

Welcome to Unity (Part 1 of 3, in Pathway to Membership Series)
7:10 p.m. to 8:30

Workshop Overview

- I. Welcome/Overview/Introductions (20 minutes to 7:30)
- II. Exploration of Religious Authority and Unitarian Universalism (20 minutes to 7:50)
- III. Small Group Sharing (15 minutes to 8:05)
- IV. Story of Unitarian Universalism: Protestant Reformation to Now (10 minutes to 8:15)
- V. Questions/Handouts/Need Steps (10 minutes to 8:25)
- VI. Closing: What are you leaving with? (5 minutes to 8:30)
- VII. Closing Reading

I. Welcome and introductions (7:10-7:30):

Engage in small talk as people come in - explain Wed. Chapel service, programs, and 3 Sunday services.

The Summer Day Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean-
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and
down-
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated
eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her
face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

Flipchart: Welcome!

Candle, Candleholder,
Matches, Nametags,
Pens, Sign-In Sheet,
Reading

Welcome!

Welcome all of you! I'm Justin Schroeder, the Director of Congregational Development at Unity.

I love teaching these classes because I believe we offer a life changing faith - a powerful, life affirming faith for our time. (Share our Ends statements?)

"Welcome to Unity" is the first in a series of three classes designed to help you learn more about Unity Church and who we are, what we're about, and what we offer.

The next class in the series is "Finding Yourself at Unity," which builds on this class, and includes information on membership.

The final class in this series is "Committing to Unity," for those who are ready to become members of Unity Church.

Welcome to all of you! Unity Church is a welcoming congregation, committed to Anti-racism work (anti-racism audit - "anti-racism initiative" on homepage)...and to helping us find hope and purpose in our lives, to connect with what matters most...

...we are about living out our deepest values, here, and in the world. We are committed to caring for one another and to helping one another on our spiritual journeys. I'm glad you're here!

Introductions: (TIGHT) 1) introduce self, and 2) share a transforming moment you've experienced in your time at Unity

II. 7:30 - 7:50 About Unitarian Universalism and Religious Authority

In these classes, the question is always, "What do Unitarians Universalists believe?"

The trouble is - this is generally not the right question for our faith!

Put up agenda on Flip Chart - Run through it, briefly

Up On Wall: Organize sheets in order: Religious Authority, Creed, Dogma, Unitarian, Universalism, Covenant vs. Creed, dates and timeline

It assumes that there is one shared set of beliefs among everyone here. And there isn't. There are agnostics, and people who believe in god, however they define it, and there are humanists and atheists.

Read from Laura's piece

This question behind the question of what do UU's believe is really a question about religious authority.

For example, the question, "What do you believe?" might mean, do you believe in the authority of the Bible? Do you believe everything that your minister teaches? Do you believe in the authority of a sacred scripture?

In our tradition, religious authority is located (in part) in the individual - not a Pope, or Priest, or Minister.

Not a sacred scripture or creed.

In our Unitarian Universalist tradition, the individual, drawing on his or her life experience, on the wisdom of the community, and on religious teachings, develops his or her own spiritual life and identity - and lives out his or her deepest values.

In this way, we are a non-dogmatic, non-creedal faith that respects each individual's search for truth and meaning.

Questions?

Unity is a Unitarian Universalist Church.

Up until 1961, the Unitarians and the Universalists were separate denominations - but because of their small size and shared values, they came together for strength and solidarity. Our historical roots in this country are the New England area. Boston is headquarters of the Unitarian Universalist Association. We are an association of autonomous, self governing, congregations - over 1000 in the United States.

Historically, Unitarianism is the idea of the Unity of God. Early Unitarians resisted the doctrine of the trinity and stressed the belief that Jesus was human, not divine (not both). Susan B. Anthony, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Thomas Jefferson were Unitarians...(although Jefferson never joined a UU church, he did think that it was the perfect religion for the new country.)

Read from Laura S's piece

Refer to "Religious Authority" sign

Refer to Creed Sign.

Refer to Unitarian Sign

Refer to Universalism Sign

Historically, Universalism was the notion that all are saved - that God's love (however you understand God) embraced all people. God would not predestine some people to hell. Clara Barton was a Universalist.

You put Unitarian and Universalism together - and you get the idea of one God, no one left behind.

...there are other ways to understand these ideas.

You might say, "We believe in one common source (of life, love, mystery), and a shared destiny." Universalism means we're all in it together.

Neither of these ideas are new.

Unitarian and Universalist ideas have been around for hundreds of years, but they really took institutional shape in this country in the late 1700's and early 1800s. The first Universalist Church was established in this country in 1770. Unitarianism officially emerged in 1819 and the American Unitarian Association was formed in 1825.

