

Reader for Religious Education: Course Outline, Graduate Level

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A Short History of Unitarian Universalist Religious Education

Eugene B. Navias

What is the origin of the religious education movement we know today? How is today's philosophy and practice of religious education building on the past? What is old and what is new? These are questions of import as religious education has moved into the twenty first century.

Beginnings

The first Sunday School that we know of was started by Theophilus Lindsey in 1763 in Yorkshire, when Lindsey was still serving the Church of England. In sort years, he was to become disaffected with the doctrine of the Trinity, adopt a Christian Unitarianism, and start the Essex Street Chapel (Unitarian) in London in 1774. Lindsey and British scientist/preacher Joseph Priestley are considered the founders of British Unitarianism. Lindsey has been given little credit as a pioneer in religious education. It was a Gloucester printer, Robert Raikes, who published *Reading, Riting and Religion* in 1780 and founded a Sunday School in Sooty Lane, who achieved fame as the founder of the Sunday School movement which spread quickly through England and America.

For us, the Sunday School movement arose in the late 18th century just after the formal founding of American Universalism by John Murray and just prior to the emergence of American Unitarianism. Both American movements were quick to launch Sunday Schools. The Philadelphia Convention of Universalists in 1790 adopted a resolution on the instruction of children in the home and in the church and community through the establishment of Sunday Schools.

The Instruction of Children: - We believe it to be the duty of all parents to instruct their children in the principles of the gospel, as the best means to inspire them with the love of virtue, and to promote in them good manners, and habits of industry and sobriety. As a necessary introduction to the knowledge of the gospel, we recommend the institution of a school, or schools, to be under the direction of every church; in which shall be taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and psalmody. We recommend, further, that provision be made for instructing poor children, in the said schools, gratis. As the fullest discovery of the perfections and will of God, and of the whole duty of man, is contained in the Bible, we wish that divine book to be read by the youth of our churches as early and frequently as possible; and that they should be instructed therein at stated meetings appointed for that purpose. (Richard Eddy, *Universalism in America*. Vol. I. Boston: Universalist Publishing House 1891.)

Note that in this early period and before the establishment of universal public education, the agenda included what we came to call secular and religious education, and reached out to community children who would otherwise be deprived of basic schooling.

Universalist Benjamin Rush spearheaded such an ecumenical Sunday School in Philadelphia in 1790 through the First Day Society. Congregations in Beverly and Concord, Massachusetts, that became Unitarian started programs of religious instruction in 1810.

In 1782, early in American Universalism, Judith Sargent Stevens (later Murray) in Gloucester, Massachusetts, wrote and published an elaborate catechism for older children and youth. Shippie Townsend, an early and ardent lay leader in John Murray's Boston congregation, wrote widely in defense of Universalism and articulated his Calvinistic faith in a catechism for children in 1787. In 1810 Hosea Ballou, articulate liberalizer of Universalism wrote a Child's Scriptural Catechism which he revised periodically as his own faith became more and more Unitarian. In 1865, a Rhode Island catechism showed the influence of the Restorationist idea that after a time of restorative punishment all souls, no matter how sinful, would eventually be restored to God's favor.

Unitarian and Universalist Sunday School Societies

Sunday Schools in the vicinity of Boston found themselves without suitable curriculum and organizational guidance and organized the Boston Sunday School Society in 1827. It was soon to be renamed the Unitarian Sunday School Society as the movement spread westward. The Society quickly began to hold meetings to debate the kind of "religious instruction" appropriate to the new Unitarianism and to publish curricula and guidebooks for "the Sunday School Superintendent." Borrowing from the practices of denominations from which they came, both Unitarians and Universalists published catechisms. Rev. William Bourne Oliver Peabody of Springfield, Massachusetts, wrote one for children with 14 spoken questions and 78 sung verse responses.

No sooner were the catechisms in use than frontrunner Unitarian William Ellery Channing roundly denounced them in an hour-long address to the annual meeting of the Sunday School Society in October 1837:

The catechism is a skeleton, a dead letter, a petrification...I do not think that so much harm is done by giving error to a child as by giving truth in lifeless form.

Despite his attack, Unitarian divines continued to write and publish catechisms throughout the 19th and into the early 20th century.

Channing then went on to describe a four-dimensional faith in the children's capacity for growth in truth and goodness, in the teaching capacity of the [Sunday] School, in the reasoned faith of liberal Christianity, and in God. Having set the philosophical stage, Channing described the imperative goal of religious instruction:

The great end in religious instruction...is not to stamp our minds on the young,

but to stir up their own...to inspire a fervent love of truth...to touch inward springs...to awaken the moral discernment, so that they may discern and approve for themselves what is everlastingly right and good...

Channing's vision was far beyond the understanding of his contemporaries! The curricula developed and used by Unitarians and Universalists throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were didactic and authority centered, in line with the general religious education practice of the day. The model of education involved the transmission of the author or teacher's beliefs to the learner. After 150 years, Channing's vision still sounds a challenge today.

Although not an official arm of the American Unitarian Association, the Unitarian Sunday School Society gained early and widespread affirmation as a denominational agency for the publication of curriculum, guides for Sunday School Superintendents, Sunday School hymnals and worship books and for conferences to train Sunday School leaders and teachers.

In 1851 Universalists in Massachusetts formed the Universalist Teachers' Union which took the name of the Universalist Sabbath School Union in 1856. In 1913, the Universalist General Sunday School Society was founded in Utica, New York, as an attempt to unite the disparate efforts of the separate Universalist State Conventions in providing supports for Universalist Sunday Schools. Because of the autonomy and power of the State Conventions, such a unified effort never fully succeeded.

Nineteenth Century Curricula

The Unitarian Sunday School Society published five curriculum series from 1833 to 1909. This was before the American Unitarian Association formed its own Department of Religious Education in 1912, amalgamating the Unitarian Sunday School Society into the new entity.

Series I. 1833: The courses were on Jesus, the Holy Land, the Reformation, and *Scenes and Characters Illustrating Christian Truth*.

Series II. 1852: A pioneer graded series of manuals recognized children's development with lessons then considered appropriate to the children's understanding.

Series III. 1883: Didactic lessons included James Freeman Clarke's *Manual of Unitarian Belief*, a question and answer approach to right belief.

Series IV. 1892. Increasing understanding of young children informs curricula. Dr. Edward Horton develops a didactic one-topic, three-level series on the Bible and Christian history for older children and youth. Some teaching aids are provided besides the text.

Series V. 1909: The first “Beacon Series” in religious education is published, with courses for each grade from 1 to 12. Biblical study is informed by the scientific and literary study of the Bible. *World Stories* reveals an appreciation of religious wisdom beyond the confines of Christian faith and scripture. Each volume has a “teacher’s helper” section.

Universalist Sunday Schools

From the mid-nineteenth century into the early 20th, most evangelical Protestant denominations published “uniform lessons” centered on a Biblical text for each Sunday. Universalists joined this International Uniform Lesson system and were active participants in writing the lessons. However, there was a rising awareness that Universalist children needed to learn of the uniqueness of Universalism as a movement. To provide for this, they published a host of periodicals and pamphlets that went into the home weekly or monthly to be used by parents with their own children and to assist those adults who taught in the church schools to augment the lessons. Most notable was *The Sunday School Helper*, a monthly magazine with concrete suggestions for adding Universalist teachings to the uniform lessons.

The Universalists stayed in the uniform system well into the 1900s for the purpose of participating in efforts of interdenominational cooperation and for their participation in a valued system for training and certifying teachers. But there was growing concern that the price of such collaboration was the loss of their own identity. Now the time was ripe for a major Universalist effort in the creation of curriculum that was informed by recent theories in education, Biblical study, and the new field of religious education.

In 1901, the Universalist Publishing House and the Massachusetts Sunday School Association published a graded series titled *The Universalist Graded Lessons*, which were Bible centered but contained extra-Biblical material. A series of manuals for adults, written by the Reverends D. M. Hodge, F. W. Perkins, and J. F. Tomlinson, was based on the best then-available knowledge of the Bible.

In 1912, the Universalist Publishing House with the Massachusetts Sunday School Association published the *Murray Graded Sunday School Lessons*, reflecting the Higher Biblical Criticism, evolutionary theory, and the influence of progressive education. These were widely used in Universalist churches until the 1930s, when Universalists and Unitarians became closer and the New Beacon Series was developed.

New Understandings

Between 1890 and 1900 several important movements influenced liberal religious education. The Western Unitarian Conference pioneered a landmark course, *Beginnings According to Legend*, in 1890. It shared origin myths from the world’s faiths and cultures with children of upper elementary age. Interest in world religions flowered as Unitarian and Universalist leaders took part in the World Congress of Religion in

Chicago in 1893. John Dewey's *School and Society*, published in 1896, launched an era of progressive education that honored the mind and person of the child and held that the classroom itself must model the democracy that is to be learned. The field of Higher Biblical Criticism blossomed, as scientific research and literary study brought new understandings of the Bible as a work written and compiled over a period of 1,000 years. Orello Crane, Professor of Biblical Languages and Literature at the (Universalist) Theological School at St. Lawrence University wrote prolifically on this subject and was internationally acclaimed as well as influential in informing Biblical study in Universalist religious education. Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* was published in 1906.

Unitarians and Universalists were among early members of the Religious Education Association, founded in 1903. This organization brought together leaders from the more liberal wings of education and religion and the new profession of religious education.

It was in this progressive context that the American Unitarian Association instituted a Department of Education in 1912, taking over from the Unitarian Sunday School Society the responsibility of publishing curricula. That year the sixth Unitarian curriculum series was published, reflecting a new philosophy. "Hitherto, lessons in religion have been largely material-centered. Our proposal is that these lessons shall be child-centered," the Department proclaimed. Kindergarteners studied *A Friendly World*, primaries *Living Together* and *Children of the Father*. Intermediates considered *God's Wonder World*, *The Bible and Bible Country*, and *Heroic Lives*. The entire curriculum for junior highers focused on the Bible while seniors studied *Our Part in the World* and heard *Talks to Young People on Ethics*. With its greater attention to children and their own world, the development of moral character and world problems, the series was the bridge to the even more enlightened and progressive programs that were to follow.

Sophia Lyon Fahs and The New Era

In the early 1930s the American Unitarian Association (AUA) evaluated the state of religious education and found it wanting. Two members of the staff of the Universalist General Sunday School Society were invited to join the Unitarian Curriculum Commission to begin a collaboration that was to continue until the consolidation of the two associations in 1961. The 1935 report of the Commission of Appraisal, chaired by Frederick May Eliot, announced that "Religious Education is central—for better or worse—in the Unitarian movement." The Commission called for major new resources for religious education.

In 1936 a Unified Curriculum Committee stated the objectives for religious education as the progressive development of "an intelligent religious faith..., religious and ethical idealism...and character, the highest religious and ethical values...and the desire to conserve them, the ability and desire to participate in the...development of the church, and the ability and disposition to contribute to an improved social order." The

way was paved for “The New Era in Religious Education.” In 1937, the AUA appointed Sophia Lyon Fahs as Curriculum Editor. Fahs was the right person at the right time.

Born in China in 1876, the daughter of Presbyterian missionaries, Fahs had already been on a long religious journey that enlarged and transformed her worldview, educational philosophy, and faith. She had studied Biblical criticism at the University of Chicago with William Rainey Harper and Ernest DeWitt Burton, leading scholars in Jewish and Christian scriptures respectively, and found the Bible to be a human book that revealed the search for God, rather than God’s word. She had studied the faiths of the world and found the universality of religious questioning. She had been a student and disciple of John Dewey at Columbia University and studied with George Albert Coe and Hugh Hartshorne who applied concepts of progressive education to religious education.

She had raised five children and had been an astute observer of their religious questions. She watched and listened to other children at Riverside Church, New York, where she was putting this concept into practice. Fahs saw that religion grows from the daily experience of life as the child explores the natural world and the human world of family and peers.

When she became editor of the New Beacon Series in Religious Education, she already possessed a philosophy of religious education and had published curricula. Working with a team of editors and with individual writers, Fahs published 24 curricula, teacher guides, philosophical statements and worship materials in the next 17 years. The focus of the New Beacon Series was children, early youth, and parents. A separate department of the AUA focused on adults. Congregations began using the New Beacon Series as each component was published.

Consider the Children and How They Grow

Two major philosophy statements of the New Era were *Consider the Children, How They Grow* by Fahs and Elizabeth Manwell, published in 1940, and *Today’s Children and Yesterday’s Heritage* by Fahs, published in 1952. *Consider the Children* dealt with the development of young children and their participation in religious experience; *Today’s Children* presented the theology, worldview, and educational and psychological theories underlying the curricula. These books were known among liberal leaders of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish religious education. Recent articles about important women in 20th century American religion refer to Fahs’ philosophy as an important precursor to feminist theology.

Some components of the philosophy may be seen in these excerpts from materials published to describe the New Beacon Series:

1. Religious education should be grounded in the first hand experiences of children.
2. A worldview that holds that the universe is one and humanity its natural child.

3. Religion grows from natural human experience.
4. Historical and Biblical study comes when children are old enough to discover “the long ago and the far away.”
5. Religious education begins at home. In the church school we emphasize consciously the religious qualities that permeate all life.

Experiences of group worship were advocated to augment the experience of the classroom. As described in her major statement on the subject, *Worshipping Together With Questioning Minds*, such worship was often based on experiences with nature and on stories of exemplary persons. This book was published in 1965 when Fahs was 89 years old.

Explorations of cooperation between the Unitarian and Universalist bodies led to the establishment in 1954 of The Council of Liberal Churches, merging the Universalist General Sunday School Association with the Unitarian Department of Education. Fahs retired as Curriculum Editor that year, continuing as a part-time consultant until 1964. Dr. Dorothy Tilden Spoerl, who had long been associated with Fahs and who had contributed to the New Beacon Series, became Curriculum Editor. A Universalist minister conversant with psychological and educational theory, Spoerl brought her scientific, societal and humanist interests to the Fahs philosophy. Under Spoerl’s leadership, the “new era” continued until 1964. Curriculum such as the Beacon Science Series, *Tensions Our Children Live With*, and *War and Peace, Man Made* were published. Spoerl conducted research to determine to what extent Unitarian Universalist children identified with their congregations and with Unitarian Universalism. This concern with religious identity led to the publication of the Unitarian Universalism Packet, Unitarian Universalism (a historical survey for junior highers), and *These Live Tomorrow* (Unitarian and Universalist biographies).

The Sixties Bring a Call for Change

By the mid 1960s some of the courses in the New Beacon Series had been in use in congregations for more than twenty-five years. The world had seen the Depression, World War II and the Holocaust. Our two denominations had come out of the doldrums of the thirties and were prospering in a peacetime economy. The post-war baby boom brought enormous growth in religious education programs and a growing profession of religious education leaders. The Civil Rights movement was consuming national attention. The institutions of society were under severe criticism. A new secularism questioned the validity of religion and its institutions and new trends in educational philosophy were beginning to influence religious education.

Again the association studied areas of congregational life, reporting its conclusions in *The Free Church and a Changing World* in 1963. The Commission on Education and Liberal Religion was supportive of the experimental, developmental philosophy of the New Beacon Series. It identified specific needs in each age group and suggested that more emphasis be placed on ethics, Unitarian Universalist ideals,

theology—whether humanist or theist, freedom and responsibility, the natural order, and social relationships.

Hugo Hollerorth and the Multi Media Kits

One member of the commission, Rev. Hugo J. Hollerorth, became editor of curriculum development, serving from 1965 to 1980. Hollerorth had developed his philosophy and practice of religious education in Congregational churches before serving as a Unitarian Minister of Education and as Professor of Religious Education at the (Universalist) Theological School of St. Lawrence University.

He, too, valued the educational tradition of John Dewey. In theology, he was influenced by the existential framework of Tillich, which explored a darker side of life than Fahn's naturalistic theism. With Henry Nelson Weiman in *Man's Ultimate Commitment*, Hollerorth observed "the problem which religion tries to solve...is man's [sic] capacity for undergoing radical transformation. He can be transformed to the depths of cruelty and misery and to the heights of saintly virtue and blessedness." With Weiman, Hollerorth asked, "What can transform man [sic] in such a way as to save him [sic] from the depths of evil and bring him [sic] to the greatest good which human life can attain?"

Acknowledging the diversity of Unitarian Universalist responses to that question, Hollerorth expressed belief that beneath our differences, there is a core of beliefs and attitudes (meanings) that we have evolved from our experience, "which suggests, for us, a way of living and relating with each other and the entire human family which we believe is our best hope for birthing 'the greatest good which human life can attain.'" This core of beliefs and attitudes focuses on concepts of "freedom; responsibility; sensitivity; self-discipline; honesty; self-identity; adventuresomeness; love and independence."¹ Hollerorth took the goals and themes cited by the 1963 Commission, undergirded them with a unifying philosophy, guided them with contemporary understandings of human development, and sought to employ educational methods congruent with the espoused philosophy and goals.

Discovery Method

From emerging trends in education, Hollerorth found an inductive or "discovery method" as a way of living out Unitarian Universalist philosophy in the classroom, and employed that method in the new curriculum. He described this "new concept in classroom education:"

These classroom kits are based on the "discovery method" of teaching because the authors believe that the learning experience is more meaningful and lasting if the child is an active participant in his [sic] encounter with new ideas. The material is not simply presented by the teacher, with explanations of its importance, but rather, each child is challenged to discover the basic concepts of each kit in his [sic] own way and, with the guidance of the teacher, to integrate these new ideas with his [sic] own experience and knowledge in the most relevant manner.²

Heeding the request that curriculum include the resources needed to conduct rich learning experiences, Hollerorth and the teams of authors he recruited designed a series of curriculum kits which contained leaders' guides, children's books, audio-visual aids, learning games, and background books for leaders. Curricular goals and subject themes directly related to the Commission's recommendations.

Eighteen major curriculum kits were produced during the years from 1968 to 1980. Hollerorth articulated his religious education philosophy in *Relating to Our World*. Also published was a book of statements and dialogues on current issues in religious education by a group of religious educators and others called together for that purpose, *Stone House Conversations*.

The first kit, *Decision Making*, was published in 1968. It was designed to help 10 to 12 year olds cope with complex choices faced every day and the even more complicated and important decisions to be made in the future. *Freedom and Responsibility*, published in 1969, was designed to help junior highers develop a personal appreciation of the responsibilities implicit in freedom, encouraging young people to probe the values of modern religious liberalism and to test those values against their own. *The Haunting House* proved to be a uniquely appealing program to help six and seven year olds feel at home in the world of self and peers, to build a foundational sense of self-respect and an identity with and love for their religious education home.

