

Starting Point

Participant Packet

Prep-Work & Resources for Reflection



Welcome

Welcome to Starting Point. We're excited to introduce you to the journey of our congregation.

This packet contains the agendas for our meetings and a number of resources to prepare you for our time together.

For each session, we've listed a handful of essential pieces for you to engage prior to our meetings. We've also included some optional "dig deeper" suggestions if you want to explore the topics in more depth.

Have fun exploring and getting ready for our sessions together. The path of Unitarian Universalism is made rich by everyone's individual journeys coming together. We're so glad to have you on the path with us.

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The Three Paths of Unitarian Universalism, Part Two
& Finding Your Journey Group

Session One

Your Journey:
Sharing Our Stories and Spiritual Roadmaps



Session One

Your Journey: Sharing Our Stories and Spiritual Roadmaps

Session Agenda

- I. Mingle and grab a name tag
- II. Welcome
- III. Chalice Lighting & Opening Words
- IV. Overview of The Road Ahead
- V. Sharing Our Personal Journeys
 - Activity A: The Paths We've Walked
 - Activity B: Making Our Diverse Beliefs Visible
 - Activity C: What You Hope to Find
- VI. What's Next?
- VII. Gratitude Check Out
- VIII. Closing Words & Extinguishing the Chalice

Prep-Work

Ask a Unitarian Universalist - An interview with Rev. Ellen Cooper-Davis

<https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/ask-a-unitarian-universalist-response>

This is My Religion - First UU of Brooklyn, NY celebrates our welcoming faith!

<https://vimeo.com/204551565>

First Unitarian of Rochester, NY Celebrates Coming Home

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbJ32h-YpQA&list=RDOvIPa28cVfA&index=2>

Session Two

The Unitarian Universalist Journey
and
The Journey of Our Church



Session Two

The Unitarian Universalist Journey & The Journey of our Church

Session Agenda

- I. Mingle and grab a name tag
- II. Chalice Lighting & Opening Words
- III. Leftovers & Afterthoughts
- IV. Locating Ourselves on the Map
- V. Unitarian Universalism's Journey... in 8 minutes
- VI. A Walking History of Our Congregation
- VII. What's Next?
- VIII. Gratitude Check Out
- IX. Closing Words & Extinguishing the Chalice

Prep-Work

A Saving Faith *(1 minute read)*

Megan Dowdell

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/saving-faith>

Unitarian Universalist Origins *(7 minute read)*

Mark Harris

<https://www.uua.org/beliefs/who-we-are/history/faith>

Voices of a Liberal Faith *(10 minute video)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wezp1W2HKIU>

UU Principles and Sources *(3 minute read)*

<https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/principles>

<https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/principles/for-kids>

I Don't "Believe in" the Seven Principles *(10 minute read)*

Doug Muder

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/i-dont-believe-seven-principles>

Words Matter *(2 minute read)*

Carol Thomas Cissel

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/promise-and-practice-words-matter-reading>

5 Smooth Stones (4 minute read)

Tony Lorenzen

<https://sunflowerchalice.com/2011/05/09/five-smooth-stones/>

A Bit Of Fun: The Colbert Report Tries to Understand a UU (3 minute video)

Highlights how challenging it is sometimes to communicate who we are...

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/a6q20s/the-colbert-report-the-de-deification-of-the-american-faithscape>

Dig Deeper

While not required for our session, here are some additional pieces to explore the historical journey of Unitarian Universalism in more depth.

In Cupped Hands, Rev. Jen Crow

<http://firstuniv.podbean.com/e/2012-08-12-rev-jen-crowin-cupped-hands/>

Unitarianism Explained, Rev. David Usher

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ma1Vqw2cwLQ>

The History of the Unitarian Universalist Principles, Doug Traversa

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1kPvJlrHUY>

Universalists and Unitarians in America: A People's History, Rev. John A. Buehrens

https://www.uuabookstore.org/Universalists-and-Unitarians-in-America-P17148.aspx?fbclid=IwAR358aVDT9vV8Kvp_TcC8FozArMMAiJV--j_cyRTIPeldFfpHdKunCcqTJQ

Black Lives of UU Organizing Collective Urges Adoption of 8th Principle in Unitarian Universalism

<https://medium.com/outfront/black-lives-of-uu-organizing-collective-urges-adoption-of-8th-principle-in-unitarian-universalism-377480e615ef>

Learn [more](#)

The Black Hole in the White UU Psyche, Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/black-hole-white-uu-psyche>

Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War

Directed by Ken Burns

An account of a daring rescue mission that occurred on the precipice of World War II. It tells the story of Waitstill & Martha Sharp, a Unitarian minister and his wife from Wellesley, Massachusetts, who left their children behind in the care of their parish and boldly committed to multiple life-threatening missions in Europe. Over two dangerous years they helped to save hundreds of imperiled political dissidents and Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi occupation across Europe.

