

Making Meaning After Disaster: a Workshop for Unitarian Universalist Adults

By Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh

INTRODUCTION

The following workshop plan, conceived of in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, is designed for groups of Unitarian Universalists for the purpose of reflection and healing. This short curriculum can help your congregation lead a program for adults in the wake of natural disasters, attacks, and other traumatic events that have affected the community. Whether such events occur far away or in our own backyard, they can affect the way that we make meaning and the way each of us understands life's purpose and the workings of the universe.

Unitarian Universalists hold a number of theological identities, from humanist to liberal Christian to pagan. One of our strengths as a movement is that our worship and religious understandings draw from many sources. Theological reflection enables individuals and communities to more deeply understand and personalize their theological outlooks, whether or not they believe in a divine force at work in the world. This reflection is not simply a mental exercise. It also involves action—moving forward to respond to the tragedy in constructive and life-giving ways. This process is a form of praxis, the cycle of action and reflection that feeds heartfelt, faith-filled, and effective movements for social justice.

Because Unitarian Universalists are often very action-oriented, many of us might be tempted to skip the reflective and theological aspects of this process in favor of immediate action. Sometimes it is absolutely necessary to move directly from witnessing to acting in order to save lives and livelihoods. Holding a workshop such as this should never be a pre-requisite for action in the face of emergency. However, under other circumstances if we respond only by taking action, we miss an opportunity for spiritual growth and faith development.

Public tragedies tend to “shake up” deeply-held religious assumptions, challenging the outlooks of victims, emergency responders, and even those who experience the event from a

Facilitator tip:

- Read through this entire workshop plan at least two weeks in advance of the workshop. This will allow time for volunteer recruitment and preparation.

Facilitator tip:

- Identify persons in your congregation and community who can help participants deal with trauma and other strong emotions if they arise.
- Make these resources known to all participants.

distance. Trauma causes some to cling to beliefs all the more, while others let go of their beliefs after experiences challenge them. These people may be left adrift with little to cling to. It can be a frightening place to be. After a hurricane, a Unitarian Universalist whose spirituality honors nature can feel alienated from the earth, winds, and waters which once gave solace. A humanist, once so positive about humanity's potential, can lose faith in human institutions when they fail to act responsibly. The beliefs that were once avowed or rejected become subject to re-examination.

This workshop honors the theological questions that emerge after tragedy, providing a space for Unitarian Universalist adults to grapple with meaning and thus develop their ever-evolving faith. Facilitators are encouraged to use the outline below as a starting point from which to design a program that suits the congregation's interests and needs.

PROVIDING SUPPORT

Discussion of disasters can touch on trauma, grief, anger, depression, and feelings of guilt among survivors and observers. Participants may bring these and other powerful emotions and experiences with them to the workshop. Therefore, facilitators are encouraged to identify a "participant support system" in advance of the workshop—a system to which participants can be referred if the issues they are struggling with are deeper than what can be handled by the workshop. Such a support system can include ministers, psychologists, therapists, survivor support groups, and other congregational and community resources. Among the support persons and organizations you identify, be sure to include those with expertise in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

If your congregation includes people who were affected directly by the tragedy or who were first responders such as emergency personnel, chaplains, and relief workers, please contact the Unitarian Universalist Trauma Ministry (866-730-8181 and www.traumaministry.org) for guidelines on conducting debriefing interventions. Such interventions reduce the risk of PTSD.

Make this support system known to all participants, not just the ones who are showing outward signs of difficult emotions. Some participants who have a more inward or introverted way of coping might need help, too.

Two handouts on mental health are provided for this workshop—one related to natural disasters and the other to human-made

- Contact the Unitarian Universalist Trauma Ministry to learn about debriefings for first responders and persons who were directly affected.

- Talk with your congregation's staff and psychological professionals to determine an appropriate time to offer the workshop.

disasters of war and attacks. These handouts are not discussed in the workshop, but are recommended as resources for participants to review on their own.