Other programs for children sought to bring:

- Appreciation for the diversity of cultures, how they came to be that way, and how we may take a distanced look at our own culture
- The ways in which humans make meanings out of experience and the natural diversity of the meanings they make
- Increased understanding between peoples through improved communication skills
- Understanding of the Biblical Noah stories as coming from two diverse ancient sources
- Enjoyment and knowledge of great people in folk tale, Biblical story, and history

About Your Sexuality, a program for junior highers developed by deryck calderwood and published in 1971, became a flagship program for the UUA, with wide use both within and beyond the Association. The course combines keen attention to the real world of young teens and the questions and confusions they have about sexuality with the creation of a trusting forum where information can be openly shared and feelings and issues discussed with honesty. It employs a four-stage educational model that starts with shared experience, proceeds through the investigation of facts, feelings, and issues, and culminates in the learners' internalization of what they have learned and how it guides their actions. This program affirmed values held by Unitarian Universalists: open inquiry, respect for human diversity, the freedom to make individual choices, and the responsibility to make them in the light of accurate information and with respect for the

rights of other persons. A unique and appropriate requirement for *About Your Sexuality* leadership was an intensive training program.

The Invisible Minority, also by Calderwood, was a three-session program published in 1972 for older teens and adults that provided information about lesbian and gay persons and their struggles to deal with an oppressive society. This program was given an award by the National Council of Family Relations in 1973 and quickly became known in the field of sexuality education. These two programs brought about the inclusion of social justice as one of the goals of Unitarian Universalist religious education.

In Hollerorth's era, adult education became a responsibility of the Religious Education Department for the first time. Two innovative programs for personal growth—*Project Listening* and *Employing Your Total Self*—were published in 1975 and 1976. Three adult programs specifically related to Unitarian Universalism followed: *Disagreements Which Unite Us*; *Our Experiencing, Believing and Celebrating*, and *Our Ways of Relating*.

Early in the development of the multi-media kits, the decision was made to design the programs for children and youth so that they could be sold and used outside of the UUA in public and private schools, and by other denominations. It was hoped that larger sales could ease the high cost of producing programs for such a small denomination. The decision resulted in most of the programs being written without reference to liberal religion, Unitarian Universalism, or religious education. In fact, the teachers' guides did not describe the religious significance of the programs.

Enrollments Decline, New Priorities Emerge

This era had started at the height of religious education enrollment in Unitarian Universalist congregations. However, by 1968, church schools were feeling the effects of a greatly lowered birthrate. As enrollments fell year after year, the culture entered the "secular seventies." A number of world events, including the Vietnam War, were causing many young people to distrust institutions of society including government, education, and church.

Despite distinct accomplishments in curriculum development and the training to support its use, the UUA found itself needing to take stock of its programs of religious education again. The tide had turned once more. There was a strong desire by Unitarian Universalist congregations for materials that were explicitly religious and for courses that shared the rich heritage of Unitarian Universalism. There was grave concern about the small percentage of graduates of our religious education programs over the previous 40 years who continued in our denomination. There was an expressed desire to help children and young people identify with their congregations and learn enough about Unitarian Universalism so that they could knowledgeably make the choice of staying within the fold.

Changing societal norms, research in human development (especially the new field of faith development), the increasing interest in adult religious education, and new prophetic imperatives for justice suggested reconsideration of the philosophy, methods, and materials of Unitarian Universalist religious education in order to nurture individual and denominational growth. These factors, coupled with the resignation of Rev. Hugo J. Hollerorth as Director of Curriculum Development in 1979 and the retirement of Rev. Jean Starr Williams as Director of the Department of Religious Education in 1981 made way for change.

The Religious Education Futures Era

On January 25th 1980, the UUA Board of Trustees approved a proposal by UUA president O. Eugene Pickett to establish a committee to assess the Association's religious education needs and make recommendations for addressing them. Rev. Elizabeth M. Anastos was appointed to the position of staff consultant to the committee and the UUA's Religious Education Section. *The Religious Education Futures Committee Report* was published in 1981 after a thorough process of data- and opinion-gathering. The Committee's findings and recommendations guided the UUA Religious Education Department in many ways, including curriculum development, philosophy, and staffing.

New UUA staff was hired with Elizabeth Anastos and David Marshak as Curriculum Editors (joined by Judith Frediani in 1985), and Eugene B. Navias as the Director of the Religious Education Department. With Elizabeth Anastos's retirement in 1992, Judith Frediani became Curriculum Director and Pat Hoerl doerfer joined the Curriculum Office staff as Children's Program Director. Jacqui James and Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley also served in the Curriculum Office later in this era. After Navias's retirement, Makaanah E. Morriss, Lena Breen, and Judith Frediani served as department directors.

Characteristics of the RE Futures Era of Curriculum Development

Curriculum developed during the Futures Era was to be explicitly Unitarian Universalist, use a thematic approach, incorporate spiritual practices into the materials, and advance a commitment to education for social justice, especially in the areas of anti-racism and anti-oppression work. The last of the multi-media kits, *World Religions for Junior Youth*, published in 1986, reflected aspects of two eras of curriculum development. It was developed by a regionally-based curriculum team and provided clearly stated goals for learners, both of which were associated with the Futures Era.

The Futures Committee identified six "resources" for curriculum development: Unitarian Universalist Heritage, Judeo-Christian Heritage, Other Religions/Cultures, Arts, Secular Literature, Contemporary and Historical Events. These themes would be echoed in the Sources of Our Living Tradition passed at General Assembly in 1986 and 1986. They evolved during this era into what many called "pillars": Unitarian Universalism, Jewish-Christian heritage, World Religions, and Social Action.

Regionally based curriculum teams looked at materials available in each of these areas and developed, or caused to be developed, materials where there were none.

Responding to the concerns that children (and many adults) knew little about Unitarian Universalist history and beliefs, and could not answer the question, “What’s a Unitarian Universalist?” curricula of this era was explicitly Unitarian Universalist with a clear focus on the seven principles adopted by the General Assemblies of 1985 and 1986. The strategy of curriculum development was to return at every age group to the core themes, revisiting each topic in age appropriate ways and in greater depth. In this way, experience and meaning-making could be seen as spiraling, an image that represents returning to a theme, but not at the same place each time. The commitment to social justice work resulted in the formation of three curriculum teams dedicated to social justice themes: the Racial Justice team, Peace and Social Justice team, and the Gender Identity team and the creation of a variety of curriculum materials.

Materials created for children and youth 1989 to 1998 were: *About Sexual Abuse*; *Around the Church, Around the Year*; *A Stepping Stone Year*; *Beyond Pink and Blue*; *Celebrating Me and My World*; *Chalice Children*; *In Our Hands: A Peace and Justice Program*; *Life Issues for Teens*; *Messages in Music*; *Race to Justice*; *Rainbow Children*; *Special Times: Honoring Our Jewish and Christian Heritages*; *Timeless Themes*; *Travel in Time*; and *We Are Many, We Are One*.

One of the most compelling visions of the Religious Education Futures Committee was to expand Unitarian Universalists’ understanding of religious education from “something for children” to lifelong religious growth and learning for all ages, from cradle to grave. The Curriculum Office and the entire Religious Education Department was dedicated to realizing this vision, one as yet not fully realized.

The term “religious growth and learning” was intentionally chosen to replace “religious education” in order to avoid the narrow paradigms of the classroom and the limits of what Paulo Freire called the “banking of knowledge” approach to education. The curricula of this era used a praxis approach, addressed a variety of learning styles (arts, movement, role play, guided imagery, etc.), and promoted worship, social action, community building and leadership development in religious education. The five circles of youth programming were developed in this era. *On the Path: Spirituality for Youth and Adults* was published, and programs specifically for adults as well: *Our Unitarian Universalist Story*, a component of *In Our Hands, Weaving the Fabric of Diversity*, and *How Open the Door?* among them.

While promoting the vision of lifespan, holistic religious growth and learning as described above, the Curriculum Office stressed the importance of an explicit, articulated philosophy of religious growth and learning in every congregation. *Philosophy-Making. A Process Guide for Unitarian Universalist Religious Growth and Learning* (Elizabeth Anastos and David Marshak. Boston: UUA 1984) was written early in this era to help congregations engage in a meaningful process of exploration and consensus building. The guide encouraged participation by all the congregational stakeholders—parents, board

members, youth, staff, membership committee, etc.—not just those who served on the Religious Education Committee.

The important role of parents as the primary religious educators of their children in the home was acknowledged, as was the need for support for parents in this role. Recognized, too, was the fact that most Unitarian Universalist parents were not raised Unitarian Universalist. *Parents as Resident Theologians*, *Parents as Social Justice Educators*, *Parents as Spiritual Guides*, and *UU Parenting* were four curricula developed to help parents. Other adult curricula such as *Building Your Own Theology I and II* helped parents and other adults articulate their own religious philosophies.

An increasing professionalism of religious education leadership was nurtured in this era. The RE Futures Committee called for expanded training and recognition for religious educators. The UUA's Renaissance training program was introduced in 1980. The 1980s saw the advent of the ordained Ministry of Religious Education. In the 1990s the Independent Study Program moved from the UUA's Religious Education Department to Meadville Lombard Theological School as the Modified Residency Program for preparation for the ministry, and a Landscape Leadership Options program (incorporating Renaissance) for lay professional religious educators was developed within the Religious Education Department of the UUA.

The Futures Committee recommended that the UUA encourage independent curriculum development by Unitarian Universalists, and these decades saw a proliferation of quality programs by such respected authors as Barbara Marshman, Ann Fields, Charlene Brotman, Mary Ann Moore, and others whose work supplemented UUA publications and helped shape our faith.

In sum, the most outstanding characteristics of the RE Futures Committee curriculum era were:

- Explicitly Unitarian Universalist materials with attention to the seven principles;
- The introduction of spiritual practice and religious ritual;
- A commitment to social justice as inextricably linked with religious education;
- A spiral approach to learning as participants return to fundamental Unitarian Universalist themes with new understandings at subsequent ages;
- A plea to see and experience religious education as *lifelong* religious growth and learning, not a classroom experience for children.

Another Era Begins

One of the great curriculum ventures of recent times was the development of *Our Whole Lives (OWL)*, a unique program on sexuality founded on Unitarian Universalist principles and contemporary theories of sexuality and education. It is unique as a lifespan program, a first collaborative venture of the UUA with the Board of Homeland Missions of the United Church of Christ, and for including a worship component and an advocacy

manual. The first component (for junior high) was published in 1999, followed by others in 2000. There are eight sessions for Kindergarten and Grade One, eight for Grades 4-6, 27 for Grades 7-9, 14 for Senior High, and 14 for adults. Sessions for young children are one hour long, junior high one and one-half hours, and senior high and adults two hours. All who teach any of these programs are required to participate in UUA authorized training sessions.

In 1999 and 2000 thirty-two religious education leaders were invited to participate in conversations about the future of religious education in Unitarian Universalism, submitting papers responding to three questions:

- As we enter the twenty-first century, what is the core of our evolving Unitarian Universalist faith?
- What is your vision of the goals for our lifespan religious education?
- What are the vital components for Unitarian Universalist curricula?.

The papers were read and discussed in one of two meetings and published in book form by Skinner House, as *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education* in 2001, helping us to forge yet another new era in religious education.

¹ Hollerorth, Hugo J. *Multi-media Education Programs for Children, Youth and Adults from The UUA*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association 1976.

² _____. *Multimedia Curriculum Kits from Beacon Press*. Boston. Unitarian Universalist Association c. 1975.

Choosing a Racial Justice Project

Jacqui James

1. **Bring together a group of people interested in working on a concrete racial justice project.** Recruit people so that your group reflects the diversity of your congregation in terms of age, gender, interests, etc.
2. **Analyze your community:**
 - What are the most pressing racial justice problems?
 - What coalitions or community organizations already exist that you could join to help work towards this goal?
 - What are the current efforts and groups in the community that are making progress on dismantling racism?
3. **Recognize that how you think and talk about the problem is crucial.** Do you attack the people and leave the problem unattended? Do you talk about the poor rather than about poverty? The unemployed rather than the lack of jobs, the homeless rather than about homelessness?
4. **Discuss with your group the six forms of possible engagement with the community — education, witnessing, advocacy, organizing, modeling, and transformation work.** Determine which of the six forms your group is most interested in pursuing at this time.
5. **Come to consensus about who should determine what the community needs.** Consult the social justice section of the *Continuum on Moving from a Monocultural to an Anti-Racist Multicultural UUA* to help guide that discussion. Historically, most of our social justice actions have reflected the first three stages of that continuum. Our justice work only begins to become authentically anti-racist as we move beyond stage three. Engaging in effective anti-racist racial justice work requires that we learn to listen to people of color, especially those adversely impacted by poverty and economic injustice, define their own lives and problems. It is vital that we understand that we cannot possibly solve problems if we exclude the people who are experiencing those problems from discussions of solutions.
6. **Once you decide where on the continuum to begin your work, think about:**
 - What actions do you want to take to interrupt or combat racism?
 - What resources or materials, if any, would you need to achieve your goal?
 - What steps do you need to take to further your self-education about this issue?
7. **Brainstorm a list of actions that can be taken by your congregation. Then discuss:**
 - Which two or three ideas seem most practical and useful?

- What would it take to turn these into reality?
- What resources are already in place to help you move ahead?
- What other groups could you link up with?

8. Look for actions that will allow:

- Sustained and consistent involvement with the community
- Cross-cultural collaboration in community service
- Grass-roots leadership by a variety of local “stake-holders”
- Focus on a positive, pluralistic, participatory vision
- Service programs that are linked to advocacy and making systemic change
- Accountability to communities of color

9. Suggestions for community actions include:

- Helping faith-based organizations form relationships and work together.
- Getting people together to explore your community’s history of race relations.
- Looking for innovative ways to cross racial lines and support the development of businesses.
- Finding ways to build interracial support systems and exchange information about shared business concerns.
- Working across racial and ethnic boundaries on common problems.
- Supporting or creating community programs that bring together people (youth or adult) from diverse backgrounds.
- Beginning dialogues/productive conversations on the kinds of public policies that help create forward movement in addressing issues of social justice.
- Offering English as Second Language and American Sign Language classes.
- Participating in immigration and naturalization service law seminars.
- Establishing Study Circles in your community. These are groups of 10-15 people who meet regularly to address critical public issues.

10. Some social justice projects that UU congregations have initiated:

- An Interfaith Community Organization that is working together on vital community issues, including public safety, employment, economic development, and programs for children and youth, UU Church of Greater Lynn, Lynn, MA
- “Unitarios Universalistas de Habla Hispánica”, a multi-faceted effort to make UUism accessible to the Latino/a community, First Unitarian Church, San Jose, CA
- “Justice Associates” program of First Unitarian Church, Oakland, CA includes a school adoption program, an AIDS ministry, Habitat for Humanity team, and a service for housing homeless families.

- Through the Interracial Interfaith Community (ICC) Conference “Can We Talk” in Savannah, GA area, UUs work with other faith groups to address race issues in their community and to develop significant citizen participation at the local government level.
- An after school homework program that offers families both dependable after school care and assistance with homework, UU Church, San Mateo, CA.

11. UU Resources for Anti-racism education and training include:

- Weaving the Fabric of Diversity
- Journey Toward Wholeness Report, Assessment, and Study Guide
- How Open the Door?
- Creating a Jubilee World Workshop

Gabriel Moran's Theory of Religious Education Development

Makanah Elizabeth Morriss

In his newest book, *Religious Education Development*, Gabriel Moran, a noted religious education theorist, has proposed a framework for a theory of religious education development that I believe may be *very* useful for us as Unitarian Universalists. In place of the more stratified and hierarchical theory of faith development proposed by James Fowler, Moran suggests that there are three stages or phases in religious development. The first stage he calls the Simply Religious phase. This applies to young children and reflects the young child's natural and all-abiding sense of the religious in life. Moran suggests, as we Unitarian Universalists have long believed, that it is most important to nurture and support the naturally religious for the young child. The two aspects of this stage are: (1) the physical, providing a creative, accepting atmosphere and (2) the mythic or visional, using story, arts and crafts, dance and music as a way of speaking to the child's natural religious sense. We need to resist whatever smothers the child's imagination in this stage.

The second stage Moran suggests as being that of denominational education. We would call this phase the Unitarian Universalist education stage. Here the older children, our youth, and the adults who are newcomers to our denomination actually acquire our religion, so to speak. In the first aspect of this phase, the children, youth, and adults learn our people's beliefs, our heroines and heroes, and our struggles and our achievements. The second aspect of this stage is disbelief. They begin to disbelieve the very beliefs recently acquired because, both in their form and content, they are too limiting for the journey toward adulthood. Out of this phase emerges the third stage, as people try to answer an ultimate question: What do *I* truly believe?

The third stage is the Religiously [Jewish, Christian, Muslim]Unitarian Universalist stage. I found it interesting to note that Moran feels most religions, not just individuals, are only now in our time beginning to enter this phase. Here there is a return to the story or mythic element of the Simply Religious phase. Yet it is fused with a more rational and systematic understanding of our Unitarian Universalist religion to provide a life-structure for the individual so that he or she may live a Religiously Unitarian Universalist life. This is a time of de-absolutizing answers while also acquiring a greater sense of personal universal connection. Its two aspects are journeying/inquiring and centering. It is a journey of compassion for every human being who, no matter what his or her beliefs, is recognized, accepted and loved as a fellow traveler on this planet. It is a time of inquiry and curiosity on a grander scale. And it is a time for centering and detachment so that death may be allowed to become a more natural part of our religious and life flow.

Excerpted from a paper "Cosmic Evolution: Implications for Religious Education"
by Makanah Elizabeth Morriss, written in 1985

Some Notes on Multiple Intelligences

Betty Jo Middleton

“One of the most remarkable features of the theory of multiple intelligences is how it promotes *eight different potential pathways* to learning,” says Thomas Armstrong of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development on his website www.thomasarmstrong.com. “It suggests that teachers be trained to present their lessons in a wide variety of ways, using music, cooperative learning, art activities, role play, multi-media, field trips, inner reflection and much more.” This confirms something we have known for a long time—that people learn in different ways—and tells us how and why that is so. Since Howard Gardner presented his theory in 1983 in *Frames of Mind* many educators have adapted and enlarged on it. The eight intelligences identified by Gardner and expanded by others are:

1. Verbal-linguistic...called “word smart” or “book smart”
2. Logical-mathematical...“number smart” or “logic smart”
3. Visual-spatial...“picture smart” or “art smart”
4. Bodily-kinesthetic...“body smart” or “movement smart”
5. Musical-rhythmic...“music smart” or “sound smart”
(David Lazear calls this the “auditory/vibrational” intelligence)
6. Interpersonal... “people smart” or “group smart”
7. Intrapersonal... “self smart”
8. Naturalist...“nature smart”

“There’s also been some consideration of a ninth intelligence—existential intelligence—but the jury is still out on that one,” writes Andy Carvin on his website www.EdWebproject.org. Walter McKenzie includes this one on his Multiple Intelligences Survey, found on the website www.surfaquarium.com. Some people use this interchangeably with “spiritual intelligence,” but Gardner makes a distinction in his book *Intelligence Reframed*. He says “The narrowly defined variety of spiritual intelligence here termed ‘existential’ may well be admissible, while the more broadly determined ‘spiritual intelligence’ is not” (p. 64), but two pages later he writes: “I am not adding existential intelligence to the list...at most, I am willing Fellini-style, to joke about 8 ½ intelligences.”