Preview Article: <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/ken-burns-unitarians-wwii>

Watch on Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/title/80103430>



Session Three

Our Journey Together

The Three Paths of Unitarian Universalism

Session Three

Our Journey Together: The Three Paths of Unitarian Universalism, Part One

Session Agenda

- I. Mingle and grab a name tag
- II. Chalice Lighting & Opening Words
- III. Leftovers & Afterthoughts
- IV. Locating Ourselves on the Map
- V. The Three Paths of UUism & The Theology Behind Them
- VI. Exploring the Sacred Path of Listening
- VII. Reactions & Closure
- VIII. What's Next?
- IX. Gratitude Check Out
- X. Closing Words & Extinguishing the Chalice

Prep-Work

The Great Divide – Parker Palmer

A video reflection that speaks to the UU theology of healing spiritual disconnection and connecting with one's deepest self.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xz-MIUp_rY

Centering the Soul - Rev. Mark Ward

<https://uuasheville.org/sermon-centering-the-soul-audio-and-text/>

The Gift of Presence, The Perils of Advice - Parker Palmer

<https://onbeing.org/blog/the-gift-of-presence-the-perils-of-advice/>

A Circle of Trust - Parker Palmer

<http://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=1076>

Some Deep Listening Quotes...

A circle of trust is a group of people who know how to sit quietly "in the woods" with each other and wait for the shy soul to show up... In such a space, we are freed to hear our own truth, touch what brings us joy, become self-critical about our faults, and take risky steps toward change - knowing that we will be accepted no matter what the outcome.

- Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

I took comfort and strength from those few people who neither fled from me nor tried to save me but were simply present to me. Their willingness to be present revealed their faith that I had the inner resources to make this treacherous trek -- quietly bolstering my faltering faith.

- Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

It's not about what you say. It's about creating a space where every person can hear, discover and listen to their own voice.

- *Parker Palmer, A Hidden Wholeness*

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving me advice, you have not done what I asked. When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings. When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problems, you have failed me, strange as that may seem. Listen! All I asked was that you listen, not talk or do. . . just hear me. And I can do for myself. I'm not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless. When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy. But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you and can get about this business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling. And when that's clear, the answers are obvious, and I don't need advice. Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them. Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people. . . because God is mute and doesn't give advice or try to fix things. God just listens and lets you work it out for yourself.

- *unattributed*

When someone deeply listens to you...

John Fox

When someone deeply listens to you
it is like holding out a dented cup
you've had since childhood
and watching it fill up with
cold, fresh water.
When it balances on top of the brim,
you are understood.
When it overflows and touches your skin,
you are loved...

When someone deeply listens to you,
the room where you stay
starts a new life
and the place where you wrote
your first poem
begins to glow in your mind's eye.
It is as if gold has been discovered!..

When someone deeply listens to you,
your bare feet are on the earth
and a beloved land that seemed distant
is now at home within you.

Session Four

Finding Your Journey Group



Session Four

The Three Paths of Unitarian Universalism, Part Two

& Finding Your Journey Group

Session Agenda

- I. Mingle and grab a name tag
- II. Chalice Lighting & Opening Words
- III. Leftovers & Afterthoughts
- IV. Locating Ourselves on the Map
- V. The Path of Opening to Life's Gifts
- VI. The Path of Serving Needs Greater than Our Own
- VII. Your Next Step: Finding a Journey Group
- VIII. Gratitude Check Out
- IX. Closing Words & Extinguishing the Chalice

Prep-Work

Spiritual Reflections On The Path Of "Opening To Life's Gifts"

Tripping Over Joy

Hafiz

What is the difference
Between your experience of Existence
And that of a saint?

The saint knows
That the spiritual path
Is a sublime chess game with God

And that the Beloved
Has just made such a Fantastic Move

That the saint is now continually
Tripping over Joy
And bursting out in Laughter
And saying, "I surrender!"

Whereas, my dear,
I am afraid you still think
You have a thousand serious moves.