A NOTE ON TIMING

The time at which this workshop is offered is crucial to its success. Determining the appropriate time involves consideration of your congregation's:

- Proximity to the event
- Personal connection to the event
- Emotional reaction to the event

In general, a congregation that is further from the event—physically, emotionally, and personally—will be ready to undertake theological reflection sooner. Those closer to the event are more likely to have members who have suffered crises of meaning and will be more greatly in need of a program such as this. However, those congregations often have more pressing tasks to perform in the aftermath—cleaning up, rebuilding, grieving, even relocating. These are tasks that may need to be accomplished before they can give their attention to understanding how their personal theology has been transformed.

First responders and those who were directly affected by the tragedy have had distinctly different experiences from those who were indirectly affected. If a congregation has members who fit into more than one of these categories, it is *strongly* recommended that the workshop be offered for these populations separately, especially if the workshop is taking place not long after the tragic event. Debriefings should be offered first. (See Providing Support above for more information.)

Within one congregation there will likely be a mix of reactions, proximities, and personal connections to any given event. Facilitators are encouraged to consult with their congregation's staff as well as psychological professionals to select an appropriate time to conduct this workshop.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

- The activities below provide programming for a workshop of approximately three and a half hours. The times allocated for activities add up to three hours and fifteen minutes, with an additional fifteen minutes available for a break. You may choose to extend or reduce allocated times to better serve the needs of your group. You may choose to offer the “Worship and Storytelling” portion separately from the other workshop activities.
 - Worship and Storytelling – 50 minutes
 - Group Covenant – 10 minutes
 - Invitation to Reflection – 10 minutes
 - Raising the Questions – 30 minutes
 - Sharing the Questions – 30 minutes
 - Our Faith Together – 20 minutes
 - Living Our Ways Into the Answers – 15 minutes
 - Closing Worship – 30 minutes

TIPS FOR PREPARATION

- Be accessibility-minded. Arrange for amplification and/or sign language interpretation so that all members of your community can participate. Create handouts in large, clear print. Write with dark markers on white paper. Provide wide aisles for movement and space for wheelchairs, walkers and canes. Visit www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/accessibility/index.shtml for more tips on making your workshop accessible for all.
- Select chalice lighting. In addition to the one included in the program, see the chalice lightings in *Singing the Living Tradition*, on the UUA Worship Web (www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb) and in *Rejoice Together* (Skinner House Books, 2005).
- Create handouts that contain the responsive readings you choose for the opening and closing worships. An alternative source of readings is *Poems to Live By in Uncertain Times* (Beacon Press, 2001).
- You may want to create entire orders of service for the opening and closing worships.
- Write the proposed guidelines for meeting (see Covenant section) and the group discussion questions on newsprint in advance.
- Write the following questions on newsprint in advance of the workshop, or create a handout with the questions listed. On one sheet:
 - What are those questions unsolved in your heart?
 - What can give you hope or courage as you live these questions?On another sheet:
 - What does it feel like to live with these questions?
 - What would “answers” or “resolution” look like?
 - What help do you need as you live these questions?
- Photocopy the handout “Questions for Triad Discussion” – one copy per 12 participants. Cut each sheet into four sections.
- Download and photocopy the resources “[Coping with the Stress of Natural Disasters](#)” or “[Understanding Your Mental Health in Times of War and Terrorism](#)” from the website of Mental Health America.
- Designate a volunteer to assist with the stones, ashes, and water during the responsive reading. It is physically challenging to lead the reading while lifting ashes and stones, therefore at least two people are required to make the ritual flow smoothly. Brief the volunteer on the responsibilities of this role.
- If your congregation has a behavioral covenant, review it as preparation for creating the workshop’s Group Covenant. You may wish to use your congregation’s behavioral covenant as a starting point.