A chart headed “Walk in the Walk” and presented by Carolyn Chapman (IRI/Skylight Training and Publishing, Inc.) identifies a shoe for each of the intelligences as a catchy guide to understanding them:

1. The tap shoe, the “communicating shoe,” for verbal-linguistic
2. The hiking boot, with its pattern of laces, for logical-mathematical
3. Cinderella’s glass slipper, representing “imagination and creativity,” for the visual-spatial
4. The athletic shoe (obviously) for bodily-kinesthetic
5. The drum major’s boot, worn as “he keeps the band in rhythm as it plays a harmonious tune”, for the musical-rhythmic

6. The football cleat, representing “teaming...working for and with others, for the interpersonal”
7. The warm, comfortable bedroom slipper, representing “one’s time to learn about one’s self in a quiet, cozy spot” for the intrapersonal
8. The Native American moccasin for the naturalistic

Participants at the Renaissance Program’s Teacher Support and Training Module in the Pacific Southwest District in November 2003 were asked “What shoe for the existential/spiritual intelligence?” and several responded instantly: “Barefooted!”

In our culture most attention is focused on “linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence. We esteem the highly articulate or logical people of our culture...The theory of multiple intelligences proposes a major transformation in the way our schools are run,” says Armstrong. “The bad news is that there are thousands of schools still out there that teach in the same dull way, through dry lectures, and boring worksheets and textbooks.”

Multiple Intelligences in Religious Education

How may we use this knowledge about the eight intelligences in religious education programming? By looking at the topic for any class session, special event, or worship experience through the lens of Multiple Intelligences theory, the leader may be able to build in features which speak to the different intelligences. Here are only a few examples:

1. Use of words: listening, speaking, storytelling, creative writing, reading
2. Activities using patterns and sequences, puzzles, technology and gadgets
3. Drawing, painting, working with clay, making collages, sewing, using all types of art media
4. Movement, use of manipulatives, tactile experiences, construction using large muscles
5. Using musical instruments, singing, listening to music
6. Group projects (painting murals, planning presentations), conversation
7. Time for quiet reflection, journaling
8. Observing and interacting with nature; in a classroom this may involve care of plants and small animals

Most people learn through at least two or three of these ways; it won’t be possible to include activities for each of the intelligences in every lesson, but if you plan for several of them, you will probably appeal to all participants.

Some Available Resources

For further exploration of this topic, see the following useful websites:

- www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple_intelligences.html
- www.multi-intell.com
- www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed410226.html

Books about Multiple Intelligences include:

- Thomas Armstrong. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development 1994.
- Howard Gardner. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books 1983.
- Howard Gardner. *Multiple Intelligences Reframed...for the 21st Century*. New York: Basic Books 1999.
- David Lazear. *Eight Ways of Teaching. The Artistry of Teaching with Multiple Intelligences*. Third Edition. Palatine, IL.: Skylight Training and Publishing, Inc.1999.

The Method Is the Message

by Angus H. MacLean

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This is a restatement of the main contention in an address given before the Universalist Sabbath School Union of Greater Boston at its centennial dinner meeting held in Arlington Street Church, October 29, 1951. It cannot be called a revision of the speech, for a speech is tied down to a specific occasion and speaks out of a particular context. I can never make that speech again, but since people continue to ask for it, I have endeavored to liberate what I believe to be the kernel of continuing interest from its original context, and to elaborate where greater clarification seemed necessary. I tried to preserve the original text to some degree, but much of it seemed out of keeping with the style and feeling of the new material. So why not leave that speech to time except as it naturally fits into the present need?

Despite the popularity of "The Method is the Message" some readers had doubts of the thesis implicit in the title. As one of my friends said, "It can't be true. The method of delivering a sermon is not the sermon." So what? I was not speaking in absolutes, and I was concerned in a very special way with the communication of ethical values. Beyond this, I make no defense. Anyway, the surest way to miss some truth is to defend what one has already said. I would simply like to say it more clearly.

I claim here simply that the effective method of teaching values is itself the living exercise of such values. We could say this in very old fashioned terms. There is nothing very novel in saying that one who hopes to influence others had better practice what he preaches, but there is something worthy of note in the relationship I find between values and their communication. Enough to justify a restatement.

The contention that method can have value content, curriculum content, if you like, should be of special interest to a faith that has not abandoned credal finalities and moralistic fixities and judgments in favor of what is called "Openness." If this openness be emptiness, we haven't even a myth to cherish. It is worthwhile to digress a bit to talk about this openness. The struggle for openness has been a long one, and has issued from something basic in many older faiths. Few, if any, of the greater faiths failed to advise that men seek the truth continually, and never to pride themselves on having arrived. Moreover, people of any worth have always taken their private liberties with creeds to suit their personal needs, authoritative creeds, notwithstanding. There has always been this touch of individual modification, and also a touch of anxiety lest what was taken as

truth be in part error. We have this feeling much more openly and freely expressed in modern Christian theology--in the emphasis on the God who stands in judgement of the Gods, in the idea that any formulated interpretation of reality restricts the reality it represents, and may stand in the way of fresh interpretation. There is here an implicit call for continuous search and reformulation that is not adequately answered by the idea of continuous Biblical revelation.

Openness seems like a requirement of human nature. Man cannot seem to contend with reality without recognition of the limitations of his powers of discernment in one way or another. Over a hundred years ago, Theodore Parker was dedicating a career to the recognition of human nature and needs in the formulation of theology, an effort which made openness most necessary. This necessity rests in the nature of human perception and in the uniqueness of individual experience as well as in the nature of truth itself. The sciences, especially psychological and anthropological sciences, have greatly accentuated the need for openness. Therapists regard man as redeemable by love and understanding and in part by the freedom to give the imprint of his own personal "uniqueness to his faith" and in being free to question the most basic assumptions. So, the elusiveness of "The truth" and the uniqueness of individual perception, as well as man's emotional needs, require openness.

Apart from the fact that the healthy individual's faith varies, man's nature requires that he be treated in certain ways. Were this not so, justice and love would not have been. We do not know enough of one another or of life to live by law and finality and dispense with the cushioning of love and respect. Without love and forgiveness, and the sustained search for truth, man tends to destroy himself and the societies he creates. Even if we did possess a much larger body of demonstrated truth, man, at his best, would refuse to make fences of its boundaries. He explores heaven and earth, and makes answers for his questions even when he knows he does not have demonstrable knowledge. He sings his hopes even to the point of defying much that is disheartening in the unhappy world in which he lives. He becomes dramatist, poet, and mystic, and crosses the borders of the "known," sensing truth, and, to borrow a phrase from Robert Frost, hearing "the sound of meaning" in answer to his need.

So, I argue, openness in religion as in all fields of experience, is required by the nature of things. Theologians who talk about the "given" had better find a place in it for this. Whatever the "human predicament" may be this belongs to it. But what is this openness? Something to be welcomed or an inescapable something to be feared? Does it mean that we liberals despairing of historic doctrines walk without truth, and face the coming years without historic ties? Does it mean that tomorrow I shall wake up to find that the gospel I preached yesterday isn't worth a plugged nickel? Man recoils from such a degree of tentativeness, and not just because he is afraid of the new or too fond of the old. He needs historic roots, and if he is to be transplanted every morning, or divested entirely of historic soil, I wouldn't give said "plugged nickel" for his chances of survival. Man will just not go on without something that carries from today to tomorrow. He'll go back to the old certainties and absurdities first. What I am saying, is that unless this openness is itself a life-giving kind of content we are as badly off as we ever were.

The issue is a serious one for us, for one of the big words in our open ended faith is confidence. Upon what can confidence rest? In an ever changing society, in a world of emerging truth, in an expanding and maybe eternally creative universe, what are the grounds of confidence? Can it be merely a tentative experimentation with truth? If history gave us nothing, wherein our roots and confidence? The physics I learned in college wouldn't get me through a high school course today, and I had a very distinguished physicist for a teacher. What ties him to his predecessors and his successors? What are the grounds of fellowship in science? There is an expanding body of truth, of course, but would anyone dare say any of it would never need reformulation? There are methods of ascertaining truth that are truths themselves, and are among the most important truths in the world. And may not this be even more true in religion? The way we set ourselves in fellowship for the quest of truth is more significant than many of the conclusions we must tentatively hold about life's origins and meanings. Knowing how to live or to acquire wisdom is the first requisite of human wisdom, and certainly one of the rare gifts a culture can make.

There's another point that helps to clarify the main contention. The nature of the truths that have stood the test of time, and which we share with all great faiths endorses this contention. The "eternal verities" are so called because they have been found to be, not conclusive on the nature of life and the universe, but trustworthy clues to happy and enlightening living: to love both God and man--to love life and the creatures who share it with us. How often has this wisdom been declared! Love is the fulfilling of the law. It transcends law, and justice too. If we love not man we cannot love God, so the tradition says. Love is the great redeemer. We owe it to others though their sins be ever so scarlet, though they be guilty as all get out. And why, but to make it possible for them--the faltering, the troubled and confused, and the wrong doer--to be restored and to bind all men in fellowship. Love says nothing but that this is the way man should be treated. And how ministers and others who have so treated him can testify to the power of this way of life! It is a clue of address to man and all his personal and corporate problems. A way of living with anybody or everybody. And if we can't accept this as truth, there is no such thing as truth.

We have the opposite also stated in the admonition not to put our trust in horses or war chariots. Here is a profound distrust of the way of violence. Violence is not the way, according to the persistent experiences of the wisest of men.

It is also said in this tradition that man can gain the whole world and lose his own soul. So, it says, "put not your trust in riches." This is a roadblock to halt the feet of those who are eternally tempted to enter one of the worst of life's blind alleys.

"Do to others as you would have them do to you." In the long run, the traditional words imply, this is the way that is best for you and the other. It rests on the assumption that one respects himself.

The great body of our common faith is made up of such insights, and not one of them tells us that Heaven is up or down, or so many cubits this way or that; they do not say that

God is three ‘persons’ or one, and is or is not, nor do they say when the world was created or what happens when we shall shuffle off this mortal coil. They are wise ways of living, laden with the victories and defeats of the human spirit throughout the centuries. In the broad sense of the word, they are principles of method. They suggest what I have in mind; namely, that attitudes and procedures that have caught up the best fruits of human experience can be seen for what they are, the central stabilizing factors in our faith, as indeed in many faiths.

If our faith cannot produce a blueprint of human origin and destiny, or a reasonable “plan of salvation” spanning eternity, it can perhaps, find a no less significant, and a much more empirically founded, wisdom in processes of living. With these and by these we can be open minded about many things that without them would overwhelm us

A friend's response to an expression of this idea in a conversation was this; “You don't know where you're going, but you're on your way.” His sarcasm was closer to a great truth than he realized, a truth greater than his own certainties about destinations. The liberal is beginning to discover that he is more in tune with natural processes than are his maligners. He has been accused of not knowing where he stood, or of walking precariously and uncertainly in the middle of the road with Christian orthodoxy on his right and communism on his left. It is true that his genius is only partly articulate. It becomes clearer everyday, however, that he is much better off than he who stakes his life and soul on such convictions as that the earth is flat, that Jesus rose from the dead and disappeared in the clouds, or that a certain prelate has been appointed by the sovereign power of the universe to be his spokesman on earth. Such so-called truths cannot be supported for long by experience, and must find support in authority and coercion of one sort or another.

In a very good article appearing in the *Journal of Religion*, William Christian puts it nicely in these words, “The liberal has a problem on his hands, but he is not in a dilemma. The liberal is not the man in the middle of the road, but, instead, the man in the middle of a journey.” Our faith may not know the end.all of life, but if it has assurance of direction, it has what matters most. To many this faith of ours hasn't arrived or matured. It, no doubt, needs maturing, but in a sense it will never arrive because nothing in the universe ever arrives. It does arrive, in another sense, because the universe is always arriving. The kingdom of love arrives in the act of love, the reign of justice in the act of justice, the era of freedom in the exercise of freedom. Our wisdom is that of direction, and this is in great measure the source of confidence. We shall always have to deal tentatively with many things, but we rest on assured principles of operation. It took us a long time to abandon the effort to build permanent and unmodifiable theological houses for the human spirit on life's way. Well, here we are, on the way in the middle of a journey, and that is where our spirits belong. In a universe in which change is basic and universal, where can we find security and historic continuity except in modes of address to life?

Disencumbered of dogmatic fixities that cannot permanently represent the realities of experience, and retaining the real grounds of spiritual confidence, a faith can more speedily appropriate pertinent new knowledge and revise its formulations of truth. Moreover, its devotees can more easily know when they leave the realm of “fact” and have to imagine and speculate, and have to use art and symbol to guide their reaching spirits and accommodate themselves to life in total terms. They have wings then, and know they have left the ground. As sojourners in the stratosphere of the mind and spirit they will not get their visions too confused with their science, and can consequently share what they experience without attempting to impose it upon others as the only kind of

genuine religious experience. And sharing can replace the tendency to exact assent. I feel strongly, despite a lot of fear of symbols among us, that liberalism should have saved the integrity of the symbol for us, and enable us also to enjoy the mystical reaches of religion which to so many of us are now out of bounds.

Let me say again, that although we have difficulty in being certain about the nature of man or God, or in even finding grounds for hope for the peace of the world, we have discovered assured ways of addressing ourselves to life, and these should be recognized as being at the very heart of our religion, and of our religious education efforts.

It may seem by now that I have taken a long way round to facing actual teaching situations we find in our homes and churches. But I hope it will prove to be the shortest way. I have labored so far over the message of the church because I believe the appropriate methodology is implicit in that message. I have really been hinting at teaching relationships necessary between persons as they face the mysteries of life and death. To teach the great learnings of humanity; that love is the greatest thing in the world; that justice for all in the long run serves all best; that whenever goodwill rises to dominate the councils of men, they are drawn together, and that they are separated by suspicion and fear and greed and domination; that man's nature requires freedom for growth and that without it he degenerates or fails to develop his powers; that man can find his own way with serenity of spirit and leave others to do the same without breach of fellowship; that we can accept wisdom from any time or culture and have fellowship with people who differ from us. The business of communicating such values becomes, in a contingent sense, as important as the values themselves, and if one pursues this business far enough he will find out that the living of values and their communications are inseparable

I shall leave this idea in its boldest form. Such values as we are concerned with cannot be communicated except as they are set in operation, given life, in the human relations in which teachers and taught are involved, that they cannot be, that they have no existence except as forms of human relations. Love exists only when someone is loved. Freedom exists when relations worthy of that name govern communication and action between persons. Such values are communicated only when "live," if I may borrow and somewhat distort a TV term. This is why I have so often said that a faith which is so largely a faith of dynamic ethical and intellectual values, should make method the heart of its curriculum.

It should be obvious that when I speak of method I have not in mind a bag of tricks by which we hope to transfer something from one mind to another. In a teaching situation, whether in home or classroom or elsewhere, values always become active, that is, some kinds of values. These are the ones that tend to be communicated, no matter to what values we give respect and reverence by way of mouth. A parent may tell a child day or year in and out that he or she loves him and that he should be grateful, but if the parent's relations with him are characterized by constant scolding, spankings, and irritation and threats without any real sharing of life with him, how can he know that he is loved? It's a

real question whether or not he is. Even parents can be too immature to love anyone, and if so, all the dutiful efforts will not disguise the fact.

The capacity to give and receive love comes from subtle living situations which may be helped by precepts in harmony with them, but can never be replaced or cancelled out as teaching agendas by precepts of any sort.

How often we have said that the home is a most powerful teaching agency in so far as basic value patterns are concerned! This power roots in the fact that the values expressed between the stove and the sink, the nursery and the bath, and between the soup and the nuts, are the ones that are absorbed by the young as ways of living. What occasions worry in the family, or joy and happiness? Whence the drive for family enterprises? What feelings are expressed? What restraints applied and how? What are the parents' responses to all that invades the home in newspapers and TV in the way of value expressions? Such are the teachers.

Look at a school situation in which children are guided in the study of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the USA, and made to memorize poetry in praise of the American way of life, and at the same time, are never permitted to question a teacher's statements or offer an opinion, and are denied even the simplest elements of self-government. What happens to the effort to teach democracy? A school may succeed in getting a child to love America, be it right or wrong, but it can still fail to teach democracy, even when the books are of the finest. Without the experience of what the literature represents the teaching is fruitless. Democracy has no existence except as an attitude and organization with which the young can address himself to life. Whether the teaching be good or bad it carries the values inherent in teacher-student relations be they acknowledged or not.

What does all this suggest as to what the teaching situation should be like? We see at once, I hope, the inadequacy of merely directing a stream of cherished words at children. And that statement calls for another digression if I am not to be misunderstood.

Along with direct experience comes appreciation, reflection, inquiry, insight, imaginative play, and devotion. And these require words, concepts, ideas, principles, etc., to help identify, evaluate, and simplify experiences to make their fruits more available for meeting new experiences. Words are so important that we should have little capacity for thought, for moral self-direction without them. Knowledge and ideas and insights enrich and illumine experiences, skills implement them, and devotion ties them together and elevates them to the level at which a reaction to such a simple thing as a flower may involve Heaven and earth and all the mysteries, joys, and tragedies in which one is personally involved. What Robert Burns does to the mountain daisy or the timorous mouse illustrates enriched experience. It is impossible to think of his reaction without his contact with the soil, without the pains and frustrations of life, and the sadness and joy of human relations, and all that played directly on his sensitive soul. So let no one suspect that I suggest disrespect for verbal communication.

I am interested in a process through which the learner directly experiences value, and as a result is in a better position to learn and use words and concepts. I am also interested in a process that makes assets rather than liabilities of the child's restless energy, his activism, his consuming curiosity, his love of fun, his tendency to dramatize life, his constructive impulses. The child's nature is in harmony with the process by which "live" values are communicated.

I am interested also in a process by which attempted teaching and learning are not in conflict (There is nothing I observe more frequently in our church schools than this conflict). Such conflict is born of the failure to live the values with children which we wish them to acquire. So I am interested in the kind of teaching situation that uses a child's learning energies. Such a situation will permit a significant percentage of time for work with hands, for talk, and free movement whenever any or all of these are called for by the task in hand. It will be a place in which teacher and child can respond to each other in value terms; where one can think freely, where the teacher loves his or her charges and exercises patience and understanding; where much is expected, and life exciting; where a teacher confronts realities, ranging from the grass frog or angleworm to the mysteries of time and eternity, along with the child; where a wisdom-communicating relationship exists.

