same river twice, for
other waters are constantly flowing onto us. -Heraclitus

To everything there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven.—
Ecclesiastes

Do not pursue the past. Do not lose yourself in the future.
The past no longer is. The future has not yet come.
-The Buddha

God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves.
-The Qur'an 13:11

Session Seventeen: Dead Ends

Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome.
– Isaac Asimov

The fear of death is more to be dreaded than death itself.
– Publilius Syrus

I look upon death to be as necessary to the constitution as sleep.
We shall rise refreshed in the morning.
– Benjamin Franklin

For what is it to die, but to stand in the sun and melt?
– Khalil Gibran

Session Eighteen: The Final Destination

Death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight.
– Rossiter W. Raymond

Death is not the end, it is simply walking out of the physical form and into the spirit realm.
– Stephen Christopher

When you're dead, you're dead. That's it.
– Marlene Dietrich

Death is one of two things.
Either it is annihilation, and the dead have no consciousness of anything;
or, as we are told, it is really a change:
a migration of the soul from one place to another.
– Socrates

Session Nineteen: Life Is What We Make Of It

If you keep in mind how quickly this life disappears,
you will value your time and do what is valuable.
– The Dalai Lama

What matters is not when we die but how we live.
– Michel De Montaigne

For certain is death for the born
And certain is birth for the dead;
Therefore over the inevitable
Thou shouldst not grieve.
– Bhagavad Gita
Chapter 2

Life isn't fair. It's just fairer than death, that's all.
– William Goldman from, *The Princess Bride*

Session Twenty: From Protesters to Pilgrims

[The people] joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate,
in the fellowship of the gospel to walk in all [God's] ways made known,
or to be made known unto them,
to their best endeavors,
whatsoever it should cost them.
– Covenant of the Separatists

Session Twenty One: From Calvinism to Channing

I call that mind free... which recognizes in all human beings in the image of God...

-William Ellery Channing

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider,
or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you.

-Jonathan Edwards

I can never join Calvin in addressing his god...

If ever man worshiped a false god, he did.

-Thomas Jefferson,
in a letter to John Adams

The great end in religious instruction is...
to awaken the conscience.

-William Ellery Channing

Session Twenty Two: Just Whose Religion Is It?

I distrust those people who know so well what God wants them to do
because I notice it always coincides with their own desires.

-Susan B.
Anthony

God is too big to fit inside one religion.

-Seen on a bumper
sticker

Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion
or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...

-The Bill of Rights, Article 1

If we can't end our differences, at least we can make the world safe for diversity.

-John F. Kennedy

Session Twenty Three: Honoring Our Martyrs

Be as beneficent as the sun or the sea,
but if your rights as a rational being are trenced on,
die on the first inch of your territory.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Whoever said anybody has the right to give up?

-Marian Wright Edelman

Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything
or nothing in the world's estimation,
and publicly and privately . . . avow their sympathy
with despised and persecuted ideas and their advocates,
and bear the consequences.

– Susan B. Anthony

The important thing is this: To be able at any moment
to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.

-Charles Dubois

Session Twenty Four: Hey! Who's In Charge Here?

I feel we are all islands –in a common sea.

-Anne Morrow Lindburgh

Though leaves are many, the root is one.

– William Butler Yeats

The ideal society is not a choir singing in unison,
but a symphony playing in harmony.

-Peter Gay

Session Twenty Five: Learning From Others. Forming Bonds

I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be.
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

The most holy bond of society is friendship.
-Mazy Wollstonecraft

Church is a place where you get to practice what it means to be human.
-James Luther Adams, UU Theologian

All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.
- George E. Odell

Session Twenty Six: Thinkers and Doers

Everything in Nature contains all the powers of Nature.
Everything is made of one hidden stuff.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

All seems beautiful to me;
I can repeat over to men and women,
You have done such good to me,
I would do the same to you.
--Walt Whitman

Be not simply good; be good for something.
-Henry David Thoreau

I accept the Universe!
-Margaret Fuller

Session Twenty Seven: Universalism: What Are We Good For

[A person's ethical behavior] would be in a poor way if
[people] had to be restrained by fear of punishment and
hope of reward after death.