SUPPLIES

- At least one microphone, preferably two or three so that participants' comments can be amplified as well as the facilitators'.
- Handouts of responsive readings and discussion questions: one each per participant, with the exception of "Questions for Triad Discussion"—one quarter of the sheet is needed per group of three.
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnbooks and/or *Singing the Journey* songbooks for participants, including Large Print editions or enlarged photocopies of songs for those who need them.
- Chalice with candle and matches
- Smooth stones between 1 and 2 inches in diameter – one per participant, plus six
- Ashes – at least half a cup. These can be gathered from a fireplace.
- Several small flowers – at least one per participant. The flowers should be cut from the stems in advance so that they can easily float on water. Mini-carnations are excellent flowers for this purpose.
- A large clear bowl – big enough to hold all of the stones with an inch or two of space at the top
- A smaller clear bowl – big enough to hold three to six stones with an inch or two of space at the top
- At least two floating candles
- An table upon which to create an altar or centering place
- An altar cloth
- Newsprint and easel
- Large, fragrance-free, dark-colored markers for newsprint
- Masking tape
- Blank white paper, 8 ½ x 11" or larger, at least three sheets per participant
- Markers and pens for drawing
- Tables for writing and drawing
- Optional and recommended: provisions for communal snack, including food, beverages and paper goods.
- Facial tissues – several boxes.

ACTIVITIES

WORSHIP AND STORYTELLING (50 MINUTES)

1. Welcome

- Offer brief words of welcome and orientation, giving participants an idea of the workshop’s content and schedule.

2. Opening Words

- The leader may select and read suitable opening words, or use these words by Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh:
 - We gather as a people affected. Whether we were close to it or further away, we have witnessed devastation and tragedy. In times like this our grief is so great. Our anger, our sense of urgency, can overwhelm us. We have come together this day to share together, to honor one another with open hearts and open minds. We uphold the free and responsible search for truth and meaning as we make meaning of what we have seen, what we have heard, and what we have felt. This day we are here to remind one another that we are not alone or disconnected—we are held in the interconnected web of all existence. May our hearts, our minds, and our hands tend to this web as we seek to bless and build and heal.

3. Chalice Lighting

- *Singing the Living Tradition, Rejoice Together*, and [WorshipWeb](#) contain several appropriate chalice lightings. Applicable chalice lightings on [WorshipWeb](#) include:
 - [The element of fire represents passion, veracity](#), by Sarah Lammert
 - [“Let there be light!”](#) by Gordon B. McKeeman
 - [May this flame, symbol of transformation since time began](#), by Bets Wienecke
 - [Reverently I offer this symbol of our hope and high intent](#), by Elizabeth M. Strong
 - [This earthen chalice was born of clay and water](#), by Edwin A. Lane
 - [When evil darkens our world, give us light](#), by David A. Johnson

4. Narrating our Story

- The leader (or a good storyteller recruited from the congregation) spends two minutes providing a very basic “just-the-facts” version of what happened: naming “when,” “where,” “what.” At the conclusion of this narration, the leader places a stone in a large clear bowl that has been set there for the purpose.
- The leader affirms that each of those gathered holds a piece of the story—their experience, their response. When tragedy strikes, many kinds of responses are

normal. It might be easier for some participants to talk than others; it might be harder for some to share their feelings. Everyone is invited to participate in the workshop at a level that is comfortable for them, and everyone has the right to pass.

- Participants are then invited to come forward and place stones in the bowl. Those who wish to may briefly share a few sentences that tell their part of the story.
- After everyone who wishes to share has shared, the leader rises with the pitcher of water, carries the water to the bowl with the stones and says,
 - “These stones represent the pieces of the story that we hold in our minds and hearts. With this water, may the stones mingle. May all stones touch each other to create *our* collective story—our collective story of grief, suffering, power, and redemption.”
- The leader pours water to fill the bowl, covering all of the stones and saying,
 - “May these waters nurture support, healing, and growth on this day and in all the days to come.”