A father was confronted by his five-year old son with the question, "If God made everything, who made God?" So he asks me what answer to give him. My answer was for the father. I told him that the verbal answer he might give would probably have little significance, but that taking advantage of the relationship the question offered for facing life's mysteries together was the only effective answer; "The boy has not only a physical universe which he wants to understand but a need of a psychic cosmos in which to feel at home. Live with him on the edges of the immensities and mysteries and if you have any wisdom he'll get it."

It was with all this in mind that I so often urged the greater and wiser use of arts and crafts and enterprises of all sorts in the teaching of religion. I fully appreciate the psychological value of creative play and free expression, but what I always had mostly in mind was the natural human setting for living the values we talk about.

Arts and crafts and other forms of interesting work have been discredited to a degree by their superficial use and abuse. To assume that their use necessarily means a lowering of standards or a drop in the seriousness of teaching and learning is nonsense. If a teacher "muffs" it in the workshop, the only value a conventional classroom can have for him is that it provides a place in which to conceal his incompetence.

The subject matter may be what you please at any time. The Joseph story on the 8-year old level, The Drama of Ancient Israel at a more advanced age, etc., but since our methods communicate the values implicit in them, such matters as love, the ability to reason, the experience and appreciation of freedom, mutual tolerance and understanding, justice, etc., must be taught by being used all the time in all the classes and all the courses. If anything was ever worthy of being called the "core curriculum" this is. In my

years of work with seminary students I always felt that when a student understood what I meant when I said a good teacher always has a dozen irons in the fire, he was in the way of becoming a teacher. A teacher lives a dozen things while he talks of one. There comes a time when the child will need to study democracy, freedom, love, and liberalism as units of subject matter, but if we leave the teaching until such time we're too late with it. Freedom, love, and reason are the values with which we work on subjects and problems. We work not only to get at truth, we work with truth.

If we let our minds range over the values we say we covet for our young, and think in terms of their non-verbal classroom expression the truth should not elude us. If we really want a child to be free in spirit, we'll help him exercise his thinking freely. Nothing needs greater emphasis. The prevalence of one way, teacher to class, use of words is among my most discouraging observations. How we love to preach! What in the world can we mean by freedom when we cannot sense its absence in what we do? And what of other factors conducive to good thinking? For instance, knowing of the tricks of the mind; knowing something about matters on which we freely express opinions--which reminds me of a recent observation.

I was invited to attend a class on what was called a "discussion" day. The teacher was a public school teacher of long experience. When she clapped her hands to get attention, I had my misgivings. Then came the discussion. It was lively, universal, and pertinent to the matter in hand which had to do with Hebrew History. Then the teacher evaluated what had happened. She complimented all on the eager participation, and on the production of some good ideas and interesting theories. "But," she said, "we just didn't know enough about what we talked about. We had ideas but no way of knowing whether they were right or wrong. Before our next discussion session we'll think out our questions in advance, do some reading for answers, and then perhaps we'll have a really worthwhile discussion." Compare this sort of thing with a little preachment about needing information to be able to think rightly!

How, since we are still on the question of thinking, is a person to acquire awareness of the role of his own wishfulness in thinking? How does he acquire willingness to be openly identified with what he really feels and thinks? Same answer.

All this applies as much to the enterprises of a church as to the classroom. If a church's work is limited to giving good verbal counsel and it is in no way a corporate response to the world's ills, it quite likely doesn't mean what it says, and will not teach anything better than what it does mean and which its behavior declares.

And now as I conclude, may I offer a prayer that no reader will be tempted to think that I disregard or play down such matters as subject matter and instruction and other concerns that are not under discussion in this paper.

Let me close with a story told by Wm. E. Engbretson in an article on "Values of Children in Childhood Education." I think it is worth passing on. Old Zeph was a 19th century Yankee storekeeper in a crossroads village. He provided a home for his nephew Caleb.

Caleb earned his way by running errands and doing chores within the ability of a twelve-year old. The family lived above the store. One morning a too early customer heard the following conversation:

"Caleb, lad," called Uncle Zeph from upstairs, "have ye sanded the sugar?"

"Yes, Uncle Zeph."

" And have ye larded the butter?" "Yes, Uncle Zeph."

Zeph: "You're a very good lad! Now come up and join us in prayer."

How We Do What We Do in Religious Education

Some Thoughts on Possible Models and Structures
For Programs in Unitarian Universalist Congregations
July 2003

Betty Jo Middleton

Twenty-five years ago when I began this work, I thought there was a real right way to do religious education, and that I knew what it was and how to do it. I no longer believe that to be true. I have learned that despite the similarities in our congregations, there are differences as well, and these differences influence our programming. I have learned, too, that while there is broad general agreement among religious educators on the philosophy which guides us in our work, there is not a consensus that one model is the right one, nor that there need be.

Lively discussions on the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA) electronic forum for religious educators, the *Reach-List*, in January and February of 2003 indicate a growing interest in and concern about the concept of religious education models. Margaret Levine Young has established a web page on alternative methods of religious education to further the discussion (www.cvuus.org/re/workshops/html). Explorations of this subject by the leadership of the Liberal Religious Educators' Association (LREDA), the professional organization for Unitarian Universalist religious educators, resulted in the announcement of three planned events related to the topic. A LREDA-sponsored workshop at the June 2003 General Assembly focused on "Changing Paradigms for Religious Education," and *Godly Play* author Jerome W. Berryman delivered the Fahs Lecture at the same General Assembly. LREDA's annual fall conference in 2004 will focus on alternative models of religious education.

There appears, however, to be little agreement on terms and words used in the discussion. Similar differences in the usage of words may be noted in the literature of religious education and in the greater religious education community. The word "model" has many different definitions; the unabridged *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*¹ lists twenty five (pages 1235 and 1236). Several of these have been used in ongoing discussions of religious education. Because I have been working with the concept of models for more than ten years, the discussion has been of special interest to me and I hope to further our understanding of the terms we are using and how we use them.

Models as Standards

The first given definition—"a standard or example for imitation or comparison"—is one that has been used frequently in the past. In "Tomorrow's Children and Today's Heritage," a paper presented to the Harper's Ferry Ministers' Study Group and published in *Unitarian Universalism Selected Essays 1996 (pages 82-94)*² I used "model" in this sense:

...We still tend to think in terms of the model of schooling, with closely graded classes and texts (or curriculum guides) written for a fairly narrow age range. And our thinking about schooling may be based on an old model of schooling itself. Since old ways die hard, even in our time some children are still being taught by teachers who are seen (and see themselves) as imparters of knowledge, rather than as companions on a journey, and whose ways may be somewhat rigid. I am aware that this is a slightly exaggerated characterization of a model which does in fact offer rich possibilities.

In that discussion the term “schooling” was used as it has been for more than thirty years in the literature of education and religious education, referring to the most traditional of models which suggest using outmoded teaching methods and techniques, not the concept of school itself, which (as I pointed out) offers “rich possibilities.” I went on to identify other models we should consider: the library, the museum, the home, the church (or more inclusively, religious institutions), and the pilgrimage (as in trips to Boston or other historical Unitarian Universalist historical sites).

Models as Theory

*Models of Religious Education*³ by Harold W. Burgess, one of few current books dealing with the subject of “models” in the field of religious education, approaches the subject from a theoretical framework. Burgess writes:

The thrust of the term “model” is closely related to “theory.” In fact, some writers employ them interchangeably. However the notion of change seems more integrally related to modeling than to theorizing. For more than fifty centuries, possibly beginning in ancient Egypt, models have been employed *first*, as keys to understanding the past and *second*, as bridges leading to the future. Through their focus upon structures rather than subject matter, models tend to evoke consciousness of relationships, particularly the relationships that pertain among any given model’s variable elements. In addition, because of their dynamic organization of data, models are exceptionally useful in communicating specific properties that affect relationships among variable elements. (page 22)

The models Burgess discusses in the book are: the historic prototype, the liberal model, the mid-century mainline model, the evangelical/kerygmatic model, and the social-science model. He describes the historic prototype as reflecting “the prevailing worldview and religious convictions of the church during the first nineteen centuries of its existence as those were applied to the related problems of (1) educating succeeding generations for vital Christian living and (2) incorporating individuals into the church.” He further says that matters were decided on “the basis of constructs that presupposed a God who had spoken to humankind through a ‘word-oriented,’ saving message. Teaching practices commonly included a strong element of verbal transmission.” (page 23)

The liberal model, he writes, “is rooted in the classical, liberal theology characteristic of the early twentieth century” and is “buttressed by the progressive educational theories explicated in the writings of such theorists as John Dewey, George Coe, and William Clayton Bower. (page 23) “A primary difference,” says Burgess, in this model “is that salvation is believed to occur through processes solely or almost solely of this world; and it is for *the many*, as contrasted with the *individual*.” Theological judgments, he suggests, are “transferred from a metaphysical to an empirical perspective” and practices “are typically oriented to life through social action.” (page 25) Sophia Lyon Fahs is one of seven theorists of this model whom Burgess mentions. He says that she articulated and promoted “causes closely linked to the application of liberal thought in religious education settings. She was more adventuresome in spirit than some whose seminal work architected the framework of the liberal model from which she worked and the educational practices she advocated.” (page 86) Fahs is the only Unitarian or Universalist religious educator referred to in this work. Many in the Unitarian Universalist religious education community relate to this theoretical model.

The mid-century mainline model, Burgess writes, grew out of a reassessment of the assumptional underpinnings of the liberal model...this perspective perceives religious education to occur most effectively through a dynamic interaction within the Christian (religious) community. Practices developed directly out of this model typically feature relational group activities. The group is often considered a microcosm of the church.” (page 26) Theorists Burgess places in this category include several who have strongly influenced Unitarian Universalist religious educators: John H. Westerhoff Jr. (page 119), Gabriel Moran, and Maria Harris, although he says that neither Moran nor Harris fits this model “at all points” (pages 120 and 121), and I agree.

When Jean Starr Williams, then director of the religious education section at the UUA wrote “Let us move away from the Sunday School classroom paradigm toward a paradigm of living in religious community” in the September 1979 REACH Packet, she was reflecting the influence of John Westerhoff and his theories on enculturation and socialization.⁴ Moran and Harris have led workshops and programs for Unitarian Universalists and Harris was the 1982 Fahs Lecturer.

The evangelical/kerygmatic model, according to Burgess, is “energized by the vision of a revealed message that must be faithfully communicated” and “gives rise to the lecture, even preaching, as the ideal teaching paradigm.” (page 26) The social-science model is “rooted in the teaching-learning process. It consciously sustains a value-free relationship to theology, but accepts and inserts it, as appropriate, into the process of teaching religion. ...practices generated by the model have a high degree of specificity to individual situations.” (page 26) While this model has influenced Unitarian Universalists, no theorist included in this section has been particularly influential for us.

Burgess is an ordained minister in the Brethren in Christ Church and teaches at Asbury Theological Seminary. This book discusses religious education theory and models only in the church and does not include Jewish or Muslim perspectives.

Models as Methods

R.E.Y. Wickett, in *Adult Models of Religious Education*⁵ focuses more on practice, although he discusses theory as well. He begins with the definition of educational models advanced by Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil in their book *Models of Teaching*, “a plan or a pattern that we can use to design face-to-face teaching.” He lists eleven models: andragogical (based on the work of Malcolm Knowles in adult education, focusing on adults as self-directed learners), intergenerational, independent, covenant, nondirective, “Tip of Iceberg,” Interdependent, Study Circle, Freirian (group learning), action research, and distance. He says that the facilitator should “choose the model which is right for the learner, the content, the context, and you.” I believe that the importance of teaching methods or models cannot be overstated, and are properly considered in decision-making about structures and models; but that they are in a different category than structures.

In the Sixth Edition of *Models of Teaching*⁶ Joyce, Weil, and Emily Calhoun discuss four “families” of models: social, information-processing, personal, and behavioral systems. In a beginning section titled “Frames of Reference,” the authors say “we survey the available models, examine them as models of learning for students, and consider how to build communities of learners...these tools we call models of teaching are one way to organize intelligence-oriented education. Among those discussed are: cooperative learning (dyads through group investigation), role playing, direct, non-directive, enhancing self-esteem, mastery learning, simulation, task performance reinforcement, inductive, concept attainment, mnemonics, advance organizers, synectics, and various inquiry methods. “Models of teaching are really models of learning. As we help students acquire information, ideas, skills, values, ways of thinking and means of expressing themselves, we are also teaching them how to learn.” (page 6)

The Montessori method, a structured approach to learning, involves the use of hands-on materials in prescribed ways (differing in this respect from other early childhood approaches which offer many concrete objects for use in free play.) Berryman’s *Godly Play* approach to religious education is a version of this. The Godly Play website (www.godlyplay.org) gives this description: “Godly Play is a method of Christian education and spiritual direction for children ages 2-12. The goal...is to teach children the art of using religious language—parable, sacred story, silence, and liturgical action—to help them become more fully aware of the mystery of God’s presence in their lives.” It teaches through Bible stories and the use of story boxes with materials for telling and retelling each story. It prepares children for the sacrament of the Eucharist. Unitarian Universalist variations of course do not follow this in every detail. One of these is *Spirit Play*.⁷

Descriptions of these and other methods (such as brainstorming, videotapes, case studies, learning centers, computer and internet learning) may be found by doing an Internet search.

The American public school and liberal religious education are branches of the same tree, growing from the same roots and sharing a body of knowledge, experience, methods, and models. There are differences, however: in the amount of time children spend in its sphere, the ultimate aims, and the limitations on each. The language we share can be quite useful, but our scope and purposes are different. Because most adults are more familiar with lecture and discussion as teaching strategies than any other, there is a tendency for volunteer teachers to draw on these exclusively. For more than a century, however, there has been an understanding present in both of these forms of education that people (especially children) learn far more by doing than by any other method. The oldest book on teaching methods in religious education in my library is *Method in Teaching Religion*⁸, published in 1925. The methods suggested include: problem-project teaching, discussion, question-and-answer, story, dramatization, and manual arts (page 8). Care is taken to emphasize that the manual arts are not to be a distinct or separate course, but that “handicraft work...should spring out of and relate itself directly to the lessons being taught.” (page 238)

In his book *Sharing Faith*⁹ Thomas Groome calls “shared Christian praxis” a “metaapproach” to religious education and says that “it is not simply a teaching *method* in the typical sense of the term...one can use many different methods and teaching models to effect its commitments and movements” (page two). It would perhaps fit better into a discussion of curriculum design, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. And it does relate to the methods we may use in our programs. The basic approach may be used without the emphasis on “Christian.” Groome describes this process in *Christian Religious Education*¹¹, but *Shared Faith* expands upon the approach. After a focusing activity, participants are asked to name their knowing, engage in critical reflection, hear the community Story, engage in a dialectic of that Story with their own and that Vision with their own, then to make a decision for the future...(pages 147-149).

Our planned teaching methods will influence our choice of structural models for religious education, as will the numbers, ages, and developmental stages of learners, and the space available. In small congregations, the challenge may be to plan appropriate groupings that do not result in less than optimum size classes. Other factors affecting these decisions include the availability of volunteers and opportunities for them to learn about the many possible methods of teaching. One of the major problems Unitarian Universalist congregations face is the lack of time for volunteer teachers to become sufficiently familiar with the material they are using and the time and opportunity for orientation to make it possible for them to use the broad range of possible teaching approaches.

Other Kinds of Models

Other dictionary definitions of “model” include “a typical form or style” and “a pattern of structure or formation.” In *First Steps. Planning for Adult Religious Education*, I listed the following “Structures and Models in Adult Religious Education”: Sunday School, Sunday morning forum, Adult School (evening and Saturday classes and workshops), weekly evening of classes, lecture and/or film series, adult retreats, intergenerational classes/workshops/retreats as present in our congregations. (page 35)¹¹ As a result of

insights gained at the 1999 Meadville Winter Institute program on “The Congregation as Theological School” and practices observed since then, the list I now use in workshops and programs includes these additions: Theological School/Basic Seminary/Graduate-Level Church, Social Action as Educational Practice, Small Group Ministries, and combinations of all of these. They fit into the definition of “a pattern of structure.”

Many of the online discussions about models have focused on the ways participants are grouped (closely graded, loosely graded, mixed-age, multi-age, intergenerational, multigenerational). As any of these may be used with most structural Models, these distinctions do not seem to be appropriately called “models.” It’s usually better to group broadly if necessary to have eight or ten children in each class. One way of grouping participants worth mentioning in the context of models, however, is the intergenerational approach, which does have implications for how programs are structured. In his book *Intergenerational Religious Education*¹² James W. White lists six basic intergenerational program paradigms: the family group, a weekly class, workshop or event, worship service, worship education program, and the all-congregation camp or family retreat (page 33).

Other discussions among us have focused on the way content is organized: each grade or age level has its own subject matter which is used regularly or the curriculum is organized by themes, with all or most groups focusing on the same subject. This sometimes called the “unified curriculum.” Programs around themes may be organized horizontally, with rotations covering several years, or vertically, with each theme touch on each year, often called “pillars.” A non-systematic survey of web sites and brochures for many congregations indicates that these themes usually include Unitarian Universalism (religious identity or history, or both), world religions, Jewish and Christian heritages or Biblical materials, and often include social justice, ecology, and others. Some postings on the *Reach-List* in these discussions have implied that certain models preclude the presence of content. Almost any subject matter, however, may be addressed in any of the structural models discussed here.

Although most of our programs for children are held on Sunday morning, there are other possibilities. One non-Sunday morning program is the relational small group ministry program for children whose parents are in their own small groups, developed by Helen Zidowecki in Augusta, Maine. In a personal communication, she indicates that the same plan could be used for Sunday morning. For further information and lesson plans, see www.hzmre.com.

When the question “Alternatives to what?” was posted on the *Reach-List* with reference to discussions of “alternative models,” most who responded to the list or privately to me said “school” or “schooling.” Many respondents were critical of this, at least by implication. However, Michael Malone, Director of Religious Education in Miami, Florida, was not. He wrote: “The classes scheme and school model—albeit modified—really works for us and does not inhibit us in any way from incorporating worship.” Other religious educators have commented that worship is an important part of their programs. They see this as making it different from secular education.

Some were quite specific in their descriptions of what is seen as “the UU model:”

- “School model of religious education...I am talking about a Religious Education ‘program’ that divides children ‘by grade’ into ‘classes’ led by ‘teachers’ using ‘lesson plans’ in ‘curricula’ in ‘classes’.”
- “‘School’ model”
- “The UU model also calls for a presentation of some sort followed by a craft project, all indoors and mainly quiet.”
- “A few age-grouped classrooms which meet during the service for Story-talk-craft-snack.”