-Albert Einstein

A consciousness of guilt destroys all the expected...pleasures of sin.

-Hosea Ballou

You may possess only a small light, but uncover it, let it shine,
use it in order to bring more light and understanding to the hearts and minds of men.

Give them, not hell, but hope and courage.

-John Murray

Stand by this faith...There is nothing in all the world so important as to be
loyal to this faith which has placed before us the loftiest ideals.

—Olympia Brown, Universalist minister

I don't believe in punishment. Who in life gets punished?

--Maurice Sendak

Session Twenty Eight: Two Paths Become One

Universalists believe that God is too good to damn people,
and the Unitarians believe that people are too good to be damned by God.

-Thomas Starr King

When our two historic traditions consolidated in 1961 we ended up with one religion,
Unitarian Universalism, which affirms two incompatible doctrines of human nature.

-Thandeka

There were from the earliest days of both denominations
Unitarians with Universalist beliefs, and Universalists with Unitarian beliefs.

-Lisa Doege

The Unitarians represented the educated and intellectual part of our religion,
and the Universalists represented the more intuitive and caring part of our religion ... our
religion results from the merger of two originally distinct theologies.
–Susan Lynch

Session Twenty Nine: No Fate But What We Make

Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of
choice;
it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be
achieved.

-William Jennings
Bryan

The more alternatives, the more difficult the
choice.

-Abbe
D'Allanival

It is our choices...that show what we truly are, far more than our
abilities.

– J.K. Rowling, from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of
Secrets*

There is no fate, but what we
make.

-The character of John Connor in the
movie, *Terminator Two*

Session Thirty: The Devil Made Them Do It

The power of choosing good and evil is within reach of us all.

-
Origen

All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do
nothing.

-Edmund
Burke

Every sweet has its sour, every evil its
good.

-Ralph Waldo
Emerson

Every minute you are thinking of
evil,
you might have been thinking of good
instead.

-Evelyn
Underhill

Session Thirty-One: Going to Extremes

Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from a
religious conviction.

-Blaise
Pascal

With or without religion, you would have good people doing good things,
and evil people doing evil things.

But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.

-Steven
Weinberg

Some people twist religion to the way they think.

– Arneshuia
Balial

Only a Sith thinks in absolutes.

– the character of Obiwan Kenobi, from *Star Wars Episode III:
Revenge of the Sith*

Session Thirty-Two: Do No Harm

Nonviolence is not a weapon of the weak.
It is a weapon of the strongest and the bravest.
-Gandhi

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible
will make violent revolution inevitable.
-John F.
Kennedy

Be not too eager to deal out death in the name of justice,
fearing for your own safety.
Even the wise cannot see all ends.
-J.R.R Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, Book Four,
Chapter One

Violence is impractical because the old eye for an eye philosophy
ends up leaving everybody blind.
-Martin Luther
King Jr.

Session Thirty-Four: What Do We Have Faith In?

I always admired atheists. I think it takes a lot of faith.
- Diane Frolov and Andrew Schmeider, from the TV series
"Northern Exposure"

You must find things to believe in yourself,
for a life without faith in something
is too narrow a space to live.
- George E.
Woodberry

Faith is the subtle chain which binds us to the infinite.
– Elizabeth Oakes
Smith

An unexamined faith is not worth having.
– James Luther
Adams

Session Thirty-Five: Moving On

I believe in God, only I spell it Nature.
– Frank Lloyd
Wright

Only as far as the masters of the world have called in nature to their aid,
can they reach the height of magnificence.
– Ralph Waldo
Emerson

To me a lush carpet of pine needles or spongy grass is more welcome
than the most luxurious Persian rug.
– Helen
Keller

Earth has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed.
– Mohandas
Gandhi

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