5. Responding to Our Story

- The following rituals and litanies are based on the “Litany of Stones and Ashes” written by Rabbi Arthur Waskow after the attacks of September 11, 2001. One adaptation is more appropriate for use in the case of a military or terrorist event, and the other for use after a natural disaster. Both can offer a means of expressing both grief and hope in the wake of a tragedy.
- Both require a bowl of ashes, at least three stones, and a bowl of water (in addition to the stones and water already on the altar table).
- Have a volunteer hold the bowl of ashes, lifting ashes or stones in their palm each time a lifting is indicated in the reading. The volunteer will also cast a pinch of these ashes in the fresh bowl of water when described in the reading. After lifting the stones, the volunteer will place them in the same bowl of water as the ashes.
 - Responsive reading related to a military or terrorist event:
For vibrant lives suddenly, shamelessly sacrificed
we lift up our loss

For the lives that continue, haunted by the pain of absence
we lift up the ashes of our remorse

For the images forever seared into our memories,
we lift up the ashes of our pain.

For the charred visions of peace and the dry taste of fear
we lift up the ashes of our grief.

For all that has been destroyed in the fire of anger
we lift up the ashes of our disillusionment.

For deaths justified by arrogant patriotism or fanatic faith,
we lift up the ashes of our shame.

As we cast these ashes into the troubled waters of our times,
O spirit among us, beyond us, and within us, hear our plea:

that by your power these ashes will make fertile the soil of our future, and by your mercy these ashes will nourish the seeds of lovingkindness.

For the ways humanity pursues violence, not understanding,
we lift up the stones of our anger.

For ethnic, religious, and national boundaries to our compassion,
we lift up the stones of our fear.

For the ways we cast blame and create enemies,
we lift up the stones of our self-righteousness.

Dissolving the ashes of our grief and the hardness of our hearts,
O cleansing waters, wash us all toward justice and peace.

- Responsive reading related to a natural disaster:

For vibrant lives suddenly ended
we lift up our loss

For the lives that continue, haunted by the pain of absence
we lift up the ashes of our remorse

For the images forever seared into our memories,
we lift up the ashes of our pain.

For what was there and is no longer
we lift up the ashes of our grief.

For all that has been destroyed that could have been saved by
human cooperation
we lift up the ashes of our disillusionment.

As we cast these ashes into the troubled waters of our times,
O spirit among us, beyond us, and within us, hear our plea:

that by your power these ashes will make fertile the soil of our future, and by your mercy these ashes will nourish the seeds of lovingkindness.

For the ways the disaster deepened societal inequalities,
we lift up the stones of our anger.

For those times when we have closed ourselves off from
compassion,
we lift up the stones of our fear.

For the ways we cast blame and create enemies,
we lift up the stones of our self-righteousness.

Dissolving the ashes of our grief and the hardness of our hearts,
O cleansing waters, wash us all toward justice and peace.

6. Candle lighting

- Using the light of the chalice, the leader picks up at least two floating candles—one for each bowl. The leader lights each one with the flame of the chalice, and places one on the surface of the water in each bowl. The leader speaks to the symbolism of the candles, saying words like:
 - “May these flames, sprung from the chalice of our faith, signify love, compassion, hope, and transformation in all the days to come.”
- Unless it is a fire hazard to do so, the candles and the chalice can be kept burning throughout the workshop that follows.

7. Song

- Lead the group in singing together. Possibilities from *Singing the Living Tradition* include
 - 123, “Spirit of Life”
 - 388, “Dona Nobis Pacem”
 - 391, “Voice Still and Small”
 - 396, “I Know This Rose Will Open”
- Possibilities from *Singing the Journey* include:
 - 1013, “Open My Heart”
 - 1025, “When Will the Fighting Cease?”

GROUP COVENANT (10 MINUTES)

1. Ask the group if they can agree to the following guidelines for the gathering today. Write them on newsprint and review them with the group:
 - Treat one another respectfully
 - Speak for yourself and speak from your own perspective
 - Listen more than you talk
 - Respect each other’s privacy by keeping personal stories confidential
 - Check your assumptions – take care not to make assumptions about others’ theologies, cultures, practices, or viewpoints
2. Ask whether there are other guidelines that participants would like to add to help make the group a safe and productive gathering. Add suggestions to the list.
3. Ask participants to verbally covenant to uphold these guidelines for the duration of the workshop.