Sometimes the urgency of our hunger blinds us to the fact that we are already at the feast. To accept this can change everything: we are always home, never exiled. Although our minds constantly insist on seeing walls of separation, in reality most of the walls are mere veils. In every moment, everywhere, we are not even inches away from the divine presence.”

- John O'Donohue

Welcome Morning

Anne Sexton

<http://mondaypoem.blogspot.com/2013/06/welcome-morning-by-anne-sexton.html>

Read aloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFUclNQoO5w>

Everything is Waiting for You

David Whyte

<https://onbeing.org/poetry/everything-is-waiting-for-you/>

Guest House

Jelaluddin Rumi

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning is a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
[S]he may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Praise What Comes

Jeanne Lohmann

<https://journalverse.com/november-poem-of-the-month-praise-what-comes-jeanne-lohmann/>

Read by author: <https://soundcloud.com/cordella-mag/praise-what-comes>

The Word

Tony Hoagland

<https://alisonmcghee.com/2013/09/07/poem-of-the-week-by-tony-hoagland-3/>

Reflections on Our UU Effort To Open To Diversity and Decenter Whiteness

Brave Space

Micky ScottBey Jones

<http://www.mickyscottbeyjones.com/invitation-to-brave-space/>

The me that shows up in mostly white UU spaces isn't inauthentic but is guarded and not my full self.

- Rev. Marisol Caballero

Missing Voices

Connie Simon

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/promise-and-practice-missing-voices-reading>

Words Matter

Rev. Carol Thomas Cissel

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/promise-and-practice-words-matter-reading>

“In this Delicate Turning” Sunday Morning Worship, GA 2019

<https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2019/worship/sunday>

Music for centering begins at 1:04:44 and sermon begins at 1:09:43, but we encourage you to watch the entire service

Dialogue about the UU White Supremacy Teach-Ins (The VUU)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC0lsuHbsc>

Our Anti-Racism Work: Creating Accountability in our UU world (The VUU)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QM_tCPZMnc8

Keep Talking, Start Doing: Ten Ways to Deepen your Congregation's Multiculturalism Journey

<https://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/introduction/deepen-your-journey>

Prayer for Living in Tension

Rev. Joseph M. Cherry

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/payer-living-tension>

Pastoral Prayer For the Awareness of the Opportunity Before Us

Connie Simon

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/promise-and-practice-pastoral-prayer-1>

Dig Deeper

The Black Hole in the White UU Psyche - UU World Article

Rev. Mark Morrison Reed

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/black-hole-white-uu-psyche>

The Empowerment Tragedy - UU World Article

Rev. Mark Morrison Reed

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/empowerment-tragedy>

Our Faith's Complacency in Racism

Rev. Nathan Ryan

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reflection/our-faiths-complacency-racism>

White Supremacy and Beloved Community

Amanda Udis-Kessler

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/sermon/white-supremacy-and-beloved-community>

To All Get Free Together

Chris Crass

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/all-get-free-together>

What it Means to be White - The VUU #144

[*Robin DiAngelo*](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzeebSMZYxl>

Reflections On The Path Of Serving Needs Greater Than Our Own

If one fights relentlessly against injustice, want, hate and every form of exploitation, then one is a religious person. The love of God is not expressed by ritual or ceremony, but by loving.

- Wade McCree, Jr.

The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice.

- Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed

At every moment in every person's life there is work to be done, always work to be done, some of it small, some of it Great. The Great Work, in a sense, always has to do with healing the world, changing the world, and, as a necessary predicate to that, understanding the world. You rise every morning aware that you are called to this work. You won't live to see it finished. But if you can't hear it calling, you aren't listening hard enough. It's always calling, sometimes in a big voice, sometimes in a quiet voice.

- Tony Kushner

Being a community" is thinking small. Our ultimate goals and purpose cannot simply be about ourselves. Unitarian Universalists, like members of every other religion, are trying to change the world by encouraging people to live a different way. By word and by deed, Unitarian Universalists are trying to change people. It is time for us to acknowledge and proclaim this, and to see that building a religious community is but a means to that larger end... Inclusion has been our goal. But inclusion is about "bringing in." We should now be thinking about "going out." Now we should turn ourselves inside out to turn the world upside down.

[- Rev. Tom Shade](#)

Dig Deeper

Explore the "justice" articles in our UU magazine the UUWorld:

<https://www.uuworld.org/topics/social-justice>



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