Structural Models for Religious Education

We will do well to clarify our meanings and work toward some common language as we discuss issues of models and paradigms, content and method, as we move into a new era in religious education in our movement. I suggest using “models” to mean the structures and designs we create for our programs. Where, how and when they will be carried out should be part of the discussion, although most of our discussions have centered on Sunday morning programs for children and youth. Here are the structures, or models, I see in our current Sunday morning programming for children ages three through eleven or twelve, in actuality, by intention, or in our dreams.

Classroom-Based

This structure, also called “Self-contained Classroom,” may include participants grouped by any method—age, gender, interest, or random assignment. While it may suggest a traditional Sunday School to some, the model in itself does not imply any particular method of instruction or theoretical model. The room may be arranged in a variety of ways, including as an open classroom with learning centers or stations. Berryman’s *Godly Play* and Unitarian Universalist programs that follow his lead, such as *Spirit Play*, are classroom-based. Many innovative and exciting methods of teaching may be, and are, used in this kind of setting. Participants have a sense of being at home in the congregation when they meet in the same place most of the time, especially if they are able to post their own materials and projects. Problems arise when the classrooms are too small, too full of furniture, and too crowded to allow participants and leaders to move around. When rooms are set up for other purposes religious education groups may have to contend with too many distractions and too little sense of ownership of their space.

Educating Congregation

The concept of learning communities has come to us from the field of organizational development. Charles Foster’s book *Educating Congregations*¹³ is one of several published in recent years on the possible use and impact of this approach in congregations. Foster suggests that Christian education (let’s translate that as religious education) be designed around *preparation of events* in the life of the church, such as

worship, Christmas, Easter, and other liturgical seasons. The Christian liturgical year may require translation as well, but all congregations have a rhythm of events and celebrations throughout the year. The four kinds of events Foster discusses are the paradigmatic, the seasonal, occasional, and unexpected events. The paradigmatic events Foster discusses include baptism and communion, but Unitarian Universalist congregations might include dedication of children and infants, coming of age ceremonies, membership Sunday, and the like. “The education of a community around the events that give structure and momentum to its life involves three movements,” he says. These are “preparation for participation, engagement in the event, and mutually critical reflection...The structure of an event-full education is not complex, but if taken seriously, it could radically alter the way congregations order their educational ministries.” (pages 40-49)

“Some teaching/learning groups may be organized by age. Many will be intergenerational,” says Foster. (page 139) In a section on “Making Decisions about Educational Structures for Event-Full Education,” Foster says that “traditional educational structures need not be eliminated...if re-directed to equipping people to participate in significant church events” and further “classes that are not recast as times of preparation for specific events of worship and mission may become occasions for enriching the education people receive elsewhere in the life of the congregation” (page 15) Other writers on the congregation as educating or learning communities are not specific about structures but focus on the concept, as a philosophy of, or approach to, religious education.¹⁴ This attractive philosophy may seem difficult to put into practice in most congregations.

Home and Family Education

William Ellery Channing’s famous 1837 Discourse on religious instruction” includes these words “whether in the Sunday-school or the family.” The Seder and other Jewish home festivals have long been an important component of religious education which takes place within the context of the family. These have been important in keeping the faith alive through times of persecution when public religious observance was not possible. Christian practice has long included family devotions, including Bible lessons as well as prayer and song. It has been clear for a long time that most of a child’s religious education takes place at home. While this should not deter us from planning the best possible programs for children and youth in our congregational settings, it suggests that we offer programs and materials for use by parents.

The UUA’s Family Network offers resources to congregations and families who participate. Information may be found on the UUA website www.uua.org. Betsy Hill Williams’ little book *Religious Education at Home*¹⁵ published by the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF), “is intended as both a guide and a reference for the family’s spiritual journey” and suggest activities and resources for use at home. It includes guidelines for talking about religion with children, graces and prayers, and ideas for celebrating special occasions, such as holidays. Another book offering practical suggestions as well as philosophy is Jeanne Nieuwejaar’s *The Gift of Faith*.¹⁶

Roman Catholic educator Gail Thomas McKenna devotes a chapter to “Family-Centered” approaches in her book *Models and Trends in Religious Education*¹⁷ that gives ideas for setting up family programs in the church and offers suggestions for families at home. Many Unitarian Universalists now educate their children at home and it seems natural to them to include religious teaching in the curriculum. Local congregations as well as the UUA providing resources and education for parents may help families in this endeavor. The popular program *We Believe*¹⁸ was created for the CLF and works well in families. Nita Penfold suggests, in a personal communication, that *Spirit Play* could easily be used in a home schooling setting.

Learning Centers/Stations; Workshop Rotation

Melissa Armstrong-Hansche and Neil MacQueen introduce and describe “Workshop rotation” in their book *Workshop Rotation: A New Model for Sunday School*¹⁹. MacQueen says, in an article on the website www.rotation.org:

Here’s the Workshop Rotation Model in a nutshell: Teach major Bible Stories and concepts through kid-friendly multimedia workshops: an Art workshop, Drama, Music, Games, A-V, puppets, Storytelling, Computers, and any other educational media you can get your hands on. Teach the same Bible story in all of the workshops for four or five weeks rotating the kids to a different workshop each week. And here comes the extremely teacher friendly part: Have the same teacher in each workshop for all five weeks teaching the same lesson week after week to a different class coming in.

Obviously most Unitarian Universalist congregations will not teach only “major Bible stories,” but any content may be used with this model. Makaanah Morriss and September Gerety have both posted to the *Reach-List* their good results using this model with a “pillars” curriculum plan in Cheyenne, Wyoming. They and others have stressed the importance of having “journey guides” with each group as they move through different workshops, providing a continuity of adult leadership. In Cheyenne “we use the same story in slightly different variations for the workshops so children hear and experience the story in three different ways over three weeks. They basically explore three stories for each theme,” Morriss writes. (*Reach-List*. January 25, 2003.)

The exploration of the same story through different approaches over a period of time is not new to us. The workshop approach has been used under the name of “Centers” or “Learning Stations” in many Unitarian Universalist congregations, especially during special programs such as spring festivals or “mini-mesters.” (This is an expansion of the learning center as a method.) Library and museum education approaches are evident in different manifestations of this model: use of storytellers, resources, guides, hands-on exhibits, audio-visuals.

In *The Creative Process and Religious Education*, published in 1964, Dorothy Tilden Spoerl describes a proposal a religious educator wanted to institute in one Unitarian

Universalist congregation. It involved elimination of age-level and grade-level classes for children, and adoption of a “program of interest groups in which any child might enroll if he chose to do so...there would be a dance group; an art studio with a wide variety of available media; a dramatic group; a science corner or a laboratory where children could follow the dictates of their own curiosity; a library filled with many books which children could read, or from which they could be read to.”²⁰

Way Cool Sunday School/Religious Education Without Walls

Greg Stewart and others developed the Way Cool Sunday School model at the Second Church, Chicago. Writing about this model in *Essex Conversations*, Stewart says:

...we put lived experience before the dissemination of information, took Sunday School out of the church’s basement and into the city’s streets, eliminated age divisions, used curricula as a resource rather than a recipe, intentionally invited (and transported) non-UU children to Sunday school from area shelter and group homes—yes, we became both missionaries and evangelists—and we confused social action with religious education. We called this approach “Way Cool Sunday School.”²¹

Stewart noted wryly that he had “got hold of the wrong reading list,” referring to the philosophical books generally recommended by Unitarian Universalist religious educators, and tried to put into practice what he read there. He has since used this model in congregations in Cleveland and Pasadena and other congregations are using it on their own. Margaret Levine Young’s “alternatives” web page describes it this way:

The first Sunday of each month is an all-children worship. The second and third Sundays have age-based classes. The fourth Sunday of the month is reserved for a social action project. If there is a fifth Sunday, it is reserved for exploring spirituality through the arts. Children younger than six meet separately, because they need a smaller, simpler program.

Some elements of this model have been used in other Unitarian Universalist congregations for special spring programs or “mini-mesters” and in some cases at intervals throughout the year. This plan is related to the concept in secular education of “schools without walls.”

Worship-Education

“Worship which is an end in itself, is also an occasion for intergenerational learning. For many churches and synagogues, age-inclusive worship is an on-going unself-conscious practice. These faith communities have never considered doing anything else,” writes White in *Intergenerational Religious Education* (page 46). “One model intentionally integrates worship and education and...facilitates a wide variety of growth experiences. It brings all ages together for worship and learning, separates younger learners from adults for activities in different settings, and brings them back together for celebration and

sharing.” (page 50) Close coordination between worship leaders and those planning activities is necessary for this to work.

In a posting to the UUA’s *Reach-List* in December 2000, Lisa Elliott, Director of Religious Education at the Unitarian Society of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, suggested: “Another alternative to the school model for religious education...is expanding the worship time and then supplementing our chalice lighting/singing/storytelling/talking/being silent/laughing/dancing/chalice extinguishing children’s worship circles with ‘classroom’ or small group (perhaps based on age/grade or learning styles) discussion and arts/crafts and service projects.”

In June 2001 Mark Gallagher received the Unitarian Sunday School Society’s Adult Sermon Award. In his sermon he proposed a new format for religious education of children at Michael Servetus Unitarian Universalist Church in Vancouver, Washington. It included elements such as retreats, social action, and at-home family practices, but centered on a Sunday morning program consisting of “a mixed age children’s worship service—what we might call Children’s Chapel” for forty minutes “spent in making *music*, in *dynamic meditation and prayer practices*, and in engaging *rituals*. It would also include a *lesson*.” This would be preceded by fifteen minutes in the sanctuary with adults, as they were doing already and followed by twenty minutes of activities in smaller Friendship Groups. In a personal electronic communication in February 2003, Gallagher indicated that the model has not proved to be entirely successful so far. He speculates that forty minutes is too long for the chapel service and suggests that some parents find the program lacking in content. Director of Religious Education Barbara Stevens agrees that results have been mixed. Some of the challenges she cites, also in a personal communication, are: disjointed curriculum, insufficient resources for developmentally appropriate-chapel services, not enough hands-on time, difficulty of bringing new children into the group, and lack of enthusiasm on the part of adult volunteers.

Others are using variations of this approach. Director of Religious Education Gail Forsyth-Vail writes, “We at North Parish have been using a model which includes a half-hour worship followed by small group ministry groups. We’ve done it for two years, with really good results. The content piece comes through a wisdom story told during worship. The adult group leaders are responsible for encouraging and facilitating connections in their groups, and with facilitating the children’s engagement with the spiritual questions raised by the worship service. Social action is also located in the small group, and each Sunday has a ‘carrying our faith into the world’ component.” At a workshop at the 2003 General Assembly, she noted that hers is a full-time position, and that she spends “considerable time on worship preparation and on preparing suggested reflection questions and activities.” A booklet explains the process that North Parish went through to transform their program and contains a year’s worth of sample sessions.²² Forsyth-Vail comments that they “find that adults don’t feel so inadequate if their job is to get to know children and help them talk about their lives in light of their faith, rather than being the ‘teachers’ of material they don’t feel prepared to teach.”

Youth Program Models

There are many variations of programming for teenagers within our congregations. Models that have proved effective include these three:

- **Integrated Program.** In this model, the Sunday morning Religious Education class and the youth group are the same. A formal program with a curriculum plan is followed most Sunday mornings, with one Sunday morning each month devoted to planning activities and projects. Announcements and necessary follow up are carried out through Sunday morning classes in intervening weeks. Adult leaders may be the same or different for classes and for activities.
- **Traditional.** There is a Sunday morning program of classes and youth group meetings (regular or sporadic) and activities are held outside Sunday morning. The classes may be during, before or after, or between services.
- **Youth Adult Committee.** The YAC, made up of about six youth and four or five adults, has responsibility for youth activities and classes. The committee meets monthly and serves as a clearinghouse for activity planning and keeping a calendar to avoid conflicts. This committee has responsibility for planning and reviewing the curriculum for Sunday morning classes (junior and senior youth) and recruiting adult leaders for activities and classes.

How to Decide

As congregations consider which structures or models to develop for religious education, what methods of teaching are to be encouraged, and the content to be explored, there are criteria for the process. Are these models, methods, and content congruent with our Unitarian Universalist principles and with the religious education philosophy of our larger movement? Are the strengths and limitations of the congregation taken into account? Are there resources available for instituting such a plan? Decisions should be made by a broadly inclusive group: parents, congregational leaders, staff, and all who are interested. Older children and youth can participate in the decision-making. *Philosophy-Making*²³ by Elizabeth Anastos and David Marshak is a guide for such a process.

In the late 1970s, Eugene B. Navias, then on the UUA staff, wrote “Checkpoints for Teachers,”²⁴ in which he says:

One way to look at a lesson plan—a session, a Sunday morning experience—either in advance or in retrospect, is to ask whether it involved all of what I call “The Four Levels of Teaching.” I have borrowed the idea from Harmin, Kirchenbaum and Simon who describe three levels of teaching in their book *Clarifying Values Through Subject Matter*. The authors claim that complete learning experiences include: 1) the facts level, 2) the concepts level, and 3) the values level...”the facts level includes the teaching and learning of specific information, facts, details, occurrences, events, and actualities. It also includes the basic rudiments of learning a skill...” At the concepts level, the principles behind the facts are explored... “Abstractions and ideas are

entertained...on the values level, students explore the connections between the subject matter and their own feelings, opinions, and behavior.”

In religious education, we may well broaden this third level of teaching to include questions that religion eternally and universally asks: “Who am I? What is it to be human? Who are you? How do we get along together? Does life have meaning, and if so, what is it? What do I believe? What do my beliefs say to my actions?”

In the church, we have still another level of teaching available to us—that of celebration or worship. Through experiences of worship or celebration we may consider, lift up, dedicate ourselves anew to values that we hold in common...The biggest question for me as I think of planning programs every Sunday is “How do I reach the level of valuing or personal meaning every time?”...Each session needs to invite children to look for meanings and personal applications and thus be “religion making.”

Many thanks to religious educators Dawn Star Borchelt, Pat Ellenwood, and Françoise Ateto for peer review and to Ms. Borchelt for editorial assistance. All opinions and any errors or misinterpretations remain my own, of course.--BJM

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Community Story and Vision for Religious Education

Compiled by Betty Jo Middleton

What is the Unitarian Universalist Story, and Vision, for religious education?

Here are some of the strands of that Story:

“The great end in religious instruction, whether in the Sunday-school or the family, is, not to stamp our minds irresistibly on the young, but to stir up their own; not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth; not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs; not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought; not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect or peculiar notions, but to prepare them for impartial, conscientious judging of whatever subjects may, in the course of Providence, be offered to their decision; not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, which rest on no foundation but our own word and will, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment, so that they may discern and approve for themselves what is everlastingly right and good.”

—William Ellery Channing
in “Discourse Pronounced Before the Sunday School Society 1837”.

“What shall children study? All that quickens sympathetic imagining, that awakens sensitivity to other’s feelings, all that enriches and enlarges understanding of the world: all that strengthens courage, that adds to the love of living; all that leads to developing skills needed for democratic participations—all these put together are the curriculum through which children learn.”

—Sophia Lyon Fahs,
in *Today’s Children and Yesterday’s Heritage:
A Philosophy of Creative Religious Development*, Beacon Press 1952.

“It should be obvious that when I speak of method, I have not in mind a bag of tricks by which we hope to transfer something from one mind to another. In a teaching situation, whether in home or classroom or elsewhere, values always become active...Along with direct experience comes appreciation, reflection, inquiry, insight, imaginative play, and devotion...I am interested in a process that makes assets rather than liabilities of the child’s restless energy,...activities,...consuming curiosity,...love of fun,...tendency to dramatize life,...[and] constructive impulses.”

—Angus H. Maclean,
in “The Method is the Message,” Unitarian Universalist Association 1962.

“Unitarian Universalists, having evolved a process for achieving a life-enhancing orientation to the power-filled world, want to share their religion with their children and young people. They want them to have a vivid and compelling experience of the power of

the Unitarian Universalist religion to help them evolve a life-enhancing orientation to the world, and, if they are so disposed, become personally committed to it.”

—Hugo J. Hollerorth,
in *Relating To Our World*, Unitarian Universalist Association 1974.

Eugene Navias adds a fourth level, “Celebration” to the three levels of teaching from the work of Harmin, Kirchenbaum and Simon, in the field of values clarification. “We may consider, lift up, dedicate ourselves anew to values we hold in common...we need to explore the possibilities for worshipping...The biggest question for me as I think of planning programs every Sunday is ‘how do I reach the level of valuing or personal meaning every time?’ ...Each session needs to invite children to look for meanings, personal applications, and thus be ‘religion making.’”

—Eugene B. Navias
in “Checkpoints for Teachers,” Unitarian Universalist Association about 1977.

“Let us move away from the Sunday school classroom paradigm toward a paradigm of living in religious community...We have failed ourselves by denying our life-saving *need* for the companionship of children, and because we have not clearly understood our Unitarian Universalist religion...We have been living in the paradigmatic world of church school and classes.”

—Jean Starr Williams,
in “Moving from Church School Classes to Living in Religious Community,”
in the UUA’s Reach Packet, September 1979.

“As religious liberals, we are being called in challenging ways as we move into the twenty-first century. We are called to be compassionate and creative. We are called to courageously face our pain, our histories, and our personal struggles so that we may heal and be healed. We are called to reach deep within our hearts to find new reservoirs of compassion—compassion for ourselves, our families, our communities, our world. We are called to be creative, to risk new ideas and new solutions crafted with the energy of love.”

—Makanah Morriss,
in the UUA pamphlet “Spiral Journey:
Unitarian Universalist Religious Education for the Twenty-First Century,” 1995.

“What would a congregation engaged in lifespan religious growth and learning look like? It would be the ultimate committee of the whole, a community in which everyone is a teacher and a learner; in which every age and stage of life is allowed to contribute whatever tangible and intangible resources they have to offer; a community in which no decision is made about the life of the community...without consideration of its impact on and opportunities for every member of the community.”

—Judith Frediani,
in *Essex Conversations*.

Creative Midrash

USING ART AND INTERPRETATION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Sherry H. Blumberg

For the president's report this month I want to share with the members [of the Religious Education Association] an exercise that I did at the beginning of the board meeting as both an introduction to what we would study together and a way of deepening our knowledge of each other. Using glue, construction paper and a few crayons, the members of the board of directors created metaphors, artistic representations of their feelings about their own spirituality and responses to a text about God. I share it with you in the hopes that you can try something similar, share other ideas with me and with each other, and perhaps deepen your own relationship to the REA.