INVITATION TO REFLECTION (10 MINUTES)

1. Introduce the exercise that follows by talking about the ways humans make meaning in the face of disaster.
 - “As human beings we reflect, ask ‘why’ about our lives, because we are drawn to seek meaning. We need meaning as much as we need food and drink. Our reflection is rooted in this human drive to understand, to make the truest and richest meaning possible of our lives” (Killen and DeBeers, *The Art of Theological Reflection*.)

- When people witness or experience significant events, we often reflect and assign meanings to these events. One (in)famous example of meaning-making occurred two days after September 11th, 2001 when Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson said that God allowed the September 11th attacks to happen because of some Americans' support for civil liberties, feminism, gay rights, and abortion rights. On a less apocalyptic note, researchers at the [University of Southern Mississippi](#) interviewed several Hurricane Katrina survivors from a variety of religious backgrounds, the majority of whom “believed that God had used Hurricane Katrina as a way to help people reevaluate priorities ‘to be thankful for what is really important in life,’ such as relationships with family and friends, or as a general ‘wakeup call.’ “ [Beliefnet](#) reported that some environmentalists interpreted Katrina as a “message from the earth, letting humanity know of the earth’s pain.”
 - Ask participants for one or two other examples of meaning-making after a significant event.
 - If most examples offered are negative, ask for some positive examples of meaning making. These include people who, after the great Tsunami 2004, deepened their belief in the interdependence of all life and their commitment to work for the wellbeing of all who share this planet.
 - Acknowledge that sometimes the meaning we make of these events doesn’t fit into the neat categories of meaning to which we are accustomed.
 - Someone who identifies as an atheist may find themselves angry at God, and realize that they still believe in God on some level.
 - Someone who is used to feeling in control of their life can have that feeling turned on its head.
 - Many people ask “why” and struggle to find a clear answer.
 - Experiences of disaster, trauma, and grief are opportunities for reflection on our own ways of making meaning. As humans we often ask ourselves, “Why them?” “Why me?” or “Why *not* me?” These questions can have rational, empirical answers, such as “I survived because my house wasn’t in the area that was flooded.” But these questions can still remain unresolved on a deeper level, troubling us in our hearts. We might feel guilt for not being directly afflicted, or feel guilt for *being* afflicted. We might feel that things don’t make sense anymore. We might feel a loss of trust in the universe or in other people.
 - This work of making meaning is not only intellectual; it is deeply spiritual, for it affects our relationship with our planet, with one another, and with the miracle of life. It is also religious, in the sense that it puts us in touch with what we truly value and aspire to, what we hope for and what we fear.
2. Allow a few moments for silent contemplation before transitioning to the next activity.

RAISING THE QUESTIONS (30 MINUTES)

1. Share these words from the poet Rainer Maria Rilke:
Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. —Letters to a Young Poet, Letter Four (July 16, 1903)
2. Affirm that “Today we will live some of these questions together.”
3. Pose the following questions, explaining that the group will spend the next activity exploring them.
 - What are those questions unsolved in your heart?
 - What can give you hope or courage as you live these questions?
4. Make writing paper, drawing paper, markers, crayons, and pens available for participants.
5. Invite participants to quietly find the supplies they need to draw or write about the questions they are holding.
6. Allow 10 minutes for quiet contemplation, writing, or drawing. Participants can choose to express themselves in a way that feels most comfortable—they can write, or draw, or reflect quietly.
7. After 10 minutes ask participants to take three to four minutes alone to reflect on what they have drawn or written. Ask:
 - What does it feel like to live with these questions?
 - What would “answers” or “resolution” look like?
 - What help do you need as you live these questions?
8. Affirm participants’ good efforts, and encourage them to continue reflecting on these questions throughout the workshop and beyond the workshop.