Today, as a non-creedal faith, we are connected by shared values rather than hard and fast beliefs (heaven, hell, salvation, etc.)

In this way, we are a "covenantal" as opposed to a creedal faith. This is a key distinction.

The most basic covenant is a marriage or a committed partnership - two people making a sacred promise, to walk together, until death.

A covenant is a sacred promise we try to live more deeply in to. Part of our church's covenant is to try to help each other live lives of integrity, service, and joy.

III. Spiritual Journey/Small Groups (7:50-8:05)

I hope I've given you a bunch to chew on...

So - break into groups of four or five. 1) Name, 2) Your own religious upbringing, and 3) how that's

Refer to flip chart:
Covenant vs. Creed

Flipchart: What to Say
in Introduction

different/the same as what we're talking about here.

IV. 8:05-8:10 How did we get to this place? The story of Unitarian Universalism is the story of unfolding human freedom and a belief in the capacity of human beings to make meaningful choices for themselves.

Here's the 10 second summary:

In our faith tradition, starting with the protestant reformation, there has been a slow religious movement away from the idea of external religious authorities. For Unitarians and Universalists, there has been a movement away from dogma, doctrine, and creedal statements. There has been a greater focus on reason.. We have come to see the Bible as one source of truth among many.

We recognize the importance of freedom of conscience and the significance of religious tolerance.

Here's the 10 minute version:

The Protestant Reformation began in the early 1500s as a response to the real and perceived corruptions of the Catholic Church.

Martin Luther, the German Reformer, said "No" to the authority of the church and its claim that it was the ultimate religious authority.

The Protestant Reformation was fueled by the invention of the printing press. Individuals now had access to the bible, not in Greek or Latin, but in their own tongue.

They were able to read it and interrupt it for themselves.

For the religious Reformers, the Bible (and especially the teachings about the early church in the New Testament), became the central authority.

Jesus was understood as the true head of the church...and the word of the Bible was authoritative.

Flipchart: What to say
in small group

Refer to signage on wall
- timeline

The Protestant Reformation ultimately churned out the Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Quakers, Lutherans, Anglicans, and many other groups.

It also churned out the Pilgrims and the Puritans, who left England and Holland, for the shores of this country. One of their primary goals was to practice their faith in freedom...without having to follow the faith of the king, which was the norm.

The churches the Pilgrims and Puritans established (all in the New England area) were independent and autonomously ran its own affairs.

Each church was bound together by a covenant - a sacred promise. This promise bound them together.

Here's a sample covenant of the time: "We covenant to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known."

Our faith tradition emerges out of these early New England Congregationalist churches and their covenantal tradition.

By the 1800s, a clear Unitarian and Universalist identity begins to emerge, in part, as a reaction to the ideas of Calvinism and predestination.

Unitarianism is still based in the Bible, but now includes reason, science and experience as valid tools for religious discernment.

Then, in the 1830s and 1840s, radical Unitarianism emerges. Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists said that we must look beyond the bible to include other sources of revelation and wisdom - and that you can have a direct, intuitive experience of God.

Early 20th Century - strong religious humanist element.

In 1961, the Unitarians and the Universalist joined together to form the Unitarian Universalist association...

While we may not all think alike - we are bound by a set of shared values - that stress love, justice, and one's actions in this world. We believe in deeds not creeds, in living with integrity, in lessening suffering, in living into the ethical teachings of Jesus.

You're here because something has spoken to you,
something in this history...named or unnamed.

We strive to be a church that helps us live lives of
Integrity, Service, and joy - and we welcome you to join us
in that mission!

V. Questions?

Hand Out/Next Steps: (Review opportunities for
involvement..Invite people who are involved to talk about
that involvement...)

Hand out FYU schedule, pancake breakfast schedule, WW
classes, and 4:30 service and soup supper info.

VI. Closing: What are you leaving with?

VII. Closing Reading:

NAOMI SHIHAB NYE: The Art of Disappearing.

When they say Don't I know you? say no.

When they invite you to the party
remember what parties are like
before answering.

Someone telling you in a loud voice
they once wrote a poem.

Greasy sausage balls on a paper plate.

Then reply.

If they say we should get together.

say why? It's not that you don't love them any more.

You're trying to remember something
too important to forget.

Trees.

The monastery bell at twilight.

Tell them you have a new project.

It will never be finished. When someone recognizes you in a
grocery store

nod briefly and become a cabbage.

When someone you haven't seen in ten years
appears at the door,

don't start singing him all your new songs.

Handouts: Finding
Yourself at Unity
schedule, Committing to
Unity schedule, WW
Brochure, pancake
breakfasts, 4:30 service
info.

You will never catch up.

Walk around feeling like a leaf. Know you could tumble any second.

Then decide what to do with your time.

Evaluation - And give out two free meal tickets to our Wellspring Wednesday meal.