Based on the work of Dr. Milgram, a creative midrash uses reflection and symbolism to express a person's feelings, thoughts, and responses to a text or a question. The expression is usually nonverbal although some participants need to add the words. The product is not an "artistic" work, although many are quite beautiful; rather, it is a representation of the soul of the artist, reflecting the creator in new ways. When the works are orally described at the end of the process, participants come to know each other in very special new ways. We were studying text materials about interreligious dialogue from several traditions and so I read a Biblical quotation from Psalms to begin the reflection, then asked people to react to that text, the text they brought, or to try to describe themselves spiritually using colored paper that could be torn, glue, and if necessary, crayons. When we followed up with the actual study of the many texts that were brought, these early reflections still retained their depth and substance—as well as their beauty and colorful reminders of who we are. Participants agreed that it was an unusual, but special opening exercise.

I find that this kind of way of knowing and demonstrating who we are and what we feel is very powerful. It is especially effective with older students, although I have used it with students as young as ten. The verbal sharing after the creation is very important, and often the participant who began by playing with color and glue ends up with a powerful experience in the telling.

Art, metaphor, story, symbolism, music, movement and the other creative arts are powerful tools for religious education. From my experience they transcend the boundaries of our differences and, while not minimizing the differences, they can highlight the areas of universality among peoples of faith. In an organization such as the REA they can facilitate quality dialogue. Using the arts, creative midrash itself works just as well in the denominational settings.

Shalom.

--From the President's Column in REACH, Religious Education Association Clearing House, 1999 Volume XXIX Number 2, published by the Religious Education Association, 222 East Lake Drive, Decatur, GA 30030.

Draft: Common Worship – Why and How?

The UUA Commission on Common Worship*

1980 April

Worship is a human activity. Though it is often defined as an activity to placate and get in touch with divine powers, it need not have any supernatural implications. The origin of the word "worship" is in the Old English *weorthscipe*, meaning to ascribe worth to something, or even to *shape* things of worth. We worship, then, whenever we ascribe worth to some value, idea, object, person, experience, attitude, or activity, or whenever we give form or shape to that which is of worth.

A worship experience can occur at any time, while one is alone, or part of a group. Whenever something beautiful is perceived, wherever there is a deep sense of connectedness with other persons or with the natural world or with the transcendent, whenever one gains new insight or a new sense of wholeness, whenever one perceives an ethical challenge, wherever life is deliberately focused or ordered--in all these situations it can be said that one is worshipping.

Most studies of religious experience have focused on the individual. The work of the late Abraham Maslow on "peak experiences" has attracted the attention of many Unitarian Universalists because it makes no explicit theological assumptions. Maslow, however, did not deal with the collective dimension of these experiences. In fact, he questioned whether peak experiences could be created or cultivated. They seemed to him spontaneous, totally unplanned.

Yet when we gather together for worship we are making an assumption that we *can* create some kind of common experience. Common worship is a deliberate shaping, ordering, or recalling of the things of worth which we experience individually at various moments in our lives. The ordering process which is done in common adds a new and important dimension.

The term "common" has several meanings depending on the context. It may refer to those beliefs, attitudes, and activities we share as members of a particular congregation. Or it may refer to what we share as religious liberals, or what we share by virtue of being human.

"Common" may also refer to what is ordinary or regular--that which happens most of the times we gather for worship, as opposed to special festival occasions. In this essay "common" is used in both ways. Common worship is that worship which unites us in some way with others, those patterns of worship which we use ordinarily.

Part I. Thematic And Liturgical Approaches To Worship

Much worship in Unitarian Universalist societies is thematic. That is, it develops a single idea or theme through readings, music, collective acts, and the major presentation

(sermon, panel, sharing ceremony, or whatever). Thirty years ago, in the introduction to the *Unitarian Fellowship Hymn and Service Book*, Vincent Silliman defined a religious service in thematic terms:

A religious service is a diversified and orderly program which culminates in a sermon or address or other event, in which a particular idea or set of ideas is emphasized or clarified and applied to daily life.

In most cases there are elements in which the congregation takes part-- songs, readings, responses. However, at some times the service may take the form of a "set piece" for contemplation by the congregation. (This is what is often meant by the term "creative worship," especially when non-conventional elements such as audio-visuals, dance, or dramatic presentations are included.) The commonness of thematic worship lies in the extent to which the people together identify with readings, music, sermon, setting.

Thematic worship may or may not follow a "usual" order. If there is one, some elements (such as a doxology, a covenant, a special song for the offering, or a closing statement) may be repeated each time, or there may be an expectation that certain elements or kinds of elements (such as hymns, readings, prayers, sermon) follow one another in a predictable order. It may be argued that the commonness of a service lies to some extent in familiar materials which are used regularly. Although it may be tremendously creative and exciting, the completely innovative thematic service, because it is not predictable, may alienate some people. Such a service puts a heavy demand on the worship leader to come up with something week after week that sustains the excitement. There are a few people in our denomination, ministers and laypeople, who do have this kind of talent. But most worship leaders need some kind of structure to work with.

The other end of the worship spectrum could be called liturgical. The word "liturgy" comes from the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning "the people's work." Typically, much of the service is read or responded to by the congregation. The commonness lies in the congregation's familiarity with the material. One *enters into* a predictable flow rather than observing a presentation as a spectator. Liturgical worship usually follows a psychological rather than a thematic pattern. What is important is not so much the development of an idea, as the touching of certain human needs--the need to give praise, to express gratitude, to acknowledge one's shortcomings, to experience healing and forgiveness, to feel connected with the church community and with reintegrated creative forces, to be intellectually stimulated, to affirm and dedicate oneself to common values, to experience something of the transcendent, etc.

Each kind of worship, thematic or liturgical, or some combination of the two, can be done well or poorly. Each can involve people or exclude them. Each congregation must determine how it wishes its members to be involved in worship, as spectators or as active participants, and how it can best express its own common needs and celebrate things of worth.

What Does Worship Do?

Much traditional worship is viewed as a drama depicting the divine-human encounter. It is directed upward to God, inward to the individual, and outward into the community of worshippers and the world. The Roman Catholic views the Mass as a sacrifice of God by God to God, a repetition of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. In ritual form it represents the incarnation, the divine assuming human form. For many years the Mass was seen as a valid act in itself, whether or not any worshippers were present. But the event is also viewed as a drama with which the individual can identify. One is called to be part of the sacred event, opened to the divine through confession, given the holy presence, and, having been transformed, sent back into the world. There is also a community dimension to the Mass, an aspect which is being stressed in post-Vatican II Catholic theology. Through the liturgy *the people* are resurrected to new life--a life of loving concern for others.

The tradition in which American Unitarianism and Universalism have their roots is that of Calvinism, which had a largely *educational* view of worship. Some parts of it--praise, singing (the Psalms) and prayer, were directed to God, but the main purpose of worship was to proclaim and interpret "the Word" to the congregation. Scripture reading and the sermon were central, the latter being an exposition of the text lasting an hour or more. The minister wore the black academic gown to emphasize that he was learned in the Scriptures.

We have not really changed much, though today sermons are shorter. Most Unitarian Universalist worship is didactic and intellectual. The "word" is no longer restricted to the Old and New Testaments, but there is still an emphasis on *the word*--the word of an individual which is to be agreed with, argued with, or ignored. The commonness of worship that is primarily educational or intellectual lies in the extent to which values and ideas which are proclaimed from the pulpit are shared.

The educational model puts great emphasis on the person leading the service. Most efforts at reform in our tradition have been attempts to involve the congregation more. Some have welcomed this while others find all liturgical forms to be reminders of traditional beliefs they cannot accept. "High-church" liturgy, however, must not be equated with conservative theology. In the early part of this century two English religious leaders combined a humanistic outlook with high liturgy. Stanton Coit (*Social Worship*, 1913) and Harry Youlden (*Manual of Ethical Devotion*, 1914) both drew their formal inspiration from the liturgy of the Church of England but the content of their services was without theistic references. *The Magnificat*, *Benedicite*, and other traditional prayers and psalms gave glory to humanity and to the natural order. The service was an orchestrated event. The sermon was integrated into a pattern of congregational responses and unison material. These repeated elements became a common body through their familiarity.

Most of us today would agree that worship must meet more than our intellectual needs. It must involve us emotionally and bodily as well. Worship should give us occasion to affirm our common values, experience the sacred, the transcendent, the creative, to center ourselves through silence, words or actions, to acknowledge our inadequacies, feel healing power, consider the wisdom of our religious heritage, to dedicate ourselves to the

future in hope, give thanks for life, go forth in new strength, as well as to be challenged with ideas and ethical demands. All this, of course, cannot be achieved in every service. But this is the goal. Worship is radical openness to all experience, a sensitizing process that opens us up to the heights and depths of living.

Theoretical Foundations

For most Unitarian Universalists today, worship rests on a foundation that is psychological rather than theological (in the narrow sense of that word.) Religious liberals have long assumed that the world is one, and not divided into natural and supernatural realms, and that the world we experience daily actually reflects Reality. It is therefore more important to ask what worship forms do to us and for us psychologically rather than to ask what has been given through revelation or tradition. If tradition is valuable, it is because its forms are psychologically sound. The validity of worship forms, both new and old, depends on how well they help us shape and celebrate worthwhile experiences and values and help us feel and integrate the healing and transforming forces present in the world.

The Celebrative Model

In the United States, the celebrative model of worship had its staunchest advocate in Von Ogden Vogt, who was for many years minister of the First Unitarian Society in Chicago and who authored three major works on worship theory. It was Vogt who coined the term "celebration of life" which is used so often today. Vogt approached worship from a psychological point of view. His concern was with what worship elements do to the worshipper. Vogt believed that the consciousness of human beings tends to alternate between inner and outer, a sense of the many and a sense of the one, the ideal and the actual. Worship then, must touch these alternate bases. It is an art form, a drama with a clear direction. Vogt found a historical precedent in the biblical story of Isaiah's call to prophecy. Isaiah has a vision of the holy. He sees Yahweh "lifted up: and surrounded by all sorts of heavenly beings (Isaiah 6:1-4). In the presence of this glory Isaiah feels unworthy and unclean (Is 6:5). A seraph purifies his lips with a burning coal and he feels forgiven and empowered (Is 6:6-7). Yahweh challenges Isaiah to be his prophet (Is 6:8a). Isaiah commits himself and says, "Send me." (Is 6:8b). Taking the psychology underlying this ancient story, Vogt believed that worship begins with a confrontation between the worshipper and one's professed ideals and values. The focus of attention moves inward to one's sense of unworthiness, then outward again as one feels empowered and ready to be challenged. The challenge having been given, the worshipper then responds with new dedication and commitment.

Vogt's theory took form in a five-act drama. In his various books he differed slightly on what each act included, but the basic structure and direction were always the same.

- | | | |
|-------|---------------------|--|
| Act 1 | ATTENTION or VISION | Ideals and aspirations are stated and affirmed |
| Act 2 | HUMILITY | We are humbled by the |

		realization that we fall short of these ideals
Act 3	EXALTATION	We regain our strength, feel empowered, and give thanks
Act 4	ILLUMINATION	We consider wisdom from the past and present
Act 5	DEDICATION	We reaffirm our ideals, and resolve to act responsibly

Clearly his model for worship is activist. Worship takes us from the actual world into the world of ideals and transcendent reality, then takes us back to the actual world renewed and dedicated to the realization of what is beyond.

Unfortunately Vogt failed to integrate the sermon into his five part theory. Instead, he tacked it on after the liturgy. Most people today who take his work seriously include the sermon by putting it in the Illumination section.

Vogt performed a great service for the Unitarian Universalist movement. The richness of his language is found in many of the prayers and readings in *Hymns of the Spirit* and in the reading section of *Hymns for the Celebration of Life*.

Most Unitarian Universalists interested in liturgy today draw their inspiration from Von Ogden Vogt. Some have changed the number of acts or the emphasis in each, but the principle of the alternation of psychological moods is still central. Here are some variations:

A

1. Centering
2. Embracing the Limitations
3. Declaring the Possibilities
4. Building Community

B

1. Approach
2. Emptying
3. Exploration
4. Connection

C

1. Gathering
2. Reflecting
3. Exploring
4. Affirming

D

1. Approach
2. Emptying
3. Connection
4. Exploration
5. Closure

E

1. Attention
2. Embracing the Limitations
3. Proclaiming the Possibilities
4. Focusing
5. Commitment

6. Community Concern

Neither the specific labels for each section nor the forms within each section are sacrosanct in this kind of worship, e.g. Humility or Emptying may be expressed by silence, a general acknowledgment of limitations, a responsive reading, or something else entirely. Explorations might include readings, a sermon, a hymn, or a group activity. The main concerns are the alternation of moods, the direction, and the level of participation by the people.

The Vogt model seems to be evolving in two ways at present. Some people use Act 2 as a time for individual and collective reflection on the limitations of life. Others use Act 2 as a time for gathering together as a community before going on a journey together. The difference, though apparently significant, may not be crucial. What is important is that the congregation have a common sense of what it is doing together so that its members can enter into the flow of the service.

Other Models Of Worship

While Vogt seems to provide the basis for much Unitarian Universalist worship, even for those who think in more thematic terms, there are other theoretical models which have their own validity.

Eugene Gendlin, a University of Chicago psychologist and philosopher, has developed a theory of psychotherapeutic change which may have application to the movement of worship. It develops as follows:

1. Awareness of the issue at hand.
2. Owning one's relationship to the issue. (Reality testing.)
3. Application of the issue to aspects of living.
4. Shifting back to the self, with a new sense of wholeness.

Applied to worship, there are many similarities to Vogt. The major difference lies in the final act, which is less active and more integrative. The educational model which is the foundation of many Unitarian Universalist religious education curriculum kits, notably *About Your Sexuality*, takes a very similar course to Gendlin's

1. Initiation
2. Interaction
3. Investigation
4. Internalization

In this case, Act 2 is more community-centered while Act 4 is integrative, much like the Gendlin model.

Several people have suggested that worship is a pilgrimage in which the individual is drawn out of one's own individuality into a group exploration. At the end of the journey

the individual is alone again, but renewed and inspired. The acts of a service following this model might look like this:

- 1 APPROACH Gathering together in a particular time and place
- 2 CONNECTION Realizing our connections with one another and with transcendent values
- 3 EXPLORATION Exploring ideas together
- 4 RE-TURN Turning again back to everyday life as an individual

Again, Act 2 is community-centered and Act 4 is more inward.

Obviously, in a group as diverse as ours, we cannot say that one model or another is the “correct” one. What is important is what these models say about our religious consciousness. Each involves the individual as one relates to the religious community, to transcendent values, and to one’s responsibilities in everyday life. Each includes an intellectual element. Each includes inward, reflective time.

A good worship service reflects careful attention to the alternation of moods and to the types of material used, coupled with a clear sense of where the service is to take its participants.

The Place of the Sermon

Most worship in the Unitarian Universalist tradition has centered on the sermon. We are “people of the Word.” even though we have broadened the “canon” of scripture and the concept of what is religious.

The sermon has many functions. It may be educational, serving to instruct or inform the congregation about its roots in tradition, about questions of meaning that need to be addressed and issues that need to be understood more clearly. It may be “evangelistic.” Unitarian Universalists do have a gospel to proclaim, the good news of the vital and creative tension between individual and community, between freedom and commitment. The sermon may be prophetic, challenging the gathered community and the individuals that are part of it with the values they profess and with the implications of those values in daily life. It may be nurturing, offering the wisdom of the ages, the support of caring people, the transforming power of what is creative and possible.

One important question to be considered is how and where the sermon fits into the total service. In the mainly thematic service, there is a progression which leads up to the high point which is the sermon. Sometimes this is followed only by a hymn and closing words, sometimes there is a longer *denouement* which includes the offering and perhaps a meditation and/or affirmation. In the liturgical service the sermon is emphasized less. It is seen as but one aspect of the total worship experience. Therefore one is more likely to find it in the middle of the service.

Most people who lead worship regularly are aware that the sermon is a particular kind of discourse, quite different from a topical “address” or “talk.” (We often use these words because we are uncomfortable with the traditional term “sermon.”) A sermon is created out of the common life of a particular religious community--an individual society or a denomination. Occasionally it may reflect the universal experience of being human. Many Unitarian Universalists today say they want sermons to be more “religious” or “spiritual.” This is especially the case in those congregations which rely for their Sunday programs on lay speakers, most of whom are not Unitarian Universalists. It would appear that what is being asked for is not services that espouse a conventional kind of religiosity or spirituality, but services that reflect the depth of our humanity, that deal openly and honestly with our common needs as members of a caring, prophetic, religious community.

Panels, dialogues, dramatic works, poetry readings, and other artistic presentations may take the place of a sermon in a service of worship. But the discourse given by one person still has power. Many have questioned why this is so in an age of entertainment and electronic communication. Perhaps it is because a sermon is the offering of a real, flesh and blood human being who cares enough to share his or her insights, feelings, and dreams with a living community, who takes the time to relate the wisdom of a tradition to a particular gathered group. Instead of being a show carefully programmed to present a polished, upbeat message, fitting exactly within the human attention span as defined by experts, and offered to a faceless crowd, the sermon is the work of one who wrestles honestly, openly, and vulnerably with the deep questions of life.

What We Bring To Worship

What is brought to a service of worship may be as important as the service itself. One who brings no expectations, no intention to flow with the experience is unlikely to get much out of it. We bring ourselves, our own unique experiences into the common experience. Above all, we must bring an openness of mind, of spirit, of self. Are we willing to let ourselves be transformed by the power present in a caring community gathered together, by the creativity that lies in ideas, in the spaces between us and beyond us, and in our very receptivity to what is new? The 1967 UUA Goals Survey pointed out that Unitarian Universalists are more likely to feel that their membership in a Unitarian Universalist society confirms their previous values rather than gives them a new value system. Yet if we are to be true to our liberal heritage, we must be open to the possibility of a complete transformation of our ideas and way of life. Furthermore, the open mind principle we espouse goes beyond merely a receptiveness to new ideas. It includes new forms as well.

We are a diverse denomination. Nevertheless, it should be possible for the member of an informal fellowship to worship in one of our more liturgical churches, or for one used to certain fixed forms to worship in a setting where the forms are quite different. This can happen if the worshipper is willing to work at the service to get the most out of it. If the service is mainly intellectual, there must be a willingness to hear the spoken word with an

open mind, to feel the flow of thoughts and poetry with an open spirit. If the service is mainly liturgical, there must be a willingness to enter the flow of established forms and find new meanings each time. Above all, there must be a level of expectation that something will happen, that the service has the power to change, or help one change, one's thinking, feeling, relating.

Style

Questionnaires on preferred styles of worship usually force people into categories that are mutually exclusive--formal versus informal, traditional versus innovative, complex versus simple. Most of these categories miss the point of what is really going on. One may call a service "formal" simply because it occurs in a formal church setting, or "traditional" because a biblical reading was used, or "innovative" because a dancer took part in the service. Yet these terms may not do justice to the total worship experience at all. A service with many congregational parts, though labeled "liturgical," might flow with natural grace, while a service with a very "simple" structure may suffer from jarring discontinuities. A service that looks very "formal" on paper may be conducted warmly and may have room for much spontaneity, while a service that appears to be "informal" may be conducted in a stiff, intellectual manner.