SHARING THE QUESTIONS (30 MINUTES)

1. Ask participants to form into groups of three. If the group is not divisible by three, create one or two pairs in addition to the triads. A group of four is too large.
2. Explain, “In these small groups, we will bring these questions into conversation with our UU theological tradition as well as our personal theologies.”
3. Explain the group process as follows:
 - Each triad will have three roles: speaker, compassionate listener, and person who holds the space. If a group has two participants, they will take turns being speaker and compassionate listener. Allow five minutes per speaker.
4. The following words from Rev. Barbara Hamilton-Holway explain the process further:

- It takes courage to speak from the depth to one another. This true, honest speaking creates community and strengthens you in being true to who you are. You choose how much and what you want to share.
 - Listening is a way of showing respect and care for another. Listening is a way to learn and grow. Listening creates community. Listening without interruption and with attention takes concentration and effort.
 - “Holding the space” might be thought of as holding the good intentions for the group, witnessing to the sacred quality of this sharing. As you hold the space, you want the best for the time; you want safety, compassion, and for truth to be spoken. When you are holding the space, you are giving your attention and support to the speaker and the listener, caring for the process and the relationships.
 - Each person will have five minutes to speak. When it is your turn to speak, you might begin by taking a deep breath and speaking the essence of what you have to say. As a general guideline, take the time given to you, not less so as not to show up, not more so as to take away from someone else’s presence in the group. You might think you’ve said all you have to say, but your five minutes are not up. Pause quietly, breathe, and perhaps you will get in touch with something more to share.
 - Within your triad take a moment to decide the order you will have for the three roles.
5. After each person in the groups has shared, distribute small slips of paper to each group with the following questions printed on them. Allow fifteen minutes for the group to discuss these together. Triads can choose whether to take turns or to have open discussion among themselves.
- Do these questions fit comfortably with your ideas of how the world works? If so, why do they fit comfortably? If not, where is the discomfort or disconnect?
 - What can you draw on from Unitarian Universalism’s living tradition to help you live these questions? What in our tradition gives you hope and faith?

OUR FAITH TOGETHER: (20 MINUTES)

1. Bring the large group back together. Affirm the good discussions that have been going on, and encourage participants to informally continue these discussions with each other in the coming weeks and months.
2. Explain that the five “big questions” of theology can be summarized quite simply in personal terms:
 - Who am I?
 - What is my purpose? (or, Why am I here? or What am I called to do?)
 - Who or what is in charge?
 - How do I know what I know?
 - What happens after I die?

3. Ask participants to look at this list and think about these “big questions.” Ask, “Are there other “big questions” you would add based on our discussions today?”
4. If participants have not already added questions about suffering and injustice to the list, add one or more of the following:
 - Why is there injustice?
 - Why is there suffering?
 - Why do bad things happen to good people?
5. Ask participants to think for a few moments about the connections between their questions and the questions listed on the sheet.
6. Ask, “Which of these big questions is most burning for you at this time in your life?” Allow time for silent reflection.
7. Invite participants to raise their hands and name which of the questions is most burning for them at this time.
8. Affirm that your Unitarian Universalist congregation is a place that upholds the life-long “free and responsible search for truth and meaning,” and that we seek to help one another along this path. We have many companions in living these questions.

LIVING OUR WAYS INTO THE ANSWERS (15 MINUTES)

1. Unitarian Universalism has often affirmed that “What we *do* with what we believe is more important than precisely *what* we believe.” Explain that we will now be exploring what we can do with the theological questions we have raised today.
2. Ask participants to name some ways we do—or can—“live these questions” in our personal and communal lives. Take notes on newsprint.
3. Invite participants to name some ways we have individually or collectively addressed (or can address) the real human needs that have arisen from the tragic event that brought us together in this workshop. Take notes on newsprint.
4. Post both lists where participants can see. Ask, “How are these lists related? Are there ways we can live the questions as we respond to the real human needs?”
5. Ask, “What will we do with these lists and the actions we have identified?” Possible responses include sharing the lists with the social action committee, board, or staff of the congregation. If there is time and energy, participants can decide on actions to take together.
6. Affirm that theology is not simply an abstract exercise. It is about how we live our lives.”

CLOSING WORSHIP (30 MINUTES)

1. Song

- Lead participants in a simple closing song, preferably one that does not require accompaniment. Possibilities from *Singing the Living Tradition* include:
 - 123, “Spirit of Life”
 - 388, “Dona Nobis Pacem”

- 391, “Voice Still and Small”
- Possibilities from *Singing the Journey* include:
 - 1025, “When Will the Fighting Cease?”
 - 1059, “May Your Life Be As a Song”

2. Reading

- *Unitarian Universalism affirms:*

That Creation is too grand, complex, and mysterious to be captured in a narrow creed. That is why we cherish individual freedom of belief. At the same time our convictions lead us to other affirmations . . .

That the blessings of life are available to everyone, not just the Chosen or the Saved;

That Creation itself is Holy -- the earth and all its creatures, the stars in all their glory;

That the Sacred or Divine, the Precious and Profound, are made evident not in the miraculous or supernatural but in the simple and the everyday;

That human beings, joined in collaboration with the gifts of grace, are responsible for the planet and its future;

That every one of us is held in Creation’s hand — a part of the interdependent cosmic web — and hence strangers need not be enemies;

That no one is saved until we All are saved, where All means the whole of Creation;

That the paradox of life is to love it all the more even though we ultimately lose it.

—William F. Schulz, *World* January/February, 1990

3. Flowers from the Stones and Ashes

- Invite participants to come forward, one by one, and take turns naming ways that their Unitarian Universalist community can be helpful to them as they continue to make meaning of this disaster/event.
- As they speak they may place small flowers (stems cut off) in the water to float above the ashes and stones.

4. Commitment to Action

- Potential readings for prayer and meditation include these selections from *Singing the Living Tradition*:
 - 560, “Commitment” by Dorothy Day

- 564, “Love is Not Concerned” by Alice Walker
- 569, “Stand By This Faith” by Olympia Brown
- 576, “A Litany of Restoration” by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley
- 584, “A Network of Mutuality” by Martin Luther King, Jr.

5. Blessing/Closing Words

- Selections from *Singing the Living Tradition* include
 - 683, “Be Ours a Religion,” by Theodore Parker
 - 687, “Go Your Ways,” by John W. Brigham
 - 692, “If, Here, You Have Found Freedom,” by Lauralyn Bellamy
- Selections from WorshipWeb include:
 - [In Our Hungering for Meaning](#), by Bruce Southworth
 - [With what benediction shall I leave you?](#) by Mark Mosher DeWolfe

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Sincere thanks to Tracey Hurd, Ph.D. and Jesse Jaeger for their advice on and conceptual help with this workshop.

Appreciation and gratitude to those who read drafts of this workshop with a critical eye and made suggestions for its revision: Rev. Sofia Betancourt, Rev. Aaron Payson, Rev. Wendy Von Zirpolo, Rev. Devorah Greenstein, and Rev. Mary Higgins.

The reading from William F. Schulz can be found on Rev. Jone Johnson Lewis’s excellent website, www.wisdomquotes.com.

Thank you to Rabbi Arthur Waskow and the [Shalom Center](#) for the “Litany of Stones and Ashes.”

Thank you to Mental Health America for permission to include “Dealing With Stress after a Natural Disaster” and “Understanding Your Mental Health in Times of War and Terrorism.”

If you have used this curriculum, we welcome your feedback. Write to us at adultprograms@uua.org or call the UUA Adult Programs Director at 617-948-6460.

Handout: Questions for Triad Discussions

Cut into strips, one per small group.

- Do these questions fit comfortably with your ideas of how the world works? If so, why do they fit comfortably? If not, where is the discomfort or disconnect?
 - What can you draw on from Unitarian Universalism's living tradition to help you live these questions? What in our tradition gives you hope and faith?
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