Innovations may take place in the context of structured services. But there are worship leaders whose goal is to have each service be an entirely new and different experience. This kind of worship can be exciting to the worshipper. However, it does make demands on the leader. The focus tends to be on the leader and what he or she can produce rather than on the worshipping congregation. The service may become a performance, an artistic "set piece," rather than a communal act.

Worship that is liturgical in form includes familiar elements to which a worshipper can relate and make one's own. It is a drama in which each is a player with a part. There is a dignity of language in forms that have been carefully created and honed with frequent use. But there is also a risk of "vain repetition"--the hardening of words and phrases through mechanical recital so that they become devoid of meaning. If liturgical worship is to be vital, its forms must periodically be renewed and, if necessary, rewritten.

Great worship includes a balance between form and informality, the familiar and the innovative, the structured and the spontaneous. But whatever type or style is chosen, worship leaders ought to keep in mind the purpose of the words and activities, the direction which the service takes, and the climax of the event.

Few would disagree with the concept of worship as a drama. Whether it is a drama in which the worshippers are involved spectators or involved participants is something that must be determined for each congregation. Whether the drama is a repeated one, like the Greek tragedies, the works of Shakespeare, or the Passion Play, or is a completely new work created for each occasion must also be decided. We must not lose sight of the main question, however: how worship can best unite us, express our

religious aspirations, transform and challenge us, and help us celebrate those things which are common to us.

Common worship is too important to be the exclusive domain of minister alone, or tradition alone, or worship committee alone. It belongs to the whole congregation. Like any other artistic endeavor, it ought to be shaped by those who are competent in the theory and practice of worship, but only through dialog with a whole congregation about its function, form, direction, and style, can that emerge which truly expresses the hopes and fears~ the joys and sorrows, the aspirations and commitments of those who gather to worship.

Part II. Elements in the Service of Worship

Anyone who has attended services in several Unitarian Universalist churches and fellowships, or who has studied orders of service from several congregations, is aware that in spite of our tremendous diversity, there are elements and activities which are shared in common. Let us look at the functions of some of these elements.

Opening and Closing Words

Opening words differ widely in both form and content. They may take the form of a choral introit, spoken sentences, or an invocation read by the leader or spoken by the congregation in unison or responsively. The words may be the same each week, entirely new for each service, or several selections may be used in rotation. Opening words may serve to greet or welcome the congregation, state the purpose of worship, set aside the hour as a special time, or focus the minds of the worshippers on a particular idea. Thinking thematically, opening words set the theme for the whole worship experience. Thinking liturgically, opening words serve to call the group together. They may, of course, do both.

Increasingly in our movement we are finding more ritual statements used at the beginning of the service, many of them centered around the lighting of candles or a flaming chalice. (The availability of two handsome pewter chalices from the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee undoubtedly will encourage this practice.) The lighting of candles or a chalice is an act which has uniting power beyond that of words. Candles in our culture always signify special times and places. Other opening rituals may also be used, such as the reciting of a covenant, statement of purpose, or common aspiration like "Love is the doctrine of this church. ..." These acts serve to unite the members of the congregation in a common purpose.

Closing words or a benediction frame the other end of the service. The terms "closing words" and "benediction" are often used interchangeably, though their function is different. Closing words usually restate the theme of the service in some concise manner. A benediction is literally a "good word," a blessing, spoken to or in behalf of the congregation. Closing words or benedictions are usually spoken by the leader, though occasionally they may be by the congregation spoken in unison or responsively. It may

be appropriate to have both closing words and a benediction, the first to close the theme, the second to complete the service.

Hymns, Songs, and Other Music

It is hard to envision a truly celebrative community that does not sing, though there are churches and fellowships that do not include singing in their services. Singing provides a way that people can unite through familiar words and tunes. If songs are to aid common worship they must be familiar, either familiar from the past or made familiar through constant use. The commission feels that hymns should not exclude people because of certain gender references. Theological views presented should likewise be as inclusive as possible, although outright rejection of language and images from the past in the name of intellectual honesty can lead to sterility in our religious expression. Some old hymns with an outmoded theology have a mantra-like quality which may have value. Within our Unitarian Universalist movement there has emerged a small body of hymns and songs which tend to be sung whenever we get together at General Assemblies, conferences, installations, etc. (e.g. *Rank by Rank, O Life That Maketh All Things New, Faith of the Free, Life of Ages Richly Poured, Morning Has Broken, Forward Through the Ages.*) Most local congregations have their own “canon” of hymns which express a common awareness.

Other music--chants and responses by either choir or congregation, doxologies, offering songs, closing responses such as *Shalom Havayreem*, can be touchstones of familiarity helping the worshipper feel at home. These often have a special value when the dominant mode of the service is innovative. Music for participation can be one of the most important vehicles for the expression of our common awareness, since it combines intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional dimensions.

In some of our churches, choral or instrumental music, often of very high quality, is used mainly as entertainment, or at most for setting a worshipful mood, with little attention paid to its theology (in choral works) or its relation to the service. In others, a strong effort is made to integrate all music with the theme of the day. Anthems and solos are chosen to illustrate points in the sermon or to present a text. In more liturgical settings, responses and anthems often express the feeling of a particular section or act.

Responsive and Unison Readings

There is a widespread opinion among Unitarian Universalists that responsive readings are disliked. Some congregations never use them, but in a 1979 survey, the Commission found that almost two thirds do. The origin on the form goes back in the Judeo-Christian tradition to the antiphonal chanting of the Psalms. Later, other familiar scriptural texts were put into this form, and more recently many non-biblical readings were made responsive. Unfortunately, many readings that are fine when read in unison or by the worship leader are not really suitable as responsive readings. A good responsive reading flows well from leader to people or between two or more sections of the congregation. The form is still valid if the compilers of such readings would be sensitive to sound,

length, and flow. Familiarity is as important here as it is in hymns. It may be that the responsive form is more suited to repeated affirmations and the like rather than to selections used for their intellectual content.

An affirmation is an act spoken by the whole congregation which attempts to reflect values held in common. As such, it is usually broad and general. Some affirmations might reflect the uniqueness of a particular congregation, the right to differ from the majority is a vital principle of our liberal tradition, and this would apply to words we speak in common. However passages spoken together should be regarded as *attempts* at consensus rather than as unchanging creedal statements. Affirmations should be examined frequently to see if they do indeed express consensus, for words that do not actually express at least the broad general outlook of the gathered religious community can become merely historical curiosities devoid of real power.

Prayer or Meditation

“Prayer” (like “religion,” “worship,” “hymn,” and “sermon”) is a loaded word for many religious liberals. When we do use it we often mean something quite different from what those in more traditional religious groups do. Yet, as Vincent Silliman pointed out some years ago, the Stoics used prayers that were unaddressed. So do Buddhists, who feel that the concept of God is irrelevant. Regardless of one's theology, prayer is an act of focusing, centering the self. It may serve to acknowledge our limits, become one with the world, bring the community together, gather in one place our concerns and intentions. As a total act, worship involves this focusing, shaping, and ordering and therefore, in a sense, all worship is prayer. Some people prefer the term “meditation,” although it might be argued that a “meditation” is a verbal piece expressing a person's feeling or point of view rather than a piece that attempts to reflect and focus common concerns.

Regularly repeated prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer in our more traditional churches, or prayers used in rotation, have the value of familiarity. On the other hand, a prayer composed for the occasion, especially one that is not written out, has freshness and spontaneity. Again, the question is one of proper balance. In recent years the Roman Catholics have encouraged laypersons to lead the congregation in prayer, signifying that the act is not a priestly one, but one that comes from the people. We are heirs of the Reformation concept of the “priesthood of all believers.” Having a layperson lead the congregation in prayer can serve to emphasize the fact that public worship is an act of the people.

Silent meditation has many functions. For those like the Quakers, who are comfortable with extended periods of silence and are disciplined in its use, silent meditation possesses power to unite a congregation in ways that words cannot. However, since most Unitarian Universalist congregations are not so disciplined, the use of silence is often limited to brief periods. These can provide an opportunity for individual centering, shift the mood of the service, or, when used after a spoken prayer or meditation, give the worshipper an opportunity to reflect on the words just spoken. Silence may also be used as a non-

controversial way of achieving focussing in those congregations where prayer spoken in behalf of the group is inappropriate.

Readings or Lessons

Except in those churches in which the Bible is read regularly in services, Unitarian Universalists no longer have a canon of commonly accepted inspirational material. Lessons and readings are often chosen as much to support intellectually the topic of the day as they are for inspirational content. The “loose-leaf Bible” is more a slogan than a reality since much of what is read lacks the timeless quality of “scripture.”

Attempts have been made to create a body of classic readings for worship use. The two volume collection *Great Companions*, compiled in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s was one of these, and it is still in use today. While some of this material still has value, much of it appears dated. For some, the reading section of the hymnal functions as a body of familiar readings, though, again, social changes have made some of the material impossible to use.

In some societies a selection from the ancient scriptures of the world is regularly chosen along with a more modern reading as a way of maintaining continuity with past inspiration. This practice might be cultivated more, since one of the functions of worship is to tie the present to the past.

Sermon or Other Presentation

As stated earlier, the sermon is not, or should not be, simply another talk or lecture, but a discourse that stems from and centers on the religious community. In those societies which depend on outside speakers for Sunday programs, it might be appropriate to appoint someone who can make an effort to relate the speaker's topic to the church or fellowship context. This might help to overcome the feeling by some people that services are not “religious” enough.

Discussions as an extension of the major presentation are common in fellowships and in some churches. For obvious reasons it is difficult to have a discussion in congregations much larger than 40 or 50, and difficult, though not impossible, to be successful in churches with fixed pews all facing forward. The commonly used term “talkback” unfortunately emphasizes rebuttal, argument, or criticism, all of which are rarely conducive to the spirit of worship. If there is genuine *discussion* of the presentation, however, and the mood of worship is respected, a discussion period within the body of the service can help the congregation internalize the theme and it can therefore become a participative act, though perhaps only at the intellectual level.

Offering

In her book on the fellowship movement, *Bright Galaxy*, Laile Bartlett wrote that she could go into almost any group and be certain that they had been through “the collection

plate controversy,” the debate over whether to pass the plate during the service or to leave a box at the door for contributions. Many people are embarrassed when the plate sails by with few putting anything in because the “regulars” pay their pledges monthly by check. But James Luther Adams has emphasized the symbolic power that lies in the passing of the offering plate. This act, he says, signifies that the church is not dependent on the state, a hierarchy, or private benefactors, but relies on the freely given support of its people. The offering, then, has a real place in the service of worship. In some societies the offering just disappears out the door and into the hands of the treasurer, while in other words of dedication, either spoken or sung, are used to underline its importance.

The offering can be a genuine act of community-building. Where it appears in the service depends on one’s theory of worship--before the sermon if one believes that the congregation should “connect” before going on an intellectual journey together, or after the sermon if one thinks of it as an act of commitment that is properly made after one has heard “the word.”

Announcements

Are announcements intrusions into an order of worship or are they truly an expression of the religious concerns of the community? When announcements are read from the pulpit they are often perceived as a break in the flow of the service. In those societies which permit announcements from the floor there is an added problem in the long-winded person or the parishioner with the one-track mind. Such harangues are clearly disruptive to most people. Perhaps notices and comments should come before or after the service itself, or even be restricted to the printed program.

Many churches have recently introduced a different kind of announcement period under such labels as “sharing of concerns” or “milestones.” This is a time when members of the congregation are invited to share important events such as birthdays and anniversaries, to express concern about members who are ill, in trouble, etc., or to share a concern about some need in the wider community. This form has the makings of a genuine communal act and probably should be encouraged. The setting, style, and traditions of each congregation will determine whether this is appropriate.

In the past, Unitarians and Universalists have celebrated communion, usually in a simple form, to commemorate the life and teachings of Jesus. Some of our churches still celebrate it regularly, as often as once a month. In this century many churches of both denominations abandoned the practice as not in keeping with an enlightened religious faith. But in recent years communion rituals have been revived. Many of these are free of references to the traditional last supper of Jesus, though the use of bread and wine is common.

Eating and drinking as a common ritual act can have great power. All human beings are united by the universal need for food. Thus many of the recent ceremonies stress community, solidarity with the hungry, connectedness to the earth. The traditional bread

and wine have important symbolic value. Grain is gathered and transformed into bread by human hands; grapes are crushed and changed into wine through fermentation. In some communion services other elements (fruit, cheese, juice, etc.) are used in place of or in addition to the traditional ones.

Some of our societies have found meaning in the Jewish Passover Seder, a ritual meal celebrating freedom from bondage. In several cases the Seder has been combined with the communion ritual or even universalized into a service of Thanksgiving celebrating the “exodus” to the New World.

More Unitarian Universalists today seem to feel free to use or to adapt ancient rituals without feeling that participation in them implies the acceptance of outmoded beliefs. Perhaps this openness can lead to the development of new ceremonies that grow out of our own unique liberal religious values. Actually, we have at least one of these already. The flower communion service developed by the Czech Unitarian Norbert Capek and used by many of our societies, is an expression of the cherished principle of the valuing of human differences.

Some of our more formal churches have included processions and recessions as part of the service, although Unitarian Universalists do not have a strong tradition of pomp and ceremony such as exists in many liturgical churches. Dance has a long history in most of the religions of the world as a means of expressing the sacred myths and stories. Unitarian Universalist societies have occasionally included dancers and movement choirs in the service, but more often than not these have been in the role of performers. Only rarely have we used dance and movement as a congregational act.

Since our tradition is largely nonliturgical, there is little awareness of the tremendous power of hand gestures and body position. Few of us feel free to kneel and we stand only to sing or perhaps participate in responsive readings. Movement and gesture however, can be powerful reinforcers of words and ideas. We would do well to learn from the austere, but deeply moving, Zen tea ceremony or from the hand movements of the Catholic priest at Mass.

The ancient Christian tradition of “Passing the Peace” has been revived in some Unitarian Universalist societies. In others, various nonverbal acts such as reaching out to a neighbor or holding hands in a circle are included. Are we open to a more active use of our bodies in worship? Surely religion is an activity of more than the intellect alone.

Part III. Integrating the Elements of the Service Putting the Elements Together

The Bauhaus architectural ideal that form should follow function is also valid in worship. If one believes the main function of worship is to develop a theme, then the forms one uses should express that theme, building up in a crescendo to the main thematic expression (usually the sermon). A proper closing would be simply a hymn and a benediction. However, if one believes the goal of worship is to touch certain

psychological bases in a rhythmic progression, the Vogt model, or something like it, is hard to improve upon. The forms chosen would follow the psychological mood of each section. For example:

- Approach: Call to celebration, Invocation, Opening Words, Processional Hymn, Doxology, etc.
- Centering: Silence, Reading newspaper clippings illustrating the Self, human folly, poetry or music, unison acknowledgment of limitations, chanting, etc.
- Exaltation: Upbeat words, act of sharing, hymn, etc.
- Illumination: Readings, Sermon, dramatic presentation, dance, panel audio-visual presentation, etc.
- Dedication: Offering, Passing the Peace, Affirmation, Communion, Sharing Concerns, Prayer, Hymn, Closing Words, Benediction, etc.

The actual forms used in each section (hymns, responses, readings, etc.) are less important than the mood that is created. The moods, however, follow one another according to the theory that Vogt developed.

This of course assumes the validity of Vogt's psychological model of worship. But other theories may also be valid and they have their own logical use of material. In the "pilgrimage" model, which is a variation of Vogt's theory, it is appropriate to have items such as the offering, sharing of concerns, passing the peace, etc., in the second section, "Connection," since these express the mood of gathering together the community before it undertakes its pilgrimage. The final section becomes one of closure, thanksgiving, and blessing.

The Gendlin model and its variations emphasize going back to everyday life as an individual at the end of the service. In this case the last act would probably center on some individual activity such as silent reflection, rather than group affirmation.

What is important is that worship leaders think carefully about what wants to be accomplished in worship and then find the vehicles that best express the appropriate moods. A worship service must be more than just a haphazard assemblage of readings, songs and spoken words. It must have direction and purpose if it is to be effective. Good form need not mean rigidity. There is room for wide variation within all the theories of Worship presented here. Good structure is open and flexible to the different (and changing) needs of our diverse congregations.

When we choose materials for worship we must keep in mind their function. What does a particular poem or hymn or litany or invocation actually do? What mood does it evoke? What demands does it put on us emotionally, theologically, intellectually? What does it lead up to?

If adhering to a unifying theme seems important, materials should be chosen for their stimulating power and their direct application to the topic, since they will be used perhaps only once and must have an immediate impact on the hearer. If a liturgical pattern seems

important materials should be chosen with a sensitivity to flow, to sound to how they will feel after being used several times. Ideally, such materials should come out of a congregation's own experience, or at least out of our collective experience as Unitarian Universalists.

Setting

The shape of a worship space obviously influences what happens there. A discussion will be more successful where there are moveable seats or pews in the round than where all the seats are fixed and facing forward. A dark, closed-in space with diffused light stresses the inward, "vertical" dimensions of religion, while a bright, light-filled space, like many old New England meeting houses and a good number of modern buildings, stresses the outward, "horizontal," active aspects.

While setting can be limiting, it should be realized that stimulating and meaningful worship can sometimes occur in spite of the setting. At one General Assembly a dreary university classroom was transformed into a worshipful space by the intent and the expectations of the people present, and by the eagerness with which they joined in the service. The familiarity of a particular space, the feeling a congregation has that it belongs in a particular building, the awareness one has of being part of a worshipping community that extends into the past and will extend into the future probably all have more effect upon worship than does a building that is especially beautiful or practical.

A few churches and worship leaders make full use of a variety of audio-visual materials to create particular moods and to illustrate themes. Sometimes slides and tapes form the central core of an entire service. In the hands of someone skilled in their use, these materials can have stunning effects. But again we have to ask whether these effects strengthen our *common* worship or are artistic pieces for individual contemplation only.

Von Ogden Vogt claimed that worship is an art and he used many artistic media and symbols in his services. Some Unitarian Universalists are bothered by anything that reminds them of the symbols of religions they have rejected. In some cases this has meant an aversion to all symbols--robes, candles, flowers, bread and wine. When the Puritans under Cromwell attempted to "purify" the Church of England of what they regarded as "popery," they smashed the stained glass, tore down the organs, and melted down the crosses. There is still a strong Puritan influence in Unitarian Universalism. Yet our worship need not be devoid of all art and symbolism. Old forms can be perfectly appropriate vehicles of new messages if they speak to deep *human* needs, as many of them do. Special symbols, garments, art, or sacred spaces need not be thought of as necessarily "conservative" or "traditional."

The Goal

The aim of all worship is to help order the religious consciousness in the individual and the group. It is to help us know and feel how we relate as individuals to ourselves, to the world, to the totality of being. The aim of worship is to help us face up to our limitations

and failures and to open us to sources of creative, healing, transforming, and renewing power. It is to help us discover how that which transcends our narrow individual existence can move us, challenge us, inspire us, stimulate us to think, feel, act, and be--to help us declare, celebrate, rejoice in those things we hold to be "of worth." The aim of worship is to help us reorder, reopen, reshape, and reinterpret our experience and find the power to reaffirm again and again in word and deed what is worthy of our ultimate commitment.

**The members of the Commission are Christopher Gist Raible (chair), John Corrado, Til Evans, Frederick E Gillis, OCA (editor of this version of the paper), Adrian Mak, Christopher Moore, Lucy Nave, Marjorie L Sams, Carl G Seaburg, Clarke Dewey Wells. The Commission welcomes comments.*

Intergenerational Worship in Unitarian Universalist Communities

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Intergenerational worship is an act of creating community and being community. The goals of intergenerational worship are to create community and to share how being a part of that community supports us and enables us to be more than we can be alone. Everything I say about children in this article is probably true about adults. Sunday morning worship is a time of sharing our values whether we are gathered as a community of adults or as a community of all ages.

What do you need for intergenerational worship?

Children and youth must be welcome. (Once I was working with a group of teenagers in a UU church who said to me, "Every time I sit in the Sunday morning service, people look at me as if I might be in the wrong place or like what are you doing here?") Being welcomed and feeling welcomed are sometimes two different issues and both must be true for good intergenerational worship.

Children must be allowed to be who they are. Children should not be invited into a service to pretend to act like an adult. They should have the opportunity to move by standing and sitting. No single activity should last more than ten minutes.

Children deserve to know what is expected of them, as children, and why they are there. It is primarily the role of a parent or guardian to introduce this. It is a role of the community to reinforce this knowledge throughout the experience.

Parents, you can encourage a curiosity about what will be happening in the service they are about to attend. Use conversation, which involves the senses rather than abstract ideas:

“Do you think there will be a choir or instrumental music this morning? Maybe we will hear an instrument you have never heard before. Everyone is quiet during the prelude so we can really hear what these instruments sound like. The musicians have brought us a gift--a present of their music. The way to thank them is to listen carefully.”

“I hope there is a banner hanging, Which banner do you like the best? Why do you think the pink triangle banner was hung last week?” “Did you notice the way the sunlight came through the windows when we were singing the first hymn?”

“The newsletter said the sermon is going to be about disappointments this morning, I wonder what the children's story (dialogue, time with) will be. What story would you tell about disappointments?”

Parents, on the way to church, *talk about why you go to church*. Mention how good it feels to be able to sit in the church service with your child. Share what is important about the service with your child. Mention the music; truly valuing sitting in silence; taking time to be calm; loving the laughing and joyful excitement you feel; seeing friends. Share what it means to you. Invite your children to share what they are looking forward to experiencing or what worries them. *Listen to what they say*.

Let children know that during the time when music is being performed, people are speaking or there is silence, children and adults are expected to be quiet and to be still. Being still is harder than being quiet for most children. I think that is true because they think that being quiet is all that is required. Play a game with your children in which you demonstrate how distracting motion without sound can be. Wave at someone, walk in a room, run up or down stairs, swing an umbrella or purse. If you quietly lean down and tie your shoe, take it off, accidentally drop it, put it back on and do that same thing three times--or five times, it could easily become distracting. Many children know that they can get your attention without making a sound, but haven't thought that some of those same techniques can be very disturbing for people wanting quiet.

As well as being interested and curious and being quiet and still, *children should be encouraged to participate*. That means singing, joining in responsive readings, lighting the chalice, helping with a story sometime, helping with a reading (especially older teens) .

All this gets us back to that point about children needing to be children. *Music should be high quality and of the genre the congregation as a whole wants*. If you use classical music, do not change for children. But make it *SHORTER* than you would for an adults-only congregation. Children deserve to hear good music.

Many children do not read, so responsive readings, hymns with choruses, or hymns with *very repetitive* words are especially inviting. It is also important for children to *learn by rote the hymns, which carry the identity of the congregation*. Any child who can: learn the words to the “Star Spangled Banner” (and most of our children do) can learn any hymn we have, if the congregation sings it with vigor and frequently. Parents, follow along with your finger the words in the hymnal as soon as your child shows an interest in words-even before they are reading. Children usually think you should read the top line and then the line just below that and the line just below that before you move to the second or third groupings of printed lines. You can see how a child might try to sing the first line to all the verses in a hymn. Singing hymns can be like a puzzle and children can have fun with it.

Words used in the service should be simple and make sense. That doesn't mean the service can only use a vocabulary for a six year old. It means a six year old should be able to understand something from the words and be encouraged to wonder.

In the service during a story or a homily or a reading or a dialogue, *children should be addressed in inclusive ways.* Don't talk to children as if there were no adults present. Don't talk to adults as if there were no children present. If questions are asked in a dialogue with the congregation, be sure to ask adults the same questions you are asking the children? If the question would put an adult on the spot, it will put a child on the spot too. I once worked with a minister who said he was going to ask the children on Easter who Jesus was. I said, "would you ask the adults in the congregation to answer that in front of everyone on Easter morning?"

If children are invited forward in a service, they must be participating in creating worship, not entertaining the adults. This is very important. Children should never be laughed at in a service. It is often a very fine line. If children are laughing because what is happening is funny to them, that is great. If adults are laughing at children because they are so cute or just said something so cute, the moment of worship has been lost. Children may laugh when they are being laughed at, but it is a protective measure to preserve their self image. **BE CAREFUL.**

The voice and presence of each person is a contributing component in intergenerational worship. There are many ways to do it as long as we continue to create and be in community.

Intergenerational Worship Suggestions

Kathie Davis Thomas

This is an adaptation and enlargement of a paper on the same topic

Roberta M. Nelson and Ann B. Fields

1. Familiar Rituals

Let the format, the framework of the service contain familiar elements in a familiar sequence e.g. use chalice lightings, doxology, songs or affirmation of faith that children use in their chapel services or in their classroom or that are repeated each time the young people are in church

2. Music

Use lots of singing, music to listen to, music to see (instrumentalists or soloists up front, the youth choir singing up front); music to march to, such as processional around sanctuary by the children with palms to “Hosanna” or pennants with names of UU Saints to “When the Saints Go Marching In”; music under the narrator's voice in a dramatic service; a folk guitar group of children and adults. Rehearse new music with the congregation (including the children) before the service (children will then eagerly await this.)

3. Visual Focus

Create an impressive visual focus. If it changes and “grows” during the service, it will rivet the children and the child in all of us: a world tree that grows with fragments from religious and folk traditions; an Easter tree that goes from death to life as flowers, birds, eggs are added; tree of light at Winter Solstice/ Christmas/ Divali/ Hannukah; calling the four directions with candles and readers.

4. Alternate Focus

Alternate portions for adults and portions for the children. Adults need to worship also. Create a message/element that has several levels of meaning, e.g. a poem for adults that is interpreted with dance which appeals to the young people.

5. Seating

If the children are up front, have a good reason--don't put them on display or “use” them. Seating with families is important when parents and other congregants will need to support or assist them, such as in a service on death

6. Participatory

Use words from children in a song they have written, or in words collected and then read as a litany, or a sentence completion in the Order of Service, “This year I will...” Invite youth to do a “sculpture” Chalice Lighting or to do the Reading in the service; children can lead a song; youth choir sing.

7. Use Props

Children are concrete and focus better if you have an object to illustrate your story or point. A good set of books on this topic is The Brown Bag Series.

8. Stories

Have the story acted out; use readers to tell the story; invite actors to mime the story as it is read. If you want to show the pictures from a book, consider having them made into slides so they can actually be seen by everyone. Showing pictures from the front of the room is difficult unless in a very small intimate service.

Models

I. Part of Sunday Morning Worship

Usually the first 15 or 20 minutes of a service. Make the elements familiar .Remember that this is a chance to build community -so use elements such as Joys and Concerns that the children participate in. (First Baltimore now has a children's altar on which children can share something special to them or which represents an important event in their lives) Announcements are difficult for children to relate to in their portion of service!

II. Entire Sunday Morning Worship

Remember pacing -shorter elements to keep children's focus: a homily instead of a sermon; elements tied together with music; visual focus; participation

III. Family Sunday Service separate from Congregational Service

Opportunity for a more intimate and possibly more experimental service. Can have more conversation with and comments from the young people. Could be an occasional or regular format.

IV. Family Service with Week-Night Religious Education program

This has been used in churches that have regular classes or meetings of parents that includes programming for the children. What a great opportunity to have families share in worship models that families can use at home!

V. Between Sunday Morning Services

Great opportunity for all ages to meet together every Sunday.

Stories for Multigenerational Worship

by Diane Elliott, with an introduction by Eugene B. Navias

I first heard Diane Elliott tell original stories when she was the Director of Religious Education at the Arlington Street Church, Boston, and I was the Associate Minister. It was evident from the first that both the children and the adults enjoyed her stories and the way she told them. The stories seemed to have something for everyone. They were on universal themes that had no age boundaries. The church where Diane is now the DRE also has the pattern of having the children frequently attend the first portion of the service. As at Arlington Street, Diane is skilled at writing or selecting stories that complement the minister's sermon theme, thus helping the service have an artistic whole.

Diane has a large collection of books from which she adapts stories, usually having to shorten them for the time allotted. She is also skilled at making up stories from her own life experiences as is evidenced by the four examples that follow. Such personal stories are often especially effective. Stories such as these and others we might share in church may prompt further discussion at the beginning of the religious education classes. Story leaders may want to advise teachers in advance of the story theme, so that classroom leaders can follow up with the children if there is a need.

Children enjoy the hymns, songs and rituals that are familiar to them in intergenerational services. They are familiar with the Chalice lighting in the big church because they light a chalice in their own services. They like songs and hymns they know, so coordination between the Parish minister and the Religious Educator is invaluable. They like familiar rituals such "Go Now in Peace" (Hymn 413 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.) which is sung by the adults as the children leave for the R E program. They also like to teach adults motions which go to a familiar hymn or song.

In some congregations, it is the parish minister who tells a story to the children; in fact in one church, the religious educator finds the stories and the minister tells them. It is important for children to experience the minister(s) in ministerial roles. One important time is at Baby Dedication Services. During the words of dedication, the children may be asked to take their part in helping the baby grow up and flourish, just as the adult members are so charged.

There is great value in experiences that call attention to the congregation being multi-generational where no one is too young to too old to be part of the family. Congregations are one of the few places in our world, where people can come back again and again throughout life, where birth and every stage of growth and death are celebrated.

—Eugene B. Navias

Treasure Hunting

How many of you have ever gone on a Treasure Hunt? And did you find amazing things like candy, baseball cards or jewels? Or did you find the fountain of youth, wisdom, and world peace? Thinking about treasure hunts can capture our imaginations and take us to place of 'what ifs' and dreams come true.

When I was a child my friends and I would take turns making up our own treasure hunts, using whatever stuff we had at hand. ...a comic book, our plastic jewels, stuffed animals, candy, anything we could find that resembled treasure. Most important of all, the treasure box would have to have something mysterious in it. Like a message made up in secret code or invisible writing, or a map we would draw to lead to yet another treasure.

After hiding the box, we would spend the afternoon making up and hiding clues, like "go to the tallest tree and climb up three branches," or walk 12 paces from the swing set." But, which way? Half the fun was in the guessing, and you might go around in circles a little before finding the next clue that would lead you on.. Sometimes the clue might tell you to go into the field behind your street, and you would have to, even if the bigger kids said there were gigantic ants there. Or you would have to stick your hand in a pricker bush and carefully reach the next clue without getting a million prickers in you... an impossible task. On and on this would go until the treasure was at last found.

It's funny, though, what was in the box was not really what mattered. It was the way we felt when we were searching for the treasure and then the excitement we felt when we found it.

Our lives are like a treasure hunt. We go along searching and wondering, looking for clues and discovering treasures. And then we start on the next hunt. The hardest part is deciding which clues to follow and which ones to leave behind. We can always ask for help from trusted others, like our friends, parents, partners, teachers, and our mentors and ministers which can make all the difference, especially if we find ourselves venturing into unknown fields or pricker bushes. Some of the clues and treasures may be discovered by being in connection with a religious community. There may be religious maps that require help within the church. The religious treasure hunt gets a little tricky as we begin to ask questions and search for meaning. We may come upon a sudden turn, or a clue we did not expect. We may realize that we must learn to see with new eyes so as not to miss the hidden treasure. And harder still we may need to look at each other or even ourselves with new eyes. The best part is that we share in both joy and mystery of the treasure hunt and the discovery .

May we all remember that our treasures are always close at hand. Let us nurture them in ourselves, in each other, and in all our relationships.

—Diane Elliott

Making a Decision

When I was a child living in Lubbock, Texas I lived down the street from a little convenience store that we lovingly called the Little Store. The Little Store was two short blocks from my house. I could see it from my yard. Being allowed to walk to The Little Store by myself was the first independent step I was allowed to make, alone out in the big world. The Little Store was filled with cake mixes, milk, eggs, bread, soups, sodas, but most importantly candy.

Behind the check out counter there were shelves of candy of every kind and the gumballs were my favorite. There was a particular gumball that I loved. They were a pale blue and had white sparkling sugar all over the outside. I loved to take my money down to the store and buy these gumballs. Now one day I went to the store with my sister to buy some milk. As my sister paid for the milk I was over at the candy aisle. I don't know what came over me, but as I was looking at the gumballs I picked one up and quickly put it in my pocket. I stood by the door and waited for my sister to finish paying and we left the store.

The next day my mom asked me to go to the store to get her some bread. As I walked to the store I began to think about how I had stolen the gumball. I wondered if the store owner, Mrs. Walker, who was really a nice woman, knew what I had done. I had a sick feeling in my stomach and my face began to feel hot. When I walked into the store Mrs. Walker greeted me warmly and smiled. I smiled back, got the bread and left.

All the way home I thought about what a nice woman Mrs. Walker was and how I had taken something from her store. I knew that what I had done was wrong., but I didn't know what to do to make it right. I worried all night long. I wanted to feel better. I was in a mess and I needed to get out. I had to decide if I would walk into the store and say I stole a gumball from you and here is the money or if I would go in and put the money in the gumball box and not say anything or if I would just forget about it.

When I just couldn't decide what to do I went to my sister and told her what I had done. Of course, she told me I shouldn't have taken candy from Mrs. Walker and how could I have done such a horrible thing. I told her I knew that and asked her what I should do. We both agreed I could go to Mrs. Walker and tell her what I had done or I could slip the money into the box. I finally decided I would put the money in the box and say nothing. The next day I went to the store and went in. I quickly put a nickel in the gumball box and picked up a candy bar. I went and paid for the candy bar, noticing that Mrs. Walker was still smiling at me as I left the store.

As I look back on that situation I know I had a very important decision to make. I could have tried to forget that I had stolen the gumball or I could have confessed to Mrs. Walker. I had decided to do neither one. But I did do something to help me feel better about what I had done and it was this decision that taught me a lesson about stealing. That was the last time I stole anything. Making decisions can be very hard.

—Diane Elliott

Memorial Day

There is a graveyard down the street from my house that is a very special place for me. I have been going to this graveyard for as long as I can remember. I rode my bike there when I was a child and vacationed in Hingham at my grandmother's house. I played hide and seek in there until the thought of all those graves scared me away, and when I grew older my grandmother would ask me to help her clean the graves of the moss and lichen that had grown on them. I remember scrubbing away as she watched and the smile that came across her face when the name became clear once again. It was through the scrubbing and the weeding around the gravestones that I came to learn about my ancestors. What many of you may not know is that I am the 13th generation to have lived in the town of Hingham. That graveyard memorializes many members of my family and holds many stories.

When my children were small I would take them to the graveyard and we would have picnics on my grandmother's grave and I would share stories about her. About her blue eyes and how she loved ice cream cones more than anything. Then there was the story of her moving to Cuba as a young bride and her first born child dying. His grave is there as well. We would have our picnic and my children would ask a million questions about her life and her death. It was one of those great places for meaningful conversations to take place.

Memorial Day holds many meanings for different people. For some it is about remembering loved ones who have died and for others it is about remembering those people who fought in wars and died defending our freedom. But for all of us it is about remembering those who served humanity. Those who made our world a better place. Take time to share the stories of those people who you loved and who have died. Their memories are to be treasured and honored.

—Diane Elliott

The Day Before

In preparation for this reflection, I had the opportunity to focus on the idea of tradition and the recreation that I go through each year at this time. There are many feelings that come up during the season, but I am choosing to share with you a piece of the tradition of my Christmas Eve.

Christmas Eve has traditionally been a day that I hold to be sacred. It is a day of hustle and bustle and preparation and in the midst of all that there is a place that I hold, for joy, love, peace and hope. This sense of sacredness that I feel did not spring out of nowhere.

The tradition did not begin with my created family; it began with my childhood when my Grandmother Hester Abbey would come to stay with us. My Grandmother brought a sense of magic with her when she came to our house each year. She was the great creator of special moments, On Christmas Eve, we would always bake cookies, breads and pies.

Grandma would mix the dough and she always pushed the bowl toward me so I could my finger into the bowl to lick the dough. On some years, after we baked the cookies, we would have tea party with china cups of hot tea and a plate of warm cookies. She would ask questions about my school and my friends and she would tell me stories about her life. It is these memories that I have always cherished and carried into my life and to my now created family. This is my sense of joy.

Christmas Eves of today are still about baking bread and making cookies. When my children w were small and spent the day impatiently waiting for Santa to come, we would paint sugar cookies with egg yolks and sparkly colored sugar. After the cookies were baked, they would glisten and shine. The cookies would then be given to friends and they were saved for Santa to eat later that night. Now that the children are older, I still bake these cookies and if they are around, they help me. I realize that when I bake these cookies I am keeping the spirit of my Grandmother alive. I am having a sacred moment and it is about love.

In the early evening, we all go to the Old Ship Church, which is the Unitarian Church in Hingham and the church of my ancestors. It is when I sit down at this service and am in the company of my family and friends that the business of the day washes away. I sit in the building that I love and I listen to stories and sing carols and I am filled with a sense of peace.

After the service, we go home to dinner. Sometimes we are alone and other times we are with friends. One of the last things my daughter and I do is prepare the Christmas bread that we will eat when their Grandparents come to breakfast and they will ask the children about their schools and their friends and then they will share their stories. It is in this relationship that I have felt a sense of hope.

May you all spend just one moment during your Christmas Eve to pause amidst the hustle and bustle and preparation to take in the sacred.

--Diane Elliott